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

## ***Legal Aid Calls on Governor Hochul to Sign the Challenging Wrongful Convictions Act***

(NEW YORK, NY) – Elizabeth Felber, Director of the Wrongful Conviction Unit at The Legal Aid Society, issued the following statement calling on Governor Kathy Hochul to sign the [Challenging Wrongful Convictions Act](#), which was just transmitted by the Legislature to the Governor for consideration:

“New York’s existing framework to help innocent people appeal wrongful convictions is completely outdated. Vulnerable New Yorkers — and disproportionately people of color — often face fear-inducing coercive tactics from law enforcement offices that cause them to plead guilty to crimes they did not commit. As a result, they face years or decades of undue punishment. Governor Hochul must sign the Challenging Wrongful Convictions Act into law immediately and allow these people the opportunity to live their lives without the immense burden of an unjust criminal conviction.”

### **Background**

The Challenging Wrongful Convictions Act would improve the existing framework in New York State that allows those who pleaded guilty to file a claim of actual innocence only if DNA evidence emerges – a framework that few cases can meet, even as huge numbers of people plead guilty when they did not commit the crime.

This bill also brings New York law in line with five other states and the District of Columbia that have mechanisms for people to clear old convictions for crimes that have subsequently been decriminalized.

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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)*