



February 1, 2022

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

Legal Aid and Empire Justice Center Urge Albany to Enact Robust Legislative Package that Reforms Cash Assistance to Prevent Homelessness, End Deep Poverty and Ease Benefits Cliff for Low-Wage Workers

(New York, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** and **Empire Justice Center** called on Albany to enact a recently introduced package of legislation sponsored by New York State Assembly Social Services Chair Linda Rosenthal which will increase assistance to low-income and homeless New Yorkers. The bills would:

- ([A.8900](#)) would increase the maximum shelter allowance to 100 percent of the HUD Fair Market Rent;
- ([A.9130](#)) would make long overdue increases to the non-shelter cash grant components - some of which have not been increased in over 30 years;
- ([A.9112](#)) would make income and resource rule changes that would allow working families to access cash assistance; and
- ([A.8061](#)) would raise certain basic needs grants for homeless households living in shelter, benefits which haven't been increased since 1997.

Susan Welber, Staff Attorney in the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society, said: “The current levels of cash assistance relegate participants across New York to a state of ‘deep poverty.’ For our clients and all low-income New Yorkers eligible to receive assistance, this increase will alleviate some financial hardship and grant them more access to economic opportunities. An increased shelter allowance is crucial to preventing homelessness as we start to emerge from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a matter of economic and racial justice. The Legal Aid Society calls on Albany to immediately enact this package of critical legislation.”

Susan Antos, Senior Public Benefits Attorney for Empire Justice Center, a statewide legal services and advocacy organization for low-income New Yorkers states: “The provisions in the bill will be life changing for low income families, and will make the difference between having a home and living on the streets. We thank Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal for her leadership and advocacy on behalf of low-income New Yorkers. The public assistance shelter allowance for families with children has not been updated in nearly 20 years and it has been 34 years since the shelter allowance for individuals without children has been revised. In every county in Upstate New York, the total public assistance grant, including the portion earmarked for shelter costs, is at or below 40 % of the Federal Poverty Level. As a longtime public benefits attorney, this package of bills is equitable, necessary, and long overdue.”

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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