



BROOKLYN  
DEFENDER  
SERVICES



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

## ***NYIFUP Statement on Detained Immigrants' Hunger Strike and New COVID-19 Outbreak in Hudson County Jail***

(New York, NY) – This week, **Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, and The Legal Aid Society** – New York City’s defender organizations providing free legal representation to detained immigrants through the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) – received multiple reports from people served by the program of an ongoing hunger strike in immigrant detention at Hudson County Jail and of a new COVID-19 outbreak at the jail. One detained person reported that many fellow detained people are participating in the strike, saying that “everyone is joining to be united.” Immigrant rights advocates have also reported a hunger strike and COVID outbreak in the Essex County jail.

**NYIFUP** released the following statement:

“With COVID surging in New York, New Jersey, and across the country, releasing all people from immigration detention has never been more urgent. Life-threatening conditions reported by detained people — ranging from inadequate medical care, poor sanitation, broken phone and video equipment that cuts them off from their families and counsel, and widespread solitary confinement — only worsen the harm and spread of the virus. The ongoing hunger strike is yet another urgent call to action by detained people taking enormous personal risks to demand justice and safety. The daily accounts we hear from the people we serve, including those currently participating in the strike, are horrific and appalling, and we are united with them in their fight. We call on ICE to respect their right to protest, to not retaliate, and instead to protect public health and human rights by releasing people immediately.”

## **BACKGROUND:**

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 the Varick Street Immigration Court in New York City.

There is currently [a COVID-19 outbreak](#) in the Hudson County jail, which officials believe can be traced to a staff person.

Public health experts have [called for decarceration](#) as a life-saving tool in the fight against COVID-19.

Immigration detention facilities have relied on widespread solitary confinement amid this pandemic, which [only exacerbates the harm](#) and spread of the virus.