

RESOLUTION NO. 21-

RESOLUTION OPPOSING GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL'S ABRUPT, SECRETIVE AND UNSAFE PRISON CLOSURES ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUNDS

By: Legislature as a Whole

Seconded by: Legislature as a Whole

WHEREAS, Gov. Kathy Hochul has abruptly announced that six prisons across the state will close by March of next year, consisting of: Ogdensburg Correctional Facility; Moriah Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility; Willard Drug Treatment Campus; Southport Correctional Facility; Downstate Correctional Facility and Rochester Correctional Facility, and

WHEREAS, Governor Hochul's announcement arrived with no advance warning and no meaningful local input or outreach to corrections unions or local officials, and

WHEREAS, local officials at the state and county levels have stated that they only learned of these closures from media reports, and

WHEREAS, such secrecy goes against the promises of transparency and collaboration made by the governor upon taking office, and

WHEREAS, this announcement appears to disregard a 2005 state law that requires 12-months' notice for a prison closure, and

WHEREAS, recent reforms that release violent offenders to the streets and close correctional facilities do nothing to protect our state from violent crime, and

WHEREAS, despite fewer inmates, dangerous violence and assaults inside our correctional facilities continue to rise, attacks on corrections officers have doubled over the past ten years in the wake of more than 20 facility closures in that same timeframe, and inmate-on-inmate violence has increased with the closure of these prisons, and

WHEREAS, placing more inmates into fewer facilities lead to a rise in assaults, a decrease in social distancing and elevated health dangers to staff and inmates caused by COVID-19, and

WHEREAS, the closing of these facilities will negatively affect over 1,300 correctional officers who are projected to be displaced, in addition to the negative impact these closures will have on local communities, and

WHEREAS, one of these facilities, Southport Correctional Facility is located in Chemung County and counties adjoining Chemung County, respectively, Schuyler County and Seneca

County, and Willard Drug Treatment Campus is located in counties adjoining Chemung County, respectively, Schuyler County and Seneca County, and

WHEREAS, each facility provides employment opportunities to residents of Chemung County, and

WHEREAS, Governor Hochul's decision impacts hundreds of area correctional officers and prison staff, and means uprooting hundreds of area families and a devastating toll on already hard-hit local economies, and

WHEREAS, the closure of Southport Correctional Facility threatens area infrastructure and related costs to that community, further, such closure threatens to prevent or delay necessary upgrades to the wastewater treatment facilities for Chemung County Sewer District, and

WHEREAS, the state has recently invested \$20 million into operations at the Southport Facility implementing a step-down program to work with the most violent inmates in the state's prison system to get them ready for reintegration into the general prison population.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chemung County Executive and the Chemung County Legislature hereby opposes and condemns the Governor's abrupt, secretive and unsafe plan to close these six prisons, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chemung County Legislature stands with our brave New York State Corrections Officers, as well as with corrections support staff and their families, whose lives will be devastated by this decision, and other area residents along Chemung County and otherwise, and calls for this decision to be reconsidered and reversed immediately, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Clerk of the Legislature immediately transmit a true copy of this resolution to Governor Kathy Hochul, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Anthony J. Annucci, New York State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, New York State Assembly Speaker Carl E. Heastie, New York State Senator Thomas F. O'Mara, New York State Assembly Member Philip Palmesano, Inter-County Association of Western New York, New York State Association of Counties, the Clerks of the Schuyler and Seneca County Legislatures, and such other persons deemed necessary and appropriate.