

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

January 19, 2021

Contact:

Redmond Haskins
The Legal Aid Society
929-441-2384
rhaskins@legal-aid.org

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

Legal Aid Statement in Response to Governor Cuomo's Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Address

(NEW YORK, NY) – **Tina Luongo, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**, released the following statement in response to Governor Andrew Cuomo's Fiscal Year 2022 budget address:

“A budget is a reflection of values, and New York should have a progressive budget that prioritizes legislation that reforms our broken criminal legal system, including the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act — the only path to legalization that centers Black and Latinx communities that have been devastated by the war on drugs and ravaged by COVID-19. This legislation creates clear community reinvestment provisions that dedicate resources to job training, expansion of afterschool programs, education and reentry services — all critical services that are long overdue in communities targeted by the war on drugs.

The Governor must also prioritize the enactment of decarceral legislation that advances racial equity, promotes public health and would save the state hundreds of millions of dollars annually. At a cost of more than \$369 million a year to incarcerate people for technical violations of parole, it is time for the state to enact the Less Is More Act (S1144). At a cost of more than \$120,000 per person, per year, to incarcerate elderly people, it is time to enact Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole (S15 and S1415). And at a cost of \$132 million a year to hold people in solitary confinement, it is long past time to enact the Halt Solitary Confinement Act (S1757).

In the last election, voters returned a Legislature with a mandate for ambitious criminal justice reform, and the Governor must respond to that mandate. The pandemic has only compounded the injustices faced by the New Yorkers we serve, and we look forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature on a budget that lives up to our State's progressive promise.”

###

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