

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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

Statement from Legal Aid Ahead of NYS Joint Legislative Hearing on Criminal Legal System Data

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society released the following statement ahead of a [joint legislative hearing](#) on criminal legal system data:

“In 2019, Albany passed needed reforms to New York’s outmoded, punitive, and racist discovery, bail, and speedy trial statutes, and this represented a seismic shift towards securing transparency and fairness in our criminal legal process.

“But since implementation, local tabloids and fear-mongering politicians have waged a relentless campaign to rollback these reforms, spreading misinformation and faulting the measures as root causes behind an endless number of society’s problems.

“With regard to discovery, District Attorney’s now claim that the requirements for sharing evidence are too onerous, leading to an unprecedented number of case dismissals. But this also isn’t true.

“Prosecutors dismiss cases for a range of reasons, and [figures](#) from 2017 released by the New York State Office of Court Administration reported that 43 percent of cases resulted in an eventual dismissal. Our data confirms that the current dismissal rate compares to pre-pandemic levels.

“However, we do agree with our adversaries that funding is absolutely needed so the reforms can achieve their full intended promise. The 2019 legislation failed to include any resources for public defender and DA offices to assist with establishing systems to comply with the new mandates. With funding, we will all have the bolstered support to better gather, share, store and analyze critical case information. Our standards were rightly raised, and we should not turn back in difficulty.

“We thank the Legislature for calling this hearing to keep the focus on facts and push back against fear-mongering. We will continue to work this legislative session to advance measures to move New York forward and leave behind past policies that fed mass incarceration, eroded due process, and made our state less safe.”

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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. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>