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

## **Attorneys for Detained Immigrants Demand Their Release from Bergen County Jail Amid Heat Wave and Reports of Broken Air Conditioning**

**(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, and The Bronx Defenders –**

New York City's defender organizations providing free legal representation to detained immigrants through the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) sent a [letter](#) on Saturday to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement demanding the release of their clients

amid reports of broken air conditioning systems at Bergen County Jail, as temperatures reach the mid 90s over the next several days.

NYIFUP released the following joint statement:

“As a heat wave scorches New York and New Jersey, a growing number of our clients have reported that the air conditioning systems in several units of the Bergen County Jail have failed, and that they are enduring oppressive and dangerous conditions. The soaring temperatures and lack of ventilation are especially dangerous as detained immigrants and staff continue to face the threat of the spread of COVID-19 within the facility. The lockdowns and prolonged confinement to small cells, imposed by jail officials ostensibly to protect people from the spread of the virus, are adding to the extreme discomfort and health risks of the heat, given the limited air circulation in those small spaces.

There is no reason for people to be incarcerated as they fight their deportation cases in immigration court. ICE and local jail officials have repeatedly shown their inability to handle public health emergencies and are responsible for an ongoing humanitarian crisis. As detention conditions continue to threaten the health and safety of detained immigrants, we demand the release of our clients from Bergen County Jail and renew our calls for the immediate release of *all* people currently in ICE custody and an end to ICE raids.”

**Dr. Lauren Brinkley-Rubinstein**, Assistant Professor of Social Medicine at UNC, stated:

“Exposing people to housing units without proper ventilation amplifies risk of COVID-19 infection in correctional settings. Extreme heat, similarly, can exacerbate existing conditions with sometimes fatal consequences.”

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*The New York Family Immigrant Unity Project*

*(NYIFUP) is the nation’s first public defender system for immigrants facing deportation—defined as those in removal proceedings before an immigration judge. Funded by the New York City Council since July 2014, the program provides a free attorney to almost all detained indigent immigrants facing deportation at Varick Street Immigration.*