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

***In Response to Budget Extender, Legal Aid and ALAA Call on Albany to Ensure Inclusion of Legislation to Increase Student Loan Assistance for Lawyers Serving the Public Interest***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society and the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys UAW Local 2325, in response to the budget extender, called on Albany to ensure the budget inclusion of [legislation](#) that would bolster the District Attorney and Indigent Legal Services Attorney Loan Forgiveness (DALF) program, administered by the New York State Higher Educations Services Corporation.

The legislation, carried by State Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon, would increase student loan aid from up to \$3,400 to \$8,000 annually, for up to eight years, or total award eligibility of up to \$64,000 in total.

Earlier this month, the Senate [overwhelmingly passed](#) the bipartisan measure, and the Assembly included DALF in their [one-house budget](#).

Additionally, more than [600 individual attorneys](#) and [35 district attorneys - including the District Attorney's Association of the State of New York - public defender offices, civil legal services providers, and unions](#) throughout New York signed advocacy letters urging Albany to enact the critical DALF legislation.

Under the current program, lawyers serving the public interest can receive up to a total of \$20,400 over six years to pay down their student loans, putting them [well behind](#) the award amounts allotted for registered nurses on teaching faculties and social workers, who perform vital work but, on average, carry less debt than [public interest lawyers](#). During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the federal student loan pause gave experienced public sector attorneys critical financial relief, allowing them to stay in their jobs and provide essential advocacy to low-income New Yorkers. With the ending of the pause and the skyrocketing cost of living in the state, the need to expand this loan assistance program is [more crucial than ever](#).

“Public interest attorneys are a vital part of our legal system, ensuring that all New Yorkers - regardless of income - have access to free and zealous representation,” said **Twyla Carter, Attorney-In-Chief and CEO of The Legal Aid Society**. “But for years, these attorneys have not received sufficient student loan assistance to ease the financial burden of attending law school, and these disparities have caused attrition rates at our organizations to

skyrocket. Governor Hochul and the Legislature must prioritize this legislation in the upcoming budget to thwart this alarming and unacceptable trend.”

“This bill has broad bipartisan support from our state Senate, our state Assembly, our District Attorneys, and legal services attorneys from across New York, showing that the time to expand student debt relief for these essential workers is both long overdue and critical to supporting access to justice,” said **Lisa Ohta, President of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (UAW Local 2325)**. “Our clients deserve experienced advocates by their side in court and without student debt assistance more of our union members will be forced to leave jobs they love. We urge the Governor and the Legislature to include this bill in the state budget and give these essential workers an opportunity to stay in public service for years to come.”

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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)*