



March 15, 2020

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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

***Joint Defender Statement Condemning Gov. Cuomo's Attempt  
to Roll Back New Bail Laws Through an Accelerated NYS  
Budget Agreement***

*With Prisons and Jails Functioning as Likely Incubators for Infectious  
Disease, New York Should be Releasing Vulnerable People, Not Cycling  
More People Through These Facilities*

**(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, New York County Defender Services and Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem** issued the following joint statement condemning Governor Andrew Cuomo for attempting to roll back the newly enacted bail reform laws through an accelerated budget agreement:

“It’s unconscionable that in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic, Governor Cuomo continues to push criminal justice policies that would increase the number of incarcerated New Yorkers. It is widely known that jails and prisons are prime incubators for infectious disease. The last thing lawmakers should be doing is looking for additional ways to overcrowd them. Any rollback to bail reform that could lead to the incarceration of more New Yorkers - individuals who are presumed innocent and have not been convicted of any crime - during this health crisis could very well carry a death sentence.

Albany and others should instead focus their efforts towards the immediate release of New Yorkers in custody who are at high risk of serious illness from COVID-19 and reducing the jail population through every means possible. For anyone remaining in jail, the focus should be on ensuring free and unlimited access to hand soap and water as well as phone calls and emails with loved ones to replace temporarily suspended visits. This is not only sound policy but a moral necessity.”

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