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

## ***NYC Defenders' Statement on the City's Fiscal Year 2022 Budget***

**(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, Queens Defenders and New York County Defender Services - New York City's primary public defender and legal services organizations - released the following statement in response to the City's Fiscal Year 2022 budget:**

“As New York City’s public defender offices providing critical legal services for low-income New Yorkers, we recognize the importance of a budget that restores funding for mental health, immigrant defense, eviction prevention and a tested, community-led response to gun violence.

A budget that increases funding for the New York City Police Department by \$200 million, local District Attorney’s offices by a combined \$36 million, and for other law enforcement functions, but fails to adequately fund the organizations that defend those targeted and funneled into the legal system by these government entities, will shortchange low-income New Yorkers and communities of color, and deepen the inequities that we, as defenders, see every day in our work.

The people we serve have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and the economic crisis. They need their city to invest more than ever before in community-based resources, including legal services. At a time when city hall received considerable federal funding to aid in pandemic recovery, we are mystified and angry that the City’s budget has prioritized punishment over services and does not include any increases for organizations providing Constitutional, mandated representation and life-saving civil legal services to New Yorkers in need.”

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