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

Legal Aid and Bronx Defenders Win Immediate Release of 4 Immigrants in ICE Detention, Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

Federal Judge Found “...no evidence that the government took any specific action to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to high-risk individuals... held in civil detention.”

(NEW YORK, NY) –The Legal Aid Society and The Bronx Defenders today [won the immediate release](#) of four immigrants in ICE detention who are at high risk of serious illness or death in the event of a COVID-19 infection, due to their underlying health conditions. The lawsuit, *Coronel et. al. v. Decker et.al.*, sought a temporary restraining order (TRO) amid mounting reports of egregious conditions at local ICE jails, exacerbating the risk of infection and spread of the new coronavirus within these facilities.

The decision is the second of its kind in the country, following a decision last night in a similar lawsuit filed by Brooklyn Defender Services that secured the release of 10 immigrants in ICE detention, based on similar concerns.

Among the plaintiffs in *Coronel et. al. v. Decker et.al.*, are individuals who suffer from diabetes, heart disease, neurocognitive disorder, kidney disease, and lung and liver problems--all groups of people that the CDC has identified as particularly high risk to COVID- 19 infection.

In her decision, Judge Alison J. Nathan of the U.S. Court of the Southern District of New York, said:

“Due to their serious underlying medical conditions, all Petitioners face a risk of severe, irreparable harm if they contract COVID-19.... Being in immigration detention places Petitioners at significantly higher risk of contracting COVID-19. Individuals in carceral settings are at a ‘significantly higher’ risk of spreading infectious diseases. It is not possible to isolate immigration detainees from the outside world (including from staff and vendors who may have been exposed to COVID-19), nor is it possible to isolate them from one another. As a result, jails will struggle to contain any eventual outbreak of COVID-19. The imminence of this risk is underscored by the fact that two of the three jails housing the remaining Petitioners have confirmed cases of COVID-19.”

“The release of these individuals marks a turning point in our fight for our clients’ health, safety, and constitutional rights,” **said Aadhithi Padmanabhan, Staff Attorney in the Immigration Law Unit at The Legal Aid Society.** “The decision, the second federal court ruling to find that ICE has shown a deliberate indifference to the medical needs of detained people, makes it clear that ICE cannot continue to recklessly endanger the lives of our clients or fail to take any steps to protect medically vulnerable individuals in its care and custody.”

“This is a critical, potentially life-saving ruling for our clients,” **said Suchita Mathur, Federal Practice attorney with The Bronx Defenders’ Immigration team.** "Judge Nathan's forceful decision also makes clear just how woefully inadequate ICE's handling of the pandemic has been and the devastating impact their failure could have on individuals and our communities. As the virus continues to spread in ICE jails, we will not stop fighting until every single person is freed from immigrant detention and taken out of harm's way.”

The [lawsuit filing can be found here](#).

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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>

[The Bronx Defenders](http://www.bronxdefenders.org) is a public defender nonprofit that is radically transforming how low-income people in the Bronx are represented in the justice system and in doing so, is transforming the system itself. We have pioneered a ground-breaking, nationally recognized model of defense called holistic defense that achieves better outcomes for our clients. Each year, we defend 27,000 low-income Bronx residents in criminal, civil, child welfare, and immigration cases, and we reach thousands more through our community intake and outreach programs. Learn more at www.bronxdefenders.org