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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

***Civil Rights, Legal, and Advocacy Organizations Call
for an to End Qualified Immunity in New York***

(Albany, NY) - Today, six organizations supporting the Campaign to End Qualified Immunity in New York are convening in Albany to advocate for the passage of [Senate Bill S182](#) and companion [Assembly Bill A710](#). If passed into law, these bills would eliminate qualified immunity as a defense in state court cases in New York in which victims have had their constitutional or civil rights violated. Qualified immunity is a legal doctrine that has long been used to shield government officials like law enforcement officers and prison officials from accountability and to deny victims the opportunity to pursue justice through the courts.

The day begins with an 11:00 am press conference, followed by film screenings and lobbying meetings. Members of the campaign sponsoring this event include the [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF), the Legal Aid Society, the Innocence Project, VOCAL-NY, The Gathering for Justice, and Americans Against Qualified Immunity.

The Campaign to End Qualified Immunity began in 2018, following the death of Dante Taylor, who died by suicide in solitary confinement after being brutally attacked by prison guards. His mother, Darlene McDay, sought justice in the courts, only for prison officials to cite the qualified immunity defense. The campaign is led by Darlene McDay and other impacted family members.

“Over six years have passed since Dante Taylor died, and qualified immunity has remained a barrier that has made it difficult for Dante’s family to secure justice. Government officials and law enforcement officers are not above the law when they violate the trust and rights of the public they are put in place to serve. They should be held accountable, not shielded when they commit misconduct,” said **LDF Community Organizer Obi Afriyie**. “New Yorkers who have been victims of police and other governmental misconduct have been denied a pathway to justice by qualified immunity

for too long. We urge New York State to follow in the footsteps of other states like Colorado and end this harmful practice immediately.”

“Police misconduct has contributed to a disproportionate number of wrongful convictions for people of color and far too many of them have lost their day in court because of the doctrine of qualified immunity,” **said Keli Young, State Policy Advocate at the Innocence Project.** “Ending qualified immunity is a critical step toward providing exonerees with the financial justice they deserve after government officials violated their rights and unjustly took their freedom. As our rights continue being eroded on the federal level, the burden of protecting citizens’ constitutional rights falls with the New York legislature and we are calling on them to pass the Bill to End Qualified Immunity (S182/A710).”

“Qualified immunity is an outdated doctrine that has wrongfully shielded the misconduct of public officials for too long. Our legal system continues to fail victims of abuse, especially when the person causing harm is part of that system. Ending qualified immunity is not only the beginning of building accountability and trust throughout our criminal legal system and communities, but a pathway to protection, justice, and autonomy for all victims. We urge the NYS legislature to end the delay and pass End Qualified Immunity before the end of session,” **said Jessica Persaud, Director of Policy & Advocacy at The Gathering for Justice.**

“I’ve been directly impacted by mass incarceration, police brutality, and lack of police accountability due to qualified immunity. From Rikers to Bedford and all across our state, law enforcement officers continue to show a disregard for our basic constitutional rights. Qualified immunity shields police officers from accountability. All government officials, no matter what role they play, should be held accountable for their actions. We must end qualified immunity so we can end the rampant culture of impunity in law enforcement,” **said Neil Berry, a leader with VOCAL-NY’s Civil Rights Union.**

“Ending qualified immunity is important for youth like myself because it creates an authentic environment for youth to prosper, especially in the future,” **said Danajah Young, Youth Committee Member at Youth Represent.** “It adds protections and keeps them safe from misconduct in their neighborhoods because we see frequently how there is a lack of accountability when it comes to policing youth and the measures in place to protect them.”

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