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*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

Public Defenders, District Attorneys, Indigent Legal Services Providers, and Labor Unions to Hold Press Conference to Call on Governor Hochul, NYS Legislature to Expand Student Loan Assistance in FY27 Budget

(ALBANY, NY) — A coalition of public defenders, district attorneys, indigent legal service providers, and labor unions will hold a press conference in Albany on Wednesday, March 11 at 11 a.m. to call on Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature to include in the New York State Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) budget [funding](#) to bolster the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) District Attorney and Indigent Legal Services Attorney Loan Forgiveness (DALF) programs, which provide student loan assistance for attorneys serving the public interest.

WHAT: Press conference urging state leaders to expand student loan assistance in New York's FY27 budget for attorneys serving the public interest.

WHO: Bill sponsors New York State Senator Jessica Ramos and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon, public defenders, district attorneys, indigent legal service providers, labor unions, and others.

WHEN: Wednesday, March 11 at 11 a.m.

WHERE: Million Dollar Staircase, 3rd floor, State Capitol, Albany, New York

Background:

The [modest expansion](#) of the HESC/DALF program, if passed in the New York State FY27 budget, 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, public interest attorneys and district attorneys can only receive up to \$20,400 in total loan assistance – despite an [estimate](#) from the American Bar Association finding that lawyers graduate with an average debt of \$130,000.

Moreover, public interest attorneys and district attorneys lag behind both licensed registered nurses, who graduate with an [average debt](#) of \$55,000 and are eligible for up to \$40,000 in the HESC award, and social workers, who graduate with an [average debt](#) of \$76,000 and are eligible to receive up to \$26,000 in the HESC award.

The HESC/DALF expansion bill will right-size the award program by both expanding the total eligible award and the period of eligibility, allowing attorneys to now apply in their second year of work up until their tenth year when they will presumably be eligible for federal loan cancellation should it still exist.

The bill enjoys robust support from institutional defender offices, civil defender offices, labor unions, and District Attorney offices, and has [passed](#) the NY State Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support for the last three years, never garnering more than one nay vote.

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