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

***In Response to City's Botched Effort to Engage Communities on Police Reforms, Legal Aid, CPR and Community Groups Announce Town Halls - "Redefining Community Safety" - to Ensure Input From New Yorkers Historically Affected by Over-Policing***

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society, Communities United for Police Reform and local community groups** announced today a series of town halls and events - "Redefining Community Safety" - in response to Mayor Bill de Blasio's botched effort to engage communities on plans to reinvent policing, as required by Governor Andrew Cuomo's Executive Order announced this past June.

Per the Executive Order, localities, in developing their plans, must include key stakeholders, including "members of the community, with an emphasis in areas with high numbers of police and community interactions; interested non-profit and faith-based community groups; the local office of the district attorney; the local public defender; and local elected officials."

To date, Mayor Bill de Blasio's committee on this initiative has refused to include public defenders but, more importantly, these forums have entirely failed to include any smaller, community-based organizations led by people most affected by over policing or frontline leaders of the police reform movement.

Instead, Mayor de Blasio has excluded most critical voices and has ceded complete control of the process to the NYPD, the very entity whose actions lie at the heart of the current problem of policing.

The City Council held a hearing on January 11 lambasting the Mayor and the NYPD for botching the process of community engagement and allowing the NYPD to control the reform process.

Mayor de Blasio's failure on this issue was also [recently cited by Governor Cuomo](#), with the Governor condemning the lack of community input in the police reform process stating:

"By April 1, New York City has to submit a new public safety plan...April 1 is when the budget is signed, and they (New York City) will not be in the budget if they don't have a passed new police plan. And that is not going to be a deadline that can be blown.

And I said months ago, to every locality...form a collaborative, put everyone around the table, let everyone speak, let everyone vent, discuss the release issues...a lot of important questions. Communities all across the state are doing it...they are making great progress.

But they (New York City) have a plan in by April 1. That's like nine weeks - it has to be passed by the City Council. New York City...has the police department in charge of the reform plan, which by the way, doesn't make any sense to me. There is no agency that is going to reform itself."

These town halls will culminate in a report that will be submitted to the New York City Council in March to inform the Council's consideration of the reform proposal the Mayor and the NYPD plan to submit without community input.

The other organizations and co-sponsors involved include the Anti-Violence Project, The Audre Lorde Project, The Bronx Defenders, Center for Constitutional Rights, New York Civil Liberties Union, Interrupting Criminalization, Justice Committee, Brooklyn Movement Center, DRUM, Make the Road NY, Girls for Gender Equity, Public Science Project, VOCAL-NY, True 2 Life, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, RISE of Staten Island and others.

“Mayor Bill de Blasio had a chance to bring New York City together to collaborate on a plan to transform the NYPD into a department that better serves the people of this city. He failed, but that does mean community voices can be sidelined in this process,” said **Corey Stoughton, Attorney-in-Charge of the Special Litigation Unit with the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “Whether in organizing our own town halls or organizing street protests, New Yorkers will do what it takes to be heard on the question of how our city should be policed.”

“It’s clear that the City's process to ‘reform and reinvent’ policing has been a sham from the start and will not result in any more safety from police violence for Black, Latinx and other communities of color,” said **Adilka Pimentel, spokesperson for Communities United for Police Reform**. “Our Redefining Community Safety Town Halls are an opportunity for the public to share their vision of what will create safe & healthy communities, especially for communities that regularly experience violence from the police. Our series of virtual town halls and events are the real speakers’ corner, free from NYPD propaganda and free from the Mayor’s continued deceit and inaction around police violence.”

**[Preliminary schedule of Redefining Community Safety town halls and other events \(All events are virtual due to COVID; schedule will be updated as additional public events are added\):](#)**

**Thursday, January 28th from 6:00pm - 8:30pm - Town Hall on Redefining Community Safety: Staten Island, organized by The Legal Aid Society, True 2 Life, RISE of Staten Island, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.**

Zoom link: [www.tinyurl.com/yyksdhd8](http://www.tinyurl.com/yyksdhd8)

**Wednesday, February 3rd from 5:00pm - 6:30pm - Community Safety for Youth by Youth, organized by the New York Civil Liberties Union & the Center for Constitutional Rights.**

**Monday, February 8th, from 6:00pm - 8:00pm - The Missing Story of #MeToo: A Teach-in on Police Sexual & Gender-Based Violence, organized by Interrupting Criminalization and Communities United for Police Reform.**

**Tuesday, February 9th, from 6:00pm - 8:30 pm - Redefining Community Safety: Debunking the Myth of NYPD Discipline, organized by Justice Committee and Communities United for Police Reform.**

**Wednesday, February 10th, from 5:00pm - 6:30pm - Decriminalizing Protest: A Forum on Redefining Community Safety, organized by New York Civil Liberties Union and Center for Constitutional Rights.**

**Thursday, February 11th, from 6:30pm - 8:30pm - Police ≠ Safety: Organizing for Real Community Accountability TEACH IN, Organized by Communities United for Police Reform, Brooklyn Movement Center, DRUM, Make the Road NY, NYC Anti-Violence Project.**

**Thursday, February 11th, starting at 6pm - LGBTQ+ Town Hall to Redefine Community Safety**, organized by Audre Lorde Project, Girls for Gender Equity, NYC Anti-Violence Project, Public Science Project.

**Wednesday, February 17th from 5:00pm - 6:30pm: Citywide Youth Town Hall on Community Safety**, organized by Make the Road NY and others.

**Thursday, February 25th, from 6:00pm - 8:00pm: Redefining Community Safety: The Bronx**, Organized by Bronx Defenders, Justice Committee.

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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. [www.legalaidnyc.org](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*