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

Legal Aid Calls on Governor Hochul to Take Action on Hundreds of Pending Clemency Applications

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** today [called](#) on Governor Kathy Hochul to act on the many clemency applications (applications for both sentence commutations and pardons) currently pending with her office in order to offer a well-deserved second chance for incarcerated New Yorkers and individuals with conviction records.

Since taking office last year, Hochul has used her commutation powers [sparingly](#) despite widespread calls from public defenders, criminal legal system advocates and others to grant relief for the many individuals who have proven through their immense dedication to self-improvement that they have learned from their past mistakes.

“There are currently hundreds of individuals throughout New York who are suffering unjustly harsh consequences due to past convictions,” said **Ted Hausman, supervising attorney with the Criminal Appeals Bureau at The Legal Aid Society**. “Many were sentenced to extreme sentences as adolescents, and many are growing old in prison and should be given a chance to reunite with their families and communities. These individuals, a disproportionate number of whom are people of color, have gone above and beyond to prove they are deserving of a second chance — a chance that Governor Hochul has the power to provide for them. We urge Governor Hochul to not define these individuals by one low moment in their lives and take full advantage of her commutation and pardon powers before the year’s end.”

Some examples of individuals for whom the Governor should immediately act to provide relief:

Victor Clemente

Mr. Clemente, a 69-year-old man imprisoned for a second-degree murder he committed in 1996, is a man for whom a second chance will not be squandered. Mr. Clemente continues to express the deepest regret and remorse for his past actions, and his lifetime of good works before and after the incident — including the 18 years he spent working in healthcare prior to his incarceration — demonstrate that his conduct decades ago was a singular aberration.

Since his incarceration, Mr. Clemente has dedicated himself to self-improvement, as evidenced by his exemplary disciplinary and programmatic records. Mr. Clemente had no criminal record whatsoever prior to his arrest, and letters from his family, friends, and colleagues submitted during his trial demonstrate that he is a loving father and husband, an exceptional employee, and a valued friend.

Upon his release, Mr. Clemente is committed to returning to his native country of the Philippines, where he has a network of close family members ready to support him, to serve his community by volunteering for the Red Cross.

Darr Williams

Darr Williams, age 53, has served 32 years in prison for his role in a double shooting, which was instigated by an older man. Mr. Williams, who was 20 years old at the time of the crime, has taken full responsibility for his conduct and expressed deep remorse for the harm caused by his actions.

Mr. Williams has compiled an extraordinary record of achievements in prison, including earning his GED, associate degree, and coursework for a bachelor's degree that he continues to pursue while incarcerated.

For more than 9 years, Mr. Williams has served as the program director for the Prisoner for A.I.D.S. Counseling and Education program ("PACE"), where he supervises fourteen prisoner-facilitators and creates programming for the group, which provides education, counseling, and support to incarcerated men on the health risks of HIV and A.I.D.S. within the prison population.

He has also counseled well over 7000 at-risk youth through the Youth Assistance Program ("YAP"), where he is able to draw from both his own experience and what he has learned by completing extensive training programs. Mr. Williams has close relationships with his family members, including his younger sister, his son, and his daughter, as well as numerous nieces and nephews, who are ready to welcome him home.

Michael Williams

Mr. Williams is currently serving a 20-year sentence for drug possession and sale. These crimes occurred on two days in 2010 when Mr. Williams was a young man. Mr. Williams, who takes full responsibility for his actions, has spent the past decade growing as an individual and is more than ready to return to his family and his community. Strong mitigating factors surrounding Mr. Williams' case, as well as his record during his incarceration and his solid release plans, present an excellent opportunity for the Governor to exercise her executive clemency power by commuting Mr. Williams' harsh and excessive sentence.

Rudy Roa

In January 1992, Rudy Roa committed a robbery in Manhattan that turned fatal, causing the death of one individual and injuring another. At the time of the robbery, Mr. Roa was 20 years old and struggling to provide for his wife and two young children. His son was born the prior year, and mounting financial pressure resigned Mr. Roa to turn to drugs and weapons sales to try to make ends meet. Mr. Roa takes full responsibility for his actions that night and is deeply remorseful for the harm he caused.

Mr. Roa has dedicated himself to reflection and self-improvement to ensure that he is never again the source of such harm, but rather a catalyst of positive change in his community. For the past 30 years, Mr. Roa has spent his time in prison expanding his horizons through vocational programs and higher education — not only has he earned his GED, and an associate's degree from Nyack College, but he is now pursuing a bachelor's degree.

In addition to nurturing his own personal growth, Mr. Roa has found purpose in uplifting the community around him. He is a devoted member of the Protestant congregation, and he has worked to advocate for his fellow prisoners as a law library clerk.

Letters of support describe Mr. Roa's generosity and empathy as a friend, husband, father, and grandfather. Mr. Roa's rehabilitation over the past three decades has prepared him to thrive after his release. Additionally, Mr. Roa's excellent disciplinary and programming record illustrates his commitment to rehabilitation, and his strong re-entry plan demonstrates his aspirations to build a meaningful life outside of prison.

John Katehis

John Katehis, a victim of sustained childhood abuse, has been incarcerated since age 16. After his arrest and conviction in Brooklyn for second-degree murder – for which he received an indeterminate sentence of 25 years to life in prison – Mr. Katehis embarked on a now nearly 15-year path to redemption, embracing programs provided by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision and other opportunities created by other individuals with whom he has been incarcerated.

Mr. Katehis, now age 31, is not the troubled adolescent he once was. His extraordinary range of academic, social, vocational and personal accomplishments serves as an example of successful rehabilitation for the Sing Sing Correctional Facility community. A loving, supportive family and prospective employers eagerly await Mr. Katehis' release. His family – including Hana Katehis, his wife of seven years – centers a stable support system that will assist Mr. Katehis financially and emotionally on his release.

Mr. Katehis' academic and vocational achievements in prison have opened multiple doors for him in the outside world: among other things, Mr. Katehis has reasonable assurance of employment on his release. He also maintains a strong interest in paying his accomplishments forward by continuing to work with organizations within Sing Sing to positively affect other incarcerated individuals.

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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