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

Legal Aid and Blank, Rome LLP Secure Pardon for Natasha Joseph, Client Convicted of a Low-Level Crime and at Risk of Certain Deportation

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society and Blank, Rome LLP** successfully secured a pardon from New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo for Natasha Joseph, a long-term U.S. resident, who faced near certain deportation based on a single conviction, almost ten years ago, of a non-violent, and low-level offense.

“Ms. Joseph faced almost certain deportation because of this conviction and the Trump Administration’s punitive enforcement of federal immigration laws,” said **Ted Hausman, Supervising Attorney with the Criminal Appeals Bureau at The Legal Aid Society**. “Now, just before the holidays, Ms. Joseph has peace of mind to know that she’ll be able to remain here in New York City with her family and community. Legal Aid thanks Governor Cuomo for granting this pardon and urges the Governor to wield this authority more often to grant relief to the literally thousands of deserving New Yorkers who have pending pardon or commutation applications on his desk.”

“We are grateful that Governor Cuomo has granted a pardon. The conviction was for a single, low-level, and non-violent offense, involving property worth less than \$400, was going to result in deportation for our client, which as a practical matter, would also force her U.S. citizen children to leave the country,” said **John S. Kiely, who is Of Counsel, and in the Private Client Group, at Blank Rome LLP**.

Background

Natasha Joseph was born on April 4, 1986 in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Growing up, Ms. Joseph's family struggled and had little more than the necessities of life. Ms. Joseph entered the United States on February 19, 2008, as a lawful permanent resident. She came to the US for a better life and more opportunities. Ms. Joseph has two U.S. citizen sons. Her older son is enrolled at a public school in Brooklyn; her younger son is afflicted with sickle cell anemia. (This painful and incurable disease requires ongoing treatment and leaves him susceptible to infection. He currently receives effective and affordable medical treatment in the United States.)

Ms. Joseph, a permanent resident, is facing almost certain deportation – and definite loss of permanent resident status – due to a conviction for a single, non-violent, and low-level offense, namely, Attempted Forgery in the Second Degree. In short, on June 20, 2012, Ms. Joseph obtained a temporary department store credit card that was not in her name and used this card to obtain merchandise worth less than \$400. Following a guilty plea, Ms. Joseph was sentenced to time served, plus a 5-year term of probation, which she successfully completed with an early discharge from supervised release. Deportation is in effect an additional, and grossly disproportionate, punishment for the underlying offense.

Ms. Joseph has accepted responsibility for the offense and the absence of any criminal offenses in the eight years since it occurred demonstrates her ability to lead a law-abiding life. Ms. Joseph has a lengthy history of gainful employment. Until recently, she worked at a restaurant in a supervisory role; she recently went on unemployment because of the unacceptable COVID-19 risk that her work poses to her medically vulnerable son.

Ms. Joseph's representation on her pardon is by Legal Aid (by Lawrence T. Hausman and Yvonne Floyd-Mayers; and Blank Rome LLP (by John S. Kiely and Peter C. Valente).

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org