June 8, 2020

Memorandum of Support for Passage of the Safer NY Act

The Center for Appellate Litigation (“CAL”) submits this memorandum in support of passage of bills in the Safer NY Act, a package of critical police transparency and accountability legislation. Three of the Safer NY Act bills are currently under consideration for passage by the Legislature, including the bill to repeal 50-a (A10611/S8496), the Police STAT Act (A10609/S1830C), and legislation to strengthen and codify the office of the Special Prosecutor (A1601C/S2574C).

These bills, if passed and signed into law, would represent significant forward progress toward meaningful police reform. Here’s how:

- The repeal of 50-a (A10611/S8496) would strike arguably the most regressive police secrecy law in the country from the books. A full repeal of 50-a would provide the public much needed transparency on police misconduct and discipline.

- The Police STAT Act (A10609/S1830C) would require police departments throughout the state to record and report on low-level enforcement (violations and misdemeanors) and would require comprehensive reporting on the total number of people who die during an interaction with law enforcement.

- The Special Prosecutor bill (A1601C/S2574C) would strengthen and codify Executive Order 147 – ensuring that the Attorney General’s office is able to investigate and, if warranted, prosecute all cases where a person dies during an encounter with police.

CAL is a holistic appellate public defense organization serving indigent individuals convicted of crimes in Manhattan and the Bronx. Our mission is to fight injustice through exceptional advocacy and enduring compassion for each client. Our vision is a post-conviction process grounded in our clients’ humanity. Our advocacy is not limited to the legal realm. We assist our clients with their parole appearances; the way they are treated while they are incarcerated; re-entry services; and much more. We believe that client-centered advocacy is not optional, but essential.

CAL supports swift passage of the full Safer NY Act because we’ve seen time and again how undisclosed police misconduct produces unjust convictions and costs countless years of our client’s lives. Moreover, we’ve witnessed and experienced firsthand the trauma that police violence inflicts on our community, both inside and outside our office. The Safer NY Act is not a radical step toward police accountability, but a long overdue one. No public servants should be above reproach or scrutiny, least of all those tasked with protecting our communities.

If you have further questions, please contact Attorney-in-Charge, Robert Dean, at rdean@cfal.org.