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

Legal Aid Calls on Governor Cuomo to Review Clemency Applications, Grant Relief Before Leaving Office

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society calls on outgoing Governor Andrew Cuomo to review all clemency applications and grant relief to qualified New Yorkers before leaving office.

The Governor has the names and applications of over 30 clients petitioning for clemency. As he prepares to leave office, we are imploring him to review all applications and make good on his promise to grant relief to qualified New Yorkers. The Governor has the power to grant clemency in the form of sentence commutations and pardons of convictions under the New York Constitution and state law. Given the systemic, decades-long over-incarceration of poor New Yorkers, almost entirely Black and brown people, the Governor must immediately provide justice to those serving draconian sentences and who, having demonstrated records of meaningful rehabilitation, are ready to return to their loved ones and to their communities. Many of these individuals are medically vulnerable and are in controlled, congregate settings where they run an unacceptable risk of exposure to the COVID-19 Delta variant.

The Governor should also use his powers to grant pardons to the many New Yorkers who, having committed crimes in the distant past, have become contributing members of their communities and who, nonetheless, face deportation because of the draconian federal immigration system. Action by the Governor can prevent the families of these longtime New Yorkers from being torn apart.

“It is not too late for the Governor to change the lives of many New Yorkers who have been unfairly subjected either to over-incarceration or to the specter of enforcement of cruel and inflexible immigration laws,” said **David Loftis, the Attorney-in-Charge of Post-Conviction and Forensic Litigation at The Legal Aid Society.**

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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