



## 2024-25 Budget Priorities

**Civil Legal Services Funding:** NYLAG supports the \$10 million increase to the Interest on Lawyers Account (IOLA) as well as the proposed 6% increase in the Judiciary Civil Legal Services appropriation and the 3% Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) being applied to IOLA. We also support the redirect of \$2.5 million of the revenue from the Legal Services Assistance Fund (LSAF) to its original purpose to support civil legal service programs with budget language assuring the same.

However, **NYLAG strongly opposed the proposed sweep of \$100 million from the IOLA Private Contribution Account to the General Fund.** IOLA funding supports essential services that help low-income New Yorkers obtain help with civil legal problems that impact access to basic needs, such as food, shelter, and health care and is critical source of funding to the civil legal services communities. Sweeping this funding into the General Fund would undermine the intent of the legislature when they established the IOLA Fund in 1983. The need and demand for civil legal services is high, and the justice gap only continues to grow. It is more critical now than ever to fund essential civil legal services, as diverting these funds to general causes will create more barriers for vulnerable New Yorkers in accessing justice.

**Homeowner Protection Program (HOPP):** NYLAG is very saddened to see HOPP cut entirely from the Governor's Executive Budget. We support a \$40 million restoration of HOPP, the same level enacted in last year's state budget, to maintain services to homeowners. Without restoring HOPP, the State's investment in preventing foreclosures will be irretrievably lost. Homeowner preservation services are critical in preventing deed theft, loan modification, partition scams and other schemes targeting elderly and black and brown homeowners. Since the pandemic, we have continued to see a dramatic increase in the need for HOPP services and the preservation of homeownership is more important now than ever.

**Managed Care Consumer Assistance Program (MCCAP):** NYLAG is one of six organizations in the MCCAP network providing vital counseling and advocacy for low-income Medicare beneficiaries desperate to reduce their out-of-pocket costs. They need help navigating the barrage of marketing mail they receive to pick the Medicare plan that best covers their prescriptions and preferred providers. A \$1 million increase above the \$1.76 million appropriation is needed to cover rising costs and meet increased demand.

**Disability Assistance Program (DAP):** Recognized as a model across the nation, New York State's DAP has provided legal assistance to low-income disabled New Yorkers seeking Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability since 1983, and returns millions of dollars to the State and local counties every year. In the past contract year, DAP closed nearly 2,800 cases, returned over \$16 million to disabled New Yorkers and returned nearly \$3.5 million to the State and counties. DAP is currently funded at \$13.52 million, inclusive of the county match. To maintain level funding, we request \$1.5 million from the Legislature to supplement the \$5.26 million proposed by the Executive. Currently, NYLAG receives \$1,478,978 from the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to support DAP.

**Immigration Legal Services:** NYLAG is a large provider of immigration legal services. In 2023, our organization served over 20,000 immigrants. Since spring 2022, we have been on the front lines providing legal services to recently arrived migrants, working with our partners to develop innovative programming to help best meet the immigration legal needs of our newest New Yorkers and bring programming to scale. We are grateful to the state for their investment in immigration legal services over the years and, particularly, in response to the influx of recently arrived migrants, helping immigrants protect their rights, establish economic security, and promote family unity. However, the proposed \$20 million cut to immigration services in the Governor's Executive Budget will prevent access to these critical services at a time when need is high.

**Office of Victims Services (OVS):** NYLAG supports the \$120 million in total funding for Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) which will cover the anticipated federal shortfalls for OVS contracts, VOCA is essential in providing services and protecting survivors in a way that centers survivors. These funds support legal services that empower survivors.

**Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program (EDCAP):** EDCAP plays a pivotal role in providing counseling services, outreach, and education to student loan borrowers across New York State, assisting them in managing and eliminating debt. With the resumption of federal student loan payments, changes to relief programs, and challenges stemming from servicer mismanagement and transitions, the demand for EDCAP's services has significantly increased and has become crucial. We urge you to provide \$3.5 million in funding for EDCAP for FY25 to sustain this vital program, ensuring New Yorkers have the free and unbiased assistance they need to tackle their student debt.

**Consumer Protection Act (TED Budget Bill, Part JJ):** NYLAG is supportive of the core element of the proposal that prohibits unfair and abusive practices. We are recommending amendments to strengthen this proposal and bring it more in line with the standalone Consumer and Small Business Protection Act (CSPA) bill (S.795/A.7138). NYLAG strongly supports CSPA, which we see as the gold standard for bringing New York back as the national leader in consumer protections, and ask that you support CSPA and the Governor's budget language with the Fair Deal NY coalition's recommended changes.