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

Statement in Response to Siena College Poll on Bail Reform

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society issued the following statement in response to today's Siena College poll on bail reform:

“Politicians and local tabloids have fueled a relentless false narrative across New York State that bail reform is the reason for all of society’s problems. That is simply not the case, and data continue to support this. If anything, bail reform has furthered public safety by keeping families and communities together.

“With the budget due in less than a week, Governor Hochul is attempting to hammer through her knee-jerk, politically expedient proposal to eliminate a requirement that pretrial incarceration for bail-eligible charges be the ‘least restrictive’ alternative as a means of providing judges more discretion in setting bail.

“But existing law already addresses the concerns raised in today’s poll as judges currently have discretion to set bail or even remand to jail people charged with ‘serious crimes’. The prevailing narrative peddled by the Governor ignores this reality in service of furthering her political agenda.

“Eliminating the ‘least restrictive’ requirement would harm thousands of low-income New Yorkers by removing the safeguard against wealth-based detention, and balloon jail populations throughout New York in an effort to incarcerate a handful of people entrenched in cycles of rearrest.

“Decades of research confirms that incarceration is among the least effective and most expensive approaches to crime prevention. Moreover, research also shows that targeted community violence intervention programs have some of the strongest results in reducing gun homicides and shootings.

“The Legislature must reject Governor Hochul’s extreme proposal and focus on additional investments in community violence intervention infrastructures and community-based programming to further support the New Yorkers most at risk of re-arrest.”

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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