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

***With the NYS Budget Deadline Looming, Legal Aid Calls on Albany to Advance Key Housing Priorities to Help Struggling Tenants During COVID-19***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, with the New York State budget deadline looming, today called on Albany to advance key housing priorities in the New York State Fiscal Year 2022 budget to help low-income tenants who are struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic. The need for rent relief across the state is unprecedented, and the state Legislature must allocate significant funding in the budget to assist the hundreds of thousands of tenants who, as a result of the pandemic, have been unable to pay rent and face homelessness.

Among the key housing priorities that would impact low-income New Yorkers most significantly, are:

- **Leverage Federal COVID-19 Relief Money to Help New York Tenants (S2742A/A3918):** The bill would distribute federal funds in a way that is fair, equitable, and effective. It puts in place rules that will ensure rental assistance gets to New Yorkers who have suffered financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic, and will provide guidance to enable the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to effectively operate the program for the benefit of all. The bill prioritizes the lowest income New Yorkers who have the greatest need for assistance and does not discriminate based on immigration status. The bill also permits a common-sense solution: landlords will be able to work together with tenants to seek arrears on their behalf with their consent.

- **Housing Access Voucher Program (S2804A/A3701A):** A statewide rental subsidy for low-income families and individuals facing eviction, currently homeless, or facing loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions. HAVP would help low-income New Yorkers achieve stability and retain permanent housing by subsidizing their rent. The payment standard for HAVP would be 100% of Fair Market Rent, and tenants would contribute 30% of their income toward rent. Ultimately, HAVP would reduce costs to the state and taxpayers by preventing evictions, reducing emergency shelter utilization, and creating a path to permanent housing.
- **Public Housing:** Include funding for NYCHA and other struggling public housing authorities around the state.

New York must ensure that funds get to the families who are most in need of housing assistance immediately in order to prevent eviction and homelessness. The Legal Aid Society commits to working with the Governor and Legislature leaders to bring these priorities to fruition this session and protect the most vulnerable of tenants across the state.

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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 145 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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