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Contact:

Redmond Haskins  
The Legal Aid Society  
(929) 441-2384  
[rhaskins@legal-aid.org](mailto:rhaskins@legal-aid.org)

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

***Legal Aid and Kasowitz Secure Pardon for Rosario Pena, New Yorker at Risk of Deportation due to Convictions That Were a Direct Result of Having Been a Victim of Human Trafficking***

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society and Kasowitz Benson Torres LLP** secured a pardon from New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo for Rosario Pena, who immigrated to the United States more than 50 years ago, but who was at risk of deportation based on decades-old convictions that were the direct result of her having been a victim of human trafficking.

“Rosario Pena’s convictions were the direct result of her having been a victim of human trafficking, and no one is more deserving of relief than she is,” said **Ted Hausman, Supervising Attorney with the Criminal Appeals Bureau at The Legal Aid Society**. “This pardon will allow her to continue her life in New York, a city she has called home since the age of five. Legal Aid applauds Governor Cuomo for granting this pardon and urges him to use these powers more often on behalf of the many New Yorkers deserving of this relief.”

**David E. Ross of Kasowitz Benson Torres LLP**, added: “We are honored to have assisted Rosario Pena and the Legal Aid Society in obtaining this just recognition and relief to Ms. Pena which also provides hope to other trafficking victims deserving of the full restoration of their liberty.”

**Rosario Pena Background**

Ms. Pena, born in 1959, has lived in the U.S. since the age of five, is a legal permanent resident, and has two adult citizen children. Ms. Pena was trafficked into prostitution and other illegal

activities starting at the age of 17. Ms. Pena has had multiple convictions related to drugs and prostitution vacated in New York County because those convictions were the direct result of her having been a victim of human trafficking. She has two remaining Queens County convictions, which were also the direct result of activities in which she was forced to engage while being trafficked into prostitution. Ms. Pena's vacatur motion was denied in Queens County Supreme Court because the court concluded that her convictions there did not fall within the express terms of the trafficking vacatur statute. Until the Governor's pardon today, those convictions, for petit larceny and attempted robbery in the 2nd degree, made her deportable.

Ms. Pena has led a quiet, law-abiding life since her last conviction in 1986, when she escaped her traffickers for good.

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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](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*