



## NEW YORK STATE legislature

### MEDIA ADVISORY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 21, 2021

**What:** Press Conference

**When:** 9:30 am, Wednesday, April 21, 2021

**Where:** Courtyard, next to the Robert Abrams Center for Law and Justice (Justice Building)

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# LEGISLATORS AND LEGAL SERVICES AGENCIES ANNOUNCE \$3.5 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR UPSTATE LEGAL SERVICES IN THE STATE BUDGET

*Upstate New York Receives 85% of New Funding Committed To Civil  
Legal Services in New York State in FY 2021-2022*

**ALBANY** – Today, April 21, 2021, New York State Senators Sean Ryan, Neil Breslin, and Michelle Hinchey, and New York State Assemblymembers Patricia Fahy, John McDonald, and Phil Steck, announced that the state budget for FY 2021-2022 includes \$3.5 million in funding for civil legal service agencies operating in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany. The funding for upstate agencies makes up 85 percent of the new \$4.13 million committed to civil legal service providers in the state budget.

This funding will help support local agencies that provide legal services or public safety programs to help low-income families and individuals access basic necessities such as housing, government benefits, employment, domestic violence orders of protection, custody issues, and educational services. In the Albany area and surrounding region, the funding will support the work of the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, Rural Law Center of New York, The Legal Project, and The Justice Center at Albany Law School.

**Senator Sean Ryan** said, “The agencies receiving this funding dedicate extraordinary efforts to providing services that help members of our communities overcome unexpected hardships before they

lead to long-term financial burdens. The funding will not only benefit the people who are in need of these services; assisting them will in turn help lessen the lasting effects of the pandemic on our local economy.”

**Senator Neil Breslin said,** “The Legal Project, the Justice Center at Albany Law, The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York, and the Rural Law Center are indispensable supports for upstate families in need. The additional \$3.5 Million for upstate civil legal services in the State Budget will go a long way to help low-income families and individuals retain housing, file orders or protection, handle custody issues, access government benefits and so much more.”

**Senator Michelle Hinchey said,** “As COVID-19 continues to take its toll on our communities, more New Yorkers than ever need access to fair and affordable legal assistance as they face job loss, unlawful evictions and foreclosures, or protection from domestic abuse. Civil legal services are an especially important line of defense that protects our working families who otherwise could not afford legal representation, and I was proud to work with my colleagues to secure sustainable funding through this year’s state budget for the vital services delivered by our local agencies.”

**Assemblymember Patricia Fahy said,** “Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, the Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York was a key partner in responding to my constituent's needs, and has continued that partnership throughout this crisis. This year's state budget provides new funding to LASNNY and other nonprofit legal aid providers throughout Upstate New York to help the hardest-hit among us; low-income New Yorkers, communities of color, and those most at-risk of eviction or homelessness. I thank Senator Ryan for his leadership on this issue in the Senate, my colleague Assemblymember John McDonald for his support in the Assembly, and lawmakers who supported this request in the state budget, and I commend LASNNY for the critical work they do in communities throughout Upstate New York in particular.”

**Assemblymember John McDonald III said,** “Our civil legal service providers are a lifeline for many who are unable to afford their own attorney to represent them and navigate them toward necessary services. Thank you to Senator Ryan for his leadership on this funding and for moving forward on efforts that my colleagues and I have strongly supported throughout the years. This additional funding will provide the necessary resources for our Upstate providers to expand on and continue their important work.”

**Assemblymember Phil Steck said,** “As a civil rights attorney who represents employees, I appreciate the fact that getting legal representation is very hard because many people just plain cannot afford it. I am pleased that we are increasing funding to support the vital work that Civil Legal Services Agencies do to make sure that people are not overrun by the legal system. Indeed, their work of securing basic needs, protecting and preserving legal rights, and providing equal access to justice has only become more critical due to the pandemic.”

**Lillian M. Moy, Esq., Executive Director, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York said,** “We are enormously indebted to our supporters in the Legislature, especially Senators Ryan, Breslin and Hinchey and Assemblymembers Fahy, McDonald, Steck and Woerner for recognizing the stability that civil legal services brings to all of Upstate. Across the range of all our practice areas and vulnerable clients, we are delighted that we are recognized as the linchpin we are for ensuring access to justice whether it’s a secure home, personal safety, economic justice or the peaceful resolution of disputes.”

**Gail Brown, Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York client** said, “I am so grateful for all the assistance received from Legal Aid that changed my life for the better and helped me achieve stability for my children and grandchildren that live with me.”

**Heidi Dennis, Esq., Executive Director, Rural Law Center of New York, Inc. said,** “The need for greater legal assistance throughout upstate New York cannot be overstated. The funds that have been dedicated in this year's budget will ensure the provision of increased legal services that will profoundly impact the rural communities we serve. Senators Ryan, Breslin, Hinchey, Assemblymembers Fahy, McDonald, Steck and Woerner have tirelessly advocated to achieve this upstate support. The Rural Law Center is so pleased to be a part of improving services for the otherwise unmet needs of our clients.”

**Michele Pollock Rich, Esq., Executive Director, The Legal Project said,** “We are sincerely grateful for this funding, which will directly benefit victims of domestic violence and their children in the Capital Region in need of legal assistance to maintain their safety and security. Requests for assistance are at historic highs, and thanks to the efforts of Senators Ryan, Breslin, Hinchey, Assemblymembers Fahy, McDonald, Steck and Woerner, and the entire Legislature, we will be able to help them get the justice they so rightfully deserve.”

**Sarah F. Rogerson, Esq., Professor of Law; Director, The Justice Center at Albany Law School said,** “Albany Law School is excited to partner with this regional effort to continue our work connecting undocumented New Yorkers with the benefits they deserve.”

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