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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 4, 2022

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**IMMIGRANTS WIN VITAL PROTECTIONS FROM FOR-PROFIT BOND
COMPANIES WITH PASSAGE OF STOP IMMIGRATION BOND ABUSE ACT**

This regulatory legislation is the first of its kind in the United States

NEW YORK, NY — Today the New York State Legislature passed the Stop Immigration Bond Abuse Act (SIMBAA) [#A7770 / #S7475]. The bill, co-sponsored by Senator Jamaal Bailey and Assemblymember Harvey Epstein, received incredible support from representatives in both houses who understood the urgent need to provide consumer protections to their immigrant constituents who have been exploited by private immigration bond companies for years.

"When we first started hearing stories from our community members about the debt, the fear, and the hopelessness they felt when the bonds they received were supposed to give them 'freedom,' we were both heartbroken and furious," **said Robert Agyemang, the New York director of African Communities Together.** "How could these companies have gone unregulated for so long? This is a huge win for our community and for New York State! Thank you to our sponsors Assemblymember Harvey Epstein and State Senator Jamaal Bailey, as well as our supporters in the Assembly and Senate, along with our coalition partners for continuing to push for SIMBAA. Most importantly, however, thank you to our community members who trusted us enough to share their stories with us in a moment when safety and security felt out of reach. New York State has taken a very important step toward truly providing the sanctuary and security that immigrant communities need."

"Today New York showed that it will put the needs and humanity of people above the profiteering practices of the private immigration bond industry. SIMBAA will bring much needed regulation to an industry rife with deception and exploitation," **said Carl Hamad-Lipscombe, executive director of Envision Freedom Fund.** "This is a win for detained immigrants and their families who have been forced to compromise their privacy, finances, and dignity to gain freedom from inhumane detention."

Senator Bailey, the bill sponsor, said, "This legislation is long overdue and will bring much-needed reform to an industry that has for far too long preyed on immigrant New Yorkers and their families. For the first time, New York state will have a comprehensive regulatory

framework to rein in for-profit immigration bond companies and predatory lending practices. The Stop Immigration Bond Abuse Act will require transparency in immigration bail bond contracts, cap exorbitant fees, and prohibit the use of oppressive electronic shackles and surveillance. I want to thank Assembly Member Epstein for carrying this legislation in the Assembly, Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Carl Heastie, my colleagues in both houses, and all of the advocates who bravely shared their stories and championed this bill through its passage.”

Assemblymember Harvey Epstein, sponsor of the bill, said, “Throughout New York State immigrant families have suffered in detention centers while businesses have profited over their pain. New Yorkers should not have to pay exorbitant fees on immigration bonds, while also wearing electronic monitoring shackles and being surveilled. Today, we are putting a stop to the exploitation of immigrant New Yorkers, who are a part of the fabric of our state.”

Through countless inquiries, investigations, and lawsuits, the for-profit bond industry—including Libre By Nexus—has aggressively resisted oversight and regulation while employing misleading contracts, requiring formerly detained immigrants to wear electronic shackles or other surveillance, and charging excessive, nonrefundable fees upwards of \$450 each month for years.

Thanks to leadership by Epstein and Bailey and vigorous advocacy by the [Break the Shackles](#) coalition—composed of organizations, advocates, and directly impacted immigrants and anchored by African Communities Together and the Envision Freedom Fund— New York is the first state in the nation to pass legislation that will address the for-profit bond industry’s exploitative business model and abusive practices toward immigrants. SIMBAA now awaits Governor Hochul’s signature before becoming law.

“When immigrants detained by ICE are granted bond, the unconscionably high cost of their liberty puts immigrant New Yorkers at risk of abuse by predatory immigration bond companies. Without regulation, these companies shackle and surveil immigrants with impunity. Today, New York State took a step closer to justice by passing the ‘Stop Immigration Bond Abuse Act’ (SIMBAA).” **said Yasmine Farhang, the director of advocacy of the Immigrant Defense Project.** “We applaud the New York State Legislature in taking a stand against immigration bond abuse and we call on our Governor to sign this bill into law as soon as possible.”

“This is the first step in eliminating the for profit immigration bond industry, and it can set a precedent for the rest of the country,” **said Catherine Barnett, the co-director of Freedom To Thrive.** “As an abolitionist organization fighting against the criminalization of Black and brown immigrants, we salute this victory and we will continue to support campaigns to ensure that all of our people are free.”

Assemblymember Catalina Cruz said, “As a formerly undocumented person, I know firsthand how predatory the immigration bond industry can be. I’ve witnessed so many New Yorkers face unnecessary hardship at the hands of unregulated for-profit immigration bond companies. Today, I applaud the immigrant New Yorkers who have exuded so much courage in bringing these abuses to light. Their stories have catalyzed New York State to be an example for the rest of the country as to the prioritization of the safety, privacy, and peace of immigrant families. I thank my colleagues, Senator Jamaal Bailey and Assemblymember Harvey Epstein, as well as the advocates and community leaders who supported this multi-year campaign to win protections for formerly detained immigrants who so desperately need New York to break their shackles.”

“This is a landmark protection against the electronic shackles that private bond companies force undocumented communities,” **said Surveillance Technology Oversight Project Executive Director Albert Fox Cahn.** “I’m proud to see New York poised to take a leading role in protecting immigrant communities from these profiteers. No one should have to submit to invasive surveillance just to get their day in immigration court. Now the Governor has to act quickly to ensure this bill becomes law.”

Assemblymember Michaelle C. Solages, Chair of the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus said, “Today, we took a powerful step to reform an industry that has exploited the most vulnerable residents of our state for far too long. Many New Yorkers face greater adversity in the legal system simply because of their immigration status. This vital piece of legislation will bring greater protections to our immigrant community who are victimized by profiteering bond companies.”

“New York can’t allow its immigrant residents to be preyed upon by unscrupulous companies looking to profit off of the immigration detention and surveillance system,” **said Zach Ahmad, senior policy counsel at the New York Civil Liberties Union.** “We applaud the legislature for passing the Stop Immigration Bond Abuse Act, which takes a major step towards ending the most unconscionable and exploitative practices of the for-profit immigration bond industry.”

“Predatory bond companies are getting rich off the backs of immigrant New Yorkers with few resources or recourse,” **said Murad Awawdeh, Executive Director, New York Immigration Coalition.** “Today, our leaders in Albany heard our pleas to break the shackles by passing the Stop Immigration Bond Abuse Act. By ending the blatant and continued exploitation of low-income immigrant communities by the bond industry, the New York State Legislature has made clear it will no longer conspire in this cruelty. Now, it’s up to Governor Hochul to fulfill her duty to protect immigrant families and sign this bill into law without delay.”

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Envision Freedom Fund (formerly Brooklyn Community Bail Fund) works alongside impacted communities to dismantle the oppressive and interconnected criminal legal and immigration systems. With freedom as our guiding principle, we invest in innovative campaigns and programs that aim to win long-term, transformative change, while meeting the urgent needs of community members in the present.

African Communities Together is an organization of African immigrants fighting for civil rights, opportunity, and a better life for our families here in the U.S. and worldwide. ACT empowers African immigrants to integrate socially, advance economically, and engage civically.