

January 6, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

The time has come to finally prioritize police accountability and transparency in New York State. Recent cases of police misconduct and the ongoing systemic lack of accountability when police harm people make it clear that New York should join the majority of other states in increasing transparency of police misconduct records.

The sixty-four organizations below, from across this state call on you to immediately prioritize the full statewide repeal of New York's counterproductive police secrecy law: NYS CRL 50-a ("50-a").

We fully reject all calls for partial repeal or modification, as floated by the City of New York, or any proposal that would continue to obstruct the public and media's timely access to important misconduct and discipline records across New York State. Mere tweaks to a law designed to shield police misconduct from public transparency will be harmful and counterproductive.

Governor, please join us in declaring that the time is now for meaningful police transparency and accountability.

New York has one of the most backwards laws in the country when it comes to obstructing the public's access to police records. From NYC to [Long Island](#) to [Rochester](#), police departments across New York State are plagued with a disturbing degree of secrecy surrounding officer misconduct.

New York is one of only two states with laws that *specifically* make police "personnel records" confidential. New York is arguably the worst in the nation when it comes to police secrecy. This weakens the public's trust in government and harms those impacted by police violence and their families by denying them basic information regarding their respective cases.

Even in the case of Eric Garner where NYPD Officer Pantaleo was found guilty for using a prohibited chokehold that resulted in the death of Garner, information about Pantaleo's past misconduct and the lack of meaningful discipline was only made public because it was leaked to the media. Additionally, information regarding [misconduct by other officers involved in Eric Garner's death and related disciplinary investigations by the New York Police Department has remained secret.](#)

In the case of Michael Reynolds, an NYPD officer who resigned last week following outrage regarding the July 2018 incident in which he broke into Conese Halliburton's home in Nashville and violently threatened her family (including the use of racial slurs), the [NYPD has cited 50-a in their refusal to release information](#) regarding the other NYPD police officer involved in this racist incident.

Governor Cuomo, you have a unique opportunity to catch New York up to the rest of the country on the issue of police transparency and accountability. **We urge you to support a full statewide repeal of 50-a** in your State of the State address and work with the legislature to end officially sanctioned secrecy for police misconduct.

Sincerely,

Communities United for Police Reform
The Arab American Association of New York
Arc of Justice
BetaNYC
Bronx Defenders
Bronx Freedom Fund
Brooklyn Defender Services
Brooklyn Movement Center
Brooklyn NAACP
Brotherhood/SisterSol
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Law and Social Justice at Medgar Evers College, at The City University of New York
Center for Popular Democracy
Citizen Action of New York
Citizens Union of the City of New York
ColorOfChange
Common Cause
Community Voices Heard
Correctional Association of New York
Defending Rights & Dissent
End the New Jim Crow Action Network Poughkeepsie
Enough is Enough Rochester
Faith In New York
FIERCE
The Gathering for Justice/Justice League NYC
Girls for Gender Equity
Harm Reduction Coalition
Innocence Project
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice
JustLeadershipUSA

Justice Committee
Katal Center for Health, Equity & Justice
Lambda Legal
LatinoJustice
Legal Aid Society
Long Island Progressive Coalition
Make the Road New York
Malcolm X Grassroots Movement
Million Hoodies
MomsRising
NAACP New York State Conference
National Domestic Workers Alliance
New Kings Democrats
New York Civil Liberties Union
New York Communities for Change
New York County Defender Services
New York Working Families Party
North Star Fund
Parole Preparation Project
Public Science Project
Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP) Campaign
Rise Up Kingston
Rockaway Youth Task Force
STRONG Youth
Showing Up for Racial Justice - NYC
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction
Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center
Take On Hate
VOCAL-NY
We Dream in Black
WESPAC
The Westchester Coalition for Police Reform (WCPR)
WITNESS
Youth Represent