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

With One Week Left of Session, Legal Aid and ALAA Call on NY State 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 one week remaining in the 2024 Legislative Session, today called on Speaker Carl Heastie to bring to a vote [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.

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. Despite this, Albany failed to include this critical legislation in New York State's Fiscal Year 2025 budget.

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](#).

“With only one week remaining of session, it is imperative that Speaker Heastie bring the DALF to a vote to ensure that more attorneys are able to remain in their positions helping low-income individuals access the free legal services that we provide,” said **Twyla Carter, Attorney-In-Chief and CEO of The Legal Aid Society**.

“Failing to act on this bipartisan bill in the remaining days of session would be a grave disservice not just to public interest attorneys, but to the thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers they help each year.”

“When New Yorkers look to our courts for justice, they deserve to have experienced advocates by their side. Without student loan assistance, our union members cannot afford to stay in the jobs they love providing high quality legal representation to those in need.” said **Lisa Ohta, President of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys (UAW Local 2325)**. “We call on Speaker Heastie to bring this legislation to a vote and strengthen legal services for everyone across our state.”

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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