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

## ***Legal Aid Named as Finalist in Robin Hood's AI Poverty Challenge for Breakthrough AI Solutions to Fight Poverty in the U.S.***

### ***\$100,000 Grant Awarded for Legal Aid's Housing Justice Helpline AI Retrieval Tool***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society today announced that it has been named a finalist in [Robin Hood's AI Poverty Challenge](#) for breakthrough AI solutions to fight poverty in the U.S. Nine finalists received \$100,000 each and were announced during the [Fast Company Innovation Festival](#).

Legal Aid was awarded the grant for its AI-powered Housing Justice Helpline Information Retrieval Tool, which enhances efficiency by reducing hotline response times and improving client satisfaction. Developed with Columbia University, the Tool operates in a closed secure ecosystem, using vetted materials to help staff promptly find and summarize information. The tool leverages our expertise as NYC's largest and oldest legal service provider and enhances our ability to drive systemic change through informed advocacy and policy reform.

“We are honored to be named as a finalist in Robin Hood's AI Poverty Challenge for our innovative AI approach to helping thousands of low-income New Yorkers annually through our Housing Justice Helpline,” said **Adriene Holder, chief attorney of the Civil Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “This grant will be instrumental as we develop and scale similar AI-powered tools to serve our clients facing issues not only in housing, but immigration, employment, government benefits, and more.”

“There is no question that AI is fundamentally transforming our world. But it is still an open question whether those changes will benefit or further burden those who are already excluded from economic opportunity. And too few of the organizations and leaders on the frontlines of fighting poverty are well-positioned to influence how AI is developed or to harness its potential. That's why we launched the AI Poverty Challenge,” said **Richard R.**

**Buery, Jr. CEO of Robin Hood.** “This Challenge represents a new frontier of hope as we explore how machine learning and the AI revolution can be a force fueling upward mobility. Our finalists have been through a rigorous scoring and review process administered by a panel of 100 judges selected for their areas of expertise, including people who have experienced poverty and those who support them. We are excited to see how the work of the finalists evolves in the months and years to come.”

**Conrad A. Johnson, Co-founder and Director of Columbia's Lawyering in the Digital Age Clinic and the Edward Ross Aranow Clinical Professor of Law,** said: "Used thoughtfully, AI has the capacity to meaningfully expand access to justice. Columbia Law School's Lawyering in the Digital Age Clinic is honored to be collaborating with The Legal Aid Society and grateful to the Robin Hood Foundation for recognizing the value in our work. This is a win-win relationship in that our students are gaining hands-on experience with using AI in practice while benefiting the broader community."

The Housing Justice Helpline is staffed by Legal Aid’s highly trained paralegals and attorneys who provide advice and brief services to low-income tenants on issues such as non-payments, holdovers, and lease inquiries. Last year, the Housing Justice Helpline supported clients in nearly 17,000 calls, handling over 14,600 case matters that were opened and closed.

With support from Robin Hood, Legal Aid aims to develop and scale similar retrieval tools for implementation across seven other hotlines and intake processes. In 2023, Legal Aid responded to over 31,000 helpline calls organization-wide and managed nearly 200,000 individual legal matters.

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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 nearly 150 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)*