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Legal Aid Releases Post-Budget 2022 Statewide Legislative Priorities for Civil Legal Services

Attorneys Call on Albany to Enact Critical Reforms to Address Income Inequality, Poverty, Housing Instability, Immigrant Detention, Prison Labor, and Other Issues Affecting Vulnerable New Yorkers

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society released its [post-budget 2022 statewide civil legal services legislative priorities](#) today calling on Albany to enact a sweeping package of reforms to address a myriad of issues facing Legal Aid clients, the majority from communities of color, including income inequality, poverty, housing instability, immigrant detention, prison labor, and other issues affecting vulnerable New Yorkers.

Civil legislative priorities include:

HOUSING

- **Pass new “good cause” eviction legislation to bring renters’ rights to tenants in smaller buildings (Salazar S.3082/Hunter A.5573):** This bill would require landlords to offer renewal leases unless they had good cause for denying the renewal. It would also limit rent increases by providing for a measure connected to inflation and providing a rebuttable presumption that increases over that percentage are unreasonable.
- **Public Housing Preservation Trust Legislation (Kavanagh S.6999/Cymbrowitz A.7805):** The Public Housing Preservation Trust would propose transferring 110,000

apartments to a newly created public entity that would expedite repairs and improvements and allow the properties to receive more funding by switching from a Section 9 subsidy to Tenant Protection Vouchers or Section 8.

HEALTH

- **Reform Public Assistance and Medicaid Overpayment Recovery Processes (Gottfried A.5613/Rivera S.4540):** This legislation improves the deeply flawed overpayment process for Public Assistance and Medicaid by (1) limiting the recovery to the amount up to the value of the property that caused the overpayment, or the cost of the assistance or care received, whichever is lower; (2) protecting against recovery of benefits related to the COVID-19 public health emergency; (3) creating a defined waiver for recipients for whom an overpayment judgment would create undue economic or other hardship. The bill also creates debt forgiveness and relief for recipients who currently are subject to overpayment settlement agreements.

EMPLOYMENT

- **End Forced Labor in Correctional Facilities (Myrie S.308/Epstein A.3142):** This legislation would amend the New York State Constitution to prohibit prison slavery by allowing people incarcerated in a New York State prison the right to refuse to work while incarcerated. The amendment process requires the passage of this bill in two consecutive legislative sessions, as well as a referendum.
- **The Prison Minimum Wage Act (Myrie S.287/Perry A.1643):** This legislation would extend New York’s minimum wage laws to incarcerated workers, setting a \$3.00 per hour minimum wage for people in prison.

IMMIGRATION

- **The Dignity Not Detention Act (Reyes A.7099A/Salazar S.7373):** The Dignity Not Detention Act would prohibit local governments from entering into, renewing or continuing immigration detention contracts, taking New York State out of the immigrant detention business and putting an end to the inhumane and unnecessary incarceration of immigrants in New York jails.

“With only weeks left in the legislative session, it’s imperative that lawmakers advance key measures that meaningfully address inequality, poverty, housing instability, immigrant detention, prison labor, and other issues affecting vulnerable New Yorkers, especially those from communities of color,” said **Adriene Holder, Attorney-In-Charge of the Civil Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “Albany failed to take up these critical bills in the budget, and we call on Governor Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie and legislators to prioritize them before session concludes in early June.”

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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