

The Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senate Majority Leader
188 State Street
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblymember Carl E. Heastie
New York Assembly Speaker
Carl E. Heastie
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Hochul, Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie:

We, the undersigned community organizations, legal service providers and public defender offices, faith-based organizations, civil and immigrant rights groups, clinics, and unions urge you to take immediate action to protect New Yorkers from the harms of mass deportations. President-elect Donald Trump has promised a return to aggressive and chaotic immigration enforcement, which will separate New York families, destabilize our communities, and strain state resources. As organizations that were on the front lines during the first Trump Administration, we know that the upcoming waves of raids, detentions, and deportations will take an immeasurable toll on all New Yorkers. Time is of the essence to ensure our state laws are as robust as possible to prevent these harms.

Our communities know what they need. At least four legislative proposals have long been pending in New York State and would strengthen protections against mass deportations:

New York For All (S.987 Gounardes / A.5686 Reyes)

Immigrant New Yorkers make invaluable contributions to our communities, economy, and culture. Yet many of New York's 4.4 million foreign-born residents live in fear of being arrested, detained, and deported by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). When federal agencies build their deportation infrastructure on the backs of state and local authorities, it sends a message to immigrants that participating in local government programs or even sending a child to school could be the first step on a path to deportation.

The New York For All Act follows the lead of other states and cities by drawing sensible limits between local government and immigration enforcement. The bill would prohibit the use of government resources for immigration enforcement, restrict the disclosure of sensitive information to ICE and CBP, prohibit 287(g) agreements, and make clear that

ICE cannot access non-public areas of government property without a judicial warrant. Clear reporting requirements and oversight by the New York Attorney General would help ensure that the rules are actually followed. This legislation is critical to protecting the rights of New Yorkers who fear that they or a loved one will be swept into a sprawling mass deportation scheme.

Dignity Not Detention (S306 Salazar / A4354 Reyes)

On any given night, hundreds of New Yorkers are detained by ICE in local jails across the state. They are subjected to inhumane conditions and separated from their families and communities. Although New York became a leader in banning private prisons in the criminal legal system in 2007, it is falling behind when it comes to protecting immigrant New Yorkers. Several counties in New York profit from immigration detention and ICE is actively seeking to expand detention in New York.

The Dignity Not Detention Act gets New York out of the business of immigration detention. It prohibits NY governmental entities from entering into, renewing, or continuing contracts to detain immigrants for deportation, and prohibits private prisons from detaining immigrants in the state. This legislation is critical to protecting the state from detention camps and ensuring that New York is not complicit in the detention of its residents.

Access to Representation Act (S999A Hoyman-Sigal / A170A Cruz)

Immigrant New Yorkers who cannot afford to hire an attorney are currently forced to represent themselves in court—regardless of age or language abilities — against trained government attorneys. Studies show that immigrants with legal representation are up to 10.5 times more likely to win their right to remain in the United States, making it more important than ever for legislative leaders to fund legal services and help keep immigrant families intact.

The Access to Representation Act establishes a right to counsel in immigration court, extending the same protections already available in criminal proceedings. It would guarantee that any New Yorker facing deportation has a right to an attorney. This legislation is critical to ensuring due process for New Yorkers who are targeted by mass deportations.

Clemency Justice Act (S.7667 Myrie / A.9145 Solages)

One of the few tools that can prevent the deportation of our longtime community members is clemency. By granting a pardon, the Governor can protect immigrants and their families and communities from the layers of harm – financial, social, and mental – that stem from deportation. However, the clemency process lacks transparency and is too rarely utilized. Many immigrant New Yorkers have been seeking a pardon for several years, and their time is now running out.

The Clemency Justice Act would increase transparency by establishing a system for processing and evaluating clemency applications, which would include regular notice and an opportunity to signify “urgent need.” It would also require the Governor to provide regular reports on clemency applications to the legislature and the public. This legislation is critical to ensuring more robust consideration of clemency as a tool to fight unjust deportation.

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These proposals reflect years of advocacy and expertise within our communities. We look forward to your robust action so that we may continue to fight for the rights of every New Yorker.

Sincerely,

32BJ SEIU
ADELANTE Student Voices
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Advocates for Justice
Afghans For A Better Tomorrow
African Services Committee
Alianza Agrícola
The Ali Forney Center
APNA Brooklyn Community Center
Appellate Advocates
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
Beacon Prison Rides
Bethlehem NY Indivisible
The Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI)
Black Diaspora Liberty Initiative (BDLI)
Black Men Build
The Bronx Defenders
Brooklyn Law School Safe Harbor Project
Building Bridges Brookhaven
Cabrini Immigrant Services of NYC
Capital District Border Watch
Carroll Gardens Association
Catholic Migration Services
Center for Community Alternatives
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Employment Opportunities
Central American Refugee Center (CARECEN-NY)

Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC)
Church Women United in New York State
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Clemency Coalition of New York
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
Co-Counsel NYC
Columbia County Sanctuary Movement
The Corridor Counts, Inc.
Council on American-Islamic Relations, New York (CAIR-NY)
Critical Resistance: New York City Chapter
Ctrl Alt Del Consulting
CURE - The Coalition For Understanding Racism Through Education
Detention Watch Network
The Door - A Center of Alternatives, Inc.
ERASE Racism
Elders and Allies Free the People ROC
Elmont Cultural Center
Emerald Isle Immigration Center
Empire Justice Center
Envision Freedom Fund
Equality New York
Equity Advocates
Erie County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project
Feeding New York State
Food Bank of the Southern Tier
For the Many
Freedom To Thrive
Greater Rochester Community of Churches
#HALTsolitary Campaign
Hope's Door
Hudson Valley Strong - Indivisible
Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE)
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigration Law & Justice New York
Indivisible New Rochelle
Indivisible Scarsdale
The Interfaith Center of New York
Irvington Activists
Jericho Road Community Health Center
Jewish Voice for Peace - NYC

Jews For Racial & Economic Justice
Justice for Migrant Families WNY
Kingsbridge Heights Community Center
La Colmena
Larchmont/Mamaroneck Indivisible
Latino U College Access
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Legal Action Center
Legal Aid Society of Nassau County
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
Lions Club of Mamaroneck
Long Island Connections
Long Island Housing Services, Inc.
Long Island Language Advocates Coalition
Long Island Latino Teachers Association
Long Island Progressive Coalition
Make the Road New York
Mixteca Organization, Inc.
Mosaico NY
Muslim Community Network
NAMI Huntington
National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)
Neighbors Link
NEW Pride Agenda
New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)
New York Communities for Change
New York County Defender Services
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
New York Legal Assistance Group
New York State Youth Leadership Council
Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition
NY4ALL
NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic of Washington Square Legal Services, Inc.
Pachamama Alliance of the Rochester Area
The Prisoners' Brain Trust
Rural Migrant Ministry
Shared Humanity USA
Showing Up for Racial Justice NYC
Showing Up for Racial Justice Buffalo

Sisters of Charity of New York
Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project
Synagogue Coalition on the Refugee and Immigration Crisis
Temple Am Echad
The STEM Alliance
Tompkins County Food Policy Council
Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock
United Community Center of Westchester, Inc.
Unlocal
Vera Institute of Justice
Volunteers of Legal Service
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Westchester Citizen Therapists Indivisible
Westchester for Change
Westchester Jewish Center Social Justice Action Committee
Woodside On The Move, Inc.
Worker Justice Center of New York
Workers' Center of Central New York
Working Families Party of Nassau County
Workplace Project
Yonkers Sanctuary Movement
Young Invincibles

Signatories as of December 9, 2024