



140 Grand Street, Suite 507, White Plains, NY 10601

June 7, 2023

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***Via Email at [scousins@nysenate.gov](mailto:scousins@nysenate.gov)  
and Priority Mail***

Hon. Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
Majority Leader of New York State Senate  
188 State Street  
Legislative Office Building, Room 907  
Albany, New York 12247

Dear Senator Stewart-Cousins:

The Latino Judges Association (“LJA”) writes this letter to express our strong support for the creation of new judgeships assigned to the Family Court and enacting the proposed amendment to Judiciary Law § 36, as drafted by the New York City Family Court Judges Association, to grant Family Court the same authority as Supreme Court to hire staff immediately upon election/appointment, or whenever a vacancy arises.

Founded in 1985, LJA is a group of Latino Judges determined to promote diversity on the bench, increase our ranks and improve the working conditions of our judicial members in and outside of the Latino community. Currently, LJA members serve on every level and in every type of court throughout the State of New York and collectively maintain as their highest priority increased diversity and true equity in all our courts throughout the State. Several of our members are Family Court Judges, who have uniformly experienced a significantly increased workload prior to and following the Covid-19 pandemic. We have seen how the diminished number of judges and lack of resources impact their ability to fulfill the Family Court’s mission of effectively, efficiently, and compassionately serving and protecting the children and families of New York.

For that reason, we wholeheartedly welcome proposed legislation creating new judgeships assigned to the Family Court in New York City. That said, there is an assumption that the new judge will automatically be entitled to a law clerk (also known as a “court attorney”) and a secretary. However, several newly appointed Family Court Judges have not been able to hire a court attorney or secretary, presumably because there are no vacant lines. The Judges have been diligently performing their tasks and attempting to resolve matters with an increasing caseload on the bench - some without support staff for months. Court attorneys are a vital part in effectively moving a judge’s calendar resolving cases before the court and addressing the challenges faced by families. They conference cases, prepare draft decisions and assist judges in the resolution of cases. Without court attorneys,

the judges who serve in this vital court cannot efficiently manage their calendars, thereby impeding justice for thousands of families.

The New York City Family Court Judges Association, and its President, Judge Erik S. Pitchal, have drafted a legislative proposal that would remedy that, by giving Family Court the same authority as Supreme Court to hire staff immediately or, at a minimum, whenever a vacancy arises. Every judge would be guaranteed the staff they need to do the work – exactly what the Legislature intends when it creates the additional judge positions.

In sum, LJA urges the New York State Senate and Assembly to pass the proposed bills to create new judgeships and amend Section 36 of the Judiciary Law to assist our Judges and Justices in furthering the administration of justice for New Yorkers.

Respectfully submitted,



Walter Rivera  
President, Latino Judges Association

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