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

New Yorkers with Student, Medical, and Other State Debt Referred to AG's Office Will Have Payments Frozen for an Additional 30 Days

NEW YORK – New York Attorney General Letitia James and New York Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that the state has again renewed an order to halt the collection of medical and student debt owed to the State of New York that was specifically referred to the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) for collection for an additional 30-day period. In response to continuing financial impairments resulting from the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the OAG will renew the last two orders this coming Monday, May 18, 2020, through Tuesday, June 16, 2020. After this 30-day 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.

"This pandemic has taken a serious financial and emotional toll on our state, and the last thing working people need to do right now is worry about managing their debt," said **Attorney General James**. "We are renewing the suspension of state student and medical debt collection referred to my office for a second time to help ease the burden on New Yorkers as we hopefully will soon move towards a period of gradual recovery. More than two million New Yorkers filed for unemployment in the last two months, so I will continue to do everything in my power to protect their wallets, and the wallets of millions more across our state, as we continue to deal with the economic fallout of the coronavirus."

"As we continue our work to flatten the curve and stop the spread of the virus, we recognize that New Yorkers are still struggling with both emotional pain and economic hardship as a result of this crisis," **Governor Cuomo** said. "By renewing the suspension on the collection of student and medical debt that is referred to the attorney general's office for an additional 30 days, we are helping to lessen the burden faced by so many individuals, 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, 36.5 million residents across the nation have lost their jobs and filed for unemployment, including more than two 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** — 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 for 30 additional days. Today's order renews this suspension period through June 16, 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 1-800-771-7755 to learn more.

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