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Legal Aid, ALAA Laud Legislature for Prioritizing Legislation to Increase Student Loan Assistance for Lawyers Serving the Public Interest

Groups Call on Governor Hochul to Join Wide-Ranging Coalition In Support of this Legislation

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society and the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys UAW Local 2325 praised the New York State Senate and the New York State Assembly for prioritizing passage of [legislation](#) that would bolster the District Attorney and Indigent Legal Services Attorney Loan Forgiveness (DALF) program to assist attorneys serving the public interest manage student loan debt.

The groups also called on Governor Kathy Hochul to join the wide-ranging coalition in support of this legislation to see DALF finally codified into law.

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

On Tuesday, A coalition of 35 district attorney offices, public defender offices, civil legal services providers, unions and others signed onto a [letter calling](#) on Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature to ensure the inclusion of DALF in the upcoming budget. This comes after more than [600 individual attorneys](#) issued a joint letter calling on Albany to do the same.

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. Just yesterday, the Senate passed DALF and the bill is currently in committee in the Assembly.

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 sky-rocketing cost of living in the state, the need to expand this loan assistance program is [more crucial than ever](#).

“The New York State Legislature has done their job by prioritizing passage of DALF, and now we call on Governor Kathy Hochul to join our statewide coalition to see this needed legislation finally enacted into law,” said **Twyla Carter, Attorney-In-Chief and CEO of The Legal Aid Society**. “Failing to act on DALF would not only adversely impact our staff who struggle to manage exorbitant student loan debt, but hinder low-income New Yorkers’ access to critical legal services, and this is an outcome that lawmakers must work actively to avoid.”

“We are grateful to sponsors, Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly Member JoAnn Simon, for championing this bill through the Legislature, and for fighting for our union members to get student debt relief that is critical to sustaining a career in public service,” said **Lisa Ohta, President of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (UAW Local 2325)**. “Governor Hochul now has an opportunity to join this bipartisan effort so public defenders, civil legal service attorneys and District Attorneys can continue to serve New Yorkers who access our courts for years to come.”

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