

# THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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

## ***In Response to the City's Tentative Contract Agreement with the Uniformed Officers Coalition, Legal Aid Calls on Mayor Adams to Prioritize the Funding Needs of Public Defenders in the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget***

(NEW YORK, NY) – Tina Luongo, chief attorney of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society, released the following statement in response to the City's tentative contract agreement with the Uniformed Officers Coalition:

“Members of law enforcement aren't the only actors in the criminal legal system, and the City has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that public defender organizations, who employ thousands of unionized staff across New York, are fully funded as well.

“Due to years of stagnant investment, Legal Aid and other local defender offices face enormous staffing and attrition challenges, which threatens our collective ability to continue zealously representing low-income New Yorkers accused of a crime.

“While we appreciate that Mayor Adams has acknowledged the importance and significant role defenders play serving the public, this must come with increased funding in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget, not just lip service.

“When one side of the system is fully funded and the other neglected, it's our clients, New Yorkers from communities of color, who have the most to lose.

“A budget is a ‘values’ document, and if the Mayor truly values the constitutionally mandated work that we perform, the upcoming City budget must provide the resources we need and have long sought.”

### **Background**

See more information on New York City public defenders' Fiscal Year 2024 budget request to the City: <https://tinyurl.com/3fyapswe>.

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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](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*