Attorney General James and Governor Cuomo Renew Suspension of State Debt Collection for Eighth Time as Coronavirus Continues to Impact New Yorkers' Wallets

New Yorkers with Student and Medical Debt Referred to AG's Office
Will Have Payments Automatically Frozen Through December 31, 2020

NEW YORK – New York Attorney General Letitia James and Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that the state has renewed, for the eighth time, an order to halt the collection of medical and student debt owed to the state of New York that has been specifically referred to the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) for collection — with limited exceptions — through December 31, 2020. In response to continuing financial impairments resulting from the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the OAG again renewed orders, taking effect this morning and going through Thursday, December 31, 2020. After this period, the OAG will reassess the needs of state residents for another possible extension. Additionally, the OAG will accept applications for suspension of all other types of debt owed to the state of New York and referred to the OAG for collection.

"As COVID-19 continues to spread, more and more New Yorkers are feeling its financial impact," said **Attorney General James**. "As we approach the holiday season and more begin to worry about their finances, my office is renewing the suspension of state and medical debt through the end of the year in order to alleviate some of these hardships and help New Yorkers make it through these difficult times. We will continue to look for ways to help New Yorkers to get back on their feet, and, by working together, it is our hope that we can rebuild our state's economy and move towards a period of recovery."

"New Yorkers made enormous sacrifices to bend the curve of this deadly virus, and we recognize many people are still struggling with both emotional pain and economic hardship as a result of this crisis," **Governor Cuomo** said. "Renewing the suspension on the collection of student and medical debt that is referred to the attorney general's office through December 31, 2020 will help lessen the burden faced by so many families and businesses whose livelihoods have been affected by the pandemic. I'm grateful to the attorney general for her partnership."

Millions of New Yorkers, like Americans across the nation, have been impacted — directly or indirectly — by the spread of COVID-19, forcing them to forgo income and business. Since COVID-19 began to spread rapidly across the country in mid-March, tens of millions of residents across the nation have filed for unemployment, including more than 4.1 million in New York state alone. In an effort to support many New Yorkers economically impacted during this difficult time, Attorney General James today renewed an order — **first made in March** and renewed in **April**, in **May**, in **June**, in **July**, in **August**, in **September**, and in **October** — to ease the financial burdens for many workers and families by halting the collection of medical and student debt owed to the state of New York and referred to the OAG for collection — with limited exceptions — through December 31, 2020.

The OAG collects certain debts owed to the state of New York via settlements and lawsuits brought on behalf of the state of New York and state agencies. A total of more than 165,000 matters currently fit the criteria for a suspension of state debt collection, including, but not limited to:

- Patients that owe medical debt due to the five state hospitals and the five state veterans' homes;
- Students that owe student debt due to State University of New York (SUNY) campuses; and
- Individual debtors, sole-proprietors, small business owners, and certain homeowners that owe debt relating to oil spill cleanup and removal costs, property damage, and breach of contract, as well as other fees owed to state agencies.

The temporary policy has also automatically suspended the accrual of interest and the collection of fees on all outstanding state medical and student debt referred to the OAG for collection, so New Yorkers are not penalized for taking advantage of this program.

New Yorkers with non-medical or non-student debt owed to the state of New York and referred to the OAG may also apply to temporarily halt the collection of state debt. Individuals seeking to apply for this temporary relief can **fill out an application online** or visit the **OAG's coronavirus website** to learn more about the suspension of payments. If an individual is unable to fill out the online form, they can also call the OAG hotline at 800-771-7755 to learn more.

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