



Memorandum in Support

NYSBA #4-A

February 17, 2026

S. 161

By: Senator Ramos

A. 1602

By: M. of A. Simon

Senate Committee: Finance

Assembly Committee: Higher Education

Effective Date: April 1st, 2026

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 S.161/A.1602, 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.¹ These include focusing 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 loan forgiveness be increased and that the wait time to access the 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 those expressed in the attached report, the New York State Bar Association SUPPORTS this legislation.

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