Dear Senate President Sweeney, Assembly Speaker Coughlin and Chairmen Scutari and Mukherji:

We, the undersigned, represent a broad coalition of civil rights, social justice, faith and good government leaders across New Jersey. We are writing to ask you to remove a contentious provision recently inserted into a landmark legislative package of criminal justice reforms that threatens to derail passage while sending a horrible message to Black and brown communities that have, for generations, suffered under a criminal justice system that is stacked against them.

A4369 and A4370 were introduced to respond to the systemic racism undergirding much of our state's criminal justice system. They aim to eliminate a series of punitive mandatory minimum sentencing requirements that have filled our state's prisons with residents convicted of non-violent drug and property offenses, destabilizing communities of color and reinforcing multigenerational cycles of poverty.

These bills were meant to enact recommendations from the New Jersey Criminal Sentencing & Disposition Commission, which achieved a hard-fought consensus among prosecutors, defense attorneys and legislators on the best way to safely reduce prison populations.

Yet the Senate Judiciary Committee, at the behest of Senator Nicholas Sacco, has quietly amended the legislation to eliminate mandatory minimums for official misconduct.

Years of work went into these recommendations. This amendment is a slap in the face to communities of color, of the hard work by advocates to advance this issue.

Criminal justice reform is meant to provide redress for communities without political power that have suffered at the hands of a legal system that has marshalled the power of the state for the purpose of repression.

This amendment, if enacted into law, would surely send a message that corruption is tolerated in New Jersey — or at least implicitly sanctioned by state legislators. And it is yet another instance of our elected representatives putting the needs of themselves and their friends over the needs of their most vulnerable constituents.

We are calling on the Senate to immediately remove this deeply flawed provision immediately so as not to sully the years of work lawmakers, the governor and advocates have put into efforts to make our criminal justice system more fair.

We demand that the Legislature demonstrate to over-policed and over-incarcerated communities of color that its actions speak as loudly as it words by sending a clean version of this package to Governor Murphy for his signature.

Sincerely,

Kevin Brown 32BJ SEIU

NHU-UYEN KHUONG ACTION TOGETHER NEW JERSEY
Reverend Leslie Watson Wilson African American Ministers In Action
Rabbi Philip Bazeley Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple

Bishop Fred Rubin C.O.O.L.J.C.

Kate Delany Collingswood Democratic Committee

Lisa Brittan Essex Rising
Gary van Wyk Essex Rising

Vernon Williams Fountain Baptist Church

Good Government Coalition of New Jersey (GGCNJ)

Rev. Bryan McAllister Heard AME Church

Amy Torres Hudson County Progressive Alliance

Susan Newton Individual citizen

Han Broekman, Jeff Fox, Dave Marain, Susan Steinberg, Jeanne Stella, Madeline Trimble,

and Anna Wong Indivisible NJ 5th District Marvin Wash Isodiol International

Patricia Campos Medina LUPE

Sara Lilja Lutherans Engaging in Advocacy Ministry NJ

Diane P Hawkins NAACP

Anjali Mehrotra National Organization for Women of New Jersey

Reva Foster New Jersey Black Issues Convention

Dena Mottola Jaborska New Jersey Citizen Action

Jenna Mellor New Jersey Harm Reduction Coalition
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice New Jersey Institute for Social Justice

Brandon McKoy New Jersey Policy Perspective Sue Altman New Jersey Working Families

Leslie J. Bockol

Carole Schaffer

NJ 11th for Change

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NJ-08 For Progress

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Pastor Terrence Porter Pilgrim Baptist Church

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