

**LEGAL SERVICES NYC's
SUBMISSION OF WRITTEN TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF
THE DISABILITY ADVOCACY PROJECT FUNDING**

**Joint Legislative Public Hearing
On the 2026 Executive Budget Proposal**

Topic: Human Services

**Legislative Office Building
Hearing Room B
181 State Street – 2nd Floor
Albany, New York 12247
February 5, 2026
9:30 am**

**Submitted by William Flynn
On behalf of Legal Services NYC**

Demand Justice.

LEGAL SERVICES NYC

The Disability Advocacy Program (DAP) provides statewide legal representation to low-income disabled New Yorkers whose federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability (SSDI) benefits are wrongly denied or terminated. LSNYC joins our DAP colleagues across the state in support of the program's funding request. DAP notably saves the state millions of dollars every year in avoided public assistance costs. When clients win their SSI benefits, state and local governments are retroactively reimbursed for public assistance benefits paid to these clients. Last year, DAP legal services providers statewide won \$22.6 million in retroactive benefits for disabled New Yorkers – which resulted in \$4.4 million in Interim Assistance returned to New York State. Legal Services NYC's DAP program alone returned \$408,615 to New York in Interim Assistance. Every \$1 invested in DAP has returned over \$2 to the state and counties. The program has generated almost \$1.5 billion to the state and local counties since its inception in 1983. Our work also results in savings for New York in future public assistance costs avoided when our clients are awarded their SSI/SSD benefits. Legal Services NYC's DAP program additionally won nearly \$4.0 million in retroactive benefits for our clients.

The statewide network of DAP providers requests \$7.5 million in funding to support the program in the SFY 2027 Enacted Budget, inclusive of both the Executive and legislative additions before county match. We also request DAP to be included in the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance's Human Services cost of living adjustment (COLA) / targeted inflationary increase (TII) to ensure the program can keep up with inflation linked operational costs. Given the ROI of the program, inclusion in the COLA / TII would indeed pay for itself in the long run.

Today, DAP advocates throughout New York State are spending more of their time acting as the access point for our clients to a federal agency that has become less accessible to the vulnerable communities we serve. At Legal Services NYC, the current DAP funding covers just 67% of our operating costs to run the DAP units. Increased funding would allow us to better respond to clients who are facing delays in applications and appeals and general lack of access to the Social Security Administration staff due to federal destabilization. We thank the Committee for allowing the submission of these comments.

Demand Justice.