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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# New York City Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks Joins Paul, Weiss as Special Counsel for Pro Bono

**New York, November 22, 2021** – Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP announced today that Steven Banks, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Social Services and former Attorney-in-Chief of the Legal Aid Society, will join the firm as Special Counsel, overseeing the firm’s strategy in its nationally recognized pro bono practice. Mr. Banks will officially begin on February 1, 2022, after his appointment as a New York City Commissioner concludes on December 31, 2021.

“We are thrilled that Steve, one of the nation’s legendary public interest lawyers and a tireless defender of vulnerable communities, is joining the firm’s pro bono practice,” said Paul, Weiss Chairman Brad S. Karp. “With his deep experience with the city’s legal and social infrastructure, remarkable accomplishments in public service and decades-long commitment to legal aid, Steve will help us leverage our renowned pro bono platform to make an even greater societal impact.”

“For the past eight years, Commissioner Steve Banks has been a fearless advocate for the most vulnerable New Yorkers,” said Mayor Bill de Blasio. “From implementing the first-in-the-nation Right to Counsel Program, to ensuring services are readily available to those in need, Steve has delivered transformative change, moving mountains to make life better for millions of New Yorkers. His unwavering commitment to serving the most disadvantaged and building a fairer city makes him the perfect choice to join Paul, Weiss to provide pro bono legal aid.”

“Professionally and personally, it has been an honor to work with Steve Banks, who has dedicated his career to fighting tirelessly for the rights of underserved and vulnerable New Yorkers,” said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Melanie Hartzog. “During his tenure as Commissioner, he established the first-in-nation Right to Counsel program, modernized and streamlined access to public benefits for millions of New Yorkers, and helped to create robust prevention and

rehousing programs for individuals experiencing housing instability, which have helped to prevent and address homelessness for hundreds of thousands of households. Through his compassion and commitment to service, Commissioner Banks has made an incredible, indelible impact on New York City – and he leaves it a stronger, fairer city for all. At Paul, Weiss, where he will continue his work ably serving individuals and organizations in need, Commissioner Banks will be an amazing asset for the firm, its pro bono legal assistance program, and the public.”

“Steve Banks is a skilled and accomplished public servant, who has navigated complex government problems to find essential solutions on behalf of New Yorkers,” said Mayor-elect Eric Adams. “I wish him well in his new endeavor.”

“This is an extraordinary opportunity to serve as Special Counsel at Paul, Weiss, a firm with a storied history of public service and pro bono leadership,” Mr. Banks said. “I am grateful to firm Chairman Brad Karp, Deputy Chair Valerie Radwaner and Paul, Weiss Public Matters Committee Co-Chairs Audra Soloway and Ted Ackerman for giving me this chance to contribute to the firm’s legacy of providing legal assistance to the most vulnerable members of our society in support of the public interest. I stand ready to join Paul, Weiss and help write the next chapter of its historic pro bono commitment.”

Mr. Banks has dedicated his entire career to improving the lives of low-income New Yorkers. He has served as Commissioner of the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS), the largest social services agency in the United States, since 2014, managing approximately 16,000 staff serving over three million New Yorkers per year with an annual budget of \$12 billion. He has created and led reforms for many pivotal and high-impact DSS programs, including the first-in-the-nation right to counsel program for low-income tenants, expanded legal assistance for immigrants, Cash and Rental Assistance, Food Assistance, Medicaid and other programs that address income inequality and prevent and ameliorate homelessness. In April 2016, following a comprehensive review of the city’s homelessness policies, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio appointed Mr. Banks to lead the Department of Homeless Services, in addition to the Human Resources Administration, as head of a joint management structure under the DSS. During his tenure, the DSS decreased evictions, reduced the number of families experiencing homelessness and residing in shelters, and dramatically enhanced and expanded assistance for low-income families and individuals.

Prior to serving in city government, Mr. Banks spent over three decades working with New York City’s Legal Aid Society (LAS), the country’s oldest and largest not-for-profit legal aid organization. From 2004 to 2014, Mr. Banks was the Attorney-in-Chief at LAS, where he developed an extensive track record of working productively with a diverse and unionized workforce and helping the city’s most vulnerable residents—including children and families, seniors, survivors of domestic violence, immigrants and people with HIV/AIDS—navigate DSS programs and services. He was responsible for managing the legal practice and operations of the criminal, juvenile rights and civil programs run by the organization, which each year handles 300,000 legal matters in all five boroughs. In 2008, he helped reach a landmark settlement in *McCain v. Koch*, resulting in the establishment of a permanent enforceable right to shelter for families experiencing homelessness in New York City. For many years, he also served as counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless, enforcing the right to shelter for single adults.

Mr. Banks earned his B.A. from Brown University, *magna cum laude*, and his J.D. from the New York University School of Law.

### **About Paul, Weiss**

Paul, Weiss ([paulweiss.com](http://paulweiss.com)) is a firm of more than 1,000 lawyers with diverse backgrounds, personalities, ideas and interests who provide innovative and effective solutions to our clients’ most complex legal and business challenges. We take great pride in representing the world’s leading companies in their critical legal matters and most significant business transactions, as well as individuals and organizations in need of pro bono assistance.