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

New York City Public Defenders Joint Statement on New York's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, New York County Defender Services, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, and Queens Defenders issued the following joint statement on New York's Fiscal Year 2024 budget:

“Governor Hochul and the Legislature’s decision to yet again rollback New York’s bail laws, eliminating the well-established ‘least restrictive conditions’, is unconscionable.

“This move erodes the presumption of innocence, and it will balloon jail populations in dangerous and deadly facilities throughout New York, jeopardizing peoples’ employment, housing, education, access to critical services and bonds with their families and communities.

“The fact that Governor Hochul hijacked the budget process to force through this rollback - precluding the public from any meaningful review or comment - to stave off negative political coverage in local tabloids, is even more disturbing and the epitome of flawed policy making.

“Any effort to address public safety in the budget should have focused on investing resources and funding in communities. The ‘tough on crime’ punishment paradigm embraced by this budget has never made any of us safer.

“While we are pleased that this budget finally prioritizes resources for the staffing and technological demands required by New York’s transformative and successful discovery reform, instead of more rollbacks, we decry Albany’s refusal to include our modest budget request to bolster New York State’s District Attorney and Indigent Legal Services Attorney Loan Forgiveness program, which is especially troubling given the imminent sunset of the federal student loan pause. We’ll continue to work with lawmakers post-budget to ensure this bill’s needed passage.

“Furthermore, as we move into the remaining weeks of this year’s legislative session, New York’s lawmakers should work to pass legislation that promotes justice and fairness, like Clean Slate, decarcerates prisons and jails, like Treatment Not Jail, and creates stronger communities by providing much needed services and resources.”

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