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

***Ahead of NYS Assembly Hearing on Public Assistance Benefits, Legal Aid Calls on the State to Fight Housing Instability and Hunger***

***After Decades of Neglect, the Governor and the Legislature Need to Work Together to Increase the Grant for Rent and Basic Needs***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society, ahead of a New York State Assembly [hearing](#) on public assistance benefits, called on Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature to advance measures to combat housing instability and hunger by approving long-overdue increases in the levels of assistance for rent and basic needs for low-income New Yorkers participating in the public assistance program.

Legal Aid staff will testify about the need for these increases and explain how the levels of assistance are so insufficient that New Yorkers participating in the program cannot afford basic needs including rent, food, diapers, and clothes for growing children.

“This is a crisis, and our clients and all low-income New Yorkers who receive public benefits are bearing the brunt of inflation and the economic upheaval following the pandemic. Thousands of families are facing homelessness and they cannot wait for assistance to remain safely housed,” said **Susan Welber, staff attorney in the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society.** “The Governor and the Legislature must work together to ensure these problems are addressed after many years of neglect. The result will have positive outcomes for all: decreased evictions and homelessness and healthier families with increased economic security and prospects for a

brighter future. Given the incredible human and economic cost of poverty in New York State, lawmakers must act now.”

Among other things, the Governor and Legislature need to work together to increase levels of assistance for rent, and basic needs for those on public assistance:

- **Increase the basic assistance provided to low income New Yorkers along the lines set forth in A.9130 (Rosenthal)/S.9513 (Persaud)**, which increases assistance to keep pace with inflation so people can better meet their needs and implements a COLA so assistance keeps pace with inflation going forward. Much of the assistance was last increased 11 years ago; other parts have not been increased since the 1980s. Under the current levels, a three person family with kids in NYC receives only \$389 to meet their non rent-needs, which is less than \$100 per week.
- **Raise the maximum rent assistance to 100 percent of the HUD Fair Market Rent (FMR) along the lines set forth in A.8900 (Rosenthal/S.8632 Kavanagh), which would prevent evictions and homelessness.** Rent assistance levels for households with minor children have not been increased since 2003, and rent assistance for adult only households has not been increased since 1988. The State’s failure to increase these rent assistance levels results in eviction and homelessness for many families.
- **Adopt the Housing Assistance Voucher Program (HAVP), as set forth in S.2804B (Kavanagh)/A.3701 (Cymbrowitz), which would help families who exit public assistance for work maintain needed housing support until they can afford it themselves.** HAVP is a State Section 8 type housing voucher program available to people who are not eligible for Cash Assistance. It would be available state-wide to all households who meet financial criteria and who are homeless or at risk of eviction. Families are eligible until their rent equals or is less than 30% of income. People can obtain HAVP regardless of immigration status.

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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](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*