

Governor Cuomo, Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie,

January 1st was a historic day that ushered in pretrial reforms that will make New York fairer and more just. These reforms are a huge step forward towards eliminating the race- and wealth-based detention that has plagued New York for decades. The new laws will dramatically expand pretrial liberty and reduce jail populations and taxpayer spending on jails across the state.

These reforms are the result of years of work by directly impacted people, advocates, faith leaders, and lawmakers to address the rampant injustices of New York's pretrial system. Prior to these reforms, tens of thousands of people across the state languished in jail each year simply because they were too poor to afford bail and forced to accept plea deals without ever seeing the evidence in their cases. People routinely lost their homes, jobs, and custody of their children because of the state's broken and racist pretrial laws. The laws passed by the legislature and signed into law by the Governor will go a long way towards righting these wrongs.

Less than a week after these historic reforms were implemented, some regressive district attorneys and legislators are calling to reverse your great work and return to a pretrial system that will continue to prey on Black, Brown, and low-income communities. By referring to the new bail reforms as a "get-out-of-jail-free card," these fear-mongers are trying to expand a two-tiered system of justice in which the wealthy pay bail and go home and poor people languish in jail.

Others are clamoring for the introduction of dangerousness to our bail statute, an approach that would exacerbate racial disparities and that New York has rightfully rejected for half a century. This small but vocal group is stoking fear by spreading misinformation about a small number of cases to the media rather than celebrating the fact that thousands of people are reuniting with their families, returning to work, and making their communities stronger.

Pretrial reform is about fighting for a fairer, more just New York. Make no mistake – retreating from bail reform less than a week after it goes into effect because of predictable fearmongering will be a retreat from New York's position as a leader in criminal justice reform and will embolden opponents who prefer the status quo. Each of you fought hard to secure these important reforms, and tens of thousands of New Yorkers are and will continue benefiting from them. We are urging you to stand firm and stop any attempts to roll back New York's historic pretrial reforms.

Sincerely,

Action Together Rochester  
Alliance for Quality Education  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action  
Brooklyn Community Bail Fund  
Brooklyn Defender Services  
Broome Tioga Green Party  
Center For Community Alternatives  
Citizen Action New York

Civil Rights Corps  
College & Community Fellowship  
Color Of Change  
Correctional Association of New York  
Drug Policy Alliance  
Empire State Indivisible  
End New Jim Crow Action Network (ENJAN)  
Enough Is Enough  
Federal Defenders of New York  
First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn  
FWD.us  
Harm Reduction Coalition  
Human Rights Watch  
Immigrant Defense Project  
Innocence Project  
Irvington Activists  
John Brown Lives!  
JustLeadershipUSA  
Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS  
LatinoJustice PRLDEF  
Legal Aid Society  
Long Island Progressive Coalition  
Make the Road New York  
New Hour for Women & Children LI  
New York Civil Liberties Union  
New York Communities for Change  
New York County Defender Services  
New York State Defenders Association, Inc.  
New York Working Families  
Returning Citizens Society  
Rikers Debate Project  
Rise Up Kingston  
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights  
ROCitizen  
Showing Up For Racial Justice (SURJ NYC)  
Southern Tier AIDS Program  
Students for Sensible Drug Policy  
SURJ ROC  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
The Bronx Defenders  
The Bronx Freedom Fund  
The Osborne Association  
Truth Pharm  
Ulster People for Justice & Democracy

Uri L'Tzedek  
VOCAL  
WESPAC Foundation  
Westchester Children's Association  
Westchester Coalition for Police Reform  
Westchester for Change  
Westchester MLK Institute for Nonviolence  
Worth Rises  
Youth Represent