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Contact:

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

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

Legal Aid Lauds Senate Committee Passage of the Less Is More Act, Urges Legislature to Enact this Critical Legislation Immediately

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society lauded the New York State Senate, Committee on Crime Victims, Crime and Correction for passing the Less Is More Act (S1144), critical legislation which would provide much-needed reforms to the administration of parole supervision by eliminating incarceration for most minor non-criminal violations, requiring prompt judicial review of parole violation charges, placing caps on revocation sanctions, and providing a path to earned discharge from supervision.

“Every year, thousands of Black and Latinx New Yorkers are sent back to prison for technical violations of parole. Their lives are upended, their families are torn apart and they face serious risk of contracting COVID-19 in prison, all because they missed an office report or tested positive for marijuana,” said **Lorraine Mc Evilly, Director of the Parole Revocation Defense Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “The Legal Aid Society lauds the Senate Committee on Crime Victims, Crime and Correction for passing the Less Is More Act, and we urge both the Senate and Assembly to bring this critical legislation to a floor vote at once.”

Background

New York State incarcerates people found to have committed technical parole violations more than any other state in the country, except for Illinois. Such violations often include missing curfew, failing to report to a parole officer, failing to update contact information with parole, and failing a marijuana test, among other non-criminal acts.

Unlike in the criminal court context, where bail is available following arrest, when someone is charged with committing a technical parole violation, their incarceration is mandatory and they’re held in jail until their parole revocation hearing takes place. This often leaves Legal Aid clients incarcerated at Rikers Island or another City jail for weeks and months at a time. This mandatory detention tears clients from their families, their homes, their employment and community-based health care.

Three New Yorkers incarcerated locally have succumbed to the virus since March. Two of those persons were incarcerated on a technical parole violation.

According to a recent report from Columbia University, while the number of New Yorkers incarcerated pretrial and on City sentences have declined in recent years, the number of those people incarcerated on technical parole violations remains stubbornly high.

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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