

# THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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

## *Legal Aid Statement in Response to Governor Kathy Hochul's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget*

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society released the following statement in response to Governor Kathy Hochul's Fiscal Year 2024 budget:

“We are extremely disappointed that Governor Hochul failed to include any proposed allocation in her Fiscal Year 2024 budget for public defender and legal services organizations to address staffing and operational demands, instead prioritizing the needs of prosecutors and others in law enforcement. Funding that favors one side of the legal system over all others reinforces bias and erodes efforts to further public safety.

“Moreover, in addition to ignoring our funding needs, the Governor's call to remove a well-established provision of law requiring that judges consider the ‘least restrictive’ alternative in bail-eligible cases will only lead to the caging of more New Yorkers of color at Rikers Island, a facility imperiled by a range of crises. We also question the constitutionality of this proposal, as it likely violates United States Supreme Court [precedent](#) protecting the presumption of innocence.

“While the Governor proposes significant funding to bolster the statewide construction of affordable housing, this relief is years off, and our clients need action now. Both ‘[Good Cause](#)’ and the [Housing Access Voucher Program](#) would address the state's sprawling eviction and homelessness crises, affording tenants in unregulated apartments critical protections to remain in their homes, and New Yorkers on the brink of homelessness or those already residing in shelters the means to secure affordable, permanent housing.

“Lastly, this budget must address the epidemic of invasive police interrogations that prey on many of our young clients. Even after the Exonerated Five case highlighted how police interrogation tactics can cause young people to falsely confess, Albany has failed to advance legislation that would ensure that youth have access to an attorney prior to waiving *Miranda* rights. [#RightToRemainSilent](#), pending legislation, would codify this right, and lawmakers should pass it without any further delay.

“As we have every budget and legislative session, we'll continue to work with the Governor and Legislative leaders to advance priorities that serve the New Yorkers most in need, our clients.”

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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>*