



40 WORTH STREET, SUITE 605
NEW YORK, NY 10013
MAIN NUMBER: (212) 691-0950
FAX NUMBER: (212) 691-0951

89-14 PARSONS BLVD, 2ND FLOOR
JAMAICA, NY 11432
MAIN NUMBER: (212) 691-0950
FAX NUMBER: (718) 291-4360

Memorandum in Support of Repealing NYS CLR Section 50-a S8496 (Bailey) A10611 (O'Donnell)

Center for Family Representation (CFR) strongly supports S8496/A10611 and the repeal of section 50-a of NYS CLR, which shields abusive and destructive police activity from public criticism by keeping officers' personnel documents guarded behind multiple levels of protection. This legislation will ensure greater police accountability and abolish the secrecy awarded to police officers, a secrecy which is not given to most other public servants, and which reinforces the deep-seated institutional racism present in New York's police. New Yorkers deserve to know the disciplinary history and misconduct of the people sworn to protect them. Too often, officers with long histories of using excessive force and violating people's rights are protected at the expense of our communities.

CFR is the county-wide assigned public defense provider for parents who are respondents in Family Court Act (FCA) Article 10 proceedings in Queens and New York counties, representing 1,300 new clients each year; one third of our clients also face a prosecution in criminal court for the same incidents that lead to the family court filing. CFR has served over 10,000 families since our founding in 2002. CFR employs an interdisciplinary model of representation, marrying in court litigation to out of court advocacy: every parent is assigned an attorney and a social work staff member beginning at intake, which is generally the first day a parent is summoned to court, and these teams are supported by parent advocates, who have had personal experience losing their children to foster care and then safely reunifying their families. With generous support from the Senate and Assembly, our *Home for Good* initiative permits us to provide many of our clients with criminal defense representation, as well as representation in housing, public benefits and immigration matters and we also represent young people charged with crimes who are prosecuted in the criminal Youth parts as well as in delinquency matters in family court.

The full repeal of this outdated protective mechanism for our police force is long overdue. Not only will the repeal of 50-a provide for important public accountability, but it will also safeguard the civil rights and liberties of many of our clients, whose criminal and delinquency matters are negatively impacted by this unjust law.

Through CFR's criminal and juvenile justice work, we have seen the danger of unchecked police action. We have repeatedly seen the detrimental impact that police intimidation and violence have on the youngest New Yorkers and their families - something our clients carry with them for the rest of their lives. We hear stories from clients of constant harassment from the same officers day after day and struggle to protect them. Repealing 50-a will shine a light on these destructive practices and help the public hold police accountable.

Our clients and their families experience perpetual violence and trauma at the hands of the New York City Police Department. As we continue to see Black and brown people across the country murdered by police officers, we work in fear that one of our clients will be next. Our clients live under a constant

state of threat due to the color of their skin; they deserve accountability and nothing short of a full repeal of 50-a.

Today, the need for police reform is even clearer. But it did not begin with the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, or Ahmaud Arbury. It did not begin because of the violence we've all seen used by police against peaceful protesters. The need for police reform has existed for decades. Now is the time to take action.

S8496/A10611 will finally begin to hold the New York City Police Department accountable. We respectfully urge you to reconvene the legislature and immediately pass S8496 (Bailey)/A10611 (O'Donnell) with no amendments or modifications.