



November 16, 2021

Contact:

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

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

Legal Aid Condemns DA Clark's Call to Rollback New York's Historic Raise The Age Law

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society condemned Bronx District Attorney Darcel Clark's call on Albany to rollback the landmark Raise The Age law which was enacted in 2017 and widely supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders including law enforcement.

The Legal Aid Society said, "District Attorney Clark's misleading statement that the Raise the Age law does not provide for accountability for gun possession misses the mark on identifying solutions for gun violence. The current law allows for cases of gun possession to be retained in the adult court system. During the first eighteen months after Raise The Age was enacted, only three percent of charges filed against 16- and 17-year old were for attempted murder and murder, and ten percent were for possession of firearms and other dangerous weapons. During that time, shootings in New York City remained the lowest they have been in decades.

Only after months of COVID-19 infections, deaths, lockdowns, disconnection from necessary services and the resulting economic upheaval did gun violence increase in New York City, as it did in many cities around the country where criminal justice reforms had not been enacted. Despite the recent rise in gun related incidents, the numbers are still far lower than the rates in 2000 when all 16- and 17-year olds were prosecuted as adults for all criminal charges, even the most minor.

Furthermore, Raise the Age specifically allows for teenagers charged with the most serious crimes or those who are found not to be amenable to the services available in family court to be charged and sentenced in the adult court system.

The reality is that we can't incarcerate our way out of gun violence. That has been tried and failed — New York spent decades laboring under the myth that children are adults with no evidence that the practice ever reduced crime rates.

Intervention on the front end through proven community-based models including CURE Violence programs and enhanced mental health and family supports have been and are the appropriate response to gun violence.

This is an ill-advised proposal, one devoid of logic or merit, and Albany lawmakers must summarily reject it as it would only perpetuate the historical racial disparities of over-prosecution and over-incarceration of young Black and Brown New Yorkers.”

###

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