



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

Senator Rivera on the Closing of the Bronx Freedom Fund

GUSTAVO RIVERA March 13, 2020

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"Yesterday, I was informed that The Bronx Freedom Fund is closing their doors. This is devastating not only to me personally, but also to the many community members who benefited from their dedication to an idea both ahead of its time and far overdue. Charitable bail in New York State was made possible by a law I passed in 2012, thanks to the collaboration and expertise of those who would ultimately build the first charitable bail organization right here in the Bronx, The Bronx Freedom Fund. I was always incredibly encouraged by the success that charitable bail organizations demonstrated and I know their work was critical to ending cash bail and securing other criminal justice reforms last year.

The Governor's veto of my bill, the Charitable Bail Fund Reform Act (S494), at the last possible moment last year disregarded the need for a reasonable expansion of their services that would have allowed these organizations to assist those still subject to cash bail and pre-trial incarceration. The Governor's decision to veto this bill has contributed to the closing of a critical and proven safety net organization in the Bronx at a time when we are transitioning to a new bail system, and that could have served, as it did in the past, as a model for future reforms.

The Bronx Freedom Fund proved that our bail system was needlessly incarcerating poor

people and generated consistent evidence that individuals will appear for their court dates regardless of whether they have to pay bail, leading to more cases being dismissed and less guilty pleas. We are all forever indebted to their team, which forged our state's path to eliminating cash bail and will remain as a beacon to those fighting for a fair justice system and a decarcerated New York.

With deep gratitude and a renewed commitment to the cause, my best wishes to the Bronx Freedom Fund, their devoted staff and volunteers, and countless supporters who offered a brighter future to the Bronx and the State of New York."