

November 19, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
 Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
 Room 310, Legislative Office Building
 Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
 Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
 Room 831, Legislative Office Building
 Albany, NY 12247

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high-volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

The mission of the Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP) is to ensure that the legal system is accessible to those who, because of special needs or the overwhelming burdens of poverty, would not otherwise have their rights protected or their voices heard. Since 1990, the VLP has harnessed the powerful pro bono commitment of the private bar to provide critical civil legal services and equal access to the justice system to thousands of Brooklyn residents. As an essential legal lifeline, the VLP remains uniquely responsive to the evolving legal needs of Brooklyn’s overlooked and underserved communities.

In the past year, the VLP trained and supervised nearly 800 attorneys, law students, and other legal professionals, who, with the support of the VLP, provided over 15,500 hours of high quality, compassionate direct legal representation, advice and counsel, and community education throughout Brooklyn. The VLP provided direct civil legal services on over 8,800 matters benefiting over 22,000 low-income Brooklyn residents, assisting them to overcome life-altering legal challenges including family breakdowns, devastating debt, immigration status, threatened homelessness, and ongoing predatory practices that overwhelmingly target the poor, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities.

The VLP is actively engaged in providing legal services that target the essentials of life in the areas of housing (foreclosure), family matters (Article 17A guardianship, custody/visitation, child and spousal support, and divorce), and subsistence income (including bankruptcy and consumer debt). Our staff, volunteers and clients must navigate Family Court, Supreme Court, Civil Court, Surrogate’s Court and US Bankruptcy Court.

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We have direct partnerships with the courts to provide walk-in clinics and limited scope representation in the Kings County Supreme Court (FLAG foreclosure clinics for unrepresented litigants to receive legal information 3 days a week, Supreme Court foreclosure clinic for unrepresented litigants to obtain advice and brief services on Fridays, and Friend of the Court limited scope representation in a foreclosure part on Thursdays), and in Kings County Civil Court (CLARO consumer debt clinic for unrepresented litigants in consumer debt matters in Civil Court on Thursdays in the afternoon and evening, and Volunteer Lawyer for the Day in Civil Court for representation for the day of consumers four days a week, in partnership with the New York State Access to Justice Program). All of our programs and stakeholders will benefit from court simplification.

At the forefront of court reform, VLP urges simplification of an incomprehensible system that will better serve litigants and all who need to access the judicial system. Additionally, many of our volunteers say that the unnecessary delays they experience in the Family Court in particular are a hindrance to their increased and continued representation of our clients. A more resourced Court would expedite proceedings. The individuals we represent need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York's onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Honorable Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Heidi Henderson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Heidi Henderson
Executive Director

November 20, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
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Greg Berman
Director
Center for Court Innovation
Email
www.courtinnovation.org

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The Center for Court Innovation works to create a more effective and humane justice system by performing original research and helping launch reforms around the world. As advocates for various court reforms, we strongly support simplification of the New York state court system. New Yorkers navigating the law need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Greg Berman
Greg Berman



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The Citizens’ Committee for Children of New York advocates for children and families on a wide range of issues, using our resources to advance policies, programs, and budgets that ensure that every child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. In our efforts to advance our mission, we find that the court system fails those in need. The children and families we represent deserve a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

Jennifer March, PhD
Executive Director

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Citizens Union 299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007

November 20, 2019

Rachel Bloom
Policy Director
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www.citizensunion.org

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
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Citizens Union is committed to reforming New York City and State government by fostering accountability, accessibility, transparency, honesty, and the highest ethical standards. Simplification of the New York state court system strongly aligns with our mission. The people of New York need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Rachel Bloom
Rachel Bloom



Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies 19 West 21st Street New York, NY 10010

November 18, 2019

Jim Purcell
Chief Executive Officer
jpurcell@cofcca.org
www.cofcca.org

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
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The Council of Family and Child Caring Agencies represents nearly all not-for-profit organizations providing foster care, adoption, family preservation, and juvenile justice services in New York State. We advocate for our over 100 member agencies on issues that support the best interest of the children and families they serve. As a representative of these agencies, we strongly support simplification of the New York Courts. The children and families we represent deserve a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Jim Purcell
Jim Purcell



November 18, 2019

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Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
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Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, the Crime Victims Treatment Center (CVTC) joins our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high-volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

Since 1977, CVTC has been helping survivors of interpersonal violence heal. Our support comes in the forms of crisis intervention, individual and group trauma-focused therapy, legal advocacy, complementary therapy and psychiatric consultation. We are available from the moments following an assault, all the way through the culmination of a survivor's healing process. All of our services are confidential and free of charge. A significant number of our clients are involved, either directly or peripherally, in the New York City court system. The CVTC frequently sees survivors return from the Family Court with an order of protection that differs from the one they received in the Criminal Court. They don't understand why. Often, they do not want to access the courts at all because there is no trust that the system will serve them. The survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence we serve deserve a court system that reflects respect, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York's onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Honorable Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

Christopher E. Bromson
Executive Director
Crime Victims Treatment Center
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**FINES & FEES
JUSTICE
CENTER**

Fines and Fees Justice Center 185 W Broadway, Suite C538 New York, NY 10013

Katie Adamides

New York State Director
Fines and Fees Justice Center

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November 19, 2019

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Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
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The Fines and Fees Justice Center seeks to eliminate the fines and fees that distort justice. Simplification of the New York state court system aligns with our mission of equality in the justice system. People navigating the law need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

Katie Adamides



November 18, 2019

Executive Director
Lani Santo

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

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Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, Footsteps joins our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high-volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

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Malkie Schwartz, *Founder*

Footsteps supports and assists individuals and families who have left, or are contemplating leaving, insular ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities in their quest to lead self-determined lives. Footsteps envisions a world in which all who choose to leave insular religious communities are able to live self-determined lives, have the resources to flourish and thrive within them, and are fully supported in achieving the educational and cultural acclimation necessary for a richly integrated life within mainstream society. Footsteps has served over 1,700 people since its founding in 2003. Demand for Footsteps’ services continues to grow exponentially.

FOOTSTEPS COUNCIL

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Wendy Keys
Marion Levine
Anouk Markovits Berger
Deborah Richman
Nancy Schwartz Sternoff
Leah Vincent
Steven Weiss

Members who wish to leave the Orthodox community are isolated from their communities, have no economic support, may have been abused and lack a secular education decreasing their ability to support themselves in the future. They often risk losing custody or visitation rights of their children. Our members appear in Family and Supreme Courts of New York City and Rockland County for divorce, custody, visitation, family offense and child support matters. The experience of our vulnerable members in the New York court system leads us to believe that simplification would greatly benefit families and children. Simplification is necessary to prevent the manipulation we see in which the represented ‘monied spouse’ files for a divorce in Supreme Court in order to remove the case from the Family Court.

Dispositions are so drawn out that only with the economic support of the Orthodox community can the spouse who wishes to remain continue to afford counsel. The families and individuals we represent deserve a streamlined court system to resolve their legal issues.

As advocates for those affected by New York's onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Honorable Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,



Lani Santo
Executive Director



Good Shepherd Services 305 7th Avenue, 9th Floor New York, NY 10001

November 20, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Annie Minguez
Director of the Department of
Government and Community Relations
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goodshepherds.org

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

Good Shepherd Services serves over 30,000 children and families across Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn, offering juvenile justice programs, foster care, family counseling, and domestic violence programs among others. Several of these programs involve assisting youth and families navigate the court system. Our experience in the New York court system leads us to believe that simplification would greatly benefit families and children. The individuals we represent deserve a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Annie Minguez
Annie Minguez



CARING FOR KIDS & FAMILIES
SINCE 1806

November 19, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Re: Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

Dear Judges Hoylman and Dinowitz,

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

Graham Windham helps families and children build a safe, loving, permanent family and the opportunity and preparation to thrive in school and in the world. Simplification of the New York state court system strongly aligns with our mission and values. The at-risk children and families we represent need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

Jess Dannhauser
President and CEO
Graham Windham
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DannhauserJ@graham-windham.org
www.Graham-Windham.org

November 20, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Amy Barasch
Executive Director
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Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

Her Justice stands with women living in poverty in New York City by recruiting and mentoring volunteer lawyers to provide free legal help to address individual and systemic legal barriers. Our attorneys, and the volunteer attorneys they mentor, appear in Family and Matrimonial Supreme Courts in all five boroughs of New York. Our experience in the New York court system leads us to believe that simplification would greatly benefit the women we serve. The individuals we represent need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Amy Barasch

Amy Barasch



Hope's Door PO Box 262, 50 Broadway Hawthorne, NY 10532

November 20, 2019

Stacey Neumann
Director of Legal Services
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Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

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Hope’s Door seeks to end domestic violence and to empower victims to achieve safety, independence, and healing from the trauma of abuse. Our Legal Center attorneys represent clients of domestic violence on an array of legal matters. Our experience in the New York court system leads us to believe that simplification would greatly benefit victims. The individuals we represent need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Stacey Neumann
Stacey Neumann



November 19, 2019

Bridget McBrien
Government Relations Manager
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Room 310, Legislative Office Building
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The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services provides critical health and human services for New Yorkers in all five boroughs. We provide residential care to about 300 youth in foster care annually and help our youth and families navigate the New York state court system, so we experience firsthand the necessity of simplifying the courts. New York City youth need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York's onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Bridget McBrien
Bridget McBrien

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The Capital District Women's Bar Association Legal Project, Inc. works to ensure that all people, regardless of income, gender, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, or ethnicity should have legal services. Simplification of the New York state court system strongly aligns with our mission of equality. The people we represent need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York's onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,



Michele Pollock Rich
Executive Director

Electronic service not accepted without prior approval



November 19, 2019

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

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Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

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Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT) works to enhance access to justice for children and families by providing legal information, community education, and compassionate guidance, while promoting system-wide reform of the courts and public agencies. We work with pro se litigants in Family Court on issues of child support, custody, visitation, domestic violence, and guardianship. Through our experience in the New York court system, we believe that simplification would greatly benefit litigants who cannot afford their own lawyers and are not entitled to them due to the types of cases they have. Pro se litigants need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

Cathy Cramer



November 19, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Cathy A. Cramer

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Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

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As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

Cathy Cramer

Cc: Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz

November 20, 2019

Bishara Toussaint
Program Director
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Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

Neighborhood SHOPP provides a variety of services from Meals on Wheels to caregiving services to seniors over 60 who lives in the Bronx. One of our programs, the Violence Intervention and Prevention Program, works collaboratively with the District Attorney’s Office, New York Police Department, community agencies, and Family and Housing Courts to ensure safety among Bronx seniors. Through our experience with the New York court system, we believe that simplification would greatly benefit seniors in New York. Seniors, especially those facing safety concerns and elder abuse, need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Bishara Toussaint
Bishara Toussaint



Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation 45 Wadsworth Avenue New York, NY 10033

November 20, 2019

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Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

The Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation serves as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of the people in our community. We employ 25 attorneys in Manhattan and the Bronx who provide direct legal services to low income residents in Housing, Immigration, Family Law, Consumer, and benefits cases. As we are in New York state courts on a daily basis, we recognize that simplification would greatly benefit the low income, largely immigrant population we serve. Our clients need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Rodrigo Sanchez-Camus
Rodrigo Sanchez-Camus



**New York Lawyers
for the Public Interest, Inc.**
151 West 30th Street, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10001-4017
Tel 212-244-4664 Fax 212-244-4570
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November 19, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Re: Support for Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest joins our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. The current structure of New York's courts creates impediments for the communities with which we work; the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not readily understandable. Resources are not equitably distributed to the most high-volume courts, and the current "system" cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

New York Lawyers for the Public Interest is a community driven civil rights organization of lawyers, community organizers, policy experts, and other advocates who combine forces with 80 member firms, 900 pro bono attorneys, and thousands of community members to protect civil rights and improve the lives of millions of New Yorkers. We litigate throughout state and federal courts and experience firsthand the need for simplification of the New York State court system. People of color, immigrants, people with disabilities, and people who oppose being marginalized based on other targeted characteristics or identities need a court system that works well to resolve their legal issues -- not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York's onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore to simplify our courts.

Sincerely,

Hayley Gorenberg
Legal Director

November 19, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair, NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair, NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

**RE: MEMO IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSAL TO CONSOLIDATE AND SIMPLIFY
THE NEW YORK STATE COURT SYSTEM**

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (“NYSCADV”) joins our colleagues from across the State to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system.

NYSCADV was established 40 years ago as a statewide non-profit membership organization comprised of local domestic violence service providers and allied organizations that are committed to preventing and ending domestic violence. In New York, there are nearly 250 residential and non-residential domestic violence programs which serve more than 54,000 survivors of domestic violence and their children each year.

The purpose of our organization is to serve as an information clearinghouse, primary point of contact and resource center on domestic violence for the State of New York. We also provide education, support and technical assistance to domestic violence service providers, and support the development of policies, protocols and procedures to enhance domestic violence intervention and prevention.

Despite the concerted efforts of domestic violence advocates, allies, New York’s elected officials, and others, New York continues to have the highest demand for domestic violence services in the country. The National Census provides a one day unduplicated count of adults and children seeking services from domestic violence programs in all states and the U.S. territories. Data from the most recent Census indicate that **on one day alone in New York, 7,518 victims of domestic violence received services.**¹ Assuming the number of victims seeking services remains consistent on each day throughout a given year, one can assume **more than 2.7 million victims are in need of domestic violence services in New York on an annual basis.**

¹ National Network to End Domestic Violence, National Domestic Violence Counts Census 2018

NYSCADV

NEW YORK STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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P. 518-482-5465 | F. 518-482-3807

WESTERN OFFICE: PO BOX 17893 | ROCHESTER, NY 14614
P. 585-413-0887 | F. 518-482-3807

WWW.NYSCADV.ORG

Many domestic violence survivors in New York turn to the State's Courts to resolve issues and keep them and their children safe. Time and time again, however, New York's Courts fall short in their effort to keep families safe. Because of its current structure, New York's courts are not accessible, they are difficult to navigate, and the court process is complicated and confusing. In addition, domestic violence victims are often required to appear in court several times over a course of many months, jeopardizing current employment or making it difficult to obtain employment. As Chief Judge Janet DiFiore noted in a press release dated September 25, 2019, "If a child custody or support dispute in Family Court results in the parties wanting a divorce, the divorce proceeding must now be heard before a different judge in the Supreme Court – forcing the parties to re-arrange their work and other schedules multiple times in order to make numerous appearances in different courts and raising the possibility of inconsistent decisions." Now imagine that one of these parties was a victim of domestic violence, and the other party – a domestic violence offender – was using New York's cumbersome and silo'ed court structure to further harass and intimidate the victim. Imagine if criminal charges were pending. Participation in all the various proceedings could very well become a full-time job.

Further, many judges across New York's Court System do not understand the power and control dynamics at the heart of domestic violence, fail to identify manipulative and coercive behavior on the part of offenders in their court rooms, and minimize the dramatic impact of long-term traumatic abuse on victims who are providing testimony.

By simplifying New York's Court System, domestic violence victims and their families could be treated in a more trauma-informed manner, with judges and court personnel who are sensitive to the trauma and abuse many victims encounter. Creation of the Integrated Domestic Violence Parts in some counties ameliorated some of the problems in those particular communities. However, IDV courts do not have jurisdiction over child protective, housing or consumer matters where survivors also need relief. Moreover, only a small portion of cases are eligible to be heard in an IPV court. NYSCADV supports the creation of IPV courts statewide, and recommends that they become a permanent part of the system.

As advocates for those affected by New York's onerous court system, we urge you to support the Constitutional Amendment proposed by the Honorable Janet DiFiore. Similarly, if NYSCADV could assist with gathering information from domestic violence victims that would lend further support to this court simplification initiative, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Connie Neal
Executive Director

November 18, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

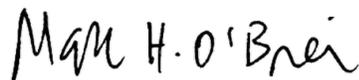
Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

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Pro Bono Net is a New York City-based nonprofit that increases access to justice through the innovative use of technology and collaboration. We operate LawHelpNY (www.lawhelpny.org), a statewide resource that helps low income, poor, and vulnerable New Yorkers in every county find legal help and/or resources to engage in effective self-advocacy around the essentials of life. Through our experience with the court system, we believe that simplification would greatly benefit New Yorkers, especially those who cannot afford an attorney. Low-income New Yorkers need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,



Mark H. O'Brien
Executive Director
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Rising Ground 151 Lawrence Street Brooklyn, NY 11201

November 18, 2019

Alan Mucatel
Chief Executive Officer
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Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

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Rising Ground provides a wide array of services and supports 25,000 children, adults, and families impacted by poverty, inequity, and lack of access to resources, as well as mental health and disability. We help people navigate several different New York state courts and we recognize that simplification would greatly benefit the individuals and families we serve. Low income New Yorkers need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Alan Mucatel
Alan Mucatel



Center for Battered
Women's Legal Services
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Fax: 212.566.0344
sanctuaryforfamilies.org

Hon. Judy Harris Kluger
Executive Director

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**in memoriam*

November 19, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

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Sanctuary for Families works to end gender violence through direct services, outreach and training, and systems-change advocacy. We assist victims of gender violence and our lawyers routinely appear in the Family, Housing, and Supreme courts of New York State. Our job is to help victims navigate the New York state court system, so we experience firsthand the necessity of simplifying the courts.

As advocates for those affected by New York's onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Judy H. Kluger".

Hon. Judy H. Kluger



TOURO COLLEGE
JACOB D. FUCHSBERG LAW CENTER

Where Knowledge and Values Meet

November 19, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

Dear Judge Hoylman and Judge Dinowitz:

As a member of the Simplify the Courts Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, are difficult to navigate, and are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

The William Randolph Hearst Public Advocacy Center provides furnished offices to local non-profit agencies that use Touro Law students for advocacy services, research work, and client relations. Simplification of the New York State court system aligns with our goal of having an impact on social justice. The people our members represent need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

Thomas Maligno
Executive Director
Public Advocacy Center and
Director of Public Interest



November 18, 2019

Madeline Bigelow
Associate Director
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www.urbanjustice.org

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

The Urban Justice Center is dedicated to providing high quality legal, advocacy, and clinical services throughout the five boroughs of New York City. A large percentage of our clients’ cases are heard in Housing, Family, and Integrated Domestic Violence Courts, so we experience firsthand the necessity of simplifying the New York state court system. The indigent and working poor New Yorkers we serve need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Madeline Bigelow
Madeline Bigelow

November 19, 2019

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Hon. Brad Hoylman
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Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

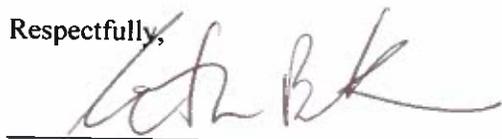
Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts Coalition, The Urban Resource Institute joins our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

For 39 years URI has been developing innovative programs to improve the lives of vulnerable populations, with a particular focus on survivors of domestic violence. We are the only domestic violence organization in New York City, and one of the few nationally, to extend these services to pets. We help individuals and families safely heal and gain the resources needed to live healthy and independent lives. URI provides individual consultations on legal issues that victims of domestic violence deal with, such as family law, divorce, civil and criminal orders of protection, housing, and child welfare. We help victims navigate the New York State court system, so we experience firsthand the necessity of simplifying the courts. While the Integrated Domestic Violence Courts have helped, they have not been a panacea. Victims need a court system to resolve all their legal issues without undue delay, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives. We look forward to working with OCA during the implementation period to ensure access to equal justice for all.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Honorable Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,



Elizabeth Brownback, Esq.



Vera House, Inc. 723 James Street Syracuse, NY 13203

November 19, 2019

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Executive Director
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www.verahouse.org

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

Vera House is a comprehensive domestic and sexual violence victim service agency. We help victims navigate the New York state court system, so we experience firsthand the necessity of simplifying the courts. Victims need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

Randi K. Bregman

Randi K. Bregman
Executive Director

November 20, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Margarita Guzman
Executive Director
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Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

The Violence Intervention Program is a social service and advocacy organization that accompanies survivors of domestic and sexual violence to court dates at Family and Criminal courts throughout all five boroughs of New York City. Our job is to help victims navigate the New York state court system, so we experience firsthand the necessity of simplifying the courts. Victims need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet DiFiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

/s/ Margarita Guzman
Margarita Guzman

November 18, 2019

Joseph Kelemen
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Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
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The Western New York Law Center represents low income Western New Yorkers in civil matters. We work within a variety of New York state courts and experience firsthand the inaccessibility of the court system. The individuals we represent deserve a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,



Joseph Kelemen
Executive Director



Youth Represent 11 Park Place, Suite 1512 New York, NY 10007

November 19, 2019

Hon. Brad Hoylman
Chair NYS Senate Judiciary Committee
Room 310, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Hon. Jeffrey Dinowitz
Chair NYS Assembly Judiciary Committee
Room 831, Legislative Office Building
Albany, NY 12247

Michael Pope, Esq.
Executive Director
Youth Represent
646-759-8082
mpope@youthrepresent.org
www.youthrepresent.org

Memo in Support of Proposal to Consolidate and Simplify the New York State Court System

As a member of the Simplify the Courts! Coalition, we join our colleagues from across the state to express our gratitude for these timely and important hearings on court consolidation and your concerted effort to reform the New York State court system. Because of its current structure, the courts are not accessible to all, the courts are difficult to navigate, and the courts are not understandable. Resources are not equally distributed to the most high volume courts and the current “system” cannot provide equal justice for all. Structural change is long overdue.

Youth Represent works to ensure that young people affected by the criminal justice system are afforded every opportunity to reclaim lives of dignity, self-fulfillment, and engagement in their communities. Through providing free legal services to more than one thousand youth annually, we recognize the importance of simplifying the New York state court system. The young people we represent need a court system to resolve their legal issues, not one that creates more obstacles in their lives.

As advocates for those affected by New York’s onerous court system, we urge you to support the constitutional amendment as proposed by the Hon. Janet Difiore and simplify our courts.

Respectfully,

Michael Pope, Esq.
Executive Director