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Legal Aid Receives \$250,000 Grant to Expand Efforts to Prevent Foreclosures, Fight Housing Instability, and Preserve Intergenerational Wealth for Client Communities

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society today announced that it has been awarded a \$250,000 grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York (FHLB NY) to advance housing and economic justice for client communities. The grant will help expand the recently launched Economic Equities Project, which focuses on protecting low-income New Yorkers' economic equity. The generous gift will fund two new attorney positions, one focused on bankruptcy and the other focused on estate planning. These attorneys will help low-income New Yorkers impacted by housing instability protect their assets and long-term economic prospects.

The Economic Equities Project houses all of Legal Aid's economic justice units, including the Foreclosure Prevention Project, Community Development Project, Consumer Law Project, and Low-Income Taxpayer Unit. Under one department, the Economic Equities Project coordinates with the housing practice and other areas within the Civil Practice to address systemic legal issues affecting the economic rights and wellbeing of Legal Aid clients. The Economic Equities team works to protect clients' assets, promote economic opportunity, and build generational financial self-sufficiency for families and communities.

Legal Aid's fight for safe and affordable housing last fiscal year included nearly 15,000 housing law and foreclosure prevention cases that benefitted more than 30,000 people, in addition to an advocacy and reform platform that impacted the entire state. Over the last five years, the Consumer Law Project has worked on over 2,600 cases and the Foreclosure Prevention Project has served over 1,300 clients, achieving positive outcomes for many households. Since the

COVID-19 pandemic, the Community Development Project and Low-Income Taxpayer Unit have assisted approximately 2,000 microentrepreneurs/nonprofits and 400 taxpayers, respectively.

The two new attorneys will play an instrumental role in helping clients save their homes. Nearly 70% of homeowners who come to Legal Aid seeking foreclosure assistance have defaulted on a prior loan modification, whether as a result of loss of employment, family break-up, or more recently, as a result of COVID-19. Filing bankruptcy under Chapter 13 is the main option for such homeowners to preserve their low-interest modified loan and prevent foreclosure.

“Protecting economic equity is paramount to empowering New Yorkers and preserving and building generational wealth,” said **Tashi Lhewa, director of the Economic Equities Project at The Legal Aid Society**. “We have seen entire communities, such as southeast Queens and the North Bronx, impacted by foreclosures and housing instability. Many of our clients have lost equity that should have stayed within their families. We want to ensure families can determine what they can keep in their family and pass on to another, protecting wealth and equity transfers from one generation to another.”

“We thank FHLBNY for their generous grant that will help continue our fight for economic opportunity and housing justice for our clients,” said **Adriene Holder, chief attorney of the Civil Practice of The Legal Aid Society**. “This funding will be instrumental for our work protecting homeowners' property and economic equity, which is critical to building long-term prosperity and generational wealth for client communities.”

“At the Federal Home Loan Bank of New York, we know the importance of creating and preserving access to housing opportunities,” said **José R. González, president and CEO of the FHLBNY**. “It is our belief that a stable home is the foundation from which we grow as individuals, families and communities. The Legal Aid Society is doing vital work in protecting housing stability for so many New Yorkers, and the FHLBNY is proud to support these efforts.”

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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 over 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