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

***Legal Aid, ALAA Laud Senate Passage of Legislation to Increase Student Loan Assistance for Lawyers Serving the Public Interest***

**(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society and The Association of Legal Advocates and Attorneys UAW Local 2325** issued the following respective statements in response to the New York State Senate's passage of [legislation](#) that would bolster the New York District Attorney and Indigent Legal Services Attorney Loan Forgiveness (DALF) program to increase student loan aid for lawyers serving the public interest:

"Public interest attorneys play a crucial role in our legal system, providing zealous representation that ensures fairness and equity for all New Yorkers, regardless of income," said **Twyla Carter, Attorney-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer at The Legal Aid Society**. "We laud the New York State Senate for their passage of the DALF legislation, and for acknowledging that without adequate funding to help these attorneys manage their exorbitant student loan debt, more highly skilled, dedicated individuals will be driven out of the public sector. We now call on Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie to bring this critical legislation to a vote to ensure that, amid the current federal administration's assault on student loan borrowers, more attorneys are able to remain in their positions where their work is essential in keeping people housed, reuniting families, and protecting the rights of the people we serve."

"We appreciate the leadership of Senator Jessica Ramos and all of the labor champions in the New York State Senate for continuing to support the expansion of this critical student loan assistance program for our UAW members despite Governor Hochul's failure to include it in the state budget," said **Lisa Ohta, President of UAW Local 2325/Association of Legal Advocates and Attorneys**. "The future of legal services is at stake with the coming cuts to federal relief programs. Without this bill, New York attorneys working in the public

sector with exorbitant student loan debt will be pushed out of their jobs and working class communities in need of advocates will pay the price. We call on Governor Hochul to sign this bill now and stop the coming crisis from worsening.”

## **Background**

Legislation to bolster the DALF program, carried by State Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon, would increase student loan aid for public interest lawyers 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](#).

In January, 69 members of the New York State Legislature signed onto a [letter](#) calling on Governor Hochul to lead the fight to protect student borrowers and ensure the inclusion of funding in the FY26 Executive Budget for legislation that would bolster the DALF program.

In December, 37 district attorneys, public defender organizations and unions also [signed](#) onto a [letter](#) calling on Hochul to ensure the inclusion of funding for this critical legislation.

On March 7, the Trump administration signed an [Executive Order](#) that would place new restrictions on the Public Interest Loan Forgiveness Program, which since 2007 has been a release valve for public interest attorneys who, after ten years of on-time payments and qualifying work in the public interest, were able to apply for loan cancellation.

At the same time, the Biden-Era SAVE program, which ties a borrower’s payments to income and household size, has been in legal limbo [since last August](#) when Republican-led states sued to end the program and the Supreme Court upheld a lower court’s suspension. Additionally, just this month, the [Department of Education began collecting](#) on the over 5 million borrowers in default status, many of whom are in such positions because of the attacks on income-based loan repayment programs.

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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>*