



April 12, 2023

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*****For Immediate Release*****

Brooklyn Defenders Urges State Lawmakers to Reject Changes to New York's Discovery Laws

(BROOKLYN, NY) – Brooklyn Defender Services released the following statement urging lawmakers to reject changes to New York's discovery laws in the state budget:

"For decades, prosecutors and police in New York were not required to provide crucial evidence, known as 'discovery,' to people facing criminal allegations or their attorneys until the eve of trial. Instead, people were coerced to plead guilty blindfolded to the evidence, fueling mass incarceration and wrongful convictions. In 2019, New York enacted new discovery laws, bringing the state from one of the worst on this issue to one of the best in the country.

With the implementation of the new laws came new technological and staffing requirements to collect, store, and share evidence in a timely manner, requiring more resources for both prosecutors and defenders. In previous state budgets, prosecutors received tens of millions of dollars in funding to meet these new obligations.

In this year's executive budget proposal, Governor Hochul allocated an additional \$40 million in funding for prosecutors statewide to comply with the discovery laws, but provided *zero* for defenders despite this shared need.

Rather than provide the necessary resources to fulfill the purpose of New York's discovery law, Governor Hochul, alongside a handful of District Attorneys, are attempting to force through a proposal that would gut these much needed reforms. Legislative changes to undermine the discovery laws will diminish prosecutorial accountability, result in more wrongful convictions, and cause more New Yorkers to languish in deadly jails for longer.

Lawmakers must reject the governor's and prosecutors' attempts to weaken the discovery laws, and instead fulfill the promise of these laws with proper resources. New York cannot go back to the Blindfold Law."

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Brooklyn Defender Services is a public defense office whose mission is to provide outstanding representation and advocacy free of cost to people facing loss of freedom, family separation and other serious legal harms by the government. We believe in a client-centered approach and work, in and out of court, to uphold the rights, freedom and dignity of people threatened by unjust, racist and harmful legal systems. www.bds.org