

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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Contact:

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

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

Legal Aid Celebrates Signing of MRTA Into Law, Urges Albany to Enact Additional Racial Justice and Criminal Legal Reforms this Session

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** celebrated the signing of the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) into law today, critical legislation that brings justice to New York State by ending marijuana prohibition, expunging conviction records that have curtailed the opportunities of countless predominately young Black and Latinx New Yorkers, and delivering economic justice to ensure that communities who have suffered the brunt of aggressive and discriminatory marijuana enforcement are first reap the economic benefits.

Legal Aid also called on lawmakers to build on this success by enacting other key criminal justice reform measures.

“For decades, New York State’s racist war on marijuana ensnared thousands of our clients - nearly all of whom are from Black and Latinx communities - resulting in needless incarceration and a host of other devastating consequences that inevitably arise from contacts with the criminal legal system,” said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “This landmark legislation will right many of those injustices, and we applaud our progressive leaders in Albany for helping to secure this victory. However, more work is needed, and lawmakers must enact additional critical criminal justice reforms this session, including desperately needed parole reform: the Less Is More Act, Fair and Timely Parole, and Elder Parole, measures that have wide-ranging support from public defender organizations and members of law enforcement alike.”

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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