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Via Electronic and US Mail

The Honorable Kathy Hochul

Governor of the State of New York

Executive Chamber

State Capitol

Albany, New York 12224

Re: Public Service Law School Loan Forgiveness

Dear Governor Hochul,

On behalf of the New York State Bar Association, the oldest and largest voluntary state bar association in the nation, we write to urge action to address the imminent threat to access to legal education and access to justice resulting from recent federal changes to graduate student lending.

HR 1, the omnibus bill passed in 2025, fundamentally alters the pathway into the legal profession by eliminating the federal Grad PLUS loan program and restructuring Public Service Loan Forgiveness. Together, these changes impose new barriers to entry into law—unrelated to merit, talent, or commitment to service—and place New York at risk of a diminished and less diverse legal workforce when access to legal representation demands reinforcement.

The consequences for New York are profound and statewide. The State already faces persistent “legal deserts,” especially in rural and upstate communities, and growing unmet legal needs among working families, seniors, veterans, and small businesses. Without intervention, these federal changes will constrict the pipeline of lawyers willing and able to serve in precisely those communities and roles that sustain the administration of justice and the effective functioning of State and local government.

New York has both the capacity and the responsibility to respond. With your leadership, New York can also protect social mobility, maintain the strength and diversity of our legal profession, and avert long-term harm to our justice system and economy.

Accordingly, we respectfully urge you to prioritize the development of a State-supported financing solution for law and other professional students suitable for inclusion in the FY 2027

Executive Budget. In 2020, the Report of the New York State Bar Association Task Force on Rural Justice addressed this issue, recommending that New York consider:

- (1) expanding the Excelsior Scholarship Program to fund a percentage of law school tuition at all New York law schools for New York residents who sign a binding agreement to practice in designated, underserved rural counties; and
- (2) a loan program that forgives the tuition based on a specified number of years of practice in an underserved rural area (or specified type of public interest urban practice). ¹

The New York State Bar Association stands ready to work with your Administration to develop and advance a responsible State solution that aligns with New York's longstanding commitment to opportunity, fairness, and access to justice.

Should you or your staff require further conversation on this matter, please do not hesitate to call me or Matthew Pennello, NYSBA's Director of Government Relations at 518-487-5748 or via email at mpennello@nysba.org.

Thank you for your consideration of this urgent matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kathleen M. Sweet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Kathleen M. Sweet
President

Cc: Hon. Brian M. Mahanna, Counsel to the Governor
Jackie Bray, Director of State Operations

¹ New York State Bar Association, Report of the Task Force on Rural Justice 15 (approved Apr. 4, 2020), <https://nysba.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Report-Task-Force-on-Rural-Justice-April-2020-.pdf>