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With Lawmakers Back in Albany, Legal Aid and ALAA Call on NYS Assembly to Pass 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, with lawmakers back in Albany, called on the New York State Assembly to pass [legislation](#) that would bolster the District Attorney and Indigent Legal Services Attorney Loan Forgiveness (DALF) program to increase student loan aid for lawyers serving the public interest. Albany failed to include this critical legislation in New York State’s Fiscal Year 2025 budget.

In March, the Senate [overwhelmingly passed](#) the legislation and the Assembly included DALF in their [one-house budget](#). The bipartisan legislation has robust support throughout the State from prosecutors and public defenders alike, with more than [600 individual attorneys](#) and [35 district attorney offices, public defender offices, civil legal services providers, and unions](#) signing onto letters in support of DALF.

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.

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](#).

“While we remain disappointed that DALF wasn’t included in the State’s Fiscal Year 2025 budget, Albany still has an opportunity to right this wrong,” said **Twyla Carter, Attorney-In-Chief and CEO of The Legal Aid Society**. “The Senate has already passed DALF, legislation that would bolster student loan assistance for lawyers

serving the public interest, and the Assembly can pass this bill in the remaining weeks of session. We urge Speaker Heastie to bring DALF to a full body vote immediately.”

“Before the end of session, the Assembly has the opportunity to support student debt relief for public defenders and legal services attorneys who provide critical representation to vulnerable New Yorkers every day, ensuring experienced advocates can remain in their jobs,” said **Lisa Ohta, President of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (UAW Local 2325)**. “This bill has broad bipartisan support because this relief is so essential to maintaining access to justice for all in our state. We call on Speaker Heastie to stand with us and bring DALF to a vote.”

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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