

## Memorandum in Support

February 9, 2024

S. 4511-C  
A. 1568-D

By: Senator Ramos  
By: M. of A. Simon  
Senate Committee: Higher Education  
Assembly Committee: Higher Education  
Effective Date: April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024

**AN ACT** to amend the education law, in relation to the New York State district attorney and indigent legal services attorney loan forgiveness program

**LAW AND SECTIONS REFERRED TO:** Section 679-e of the Education Law

The New York State Bar Association supports S4511-C/A1568-D, which would increase student loan forgiveness for district attorneys, public defenders, and indigent civil legal services attorneys.

NYSBA's Task Force on Rural Justice 2020 Report presented a number of recommendations for improving access to justice in rural New York. One of the report's suggestions focuses on the need to improve and expand the attorney loan-forgiveness programs. One such program is the New York State District Attorney and Indigent Legal Services Attorney Loan Forgiveness Program, administered by the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation; the subject of this bill. This program is designed to retain experienced attorneys employed as district attorneys, assistant district attorneys, or indigent legal services attorneys throughout New York State. To be eligible, attorneys must have worked in these positions for at least four years, but no more than nine years. The report recommends that the amount of the award be raised and that the wait time to access this program be decreased to two years.

Increasing loan forgiveness will help alleviate debt burdens and allow public interest attorneys, especially in rural areas, to continue to serve their communities. Decreasing the wait time for this award along with raising the amount will attract more attorneys to these roles, ultimately having a huge impact on access to legal representation for communities across the state.

For the above reasons, and the attached report, the New York State Bar Association **SUPPORTS** this legislation.