

December 17, 2020

Redmond Haskins, The Legal Aid Society (RHaskins@legal-aid.org)

Dan Ball, Brooklyn Defender Services (Dball@bds.org)

Ryan Karerat, The Bronx Defenders (RKarerat@bronxdefenders.org)

Lupe Todd-Medina, New York County Defender Services (LToddmedina@nycds.org)

Sam McCann, The Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (SMccann@ndsny.org)

Hettie Powell, Queens Defenders (hpowell@queensdefenders.org)

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

NYC Defenders Release 2021 Statewide Criminal Legal System Reform Priorities

Following Decisive Election, Attorneys Call on Cuomo, Stewart-Cousins and Heastie to Enact the Priorities Immediately

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, New York County Defender Services, Queens Defenders and Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem [called](#) on Governor Andrew Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie [to enact an ambitious agenda of urgent and necessary criminal legal reforms](#) when session convenes early 2021.

The letter states:

As New York City's public defenders, we write to share our legislative priorities for criminal legal reform at an extraordinary moment in history. We serve hundreds of thousands low-income people, overwhelmingly Black and Latinx New Yorkers, who have been devastated by COVID-19, brutalized by police violence, subjected to the abject cruelty of the federal immigration system, and incarcerated under lethal conditions in city jails and state prisons.

The needs of the people we serve were set in stark relief during the reckoning that followed George Floyd's murder—in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic and in the wake of thousands of Black lives so recently lost to police violence and white supremacy. Those forces have inspired a global movement for racial justice that demands concrete action from policymakers across the country. Albany must act, and it must directly confront a criminal legal system that has long dehumanized the people we serve.

The Defenders urge the Governor to sign the following bills that have already passed both chambers with broad support:

- Driver's License Suspension Reform Act - S.5348A (Kennedy) / A.7463A (Hunter)
- The Prison Proximity Bill – S.724A (Montgomery) / A.6710A (Rozić)
- Protect Our Courts Act – S.425 (Hoylman) / A.2176 (Solages)

The Defenders urge the Legislature to take action on the following critical bills:

Overhaul New York's Costly, Racially Discriminatory Parole System

- Elder Parole - S.2144 (Hoylman) / A.9040 (De La Rosa) and Fair and Timely Parole – S.497A (Rivera) / A.4346A (Weprin)
- Less is More: Community Supervision Revocation Reform Act - S.1343C (Benjamin)

End Marijuana Prohibition and Promote Racial and Economic Justice

- The Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) – S.1527C (Krueger) / A.1617C (Peoples-Stokes)

HALT Solitary Confinement

- The H.A.L.T. Solitary Confinement Act – S.1623 (Sepúlveda) / A.2500 (Aubry)

Expand Alternatives to Incarceration

- Treatment Not Jails – S.8687 (Ramos)

Hold Law Enforcement Accountable

- Independent Oversight of Police Discipline – S.7527 (Myrie) / A.10560 (Richardson)
- Banning Qualified Immunity – S.8668 (Jackson) / A.10978 (Hunter)
- The New York for All Act S.7562 (Salazar) / A.9586 (Reyes)

Shrink the Penal Law to Reduce Discriminatory Enforcement

- Repeal Loitering for the Purposes of Prostitution - S.2253 (Hoylman) / A.654 (Paulin)
- Stop Violence in the Sex Trades – S.6419 (Salazar) / A.8230 (Gottfried)

Improve Conditions of Confinement

- Require Jail and Prisons to Provide Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) – S.2161B (Bailey) / A.833 (Rosenthal)
- The Gender Identity Respect and Dignity Act – S.4702A (Sepúlveda) / A.5257A (Rozić)
- Freedom from Forced Labor S.6781 (Myrie) / A.8661 (Epstein)

Ban Invasive and Dangerous Surveillance

- End Rogue DNA Databanks – S.6009 (Hoylman) / A.7818
- Prohibit Use of Biometric Surveillance – S.7572 (Hoylman) / A.9767 (Glick)
- Protect Our Privacy (POP) Act - S.6435B (Ramos) / A.09931 (Kim)
- Prohibit Geofence Searches – A.10246A (Quart) / S.8183 (Myrie)

Secure Due Process Protections

- Protect Fundamental Rights to Appellate Review
- Address Wrongful Convictions through Post-Conviction Reform – S.7255 (Myrie) / A.9147 (Quart)
- Ensure Judicial Review of Orders of Protection – A.7633 (Quart)
- Ensure the Right to a Jury Trial for All - S.33 (Hoylman) / A.3462
- Preclude Introduction of Confessions Obtained by Deceptive Tactics (The “Exonerated 5 Bill”) - S.6806 (Myrie)

Re-Enfranchise Communities and Support Civic Engagement

- Restore Voting Rights to People in Prison and on Parole - S.6905 (Salazar)
- Enact Clean Slate Legislation to Create Broad Automatic Expungement
- End Predatory Court Fees - A.11083 (Niou)
- Expand Post-Conviction Relief for Survivors of Trafficking - S.4981 (Ramos) / A.6983 (Gottfried)
- End the Lifetime Felony Ban on Jury Duty Service - S.221A (Benjamin) / A.4760A (Aubry)

Increase Transparency in Pre-Arrest Detention

- Transparency in Police Custody – S.8707 (Gianaris)

Protect Young People

- Expand Youthful Offender Status, Create Young Adult Status – A.8381A (O’Donnell)
- A Second Look at Youthful Offender Protections - S.6572 (Myrie) / A.8160
- Increase Protections for Juveniles Interrogated by Police - S.4980B (Bailey) / A.6982B (Joyner)
- Raise the Lower Age – S.8685 / A.10727
- Courtroom Shackling of Children – A.7528 / S.6534
- Family Court Delinquency Discovery Reform – A.8085 (Joyner)
- Exclusionary School Discipline – A.1981 / S.0767B

###