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## **City Bar Calls for Increased Funding in the New York State Budget for a Range of Legal Services**

New York, March 31, 2023 – The New York City Bar Association has called for increased funding in the FY 2024 New York State Budget for civil legal services, immigration legal services and crucial programs serving children and families.

“Access to free legal services promotes the health and stability of communities across the state,” writes the City Bar in a [letter](#) supporting the proposed increase in the Judiciary Budget for civil legal services to New York Governor Kathy Hochul, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie and Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins. “In the absence of legal representation, low-income communities are unable to assert their rights, which can have devastating consequences, including homelessness, hunger, loss of desperately needed educational and/or employment opportunities, an increased risk of abuse and exploitation, and, for some, the inability to escape abuse and/or exploitation they are already experiencing.”

The letter also includes a call for restoration of funding for the Homeowner Protection Program, which has cut the rate of homeowners losing homes to default foreclosure from 90% to 15%.

In a [separate letter](#) to the government leaders, the City Bar calls for additional funding for legal services for immigrants facing removal proceedings, saying that “the presence of counsel can ameliorate a multitude of challenges inherent in immigration proceedings. Some examples include language barriers, trauma, different and sometimes corrupt legal systems in countries of origin, as well as poverty and lack of other resources.”

The letter states that “access to an attorney also ensures that more individuals can gain release from immigration detention.” The City Bar also supports enactment of the Access to Representation Act, which would “establish a right to representation for people at risk of deportation...many of whom pay state taxes and contribute in several other ways to the fabric of our state’s society.”

In a [third letter](#), the City Bar urges renewed funding for Attorney for the Child (“AFC”) offices statewide, writing that these offices “are suffering an unprecedented crisis of underfunding that threatens the very safety and well-being of the children they serve.” The letter cites the lack of pay parity with AFC’s government counterparts that has consistently drawn attorneys away from the AFC work they are committed to pursuing. “In order for New York’s justice system to fulfill its commitment to racial equity and equal access to justice, all parties entitled to free legal counsel assigned by the court must be provided with attorneys who are fairly compensated for their work and are responsible for manageable caseloads,” the City Bar writes.

In [its appeals](#) to the Governor and Legislature, the City Bar addresses several programs related to children and families in the Budget:

- Continued funding for the Close to Home initiative, which ensures that children who are deemed to require placement in a juvenile justice facility by a Family Court Judge will be placed in a location in proximity to their community, and which the City Bar says “has proven over the years to be a successful initiative that benefits New York City’s children and communities.”
- The need for a Child and Family Wellbeing Fund, which invests resources in communities that have been historically disenfranchised and targeted for government intervention through the child protective system. “Given the challenges wrought by the pandemic, this is the time for bold new investments in New York’s children and families,” the City Bar writes.
- The creation of a task force to create a statewide model domestic and gender-based violence policy “omits key stakeholders and experts” and should do more to “employ a full diversity of perspectives, and ensure its approach is evidence based.”

Copies of the letters can be found on the City Bar’s website here:

- [New York State FY24 Judiciary Budget - Civil Legal Services Funding and Restoration of Funding for Homeowner Protection Program](#)
- [Support for Increased Funding for Immigration Legal Services in Fiscal Year 2024 and the Access to Representation Act](#)
- [Fund Equal Access to Justice for Children in NYS Family Courts](#)
- [New York State Executive Budget Provisions with a Significant Impact on Children and Families](#)

#### **About the Association**

*The mission of the New York City Bar Association, which was founded in 1870 and has over 23,000 members, is to equip and mobilize a diverse legal profession to practice with excellence, promote reform of the law, and uphold the rule of law and access to justice in support of a fair society and the public interest in our community, our nation, and throughout the world. [www.nycbar.org](http://www.nycbar.org)*