

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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

Legal Aid Statements on the Mayor's Police Reform Plan and the New York City Council Passing Qualified Immunity Legislation

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** issued the following statements responding to Mayor Bill de Blasio's Police Reform Plan and the New York City Council passing qualified immunity legislation:

On the Mayor's Police Reform Plan:

"Mayor de Blasio had a genuine opportunity to implement urgently needed policing reforms. He failed to do that and instead produced a plan that at best glosses over the deeply rooted systemic problems within the NYPD that plague the New Yorkers we serve," said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. "We need to move beyond this failed process, listen to the demands of impacted communities for investment in non-police resources for improving public safety, and acknowledge that true change cannot be built on 'reforms' that entirely fail to address the underlying and long-standing problems. The Legal Aid Society will continue to work with our partners on measures that actually bring about the fundamental change that New Yorkers deserve of their police department."

On qualified immunity legislation:

"The culture of impunity that has been allowed to exist and fester within the New York City Police Department is in part due to the doctrine of qualified immunity, which shields even the worst officers from legal liability and prevents victims of police abuse from getting justice in court," said **Robert Quackenbush, Staff Attorney with the Prisoners' Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society**. "This introduction is long overdue and a solid first step, but it should not supplant the need for statewide legislation, specifically A4331/S1991, a bill that would provide comprehensive relief to victims of police and corrections officer misconduct. The Legal Aid Society urges Albany lawmakers to enact this critical measure now."

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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. www.legalaidnyc.org