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

***Legal Aid Lauds NY State Legislature for Passing Jury of Our Peers Act,
Legislation to End the Lifetime Ban on Jury Service for People with Felony
Convictions***

***Attorneys, Advocates Call on Governor Hochul to Immediately Sign Critical Bill
into Law***

(NEW YORK, NY) - **The Legal Aid Society** today lauded the New York State Legislature for their passage of the [Jury of Our Peers Act](#), legislation that would end the lifetime ban on jury service for people with felony convictions, and called on Governor Kathy Hochul to immediately sign the critical bill into law.

New York law permanently disqualifies people with felony convictions from serving on a jury, no matter the offense, how long ago the conviction took place, or what they have since done to rehabilitate their lives. The Jury of Our Peers Act, sponsored by NY State Senator Cordell Cleare and Assemblymember Jeffrion Aubry, would put an end to that ban and allow more New Yorkers to meaningfully participate in the fundamental civic function of our democracy that is serving on a jury.

The legislation – which will strengthen our democracy and public confidence in our legal system – [is supported by the American Probation and Parole Association](#) who “strongly believes that bringing people with past convictions into the democratic process is a vital part of successful reintegration.” A version of the bill was passed by the NY State Senate in 2019 and the current bill has over 50 cosponsors in the Assembly and 19 in the Senate.

“Individuals across New York State with felony convictions are no less capable of serving on a jury than their peers,” said **Phil Desgranges, Attorney-in-Charge of Criminal Law Reform at The Legal Aid Society**. “In no way do these New Yorkers, the majority of whom are people of color, deserve to be permanently excluded from the important civic function of jury service. The Jury of Our Peers act will rectify this long-standing inequality and allow for more citizens to meaningfully participate in all aspects of our democracy without undue bias. We laud the Legislature for passing this critical legislation, and call on Governor Hochul to sign it into law without delay.”

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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. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>