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

Legal Aid Statement On NYS Anti-Mask Legislation (S8415/A10446)

(NEW YORK, NY) - Corey Stoughton, Attorney-in-Charge of the Special Litigation Unit with the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society, issued the below statement concerning anti-mask legislation ([S8415/A10446](#)), which recently passed the New York State Legislature:

“Before COVID-19, New York’s outmoded anti-mask statute had long been used as means to criminalize our clients, especially New Yorkers of color. Now, in the midst of a pandemic where wearing a protective mask is one of the most effective measures to mitigate the spread of the virus, repeal of this law is a common-sense step. The public health of New Yorkers is the paramount concern right now and antiquated laws should not undermine people’s efforts to stay safe. We urge Governor Andrew Cuomo to enact this legislation into law at once.

However, this legislation does not supplant the need for Albany to implement other critical measures to combat police abuse including the full repeal of Police Secrecy Law 50-A. We urge lawmakers to pass this crucial reform before session concludes next week.”

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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.

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