



February 12, 2019

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
28 Wells Avenue, Building #3  
Yonkers, NY 10701

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie  
1446 East Gun Hill Road  
Bronx, NY 10469

**Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie and members of the New York State Legislature:**

Historically, low-income communities of color have been subject to rampant criminalization and mistreatment by police and law enforcement. We continue to see this disturbing trend play out across our state. From Buffalo to New York City, racial disparities in policing are still widely seen and felt.

The 88 organizations signing this letter represent tens of thousands of New Yorkers, including many families of New Yorkers who have been killed by police and communities that have been criminalized, abused and whose rights have been violated by discriminatory and abusive policing. With a new Democratic governing majority in Albany, you have an opportunity to create a safer New York for everyone, and help end abusive and discriminatory policing.

To achieve those goals, we urge you to pass the **Safer New York Act**– a comprehensive package of legislation that will increase police transparency and accountability throughout New York state, and help build safer communities for all New Yorkers. The **Safer New York Act** includes **passing the PoliceSTAT Act (A-Lentol/S1830A-Hoylman), repealing 50-a (A2513-O'Donnell), strengthening and codifying the Special Prosecutor Executive Order (A1601-Perry/S2574-Bailey), reducing Unnecessary Arrests (A4053-Aubry/S2571-Bailey) and passing the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (A1617-Peoples-Stokes/S1527-Krueger).**

Many of our organizations are in Albany today to lobby for the **Safer New York Act** – a much-needed legislative package that has broad and growing support among New Yorkers, including those we represent.

Below is an overview of what each of the bills in the **Safer New York Act** will do:

**Police Statistics & Transparency (STAT) Act (A-Lentol/S1830A-Hoylman)** would require police departments across the state to record and report comprehensive demographic and geographic data on deaths and killings occurring during law enforcement activity as well as enforcement of low-level offenses (including violations and misdemeanors.) to improve transparency and help address aggressive and selective police enforcement.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Endorsed in concept by President Obama's Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

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**Repeal of NYS CRL, Section 50-a (A2513-O'Donnell).** 50-a is a state statute that is used to keep police misconduct and discipline secret. NYS is arguably the least transparent in the nation when it comes to information about police misconduct. 50-a prevents public disclosure of "personnel records" and is used statewide to shield abusive officers and hide the failure of police departments to hold officers accountable for egregious actions, including police brutality, sexual misconduct, lying in official capacities, and other abuse. A repeal of 50-a is necessary to provide much needed transparency on police misconduct and discipline in New York State, and a meaningful check on police abuse, whether by individual officers or entire departments.

**Enact Special Prosecutor Legislation (A1601-Perry/S2574-Bailey) to codify and strengthen Executive Order 147.** This legislation provides the Attorney General's office with jurisdiction in all cases of police killings and deaths in police custody, memorializing and strengthening EO147. It would help to ensure fair and thorough investigations and, when warranted, effective prosecutions in tragic incidents that the criminal justice system has historically failed to address. It would help to aid New York families in securing justice for the unjust deaths of their loved ones at the hands of police or in police custody, and advance police accountability and equal justice.

**Reduce Unnecessary Arrests for non-criminal, minor offenses (A4053-Aubry/S2571-Bailey).** This legislation would help end harmful and needless arrests for low-level, ticketable offenses. These arrests can carry significant social and public costs to taxpayers, and can jeopardize employment opportunities, immigration status, and access to health, housing, and other programs for those subjected to these unnecessary arrests. By making the law enforcement action commensurate with the offense, this legislation can help reduce financial resources spent on minor infractions, and increase resources available for meaningful safety measures for all New Yorkers.

**End Marijuana Prohibition by passing the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (A1617-Peoples-Stokes/S1527 -Krueger)** which will remove marijuana from consideration under the Controlled Substances Act, and will authorize the personal use and cultivation of marijuana. Marijuana prohibition has failed in its stated goal of stopping or curbing marijuana use across New York State. Instead, the enforcement of marijuana statutes has been used to target and criminalize communities of color. The Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) will help address the discriminatory enforcement of marijuana prohibition statutes.

Passage of the **Safer New York Act** should be one of your top priorities for this legislative session.

Now is the time for real progressive leadership in Albany that will ensure police departments across our state become more transparent and accountable to all New Yorkers.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Communities United for Police Reform  
1199 SEIU-UHWE  
Ali Forney Center

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Alliance for Education Justice  
Alliance for Quality Education  
Arc of Justice  
Bronx Defenders  
Bronx Freedom Fund  
Brooklyn Anti-Gentrification Network  
Brooklyn Defender Services  
Brooklyn Movement Center  
Brotherhood/SisterSol  
Center for Constitutional Rights  
Citizen Action of New York  
Clergy Campaign for Social & Economic Justice  
Coalition for Educational Justice  
Color of Change  
Community Change  
Damayan Migrant Workers Association  
Defending Rights & Dissent  
Drug Policy Alliance  
DRUM- Desis Rising Up & Moving  
Enough is Enough Rochester  
Equality for Flatbush  
Faith In New York  
FIERCE  
Girls for Gender Equity  
Global Action Project  
Harm Reduction Coalition  
Hetrick-Martin Institute  
Immigrant Defense Project  
Jewish Voice for Peace - New York City  
Jews for Racial & Economic Justice  
Justice Committee  
JustLeadershipUSA  
Kairos Center for Rights, Religions, and Human Rights at Union Theological Seminary  
Katal Center for Health, Equity & Justice  
LatinoJustice  
Law@theMargins  
Legal Action Center  
Legal Aid Society  
LGBT Faith Leaders of African Descent  
Make the Road New York  
Malcolm X Grassroots Movement  
Metropolitan Community Church of New York  
Million Hoodies  
MinKwon Center for Community Action  
MomsRising  
MPower Action  
NAACP NEW YORK STATE CONFERENCE  
National Domestic Workers Alliance

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New Kings Democrats  
New York City Anti-Violence Project  
New York Civil Liberties Union  
New York Communities for Change  
New York Immigration Coalition  
New York Metro Area Postal Union, APWU  
North Star Fund  
Northern Manhattan Coalition for Immigrant Rights  
NY Working Families  
NYC-Democratic Socialists of America  
Picture The Homeless  
Public Science Project  
Rise Up Kingston  
Rockaway Youth Task Force  
Showing Up for Racial Justice - NYC  
South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship And Training (SAFEST)  
St. Ann's Corner of Harm Reduction  
Street Vendor Project, Urban Justice Center  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Take On Hate  
Tarab NYC  
The Arab American Association of New York  
The Black Institute  
The Center for Popular Democracy  
The Gathering for Justice/Justice League NYC  
The National Panhellenic Council of NYC, Inc  
The Policing and Social Justice Project at Brooklyn College  
Transgender Law Center  
Transportation Alternatives  
Trinity Lutheran Church  
UAW Local 2325 - Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (AFL-CIO)  
Voices of Community Activists and Leaders (VOCAL-NY)  
War Resisters League  
We Dream in Black  
WESPAC Foundation  
Westchester Coalition for Police Reform  
Youth Represent

cc:

Governor Andrew Cuomo  
Assemblymember Tremaine Wright, Chair of Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative  
Caucus  
Assemblymember Latrice Walker and Senator Luis Sepulveda, Chairs of the Criminal Justice  
Subcommittee for BPHA Caucus