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

***The Legal Aid Society Testifies Before NY State Assembly on Issues Hobbling Emergency Rental Assistance Plan (ERAP)***

(NEW YORK, NY) - Ellen Davidson, staff attorney at The Legal Aid Society appeared before a Joint Public Hearing of the Assembly Standing Committees on Housing, Social Services, and Ways and Means on Tuesday to deliver testimony on the many challenges facing New York's beleaguered Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), and the necessity of addressing those challenges to protect the thousands of residents who will remain vulnerable to eviction if the state moratorium expires on August 31st.

Despite being launched in June and supplied with nearly \$2.3 billion in federal and state funds meant to blunt the economic hardship created by the COVID-19 pandemic and protect tenants from eviction over ruinous degrees of accumulated rental debt, ERAP has struggled to disperse money to struggling New Yorkers. As late as July 21st, New York was the [only state in the nation that hadn't released any of the funds allocated to it](#); by August 6, 2021, it had dispersed about \$100 million dollars to New Yorkers - only 4% of the funds available. The glacial rate of disbursement alone puts the remaining funds in danger, as New York will forfeit federal relief to other localities if it doesn't use 65% of the funds by Sept. 30.

Standing in the way of a more aggressive pace of disbursement of relief funds are a core set of problems that have plagued ERAP from its launch - chief among them a poorly-designed, glitch-riddled application website that has created widespread confusion and dismay among applicants. Other issues - including lack of clear instructions and guidelines; absence of real-time

data sharing and application updates; and a lack of an appeals process to ensure basic due process to applicants - continue to put tenants who are the most vulnerable to eviction in danger. Without obtaining the protections associated with a pending ERAP application, they will be at risk of eviction once the moratorium ends on August 31.

“We are running out of time,” said Davidson in submitted testimony. “We must right this ship and start providing rent relief. Tenants and landlords are relying on this money. The legislature designed a fair and equitable program. Now is the time to ensure that the promise of the legislation is realized, ensuring that tenants can remain in their homes.”

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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)*