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For Immediate Release

Cuomo Ignores National Cry For Change With Court of Appeals Appointments

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Alan Lewis, Judicial Screening Committee Chair, 212-238-8647

Albany, NY - Just one year after George Floyd's murder by the police, the traumatic impact of that event remains raw. Mr. Floyd's murder ignited calls for policy reforms pertaining to police misconduct and, more broadly, the criminal legal system – particularly its role in perpetuating racial and other injustices. Yet, on the anniversary of Mr. Floyd's murder, our Governor announced his intention to fill a vacancy on the state's highest court with the nomination of a person who has not only been a career prosecutor, but also has no judicial experience whatsoever.

Mr. Floyd's murder motivated tens of thousands of New Yorkers to raise their voices in protest. Some of the protests were met with suppression, including more violence by the police. Hundreds were rounded up some were treated with the kind of brutality that galvanized the protests. For example, in Buffalo, the police violently shoved 75-year-old Martin Gugino to the ground, causing a brain injury. And in Rochester, Daniel Prude was killed by the police. These events illustrated why the calls for change are so important.

In further explaining our objection to the Governor's nomination of District Attorney Singas, we start with the observation about the profoundly close relationship that the business of criminal prosecution forges between prosecutors and the police. As much as some prosecutors may proclaim their independence, they inevitably bond with the police, their comrades in their quest to convict and imprison. That bond is the kind of life experience that lies deep, and its pernicious impact often goes unrecognized, though its subconscious impact is undeniable, even for a lifetime prosecutor whose perception of self includes intended fairness to all.

Our disappointment in this nomination is deeper still because there were several better qualified candidates for the position. Many of those who the Governor passed over have valuable judicial experience, including years of service on the Appellate Division. Others could bring to bear their diverse experiences as talented advocates had they been appointed to serve. Especially given the availability of these choices, the appointment of District Attorney Singas leaves us profoundly disheartened. The people of New York deserve better.

And it is the State Senate that can help New Yorker's to achieve the better outcome that they deserve. Respectfully, the State Senate should not rubber stamp this nominee. We believe that the closer that the Senate looks at this nominee, the more compelling it will be to conclude that this nomination should be rejected.

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