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

***NYC DEFENDERS CONDEMN EFFORT TO GUT
PROGRESSIVE BAIL REFORMS IN EMERGENCY
BUDGET***

(NEW YORK, NY) – Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, The Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service, and New York County Defender Services issued the following statement in response to the attempt to reverse bail reforms through the emergency budget process:

“In the 11th hour of the state budget process, [news](#) leaked that Governor Cuomo and the New York State Senate are seeking to quickly and secretly pass an emergency budget that would gut the transformational bail reforms that New Yorkers won last year. The move would go even further than just repealing last year’s gains. Their proposal would subject tens of thousands more people to pretrial detention each year, violating their Constitutional rights and enshrining mass incarceration in New York.

“It is unconscionable that Governor Cuomo, Andrea Stewart Cousins, and other state legislators would use a public health crisis as leverage to pass a bill that would increase jail populations across the State. To do so in secret, when the Capitol is closed to the public, during the budgeting process is even worse. If enacted, this proposal will drastically increase the number of people in jail who have not even had a trial yet. It would create a system in which innocent people are caught up in pre-trial detention and in which everyone’s rights are trampled. It would ultimately set New York decades back.

“If anything, our current crisis underlines that our already overcrowded jail system is itself a public health threat. The rate of COVID-19 infection on Rikers Island is currently eight times that of the rest of the city. What happens within our jails impacts the rest of the state. Attempting to crowd yet more people into cells at this time not only shows a flagrant disregard for New Yorkers’ rights, but a disregard for the wellbeing of the state at large.

“As attorneys for New Yorkers from underserved communities - those most at risk of unjust imprisonment should these measures pass - we call on legislators to stand strong against bail reform rollbacks, which they fought alongside us to pass just last year.”

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