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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

LEGAL AID TO NYCHA: DON'T FAIL FAMILIES AGAIN WITH HEAT, HOT WATER OUTAGES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society called on the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to ensure that families this holiday season have working heat and hot water. Last year, nearly 7,000 NYCHA residents at the Amsterdam, Jefferson, and King Towers developments [spent their Christmas without](#) these critical utilities. So far this heat season, thousands of residents have already suffered heat and hot water outages.

This past August, Legal Aid condemned NYCHA for failing to provide basic services to its tenants based upon information NYCHA provided in response to a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request which revealed that 131,301 of its approximately 175,000 housing units and [291,537 public housing residents](#) were plagued by unplanned heat and/or hot water outages last heat season, which lasted from October 1, 2018 to May 31, 2019.

In 2018, The Legal Aid Society filed a [lawsuit](#) demanding rent abatements for tenants who suffered through severe heat and/or hot water outages. The [appeal](#) in that lawsuit is pending decision before the New York State Appellate Division, First Department.

The letter states:

Last year, nearly 7,000 NYCHA residents at the Amsterdam, Jefferson, and King Towers developments spent their Christmas without working heat and/or hot water. As you can imagine, this ruined the holiday for many of our clients. No family should have to spend Christmas morning opening presents shivering, unable to enjoy a warm meal.

With Christmas, Hanukah and Kwanzaa beginning next week, we implore NYCHA to take the necessary steps to avoid a reprise of last year's nightmare. While we can acknowledge that utility outages are not as terrible as last year, we must also recognize last year for the unmitigated disaster that it was. Tens of thousands of NYCHA residents have already experienced outages since the start of the heat season on October 1, 2019.

NYCHA must also hold itself to a higher standard. If any residents experience an outage affecting their upcoming holiday, it seems only fair that NYCHA refund their rents for the relevant period. Such a refund may not salvage a child's Christmas, but it is the least NYCHA can do. After all, no one should have to pay rent when their apartment becomes essentially uninhabitable from a heat and/or hot water outages. The laws governing this in New York are quite clear, and frankly this should be NYCHA policy on days that aren't holidays as well.

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>