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

Legal Aid Urges Legislators to Resist Last-Minute Proposal From Governor Hochul, NYC DAs to Overturn New York’s Successful Discovery Reform Law

(NEW YORK, NY) — **The Legal Aid Society** released the following statement in response to a legislative proposal from Governor Kathy Hochul and New York City District Attorneys to overturn New York’s successful discovery reform law:

“For decades, New York’s unjust discovery statute was the most regressive in the country, depriving our clients of critical evidence, contributing to wrongful convictions and court delays resulting in lengthy pretrial incarceration. In 2019, lawmakers rightly enacted reform, which mirrors many other states’ statutes, to bring this law into the 21st century.

“Now, Governor Hochul and local District Attorneys have proposed language that would essentially overturn this critical reform and return New York to a time when crucial evidence was withheld from the defense and our clients languished on Rikers Island for years. If passed, this proposal would upend the criminal legal system and further the disparate outcomes that our clients, Black and Latinx New Yorkers, would have to bear.

“This 11th hour ploy to gut one of the most transformative reforms Albany has codified in recent memory is a shameless attempt by prosecutors to revert back to the days when discovery practices skewed heavily in their favor.

“Funding is actually the solution that would allow discovery reform to fulfill its intended goal. The 2019 reform failed to include resources to help both District Attorney Offices and public defender organizations implement the wholesale change in evidence sharing practices. Instead of turning back in the face of difficulty, Albany should instead allocate the funds needed in the upcoming budget.

“Lawmakers in both chambers must stand firm against these continued chaotic attempts to undo their own progress towards making our criminal legal system more fair and just.”

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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