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Contact:

Redmond Haskins  
929.441.2384  
[rhaskins@legal-aid.org](mailto:rhaskins@legal-aid.org)

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***NYC Public Defenders, Immigrant Advocate Groups Urge Federal Court to Dismiss Trump Admin Lawsuit Targeting New York's Immigrant Protections***

***Amicus Brief Defends New York's Landmark Protect Our Courts Act and Other Safeguards for Immigrant Communities***

(NEW YORK, NY) — The Legal Aid Society, The Immigrant Defense Project, Sanctuary for Families, New York County Defender Services, LatinoJustice PRLDEF, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, Make the Road New York, and Brooklyn Defender Services filed an [amicus brief](#) in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York [urging dismissal](#) of the Trump Administration's lawsuit challenging New York's Protect Our Courts Act (POCA) and two Executive Orders that safeguard immigrant communities across the state.

The brief presents the constitutional, legal, and public safety imperatives behind New York State's efforts to protect immigrants from civil immigration arrests at courthouses and in state buildings, and to limit information-sharing between state employees and federal immigration authorities.

The amici argue that these state laws and policies fall squarely within New York's authority to govern its own institutions, protect public health and safety, and ensure access to justice for all residents.

"These laws were enacted during the first Trump Administration in direct response to ICE's predatory presence at New York state courthouses and other state facilities, which spread fear, and denied New Yorkers' access to the courts, and to state programs, benefits, and services," said **Meghna Philip, Director of the Special Litigation Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. "New York has a constitutional duty to ensure equal access to justice, and to benefits and services, for all New Yorkers — regardless of immigration status — and that principle was at the heart of both POCA and these executive orders. The second Trump Administration has openly targeted sanctuary jurisdictions. This lawsuit is another example of that political attack, and it should be dismissed."

"When ICE targets courthouses, it silences victims, scares witnesses, and keeps our community from seeking justice or vital services," said **Rex Chen, Supervising Counsel for Immigrant Rights, LatinoJustice PRLDEF**. "These protections are critical to keeping all New Yorkers safe. The Justice Department is sacrificing public safety just to score points by attacking immigrants. Not only is this wrong-headed, our legal brief

explains why it is illegal. LatinoJustice will continue to work to ensure the rights of our communities are safeguarded.”

“New Yorkers were unequivocal in our call to keep ICE out of our courts to protect the rights of all our community members to due process, and our legislature took the necessary action,” said **Yasmine Farhang, Executive Director of the Immigrant Defense Project**. “In our state courts, the stakes are high— judges are determining whether to deprive community members of their liberty, separate them from their families, or strip them of their livelihoods. ICE’s tactic of snatching people in and around state courts was unjust and instilled fear in so many people. The Protect Our Courts Act changed the landscape for the better and we strongly join the call to urge this lawsuit be dismissed.”

“The Protect Our Courts Act ensures New Yorkers can access the courts in a range of proceedings, from responding to summons to maintaining custody of their children, and codifies the long-standing privilege against civil arrests in courthouses,” said **Lucas Marquez, Director of Civil Rights and Law Reform at Brooklyn Defenders**. “We urge the Court to dismiss the lawsuit in full.”

"Like so many of Trump’s directives and lawsuits, this latest challenge is meant to intimidate and silence immigrant communities,” said **Piyali Basak, Managing Director of Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem**. “It is not only unlawful — it devalues the dignity and humanity of immigrant New Yorkers, who are the very fabric of this city. We will not allow these attacks to strip our neighbors of their rights. We will continue to fight to ensure immigrant communities can safely access the courts, programs, benefits, and services they are entitled to under the law.”

**Natalia Aristizabal, Deputy Director of Make the Road New York**, said, “The Protect Our Courts Act, championed by New Yorkers, remains a critical victory for immigrant communities across our state. The law puts a halt to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) presence and its abusive tactics that instill fear and hinder immigrants from full equal access to our courts. The Trump administration’s lawsuit against this law is a dangerous escalation of ICE trying to seek every tool at its disposal to tear apart immigrant families, and kidnap our people by stalking them in and around courthouses. We stand firmly behind the Protect Our Courts Act because it will protect and safeguard communities from ICE’s harmful and unjust practices at the courts, while guaranteeing equal and safe access to New York State courts for all.”

## **Background**

Executive Orders 170 and 170.1, issued in 2017 and 2018, restrict warrantless civil arrests in New York State buildings and limit state employee cooperation with federal immigration enforcement. POCA, signed into law in 2020, prohibits civil immigration arrests in and around New York State courthouses without a judicial warrant.

As detailed in the brief, the return of aggressive ICE enforcement in 2025 — including surveillance and arrests at courthouses and state facilities — has once again chilled immigrant participation in the justice system, requiring legal service providers to help their clients navigate an atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

The brief also underscores the public health and safety benefits of these policies. Studies show that when immigrants fear enforcement, they are less likely to appear in court to vindicate their rights, report crimes, or access critical services like healthcare and nutrition assistance — even when legally eligible. By building trust, New York’s laws help ensure safer communities and healthier outcomes for all residents.

The amici include legal service organizations collectively representing thousands of low-income New Yorkers, including many immigrants and their families.

*The Legal Aid Society is a nonprofit organization that exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For nearly 150 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.*

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