



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## Senator Hoylman-Sigal & Assemblymember Lasher Introduce New Legislation to Prohibit Recognition of Pro Bono Legal Work Resulting from Unlawful Extortion by the Trump Administration

SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL & ASSEMBLYMEMBER MICAH LASHER May 16, 2025

Attorneys Seeking Admission or Renewal to the Bar Would Be Unable to Count Work Pursuant to an Agreement with the Federal Government for their Pro Bono Requirements

**NEW YORK** - Today State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal (D, WFP-Manhattan) and Assemblymember Micah Lasher (D-Manhattan) introduced new legislation in response to President Trump's coercive and unlawful extortion of private law firms, which has resulted in agreements that these law firms perform hundreds of millions of dollars worth of pro bono work that aligns with Donald Trump's interests and political goals. Under the new legislation any legal work done pursuant to an agreement with the federal government would not be recognized by New York as pro bono. Specifically, this legal work would not be counted for purposes of meeting the minimum pro bono hours needed for bar admission or for an attorney's biennial attorney registration renewal pro bono hours report. The legislation would also prohibit law firms from forcing their employees to engage in pro bono work pursuant to deals with the federal government.

Currently, when a new attorney seeks admission to the New York bar for the first time, they must report having completed at least 50 hours of pro bono work with their application. Additionally, when attorneys file biennially to renew their bar membership they are required

to report their pro bono hours. Under the legislation being introduced by Senator Hoylman-Sigal and Assemblymember Lasher any attorney doing pro bono work on behalf of a law firm that is being directed by the Trump Administration would not be eligible to receive credit for that work and would need to do additional pro bono work to be admitted to, or renewed by, the bar.

Pro bono legal work is intended to give high quality legal service to those in need. The Trump Administration's orders forcing firms to engage in pro bono work of their choosing interferes with the sacred right of attorneys to freely practice law in service of the clients of their choosing and directs crucial pro bono resources away from vulnerable New Yorkers.

**Senator Hoylman-Sigal said:** "This legislation will shield attorneys from any dirty deals made by big law firms with the Trump administration and preserve independent pro bono legal work in New York State. Lawyers engaging in pro bono representation should be doing so at the behest of the public interest to help address the unmet legal needs of disadvantaged communities in New York, not because their employer made a side agreement that forces them to represent the favored clients of Donald Trump."

**Assemblymember Lasher said:** "Donald Trump's coercion of some of the nation's most storied law firms is a stark example of the slide toward authoritarianism that is happening before our eyes. This legislation aims to send a clear message that bending the knee is never the right answer when dealing with fascists, and that we need New York's lawyers to be champions, always, for the rule of law."