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*****For Immediate Release*****

Brooklyn Defender Services Founder and Executive Director Announces Retirement After 30 Year Tenure

(BROOKLYN, NY) – Brooklyn Defenders issued the following statement announcing the retirement of its founding Executive Director, Lisa Schreibersdorf:

On the 30th anniversary of her first day as leader and attorney-in-charge of [Brooklyn Defender Services](#), its founder and Executive Director Lisa Schreibersdorf announced today that she will be retiring at the end of 2026, marking a defining moment in the organization’s history.

“As I think back on the creation and the growth of Brooklyn Defenders over the past 30 years, I feel extremely gratified and proud of the high quality of the legal work we have been able to provide as well as the resource that we have become for people, families and communities in Brooklyn and Queens. I know that BDS’ strong foundation will keep the organization continuing to meet the needs of New York City residents for another 30 years and beyond,” **said Lisa Schreibersdorf** about her retirement plans. “When I think about it, I am extremely grateful that I have accomplished more than I could ever have imagined. I am very blessed to have worked with so many dedicated and talented people over the years and together we have had an extraordinary impact.”

When Lisa Schreibersdorf founded Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS) in 1996, the organization was a small public defense office of 25 employees representing Brooklyn residents who had been arrested. Under Ms. Schreibersdorf’s leadership, BDS has grown into a nationally recognized, preeminent public defense office serving over 40,000 Brooklyn and Queens residents each year. With 750 staff, BDS provides outstanding representation and advocacy to people facing loss of freedom, family separation and other serious legal harm imposed by the government.

Ms. Schreibersdorf’s visionary leadership has been instrumental in shaping BDS’ mission that prioritizes high quality legal work for people who do not have the means to pay for an attorney and aggressively works to change systems that target low-income communities of color. Brooklyn Defenders is nationally recognized as one of the premier public defense offices in the United States, utilizing cutting edge forensics teams, working to assist people who have health and mental health issues, reducing the time children spend unnecessarily in foster placements and addressing the intersecting issues that emerge for people living with inadequate income to meet their basic needs, such as housing, education and employment.

"For three decades, Lisa has been the heart and driving force behind Brooklyn Defender Services. Through her visionary leadership, unwavering commitment to justice, and deep belief in the dignity and humanity of every person we serve, she helped build an organization that has transformed countless lives and become a national model for holistic public defense," **said Jason Starr, Chair of the Board at Brooklyn Defender Services.**

“Her legacy is reflected not only in the institution she built, but in the generations of advocates, leaders, and community members she has inspired along the way. We are profoundly grateful for her extraordinary service and the enduring foundation she leaves behind.

While her retirement marks the close of a remarkable chapter, it also highlights the strength, resilience, and mission-driven culture that she has cultivated and has become a hallmark of BDS. We remain steadfast in our commitment to standing alongside the people we represent, advancing equity, and strengthening our communities. Guided by the values that have defined this organization since its founding, we move forward with confidence, purpose, and optimism for the future."

Under Ms. Schreibersdorf’s direction, BDS developed specialized teams to serve communities with distinct needs to address the complex legal challenges. Today, its criminal defense practice includes dedicated units serving adolescents; cisgender and transgender women who have experienced violence, exploitation and abuse; people living with mental health diagnoses; and veterans. Anticipating the growing role of science and technology in the legal system, BDS also established BDS’ Forensic Science Practice, focused on forensic evidence and digital surveillance issues in criminal cases.

BDS spearheaded the first public defense representation project in immigration court where people had been facing complex legal proceedings without access to counsel. By advocating for people facing deportation and permanent exile from their families and community, BDS not only preserved the right to lawfully remain in the United States for individual clients, but also enhanced due process in immigration court.

In cases where ACS is investigating a family, BDS provides advice and representation to parents and caregivers, ensuring that children remain with loving family members whenever possible while providing zealous representation in court proceedings that often fail to meet due process requirements. Recognizing that many of these matters stem from poverty, BDS created a strong social work program and utilized social media fundraising to provide tangible items to families so they can stay together.

As a strong advocate, Ms. Schreibersdorf has led efforts to increase resources for public defense offices across New York State as well as change unfair laws and procedures that create unnecessarily harsh outcomes for people caught up in the legal system.

Guided by the belief that nobody should face the legal system without a strong advocate by their side, Lisa Schreibersdorf has dedicated her career to guaranteeing that all people are entitled to access to high quality legal representation when they are facing the legal system.

BDS’ Board of Directors in conjunction with DRG Talent will begin the process of conducting a national search for a new Executive Director with the expectation that the new leader will take over on January 1, 2027.