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

***The Legal Aid Society Files Article 78 Petition to Get Access to  
NYPD’s “SPEX Budget” Contracts After Refusal to Fulfill  
FOIL Request***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society filed an [Article 78 petition](#) today in the Supreme Court of the State of New York against the New York City Police Department (NYPD) seeking documents relating to the NYPD’s special expense budget (“SPEX budget”). The petition follows the refusal by the NYPD to grant access to documents requested by The Legal Aid Society through New York’s Freedom of Information Law (“FOIL”). The Legal Aid Society submitted its initial FOIL request on October 29, 2020 requesting “any and all documents” relating to NYPD’s “special expense purchase contracts, for the time period of March 27, 2007 to October 27, 2020.” The request included purchase contracts and records of payments, among other documents. The FOIL request was denied on March 16, 2021, and the appeal was denied in April. The NYPD cited the sensitivity of the records and claimed that complying with the FOIL request would be unduly burdensome.

Despite the passage of the Public Oversight of Surveillance Technology (POST) Act, the NYPD’s history of opaqueness surrounding its surveillance capabilities and funding continues. The Legal Aid Society submitted its FOIL request to bring transparency and greater public understanding to the murky landscape of electronic surveillance technologies that the NYPD has disproportionately used against Black and brown communities.

“New Yorkers have a right to know how their tax dollars are used by the NYPD to purchase invasive surveillance technology,” said Benjamin Burger, a Staff Attorney in The Legal Aid Society’s Digital Forensics Unit. “These records are public documents and the NYPD should follow the law and disclose them.”

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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](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*