A Bill That Would Have Allowed “Secure Pass” Scanners That Detect Non-Metallic Weapons Used by Inmates to Stab and Slash Correction Officers, Inmates, & Civilians, Was Never Given a Vote in the Assembly During This Legislative Session, Despite Passing 62-0 in the Senate

NEW YORK- The Correction Officers’ Benevolent Association is furious over the revelation that the New York State Assembly Speaker, Carl Heastie, refused to allow a vote before the end of the legislative session, on Assembly Bill A6838, which would have authorized the New York City Department of Correction to use Secure Pass scanners that detect non-metallic weapons hidden by inmates seeking to harm Correction Officers, Civilians, and other inmates.

This bill has been on the legislative agenda in both the Senate and Assembly for the past five years. Each year, it has been amended numerous times to appease all interested parties. It passed in the Senate 62-0 this year. In the Assembly this session, there were 52 Co-Sponsors and 94 members out of 150 who would have voted yes, allowing the bill to pass easily, if only the Assembly Speaker would have done the right thing and allowed the vote to come to the floor. This never happened, much to the bewilderment of the Correction Officers’ Benevolent Association.

Commenting on this failure to act, COBA President Elias Husamudeen said, “If there is one single take away from this failure to vote on the Secure Pass legislation, which was actually Mayor de Blasio’s bill, politics once again trumped public safety. When elected officials know full well that jail violence is rampant in the city’s jails, as evidenced by the 18% increase in inmate slashings and stabblings and the 650 assaults on Correction Officers, just last year alone, and yet fail to allow a vote on legislation that could have dramatically reduced the violence and saved lives, it is not simply Albany dysfunction, it’s Albany negligence. The very definition of negligence is ‘failure to use reasonable care, resulting in damage or injury to another.’ In the last three years, close to 700 inmates have been slashed, stabbed, or cut and eight correction officers and supervisors have been slashed. If we were permitted to use the Secure Pass scanners, we could have significantly reduced these numbers. Not allowing the Department of Correction to utilize essential tools to detect dangerous weapons will only ensure that jail violence will continue and lives will be lost. We know that in the
summer, violence in this city rises and the jails are no different. We had the opportunity to make the city’s jails a lot safer. I want to thank all the legislators who heard the cries of Correction Officers, civilians and inmates. This message is not for you, it's for those legislators who would not take a vote on this bill and who claim to care about the lives of young Black and Latino men, whose safety will actually be more compromised as a result of their negligence. Their blood will be on your hands every time someone gets cut, stabbed, or slashed in the city’s jail system. We will not let you, or anyone else, forget that you failed to protect them. It doesn't matter what side of the bars your family member is on, everybody deserves to be safe."

Despite the fact that A6838 was not even the COBA’s bill, COBA President Elias Husamudeen and COBA Legislative Chairman Tommy Farrell, made numerous trips to Albany to lobby legislators, including those who were originally opposed to this legislation, but have since come on board to support it.

Below are photos of actual New York City Correction Officers, civilians and inmates who have been victimized by assaultive inmates throughout the city’s jails in just the last several years. Following the failure to hold a vote and pass Assembly Bill A6838, the public can sadly expect these types of images to multiply for years to come. The COBA is calling on the public to post these images to their social media pages with the #saferjailsmatter! #publicsafetycomesfirst!

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