

Dear Governor Hochul,

We write first to express our deep gratitude to you for granting a pardon to beloved community member Sammy Vatthanavong, allowing him to stay together with his family. Your comments to the *New York Times* powerfully conveyed the urgency of this pardon in the current moment and offered a stinging rebuke to those who demonize our neighbors:

“They’ve paid their debt, and I’ll be damned if I let them be deported to a country where they don’t know a soul. And to those who would demonize them to score political points, I ask: Where is your compassion?”

We strongly support your action here. And in this moment of increasing suffering we implore you to continue to use your clemency power to protect New Yorkers who face family separation - whether due to Trump’s cruel deportation agenda who seek pardons or due to unjust sentences in the New York state prison system who seek commutations. The stroke of your pen can make all the difference for these New Yorkers and their families.

In 2021, you committed to dedicating resources to grant clemency on a rolling basis throughout the year and to increase transparency, accessibility, and communication with applicants, including where there is an urgent need. We are grateful for your clemency grants, such as Sammy’s which granted him the ability to remain with his loved ones in the United States rather than facing deportation, thereby transforming the course of his life and that of his family’s. And there are many others like him at risk - beloved community members, parents and grandparents, survivors of gender-based violence, and every day New Yorkers who are looking for hope.

We are now in a moment of daily abduction of immigrant New Yorkers by masked federal agents who funnel our community members to prolonged detention and, as you noted, deportation without due process including to third countries and far away prisons known for egregious human rights violations. We also are watching the continued ongoing humanitarian crisis in the New York state prison system, where medical neglect and denial of basic dignity must be addressed with urgency.

Our organizations deeply value human rights and we fight for dignity and justice for all New Yorkers. As these harms continue to unfold, you can be the beacon of hope that New Yorkers need in a time where courage and leadership are most needed to protect the most vulnerable. As in Sammy’s case and many others seeking pardons, you are their last line of defense against Trump’s cruel practices, and often the last hope for New Yorkers suffering in the ongoing state prison system humanitarian crisis. We implore you to see in these New Yorkers what others will not: their dignity and humanity.

Sincerely,
Clemency Coalition of New York

Alianza Agrícola
Appellate Advocates
Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund
ASISTA Immigration Assistance
Black Trans Nation
CACF
Center for Appellate Litigation
Center for Community Alternatives
Center for Employment Opportunities
Co-Counsel NYC
DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving
Envision Freedom Fund
Families for Freedom
Freedom Agenda
Freedom To Thrive
Gender Equality New York, Inc.
HALT Solitary Campaign
Heartland Human Care Services
Hello Human
Her Justice
Immigrant Defense Project
Immigration Equality
Indivisible Brooklyn
Jericho Road Community Health Center
Journeys End
Kathryn O. Greenberg Immigration Justice Clinic, Cardozo Law School
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
Law Office of Matthew Bray
Legal Aid Society of Nassau County
Make the Road NY
Mekong NYC
Miss Abbie's Kids
National Action Network NYC Chapter Second Chance Committee
National Day Laborer Organizing Network
National Lawyers Guild - New York City Chapter
National Police Accountability Project
New Hour for Women and Children LI
New York City Anti-Violence Project
New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)
New York County Defender Services
New York Immigration Coalition
New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)
Northwest Bronx Community & Clergy Coalition
NYCAIC
NYC Jericho Movement
NYU Immigrant Rights Clinic

Office of the Appellate Defender
Onondaga County Assigned Counsel Program
Partnership for the Public Good
Release Aging People in Prison
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Rockland Coalition to End the New Jim Crow
Safe Horizon
Sakhi for South Asian Survivors
Sanctuary for Families
Street Vendor Project
Survivors Justice Project
The Bronx Defenders
The Fortune Society
The Korean American Family Service Center
The Legal Aid Society (NYC)
UAW Region 9A
Unlocal
Urban Youth Alliance
Violence Intervention Program
WESPAC Foundation, Inc.
Westchester for Change
WNY Peace Center
Womankind
Women & Justice Project
Worth Rises
32BJ SEIU