

**\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\***

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Media Contacts:

Katie Schaffer, [kschaffer@communityalternatives.org](mailto:kschaffer@communityalternatives.org)

Rachel Cohen, [rachel@immdefense.org](mailto:rachel@immdefense.org)

Emily Whitfield, [ewhitfield@neighborhooddefender.org](mailto:ewhitfield@neighborhooddefender.org)

**NY Advocates, Legislators Launch Justice Agenda to Provide Real  
Community Safety and Rights for All New Yorkers**

**Albany, N.Y.** – New York State legislators joined over 120 human rights and social justice advocates, directly impacted people, legal service providers, and faith leaders across New York State to launch the [Justice Roadmap](#), a legislative agenda designed to address the deeply interconnected harms caused by the criminal legal and immigration systems and build community safety and justice for all New Yorkers.

In a [virtual launch and press conference](#), advocates said they are redoubling their efforts in Albany this year. Advocates celebrated the [Governor's signature of the Clean Slate Act](#), a key Justice Roadmap priority last year. Yet, much work remains to be done to end perpetual punishment for Black, brown and immigrant New Yorkers, especially after Governor Hochul vetoed critical bills to protect the rights and safety of New Yorkers in 2023, including the Challenging Wrongful Convictions Act.

Contrary to the governor's veto as well as [her 2024 State of the State briefing](#), which leans on the failed policies of criminalization, true public safety comes from policies that keep families together and invest in communities.

The [bills in the Justice Roadmap](#) ensure human rights and basic dignity for all New Yorkers and seek to stop criminalization of mental illness, people who use drugs, street vendors and sex workers; to protect the dignity of incarcerated New Yorkers, while expanding opportunities for growth; to reform sentencing laws and promote pathways for safe and fair release from prison; and to end wealth extraction and instead invest in historically underserved communities. Furthermore, we reject xenophobic rhetoric targeting both our long-time and recent immigrant communities and reject any attempts to divide us.

The supporters of the Justice Roadmap stand united in the belief that we must address the root causes of the harms caused by the criminal legal system and immigration system and not be

distracted by long-standing racist rhetoric that further criminalizes Black, brown, and immigrant communities in NY.

"Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) stands united with hundreds of human rights advocacy groups to champion the transformative legislation outlined in the Justice Roadmap. For over 40 years, CCA has supported and built power with people targeted by mass incarceration, criminalization, and community disinvestment across New York State," said **Katie Schaffer, Director of Advocacy and Organizing at the Center for Community Alternatives**. "The Justice Roadmap's dedication to the decarceration of New York's jails, prisons, and detention centers is necessary to create a safer, more just New York where everyone can thrive. The Communities Not Cages legislation, designed to eliminate mandatory minimums, address excessive sentences, and provide additional opportunities for release, is indispensable in our work to support transformation and reunite families."

"We need to start addressing the root causes of the criminalization caused by our criminal legal and immigration system and actively addressing the harms they have caused," said **Linda Flor Brito, Senior Policy and Campaigns Organizer at the Immigrant Defense Project**. "The bills included in the Justice Roadmap piece away at carceral systems that have historically disinvested, incarcerated, and overpoliced Black, brown, Indigenous, and immigrant communities. The New York for All Act and the Clemency Justice Act are two of the bills included in this year's roadmap that challenge the deportation machine and perpetual punishment of New Yorkers. We call on the legislature to prioritize and pass these bills and all of the Justice Roadmap bills to ensure we protect ALL New Yorkers."

"Justice Roadmap takes critical steps towards achieving justice for those that are wrongfully convicted, fairness in how penalties are levied, the release of those for whom it serves no purpose to further incarcerate, and the promotion of a successful return to the community for those that have been imprisoned," said **Patricia Pazner, Attorney-in-Charge, Appellate Advocates**.

"The Justice Road Map is a tangible step toward a more just system, acknowledging the shortcomings of our punitive approach. It sheds light on the disparities in assessments, where urban and rural communities receive risk assessments, while suburban counterparts receive trauma assessments for similar situations. It urges a critical examination of our criminal justice system, aiming to address the contradictions and gaps that persist," said **Lukee Forbes, Executive Director, We Are Revolutionary**.

"We need bold action from the legislature to address the failings of New York's criminal legal and immigration systems. Among those failings is the relentless financial exploitation of incarcerated people and their loved ones through costly prison phone calls, predatory court fees, or other egregious system costs. Passed in five other states, the Connecting Families Act would make communication free across New York prisons to ensure that families with incarcerated loved ones can stay connected without skipping on other needs or going into debt. This must pass this year," said **Bianca Tylek, Executive Director of Worth Rises**.

"For far too long, our immigrant communities have borne the brunt of racist enforcement and legal systems, and are all too often left to navigate these challenges alone. The Justice Roadmap provides legislative protection against the unfair and abusive criminal justice system. Laws such as the Access to Representation Act (guaranteeing legal counsel in immigration court), New York for All (ending collusion with ICE), and the Dignity, not Detention Act (putting an end to immigration detention in the state) are essential to creating justice and opportunity for immigrant New Yorkers. It's essential that our elected officials in Albany expeditiously pass these bills into law this session to establish trust and justice as the pillars of our governance, ensuring freedom for all New Yorkers and fostering stronger, healthier communities," said **Robert Agyemang, Vice President of Advocacy, New York Immigration Coalition.**

"As public defenders, we see every day how the criminal, immigration, and other legal systems perpetuate harm and injustice against Black, Brown, immigrant, and low-income New Yorkers," said **Anya Mukarji-Connolly, Director of Policy & Advocacy at Brooklyn Defenders.** "By following the Justice Roadmap, Albany can reject the punishment paradigm and choose a path towards real community safety. We urge state leaders to enact the entire platform, including bills that decarcerate and end perpetual punishment like the Youth Justice & Opportunities Act, the End Predatory Court Fees Act, and Treatment Not Jail."

"We are proud to stand with our fellow advocates and legislators to launch the Justice Roadmap in 2024, a critical blueprint that will address the deeply interconnected harms caused by the criminal legal and immigration systems and build community safety and justice for all New Yorkers," said **Tina Luongo, chief attorney of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society.** "We call on Governor Hochul to sign these bills into law to ensure human rights and basic dignity for our clients and all New Yorkers."

"As advocates for children, youth, and families across New York, we know that the safest communities are those with the most resources. We stand with allies across the State in support of the Justice Roadmap because it advances a vision for investing in people instead of punishment. We are proud to see youth justice legislation like the Right2RemainSilent youth interrogation bill and the Youth Justice & Opportunities Act are part of the Roadmap's comprehensive platform for true community safety," said **Julia L. Davis, Director of Youth Justice & Child Welfare at the Children's Defense Fund-New York.**

"Envision Freedom's members and their families experience lasting traumatic effects from the criminalization, racism, and inhumane detention perpetuated by the immigration and criminal legal system in New York," said **Anacristina Fonseca, the community organizing and advocacy manager at Envision Freedom Fund.** "The Justice Roadmap offers our representatives a pathway toward the safe and just New York we all deserve. Legislation such as Dignity Not Detention, New York for All, Ending Predatory Court Fees, Access to Representation, and other essential bills outlined in the Roadmap will keep families together, invest in the wellbeing of our communities, and begin to rectify some of the lasting harms caused by decades of criminalizing Black, brown, immigrant and low-income communities."

"Justice does not begin or end at courts and prisons. True justice must be conceived and enacted holistically, in every branch of society, from housing and healthcare, to jobs, to community safety," said **Jay Edidin, Director of Advocacy with the Women's Community Justice Association**. "As an organization dedicated to a holistic model of justice and an end to mass incarceration, we are proud to stand with supporters of the Justice Roadmap in working towards a just and equitable future for all New Yorkers."

"We are proud to join advocates and legislators from across the State of New York to launch the 2024 Justice Roadmap," said **Lori Zeno, Executive Director & Founder of Queens Defenders**. "As we launch a new legislative session, we call on Governor Hochul to build on the momentum started with the signing of the Clean Slate Act last year and sign these essential bills into law to establish a more equitable and just legal system for all New Yorkers."

"CEO is thrilled to be part of the Justice Roadmap Coalition. We believe that it's setting the course that will help make the necessary changes within the criminal justice system," said **Kenneth Edwards, Manager of Leadership & Organizing with CEO**. "The Justice Roadmap is a huge step in the right direction for individuals returning home and will serve as a beacon of light, providing hope to those who are looking to find their way."

"Here in Harlem, we see the disparate impact of economic and racial inequities in our community on a daily basis," said **Alice Fontier, Managing Director of Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem**. "We are happy that Gov. Hochul has signed a bill to study racial justice and reparations, and we hope she will underscore that commitment by abandoning the failed policies of criminalization and adopting the measures set forth in the Justice Roadmap."

"Once again, the impressive collection of bills included in the 2024 Justice Roadmap offers a comprehensive blueprint for creating a fair and humane criminal legal system," said **Stan Germán, Executive Director of New York County Defender Services**. "This year's Roadmap strikes at the very core of our current system's dysfunction: with the Treatment Not Jail Act, our state has an opportunity to decriminalize mental health and addiction, and divert those suffering from underlying mental health and substance use crises out of our jails and prisons. With the Challenging Wrongful Convictions Act, our state has the chance to re-consider the untold wrongful convictions that our racist, abusive justice system exacted in years past. Along with the dozens of other important bills included in this package, our state has the chance to reimagine our current carceral system and make meaningful investments in our communities."

"As public defenders in the Bronx, we know that the policies that affect the communities we serve don't come out of thin air. They are designed by people in power, but often without the people's input - especially those who are most affected by those policies. The Justice Roadmap is the exact opposite: a powerfully detailed vision, by and for New Yorkers, of how to address the harms at the intersection of the criminal and immigration systems, which is critical to achieving true community safety and well-being for all," said **Brittany McCoy, Managing Director of Policy at The Bronx Defenders**. "Anyone who asks what the alternative solutions

are to the Governor's proposals need look no further. We proudly endorse the Justice Roadmap and call on the State Legislature to make it a reality."

The Justice Roadmap provides a comprehensive framework to end New York's most carceral policies that trap our most marginalized neighbors in cycles of criminalization, poverty, and re-incarceration," said **Jared Trujillo, Associate Professor of Law and steering committee member of Decrim NY**. "The criminalization of mental illness, drug use, consensual sex work, and poverty does not make us safer, it only exacerbates underlying issues."

"The Justice Roadmap advances a vision that centers safety and justice for all New Yorkers," said **Kate Rubin, Director of Policy at Youth Represents**. "As advocates who use legal services, policy advocacy, peer education, and other tools to build power and opportunity for Black, Latiné, and other youth of color who the criminal legal system harms the most, we are proud to join with allies across New York to support this comprehensive platform. We look forward to working with the legislature to pass the Youth Justice & Opportunities Act, #Right2RemainSilent, and the other crucial pieces of legislation in the Roadmap."

"Instead of advancing justice and dignity, too often, our criminal and immigration legal systems interplay to separate, isolate, expel, and cage people," said **Naila Awan, co-director of policy at the New York Civil Liberties Union**. "That's why the NYCLU stands with our Justice Roadmap partners in the fight to end the criminalization of poverty, mental illness, drug use and consensual sex work, and begin building supportive systems for marginalized communities to receive the support they deserve."

"The Clemency Coalition is committed to standing in solidarity with our fellow advocates to push our legislative representatives to do what is right and pass all the bills in the Justice Roadmap," said **Fanta Fofana, Co-Coordinator of the Clemency Coalition**. "We are long overdue for the critical policy changes proposed in all of the bills in the Justice Roadmap, including the Clemency Justice Act, and the legislature must pass them to ensure our communities receive the justice we deserve. For decades, our black and brown communities have faced the damages and harms of the criminal legal and immigration systems."

**Socheatta Meng, Clemency Coalition Co-Coordinator** added, "So many families have been torn apart as a result of prolonged incarceration and/or deportation and have been waiting to be reunited. New York's Governor has the power to make thousands of families whole again. With the passage of the Clemency Justice Act, the Governor would be held accountable to New Yorkers seeking clemency by creating a more transparent and accessible clemency process."

"As youth who have experienced the incarceration of a parent, we know firsthand that not having access to in-person visiting can leave us heartbroken. It is our right to speak with, see, and touch our parents. This bill would protect the right to in-person visits so that families across the State will no longer worry that their next visit will be their last. When children don't get to see their parents because in-person visiting is not an option, they may think that their parents do not want to see them. In-person visits help us bond with our parents and make us so happy

because there is nothing like seeing a parent in person. Period. We urge the NYS legislature to See and Support Us by passing the Protect In-Person Visiting Bill immediately. We also support the passage of the Justice Roadmap and thank the Roadmap coalition for seeing and supporting us," said **Osborne Youth Action Council members**.

"The 2024 Justice Roadmap features key legislative steps for making New York safer, more just, and more humane," said **State Senator Julia Salazar**. "Our communities won't enjoy genuine safety, justice, and dignity until we stop locking people up as a cruel replacement for better access to healthcare, mental health care, jobs, and affordable housing. It's long past time to end the criminalization of mental illness, drug use, street vending, and sex work. It's past time to ensure the dignity of incarcerated New Yorkers and support their successful re-entry upon completing their sentences. It's past time to prohibit state spending on immigration detention. And it's past time to end the predatory court fees that incentivize over-policing, prosecution, and incarceration, especially of Black and brown communities. I'm pleased to co-sponsor all of the Roadmap's bills—and to serve as the prime sponsor of so many, including the Fair and Timely Parole Act, the Second Look Act, the Dignity Not Detention Act, the Voting for Incarcerated People Act, the Rights Behind Bars Act, the End Predatory Court Fees Act, and the Gender Identity Respect, Dignity, and Safety Act. I'm proud of the strides we've made already, such as passing the Clean Slate Act. And I'm honored to stand with this impressive coalition to finish the job."

"I join this coalition of public safety and immigrant justice advocates in announcing the launch and calling for the passage of the 2024 Justice Roadmap," said **Assembly Member Jessica González-Rojas**. "For New York to be the progressive and safe state that it can be, we must ensure that we are fighting for the dignity of all New Yorkers, including our low-income communities and communities of color, which have been historically and are currently unjustly surveilled and oppressed by the criminal legal system. When the vision of this coalition is realized, New York will be as safe for all of our neighbors, including street vendors in Corona and sex workers in Jackson Heights, as it is for everyone else."

"The Justice Roadmap is a hands-on, get-stuff-done guide for affirming the dignity and human rights of every New Yorker," said **State Senator Andrew Gounardes**. "We know true public safety comes from policies that invest in our communities and keep families together. My 'New York for All' Act does that by prohibiting local law enforcement from conspiring with ICE and Border Patrol, so parents can attend parent-teacher conferences, go to the grocery, or visit public hospitals without worrying their family will be torn apart by deportation. When we build a New York that unites families instead of dividing them, we build a better New York for all. And with all of us working together, we can get it done."

"In shaping the path toward fairness, the Justice Roadmap speaks volumes about the genuine needs that support our communities' well-being," said **Assembly Member Michaele C. Solages**. "Together with Senator Myrie, I'm championing the Clemency Justice Act – a pivotal component of this collective journey. We must heed the resonating demand for justice for all New Yorkers."

“Our job as legislators is to fight for equitable policies for all New Yorkers, not just those with privilege; therefore it is essential to pass the Justice Roadmap 2024,” said **Assembly Member Harvey Epstein**. “I am particularly passionate about passing my bill A3414B, also known as 13th Forward, which is a proposed constitutional amendment to outlaw the practice of forced prison labor in New York prisons. Similar constitutional amendments have been ratified across the nation from Alabama to Nebraska. If New York truly wants to lead the nation in progressive values, we must get this passed this session”.

“I stand with the hardworking advocates and my colleagues in support of the Justice Roadmap 2024,” said **Assembly Member Latrice Walker**. “I will work to end perpetual punishment in New York State, focusing on legislation and investments that will deliver true public safety. There are far too many people — most of them Black and brown — who are either serving excessive sentences or have done the rehabilitative work to warrant consideration for release. We scored a huge win last year with the passage of the Clean Slate Act, but we can’t stop there. We have to fight the criminalization of poverty and mental illness, end slavery behind bars and fight to protect in-person visitation. There’s so much to do. My sleeves are rolled up and I am ready to get to work.”

“I’m proud that three of my bills - the Treatment Not Jail Act, the Street Vendor Legalization Act, and the Unemployment Bridge Program - are a part of the Justice Roadmap platform. This package of bills outlines a comprehensive plan for public safety, and shows that we can do more to build thriving communities at every level of intervention,” said **State Senator Jessica Ramos**.

“Our broken carceral and parole systems condemn incarcerated New Yorkers to stay behind bars way beyond their minimum sentences, regardless of their sincere efforts to rehabilitate,” said **State Senator Gustavo Rivera**. “While important bills like the Clean Slate Act have become law, we still need to fight for many other bills included on the Justice Roadmap legislative agenda. Redemption should be part of our criminal legal system so those incarcerated New Yorkers who have genuinely demonstrated remorse and a willingness to do better can be granted the opportunity to return home and successfully rejoin their communities.”

“The violence of mass incarcerations continues to fuel a cycle of harm and poverty throughout our state,” said **Assembly Member Demond Meeks**. “The legacy of destructive policies such as the Rockefeller Drug laws have created a sentencing regime with mandatory minimums and excessive maximums that disproportionately impact communities of color. It is our responsibility to create lasting support for incarcerated individuals throughout New York State. The Justice Roadmap 2024 is aimed at transforming the criminal justice system to ensure fairness, equality, and justice for all individuals. A transformative criminal justice system addresses harm at the root; creating presumptions against incarceration, providing more opportunities for dignified re-entry, and making greater investments for our vulnerable residents. To provide for the continued welfare and restoration of our families and neighborhoods, my colleagues and I will work to pass the Justice Roadmap in the 2024 legislative session.”

“The continued criminalization of immigrant New Yorkers and people of color won’t keep us safe. We can only build a safe and livable New York for all with stable communities, investment in public and social services, and an end to the perpetual punishment that prevents people from getting back on their feet. I’m proud to support the Justice Roadmap, which makes real a vision of true public safety in our state,” **said Assembly Member Zohran K. Mamdani.**

“A majority of the State Senate has signed on to my bill to reform our parole system for elderly New Yorkers ([S2423](#)), which would ensure that our older population does not needlessly die behind bars, after having already served a lengthy sentence,” **said State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal.** There are too many incarcerated New Yorkers, and this is just one of the necessary steps we must take to address our overcrowded facilities. But simply reforming elder parole is not enough to fix all of the issues plaguing our criminal justice system. That’s why I stand with the advocates, formerly incarcerated individuals, legal experts, faith leaders, and my fellow lawmakers in support of the Justice Roadmap legislative agenda for New York. In order to create a more just New York State, we need to continue the work of reforming our criminal justice system, from one focused on incarceration to one dedicated to getting New Yorkers the help that they need. It’s long past time to end the criminalization of mental illness, decarcerate our jails and prisons, ensure that those who are locked up are treated with dignity, and finally put an end to the perpetual cycle of punishment. Let’s pass elder parole reform, along with the initiatives laid out in the Justice Roadmap, and bring more equal justice to all New Yorkers.

“New York State should embrace an equitable and inclusive agenda that puts the lives of everyday people first,” **said Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal.** “Treating those with mental health issues, financially investing in our communities, reforming the criminal legal system and expanding harm reduction efforts will provide countless New Yorkers with desperately needed resources as well as a second chance at justice. I am proud to work with the Justice Roadmap Coalition, and I look forward to once again advancing the human rights of all people this legislative session.”

“The Justice Roadmap lays out a bold pathway to reforming our broken criminal justice system and undoing decades of mass incarceration in our state. I am proud to stand with colleagues, advocates, and directly impacted individuals to say we must pass these bills and we must pass them now,” **said Assembly Member Phara Souffrant Forrest.** “We have an opportunity to send a strong message that New York is a state committed to justice and fairness and the idea that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Let us transform this broken system, and in so doing, create an opportunity for change, building a society where rehabilitation triumphs over punishment, and where every life has the chance to rebuild and contribute positively to our community. That is the future the Justice Roadmap points us toward. That is the future we demand and that New York deserves.”

“In a world where justice appears to be increasingly elusive for too many, it’s critical that we pass the Justice Roadmap 2024 to end mass incarceration and fight for the dignity of all New Yorkers,” **said Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon.** “This package of bills would stop the criminalization of mental illness and put an end to systemic perpetual punishment. I am proud to



stand with a strong coalition of my colleagues and advocacy organizations to push for these reforms.”

“As New Yorkers’ rights and humanity are on the line, the Justice Roadmap Coalition and 2024 policy priorities are here to help, with legislation that prioritize the needs of the marginalized,” said **Assembly Member Karines Reyes, R.N.** “I am pleased that my bill with State Senator Andrew Gounardes has been included, New York for All, which would prohibit local and state law enforcement from colluding with ICE when they come into contact with undocumented New Yorkers. This bill is needed to ensure that we keep vulnerable families together and take them out of the shadows in our state. I applaud the coalition and look forward to advocating for this legislation during this session.”

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