

**Brooklyn (BDS)
Defenders**

**THE
LEGAL AID
SOCIETY**

Justice in Every Borough.

**The Bronx
Defenders**

Redefining public defense

February 28, 2022

Contacts:

Alejandra Lopez, The Legal Aid Society, AILopez@legal-aid.org, 917-294-9348

Daniel Ball, Brooklyn Defender Services, dball@bds.org

Chi Nguyen, The Bronx Defenders, cnguyen@bronxdefenders.org, 347-842-2943

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

***NYIFUP Providers Testify Alongside Detained Immigrants
and State Officials at City Council Hearing on Inhumane
Conditions and Abuses in NYC Area ICE Facilities***

***Advocates Demand Release of Clients at Orange County Correctional
Facility and All Incarcerated Immigrants***

(New York, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, and The Bronx Defenders** – New York City’s defender organizations providing free legal representation to detained immigrants through the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP) – today delivered [testimony](#) before the New York City Council Committee on Immigration’s oversight hearing on the human rights violations and impact of COVID-19 on immigration detention centers in New York. Additionally, NYIFUP clients who are currently or have been detained in ICE facilities delivered testimony (available below).

NYIFUP providers detailed the inhumane conditions and abuses that incarcerated clients are routinely subjected to, highlighting egregious procedural and medical neglect by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and jail officials in their failure to adequately address COVID-19 and protect incarcerated individuals in their custody. Providers also described a culture of pervasive racism and xenophobia by New York county jails that contract with ICE, and significant limitations to access to counsel and due process violations, among many other issues.

“Immigrant communities in New York City are forced to live in constant fear because the systems in place, presently and historically, have deliberately created immigration laws that are racist and xenophobic to be a tool for their oppression and capture despite immigration enforcement being civil in nature. Detention has been categorized as an administrative measure in the deportation process, and not a punishment, though the lived experiences of people navigating these processes demonstrate otherwise.

ICE’s persecution of immigrant communities decenters humanity, pushes New York City further away from establishing and sustaining community safety and trust, and fails to care for and protect people in their custody from COVID-19 and results in other harms inherent to the caging of human beings,” stated **the New York Immigrant Family Unit Project**.

NYIFUP called on the City Council to ensure that immigrant New Yorkers’ bodily autonomy and human rights are honored and protected by:

- demanding that the living conditions of those inside Correctional Facilities be respected by increasing access to COVID-19 vaccines and boosters, access to medical and mental health care and support, and reliable communication to remain in contact with advocates and loved ones;
- holding Correctional Facility officials accountable for any acts of abuse or harassment of those incarcerated in ICE detention by demanding the termination of officers involved in abuses and pressuring New York State to end all contracts with ICE;
- passing the Preconsidered Resolution by Council Immigration Committee Chair Shahana Hanif and the New York City Public Advocate Jumaane D. Williams calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, The Dignity Not Detention Act ([S.7373/A.7099A](#)), which would prohibit all localities within New York State from entering into or renewing existing contracts with the federal government for the purposes of immigration detention;
- demanding releases, not transfers, of people in ICE detention in New York State. ICE has the discretion to release people, yet routinely chooses to keep people detained locally or to transfer them to other ICE detention facilities, often in remote locations, despite knowing that releases would allow families to reunite, regain stability, prioritize their family’s health needs, and retain reliable access to counsel.

Full NYIFUP testimony is available at:

- https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Final-City-Council-Tesimony_2_28-NYIFUP-1.pdf

Full client testimony is available at:

- <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Anonymous-NYIFUP-client.pdf>
- <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Anonymous-NYIFUP-client-2.pdf>
- <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Efrain-Rodriguez-Gonzalez-City-Council-Testimony-2.28.22-FINAL.pdf>

###

The New York Family Immigrant Unity Project (NYIFUP) is the nation's first public defender system for immigrants facing deportation—defined as those in removal proceedings before an immigration judge. Funded by the New York City Council since July 2014, the program provides a free attorney to almost all detained indigent immigrants facing deportation at the Varick Street Immigration Court in New York City.