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

***Ahead of State Budget, 49 National BigLaw Firm Leaders Call On Legislature  
and Governor to Immediately Pass Clean Slate NY Act***

***BigLaw Joins With Business, Labor, and Faith Leaders To Stand Behind Clean  
Slate***

(ALBANY, NY) - With the final FY2023 New York State budget just a few weeks away, [nearly 50 leaders of the country's top law firms](#), including Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP, Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP and Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP, released a memo in support of the [Clean Slate New York Act](#) and called on the New York State Legislature to immediately pass the legislation. The bill, if passed, would end the long term consequences of a conviction record by establishing an automatic process for sealing most records after the requirements of the criminal legal system have been met. Millions of New Yorkers are kept from accessing life essentials like employment and housing due to their conviction records. With this memo, BigLaw joins an ever expanding coalition that includes [labor unions](#), [business leaders](#), and [faith leaders](#).

“Too many New Yorkers are denied access to housing and employment because of a prior conviction, leaving them unable to work and provide for themselves and their families long after their sentence is served. Correcting this injustice is why we are excited to join an expansive coalition that includes labor, business leaders, faith groups and community organizations to tell Albany that we need the Clean Slate Act now. All New Yorkers deserve to live full lives as thriving members of their communities,” said **Jami Wintz McKeon, Chair of Morgan, Lewis & Bockius**.

“Relief is long overdue for New Yorkers who have already served their sentences but continue to deal with the civil roadblocks of a record,” said **Kim Koopersmith, Chair of Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld**. “By passing the Clean Slate Act, we can break the cycle of poverty. I hope this important legislation will be enacted promptly so that New Yorkers with prior convictions will have a chance to contribute to their state and rebuild their lives.”

“The Clean Slate Act is a historic, and long overdue, step towards ending the perpetual punishment of a conviction that denies more than two million New Yorkers with prior conviction records access to housing, employment,

and other resources. We are proud to support the coalition in its fight to enact the legislation this session,” said **Brad Karp, Chairman of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison.**

**From the memo:**

As lawyers, we believe that we need a system for sealing criminal records that in fact works. The current discretionary record-sealing system, which requires New Yorkers to apply to a court for relief, has proven to be inadequate and ineffective. The current law is complex, difficult to navigate and far too limited in scope. Accordingly, notwithstanding the efforts of legal aid organizations and private firms to provide pro bono representation in this area, in the four years since the current sealing law went into effect, fewer than 2,500 individuals – less than 1 percent of eligible New Yorkers – have had their records cleared.

New York has a long history of enacting important reforms to support full participation in the life and economy of this state. We must continue this tradition by passing Clean Slate legislation.

**Below is a fully copy of the memo:**

**Memorandum of Support for the Clean Slate Act from New York Law Firm Leaders**

As the leaders of 49 law firms with offices in New York State, employing well more than 20,000 lawyers and other professionals in the state, we strongly support passage of the New York Clean Slate legislation, which would require automatic sealing of certain convictions. We recognize that in order to effect meaningful changes in our society and dismantle structural inequities in the law, we must take action.

The passage of S1553C/A6399B will immediately transform the lives of the 2.3 million New Yorkers – including family members, friends and neighbors – who have served their sentences and met statutorily- set conditions. Our fellow New Yorkers deserve equal access to employment, housing and education.

Passing the Clean Slate Act would have a profound impact by ensuring they have access to basic life essentials.

We know that past conviction records can erect lasting barriers to economic security and full engagement in the community, affecting not only individuals with past criminal convictions but also their families and communities. Black and Latino New Yorkers are charged and convicted at higher rates relative to their share of New York’s population, and make up three-quarters of New York State’s formerly imprisoned population. Accordingly, these civil consequences deepen already-existing racial inequalities in civic life and perpetuate racial inequality.

As lawyers, we believe that we need a system for sealing criminal records that in fact works. The current discretionary record-sealing system, which requires New Yorkers to apply to a court for relief, has proven to be inadequate and ineffective. The current law is complex, difficult to navigate and far too limited in scope. Accordingly, notwithstanding the efforts of legal aid organizations and private firms to provide pro bono representation in this area, in the four years since the current sealing law went into effect, fewer than 2,500 individuals – less than 1 percent of eligible New Yorkers – have had their records cleared.

As business leaders and employers in New York, we also believe that the Clean Slate Act will provide substantial economic benefits for all New Yorkers. It is estimated that employment restrictions cost New York nearly \$2 billion in lost wages annually. If implemented, Clean Slate legislation will help bolster the state’s economy by tapping the talents of millions of people who are currently unemployed or underemployed because of their past criminal records even though they meet the required conditions in the Act. By reducing barriers to employment, we will replenish the workforce, train skilled workers, and put paychecks into pockets. And those earnings will flow back into the New York economy.

New York has a long history of enacting important reforms to support full participation in the life and economy of this state. We must continue this tradition by passing Clean Slate legislation.

**We urge the Legislature to immediately pass S1553C (Myrie) / A6399B (Cruz).**

Scott A. Meyers, Chairman and CEO, Akerman LLP

Kim Koopersmith, Chair, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP

Tim House, U.S. Senior Partner (NY), Allen & Overy LLP

Richard Alexander, Chair, Arnold & Porter

Mark Stewart, Chair, Ballard Spahr LLP

Jason M. Halper, Chair, Global Litigation Group, Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft LLP

Michael A. Gerstenzang, Managing Partner, Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP

Evan J. Cohen, Managing Partner (Americas Region), Clifford Chance LLP

Lawrence T Gresser, Managing Partner, Cohen & Gresser LLP

Michael J. Heller, Executive Chairman and CEO, Cozen O'Connor Philip T. Inglima, Chair, Management Board, Crowell & Moring LLP Curt Myers, Chairman, Davis + Gilbert LLP

Michael W. Blair, Presiding Partner, Debevoise & Plimpton LLP Sonia R. Martin, Chief Executive Officer, Dentons US LLP

Michael Grohman & James Coster, Co-Managing Partners, New York Office, Duane Morris LLP Terri Adler, Managing Partner, Duval & Stachenfeld LLP

Mark D. Wasserman, Managing Partner, Eversheds Sutherland (US) LLP/Co-Chief Executive Officer, Eversheds Sutherland Limited

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Paul H. Schoeman & Howard Spilko, Co-Managing Partners, Kramer Levin Naftalis & Frankel LLP Gary M. Wingers, Chair and Managing Partner, Lowenstein Sandler LLP

Jon D. Van Gorp, Chair, Mayer Brown LLP

Ira Coleman, Chair, McDermott Will & Emery LLP

Jami Wintz McKeon, Chair of the Firm, Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP  
Larren M. Nashelsky, Chair, Morrison & Foerster LLP

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Stephen D. Zubiago, CEO and Managing Partner, Nixon Peabody LLP  
Bradley J. Butwin, Chair, O'Melveny & Myers LLP

Mitchell Zuklie, Chairman, Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP

Brad S. Karp, Chairman, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP  
Alexander Thomas, Global Managing Partner, Reed Smith LLP

Julie H. Jones, Chair, Ropes & Gray LLP

Maria Ginzburg, Managing Partner, Selendy Gay Elsberg PLLC  
Creighton Condon, Shearman & Sterling LLP

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Douglas J. Clark, Managing Partner, Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

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