

February 15, 2023

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

***Joint Statement on Mayor Adams' Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Testimony
Before the New York State Legislature***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, The Bronx Defenders, New York County Defender Services, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem and Queens Defenders issued the following joint statement in response to Mayor Eric Adams' Fiscal Year 2024 budget testimony before the New York State Legislature:

“Defenders statewide are desperately in need of additional staffing and technological resources to collect, store, access and work with evidence in an increasingly digital era, while at the same time facing an unprecedented staffing and attrition crisis.

"We echo the call from Mayor Adams, as well as New York City Council Speaker Adrienne Adams, that a significant allotment of funding from Albany in the upcoming budget is required to address our hiring and retention needs, and help ensure that we, along with others in the criminal legal system, are able to access discovery - the sharing of documents and other evidence - in a timely and meaningful way.

“However, we reject efforts to remove a well-established provision of law requiring that judges consider the ‘least restrictive’ alternative in bail-eligible cases. This change will only lead to confusion and the pretrial caging of more New Yorkers in deadly local jails. The route to public safety is achieved by increasing investments in community-based mental health and other services, not in rollbacks to New York’s bail or Raise the Age laws.

“As the budget process moves along, we will continue to work with lawmakers to secure the desperately needed funding our offices require to fully represent people facing incarceration, loss of employment, eviction, deportation and other devastating consequences of the criminal legal system.”

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