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**Immigration Advocates Praise Gov. Cuomo for
Granting Pardons To Seven Individuals Facing Harsh Immigration
Consequences from Long-Ago Offenses**

ALBANY, NY – JULY 25, 2018 – The following is a statement from the **Immigrant Defense Project (IDP)** and attorneys for two of the individuals who received pardons from Governor Andrew Cuomo. The [Governor issued pardons](#) to a total of seven individuals facing the threat of deportation and other immigration consequences as a result of a long-ago offense.

Alisa Wellek, Executive Director of the Immigrant Defense Project, said:

“We commend Governor Cuomo’s ongoing leadership and commitment in standing up for immigrant New Yorkers, especially in the face of the Trump administration waging war on our communities. In granting these pardons, the Governor bestows these individuals with relief from the severe and punitive immigration consequences of a long-ago offense, so they can continue giving back to their communities and families. We look forward to continuing to work with the Governor to reinforce our New York values of fairness, justice, and dignity for all.”

Alina Das, Professor of Clinical Law and Co-Director, Immigrant Rights Clinic, New York University School of Law, said:

“All New Yorkers deserve second chances. We are grateful that Governor Cuomo continues to grant pardons to immigrants to ensure they are not doubly punished by harsh deportation policies. It is the right thing to do, and we are a better state because of it.”

Suchita Mathur, attorney, Immigration Practice at The Bronx Defenders, said:

“Every day, we see how ICE is targeting people with even the most minor history or degree of justice involvement to fuel mass deportations across New York City. We applaud Governor Cuomo for looking beyond New Yorkers’ records of minor criminal offenses to see what we should all see — a critical opportunity to help keep seven families and their communities whole.”

The following are among the seven immigrants who received pardons from Governor Cuomo:

Tamar Samuda, 35, left the U.S. to travel to Jamaica for a family funeral, and upon return was detained by ICE as a result of convictions from 17 years ago. She was released on immigration parole in February 2018, and continues to fight her deportation. Since her convictions for low-level assault and petit larceny, she obtained a GED, and completed medical assistant training, and works in home health care and doctors' offices. She is a single mother of three school-aged children. Samuda was cleared to work as an aide in New York City public school special education, but immigration detention prevented her from doing so.

Frank Barker, 43, is from Barbados and has been crime-free for nine years. He was convicted of criminal possession of stolen property and controlled substances and identity theft from a short-term period of criminal activity resulting from drug addiction. He has been sober for eight years and works as a coordinator at an HIV/AIDS supportive housing provider in New York City, is a certified substance abuse counselor and a community advocate in the Bronx. He is the financial provider for his family including his daughter with special needs.

This round of pardons marks the second time the Governor has granted a significant number of pardons to immigrants. IDP has spearheaded an effort with community-based organizations, law school clinics, public defender offices, and legal service providers to expand access to gubernatorial pardons granted for immigrants in New York State. The initiative has included community outreach and screening, trainings for legal service providers, and coordinating advocacy for dozens of 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, please visit the Immigrant Defense Project at ImmigrantDefenseProject.org.

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

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