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

NYC Defenders Urge New York Lawmakers to Reject Governor Hochul's Mass Incarceration Plan in the State Budget

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, The Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Services, and Queens Defenders released the following statement in response to Governor Hochul's announcement that an agreement has been reached on the state budget:

“The Governor’s decision to roll back bail reform, [despite evidence proving its success](#), will inevitably put more Black and brown New Yorkers behind bars, separate countless families, and deepen systemic racism already embedded in the legal system. No New Yorker should lose their pretrial freedom because they cannot afford to pay bail.

Instead of putting forth solutions that would get to the heart of public safety for all New Yorkers, Governor Hochul’s last-minute insertion of regressive policy into the State budget is simply a political move that plays into the hands of those who have embarked on a campaign of disinformation with undeniable racist overtones. New Yorkers deserved an informed and transparent debate about public safety. They did not get one.

When asked how the government can make their neighborhoods safer in an [NYCSpeaks survey](#), which was spearheaded by Mayor Adams specifically to inform policy, [nearly 20,000 New York City residents](#) pointed to the need to build more affordable housing and reduce homelessness as their top solution for public safety. With a \$220 billion budget, State lawmakers have the power to deliver real safety across our state by listening to their constituents’ demands and investing in safety strategies outside of law enforcement, including providing safe housing, affordable health care, mental health support programs, stable employment, and equitable access to education. Instead, this budget offers ill-considered rollbacks to successful bail reform that pander to the politics of fear and anger.

As New York City public defenders, we see how directly the bail laws have impacted the people subjected to the horrid conditions on Rikers Island, where the vast majority of incarcerated people are in pre-trial detention. We are calling on New York State Senate and Assembly members to reject the Governor’s changes to the bail laws because they do not serve a legitimate purpose and will harm thousands of New Yorkers. New York State lawmakers must stand against putting Black and brown New Yorkers in cages to satisfy a political agenda that has no legitimacy whatsoever.”

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