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

Legal Aid Releases 2024 Statewide Juvenile Legal System and Family Regulation System Legislative Priorities

(NEW YORK, NY) - **The Legal Aid Society** today released its 2024 statewide juvenile legal system and family regulation system [legislative priorities](#) calling on Albany to pass a host of reforms that will benefit vulnerable children and young people across New York State.

The measures include legislation to better [protect young New Yorkers](#) by requiring that they consult with an attorney prior to police interrogation, as well as the [Juvenile CARE Act](#), which would ensure that young people are not barred from future education, housing, or employment opportunities as a result of past juvenile delinquency adjudications.

Legal Aid also called on Albany to prioritize the [Preserving Family Bonds Act](#), which was passed by the Legislature in 2023 but vetoed by Governor Hochul last month. This bill would give Family Court judges the discretion to order contact between a child and their family of origin after an involuntary termination of parental rights when there continuing contact is in the best interest of the child.

Additional legislative priorities include the [Youth Justice and Opportunities Act](#), which would provide alternative sentencing and record sealing for young adults aged 19-25; a measure to expand the age range eligibility for rent subsidies to assist youth who are transitioning out of foster care; and legislation to mandate the use of age-appropriate disciplinary interventions to prevent the over-utilization of exclusionary discipline practices such as suspensions and classroom removals.

“Despite the strides New York has made in recent years to enact reforms in both juvenile legal and family regulation systems, thousands of children and families continue to suffer from deeply flawed, archaic practices that can have devastating, long-lasting effects on their health and wellbeing,” said **Dawne Mitchell, Chief Attorney of the Juvenile Rights Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “Albany must work to address these systemic injustices — many of which disproportionately impact Black and Latine children and families — by prioritizing legislation that will ensure all New Yorkers, regardless of age, are treated fairly by our legal system. We look forward to working with Governor Kathy Hochul, Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie to usher these bills into law immediately next session.”

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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 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