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***Seven Medically Vulnerable Immigrants in ICE
Detention Seek Release Amid COVID-19 Pandemic,
Represented By Legal Aid, Bronx Defenders, Paul
Weiss, ACLU-NJ***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, The Bronx Defenders, The American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey, and Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, have filed lawsuits seeking the immediate release of seven immigrants in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention at Hudson County Correctional Facility who are at high risk of serious illness or death if they contract COVID-19 due to their underlying health conditions.

The lawsuits, brought in the U.S. District Court in the District of New Jersey, seek the immediate release of these seven individuals amid mounting reports of egregious conditions at Hudson County Correctional Facility, where four staff members have died of COVID-19 and over 100 people have been infected.

The plaintiffs are being held in civil immigration detention and suffer from underlying conditions like asthma, diabetes, and hypertension – all groups of people that the Centers for Disease Control have identified as particularly high risk of serious complications and death if they contract COVID-19.

Aadhithi Padmanabhan, Staff Attorney in the Immigration Law Unit at The Legal Aid Society, said: “Every day that our clients and all those in ICE custody remain in immigration detention, they run the entirely avoidable risk of infection and death, especially for medically vulnerable individuals like our plaintiffs. These risks are well known and documented at this point, and it is egregious to continue detaining people based on civil immigration offenses. So long as ICE continues to recklessly endanger the lives of those in its custody in the midst of this pandemic, we will see them in federal court.”

Suchita Mathur, Federal Practice attorney with The Bronx Defenders’ Immigration team, said: “ICE's recent statements refusing to release any more people in its custody regardless of medical vulnerability demonstrates just how ill-prepared and blind it is to the magnitude of this pandemic. Given the growing number of cases of COVID-19 at their jails, at this point the only humane way to proceed is for ICE to release everyone in their jails back to their families while they await their hearings. Because ICE refuses to do the right thing, we need continued intervention from the courts to get vulnerable people out of harm's way before it's too late.”

Jeanne LoCicero, Legal Director for the ACLU of New Jersey, said: “People in prisons and jails are unable to take the necessary precautions to protect themselves from the risk of infection posed by COVID-19. Keeping people detained in such egregious conditions is unconscionable — especially during this public health crisis. As public health experts have recommended, releasing people from detention is the only way to protect people’s lives.”

Farrah R. Berse, lead counsel for the law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, said: “Immigrant detention should not be a death sentence. Unfortunately, conditions in detention facilities pose risks to many individuals vulnerable to the life-threatening consequences of COVID-19. We are taking action to protect the lives of these endangered immigrants.”

The lawsuit filings can be found here:

- https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Yeury-J-Complaint_Redacted.pdf
- https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Tracey-S-Complaint_Redacted.pdf
- https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Santiago-P-Complaint_Redacted.pdf
- https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Robenson-J-Complaint_Redacted.pdf
- https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Ricardo-H-Complaint_Redacted.pdf
- https://www.bronxdefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/1-3_Redacted.pdf
- https://www.bronxdefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/1-3_Redacted.pdf

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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](#) 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

The ACLU of New Jersey works to defend liberty throughout our state. We are involved in litigation and advocacy on behalf of individuals, and we lobby on scores of bills in the state legislature and local councils. In addition, the ACLU is active in many public education and community organizing projects. We implement legal, legislative, and public education programs in conjunction with large numbers of volunteers to advance the ACLU's goals of liberty and justice for all. www.aclu-nj.org