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

***Legal Aid Echoes Call from NYC Board of Correction
Demanding the Immediate Release from Custody of
Incarcerated New Yorkers Vulnerable to COVID-19***

***NYC Board of Corrections Confirms 38 COVID-19 Cases in
City Jails, Another 58 Currently Being Monitored for
Symptoms***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society today echoed the New York City Board of Correction’s (BOC) call demanding the immediate release of vulnerable New Yorkers at a high risk for COVID-19 from custody to halt the health crisis swamping the City jails.

In a [letter](#) sent to New York State Chief Judge Janet DiFiore, the New York State Department of Correction and Community Supervision (DOCCS), the New York City Department of Correction (DOC), and New York City’s five District Attorneys, the oversight agency persuasively argues that the jail and health authorities “*best efforts will not be enough* to prevent viral transmission in the jails. Their work must be supplemented by bold and urgent action from the City’s District Attorneys, New York State judges, New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, and DOC’s utilization of its executive release authority.”

BOC also urged the recipients to “follow your colleagues in Los Angeles County (CA), San Francisco (CA), Cook County (IL), Autauga County (AL), Augusta County (VA), Allegheny County (PA), Hamilton County (OH), Harris County (TX), Travis County (TX), and Cuyahoga County (OH), and take action now to release people from City jails.”

“Incarceration-as-usual during this pandemic violates the Constitution and endangers all of us,” said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “Shared dorms and bathrooms are the opposite of social distancing, and the situation at Rikers Island will only get worse so long as our leaders in government refuse to act. We demand action and echo calls from the Board of Correction to immediately release those New Yorkers vulnerable to COVID-19 at once. Anything less is simply inhumane.”

The number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the local jails continues to climb. BOC confirmed 38 COVID-19 cases among the jail population and staff. Another 58 individuals are currently being monitored for symptoms in the contagious and quarantine units.

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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>