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Statement on ALAA–UAW Local 2325’s Vote to Authorize a Strike

(NEW YORK, NY) – Twyla Carter, Attorney-in-Chief and Chief Executive Officer of The Legal Aid Society, issued the following statement regarding the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys – UAW Local 2325’s (ALAA) vote to authorize a strike:

“Every day, staff attorneys of The Legal Aid Society — like all our staff — work tirelessly throughout New York City, providing counsel to the New Yorkers who need our help. Yet, despite their dedication, compensation has historically failed to reflect the value and difficulty of this work, due to decades of underfunding from our government funders.

“The Legal Aid Society has long recognized this inequity and, over the past three years, has made significant headway in its efforts — in Albany, at City Hall, and beyond — to secure the additional funding needed to begin meaningfully addressing this longstanding funding problem.

“Since I became Attorney-in-Chief and CEO of the Legal Aid Society in August of 2022, we have provided staff attorneys with significant baseline salary increases and other remarkable economic benefits. Most recently, across fiscal year 2023, we increased baseline salaries for staff attorneys by 2% and provided a retention bonus of 7%. In fiscal year 2024, we increased baseline salaries for staff attorneys by 7% and provided a retention bonus of \$6,500. In fiscal year 2025, we increased baseline salaries for staff attorneys by an additional 4%, representing continued, concrete progress toward well-deserved increased compensation for staff attorneys.

“Our current offer to ALAA for fiscal year 2026, which begins July 1, 2025, also includes baseline salary increases equivalent to an additional 4% with targeted salary increases at key points along the salary scale and provides other much-needed benefit improvements for staff attorneys.

“In total, since I took over the helm in August 2022, ALAA staff attorneys have received or been offered baseline salary increases equivalent to 17 percent, a 7 percent retention bonus, and a \$6,500 retention bonus, which is more than they have received in over a decade. Legal Aid now offers the highest starting salary for attorneys among all not-for-profit legal services organizations in New York City. These salary increases

and retention bonuses were provided and offered now because of increased revenue from the State and the City.

“Despite these increases, a significant gap remains between the salaries of our staff attorneys and the rising cost of living in what is one of the most expensive cities in the country. We remain committed to ensuring that staff attorneys and all staff can afford to live in New York City, pay down student loans, cover basic expenses, and plan for their future without taking on second jobs or putting major life decisions on hold. Our goal is to make a career at Legal Aid desirable and sustainable in the long term.

“Addressing decades of underfunding will require sustained, baselined, and long-term commitments from our government funders. We will continue to urge ALAA to stand with us in this fight for our shared interests of livable wages, as our dedicated staff attorneys have long foregone far higher salaries in the private sector to serve New Yorkers — not only in courtrooms, where they defend against the power of the government in criminal, immigration, and family proceedings, but also through advocacy that confronts the systemic racism and inequities driving poverty in our communities.

“We respect ALAA’s decision to authorize a strike and will continue to bargain in good faith. We remain committed to reaching a fair and fiscally responsible agreement with ALAA that honors our shared values and secures the future of our constitutionally and legally mandated work, as well as our broader mission to advance justice and equity. Lastly, if a strike takes place, our top priority will be to continue the high-quality legal services for the people and communities we serve and rely on us without interruption.”

Background on Fiscal Year 2026 Wage and Benefit Proposal Offered to ALAA:

As stated to ALAA during bargaining, the current economic offer aims to accelerate salary growth for experienced attorneys early in their careers, with targeted increases at key points along the salary scale where recruitment and retention are most critical — a central issue for both ALAA and Legal Aid.

This proposal builds on the meaningful progress made in recent years. The total value of Legal Aid’s proposed salary increases is approximately \$6 million.

Some highlights of the proposal:

- On average, attorneys with 4 to 20 years of experience would receive a salary increase of more than 7 percent.
- Attorneys with 4 years of experience would move to \$100,000 — an 8.43% salary increase.
- Attorneys with 9 years of experience would move to over \$122,000 — a 9.78% salary increase.
- Attorneys with 14 years of experience would move to more than \$140,000 — a 7.11% increase.
- Attorneys with 19 years of experience would move to more than \$149,000 — a 7.87% increase.

Additionally, Legal Aid has proposed increasing pension contributions by 1 percent for attorneys with 18 or more years of service – an investment of approximately \$390,000 – bringing the total pension contribution up to 7.5 percent of base salary for those employees.

This salary package is just one component of a broader investment in staff attorney compensation. Legal Aid has also offered to expand and improve health insurance coverage, a more generous compensatory time policy and payout, increased student loan forgiveness funding, and a significant expansion of paid parental leave.

Legal Aid must make significant sacrifices to formulate the current economic offer to ALAA. We have invited ALAA to provide feedback on how best to distribute the proposed compensation enhancements to meet the needs of its members, and we hope to continue that discussion during upcoming bargaining sessions.

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The Legal Aid Society is a nonprofit organization that 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 the people we serve and helps improve our communities.

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