



**IMMIGRANT  
DEFENSE  
PROJECT**

**PARDON**NY  
IMMIGRANT CLEMENCY PROJECT

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Hochul Pardons 16 New Yorkers—7 Facing Harsh Immigration Consequences and Grants 4 Commutations**

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**ALBANY, NY** – Today, Governor Kathy Hochul granted 16 pardons, 7 of those to immigrants who are deeply rooted in their communities in New York, yet face immigration impacts because of their convictions. We applaud the Governor's announcements to grant these pardons and to commute the sentences of 4 others.

One of the pardon recipients is Kayode Oseni, a former lawful permanent resident who first came to the United States at the age of six in 1996 from Nigeria having been included on his parents' successful asylum application. Mr. Oseni feared being permanently separated from his wife and two-year old son once he became deportable after serving his sentence. Mr. Oseni earned numerous degrees, including an Associates in Science from LaGuardia Community College and a Bachelor's Degree in June 2022 from Baruch College. The pardon makes Kayode eligible to pursue relief and remain in the U.S. without the threat of deportation.

Kayode Oseni said, "First and foremost, I want to thank God. With prayer, anything is possible. I also want to thank my family for being supportive during this process. I would like to thank Mia Unger with the Legal Aid Society and Stacy Caplow with the Brooklyn Law School for their tireless efforts in advocating for me. Importantly, I want to send a special thank you to Governor Hochul and the Executive Clemency Bureau for granting our pardon request and making it possible for me to stay with my family. In addition, I am grateful to the Immigrant Defense Project for doing great work in helping people like myself receive a second chance."

Another pardon recipient is Warren Stewart, a longtime lawful permanent resident who migrated to the U.S. from Jamaica at the age of 14, and has lived in New York ever since. Mr. Stewart faced the threat of mandatory deportation and separation from his mother, half-brother, partner, and his partner's four children—all of whom are U.S. citizens. Mr. Stewart earned his GED in 2021, and since 2022, he has been a proud member of Iron Workers Local 46 Metallic Lathers. The pardon will remove the basis for Mr. Stewart's deportability and put him on a path to citizenship.

Warren Stewart said, "I am so grateful to Governor Hochul for granting me a pardon for my actions in 2006, which were the biggest regret and mistake of my life. Over the past sixteen years, I have grown so much and done everything I can to live a good life. I have focused on church, my family, my health, my job, and my union. Knowing that I no longer have to live in fear of being deported is a blessing. I am committed to continuing to support my family and community, moving ahead in my career, and becoming a citizen. Thank you so much to the many unions, organizations, and workers who supported my pardon, especially my own union: Iron Workers



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Local 46. My family is so happy because now they know I will be able to remain in the United States, and that we will be able to stay together."

Thousands of New Yorkers are still waiting on clemency decisions from the Governor and will remain separated from their families and communities this holiday season. In 2021, the Governor committed to dedicating additional resources to be able to grant clemency not just once a year, but on a rolling basis throughout the year and to increasing transparency and communication with applicants. Just as we celebrate today's announcement, we will hold the Governor to her commitments. Additionally, the Immigrant Defense Project continues to advocate for passage of the Clemency Justice Act (**S.222/A.155**) which would make New York's clemency process more transparent and accessible.

"Governor Hochul has brought relief to 16 New Yorkers who faced a lifetime of punishment for past convictions and we celebrate this announcement today" **said Linda Flor Brito, Senior Policy & Campaigns Organizer with the Immigrant Defense Project.** "Yet, there are thousands of New Yorkers who continue to live in limbo and face the risk of permanently being separated from their families either by incarceration or deportation who cannot wait another year in hopes to receive clemency relief. The Governor can and should use this power more broadly and consistently to grant clemency throughout the year — showing her willingness to confront our mass deportation and incarceration crisis. The time is now for urgent action and IDP will continue to call on the Governor to follow through on this commitment."

Clemency is a powerful but underused tool that offers recipients the second chance that is routinely denied by the overly punitive criminal and immigration systems. Pardons and commutations are a means for the Governor to address the unfairness of excessive sentences as well as harsh immigration consequences that never expire. For example, the criminal legal system assigns punishment without taking into consideration the long-term consequences it may have on a person's immigration case—creating a double punishment through the deportation machine pipeline. Because ICE can detain and deport someone with a criminal conviction for the rest of their life, regardless of how much time passes, a Governor's pardon helps keep families and communities together and relieves people of the heavy burden a criminal record carries into perpetuity under draconian immigration law. New York's governors have historically granted far fewer clemencies than other states.

In 2018, IDP launched the Immigrant Clemency Project, an initiative to help immigrants access pardons and push back against policies that disempower and marginalize people with criminal histories. The program was piloted in New York State, under PardonNY, and included coordinating advocacy for applications submitted by IDP and partner organizations to the Governor's office on behalf of individuals, most of whom have decade-old convictions. For more information on PardonNY, please visit [ImmigrantPardonProject.com](https://ImmigrantPardonProject.com).

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### **About the Immigrant Defense Project**

The Immigrant Defense Project (IDP) is a New York-based nonprofit that works to secure fairness and justice for immigrants in the racially-biased U.S. criminal and immigration systems. IDP fights to end the current era of unprecedented mass criminalization, detention and deportation through a multi-pronged



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strategy including advocacy, litigation, legal support, community partnerships, and strategic communications. Visit [www.immigrantdefenseproject.org](http://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org) and follow [@ImmDefense](https://twitter.com/ImmDefense).