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

As Budget Negotiations Continue, Legal Aid Urges Lawmakers to Reject Governor Hochul’s Proposed Rollbacks to New York’s Successful Bail Reform Law

(NEW YORK, NY) — **The Legal Aid Society** released the following statement urging lawmakers to reject Governor Kathy Hochul’s punitive and wrongheaded proposal to increase pre-trial detention and undermine New York’s successful bail reform law:

“The Legislature must outright reject Governor Hochul’s eleventh hour hijacking of the budget process to ram through cruel and nonsensical changes to New York’s successful bail reform law simply for her own cynical political gain.

“Judges already have wide discretion to set bail or remand, and eliminating the ‘least restrictive’ standard in existing statute erodes the purpose of bail and would only condemn more of our Black and Latinx clients to suffer pretrial incarceration at Rikers Island, a facility that has already claimed the lives of 36 New Yorkers since January 2021.

“Lawmakers can either capitulate on rollbacks for a third time, or finally hold the line - regardless of how long this delays the budget - to reject the abhorrent practice of jailing people pretrial, New Yorkers who are presumed innocent.

“This campaign has been fueled by misinformation from politicians and tabloids, and if the Legislature folds again, further attempts to gut bail and other landmark reforms will only continue.

“The Legal Aid Society implores Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie and other legislators to stand firm against Governor Hochul’s exploitation of the budget process to secure regressive rollbacks that will increase the number of people languishing in jail awaiting trial, separate families and erode public safety.”

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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