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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

***LEGAL AID CALLS ON DA-ELECT KATZ TO FULFILL
CAMPAIGN PROMISES ON KEY CRIMINAL JUSTICE
REFORMS, SUPPORT OTHER CRITICALLY NEEDED
MEASURES***

(QUEENS, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** called on Queens County District Attorney-Elect Melinda Katz to reaffirm her support for critical criminal justice reforms and to support other needed measures after Tuesday’s general election vote.

In a letter, Legal Aid urges DA-Elect Katz, upon taking office on January 1, 2020, to entirely abolish cash bail; establish a conviction review unit; fully implement discovery reform; decline to prosecute low-level crimes that are disproportionately enforced against New Yorkers of color, including marijuana possession and fare evasion; support efforts to ban Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents from making arrests in our around courthouses; decline to prosecute victims of human trafficking; and support other needed measures to reverse the punitive approach to law enforcement that the Brown/Ryan Administration employed for decades, needlessly ensnaring Black and Latinx New Yorkers.

The [letter](#) states:

During your campaign for District Attorney, you made it clear that you, too, understand that “Justice must always look the same, [yet] all too often, it does not.” I You acknowledged the high stakes, declaring that “this is not politics, this is life and death. And this is a situation where we need to take it very seriously as to how we reform this office, and most importantly, we need to get it right the first time.”

We implore you to fulfill the progressive reform promises you made on the campaign trail to ensure equity and fairness in the Queens criminal justice system, regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender identify, sexual orientation, economic means, or any other marginalized status. The Queens District Attorney's office has long held the title of the most punitive in New York City, and the need for reform is critical. In fact, the office sent more offenders to jail on misdemeanor charges than any other borough last year.

The Queens District Attorney's Office has lagged behind other boroughs in implementing progressive policies to address the racial disparities in prosecutions. This is an opportunity for you, as a progressive prosecutor, to redress the prosecutorial mistakes of the past that have exacerbated inequality in the borough, and to create an enduring positive impact on the lives of Queens residents. As you have said, "when elected officials listen and work with the community, real progress is made."

Please listen to the millions of Queens residents whose lives will be affected by your policies as District Attorney. We implore you to reaffirm your commitment now to all of Queens on these fundamental issues...

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>