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## **Governor Hochul Pardons 10 New Yorkers Facing Harsh Immigration Consequences and Grants 3 Commutations**

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**ALBANY, NY** – On Friday, Governor Kathy Hochul granted 10 pardons to immigrant New Yorkers whose convictions have triggered deportation, risk of deportation, or ineligibility for naturalization, and commuted the sentences of 3 others.

One of the pardon recipients is Christopher Dyer, a former green card holder who first came to the United States at the age of 7. Mr. Dyer was deported to Jamaica in 2017, more than ten years after convictions from his youth, and has been separated from his wife, his two young children, his mother, his sister and his extended community ever since. The pardon makes Mr. Dyer eligible to reopen his immigration case and pursue relief that should allow him to return home to the United States.

**Christopher Dyer said,** “I never thought the day would come that I would be writing this. My family and I are still very much overwhelmed with tears of joy and happiness. I believe that our past does not define who we are in the present or future, but it can sculpt us to be a greater version of ourselves. Sometimes we make mistakes and unfortunately do not know what consequences we will face until it’s too late. The mistakes that I have made have been haunting me for the past seventeen years. After being deported I made it my mission to change my life in so many ways. I have a much clearer vision on life and have devoted my time to becoming a better person for my wife, children, family and community. I would like to express my deepest gratitude and thanks to Governor Hochul for granting me a pardon for the actions I regret making. I also want to express my sincere appreciation and thank you to the Immigrant Defense Project for their abundance of support and assistance during this challenging time. My family and I are overjoyed and want to say thank you again for granting me this opportunity to return home.”

"We are thrilled to celebrate the grant of clemency to thirteen community members last Friday, including Christopher Dyer who has been separated from his family for over six years since his unjust deportation to Jamaica," **said Marie Mark, Interim Executive Director of the Immigrant Defense Project.** "Mr. Dyer has been waiting for over two and a half years for a decision on his pardon request, and we are so thankful that the relief the Governor has brought him will allow us to facilitate the next steps aimed at bringing him home. Clemency is a critical tool with the power to break the cycle of perpetual punishment that has harmed so many immigrant New Yorkers and their communities, and we will continue to call on the Governor to follow through on her commitment to actively review and grant clemency on a rolling basis year-round."

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. We celebrate today's announcement and will continue to ensure that the Governor uses her authority year-round to reunite and keep families together.

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. 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.

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.

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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](http://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org) and follow [@ImmDefense](https://twitter.com/ImmDefense).