



May 5, 2020

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

Legal Aid Secures The Release Of Eight Pregnant Women Currently Incarcerated At Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, Demands The Release Of All Ten

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society [secured the release](#) of eight pregnant women currently incarcerated at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility and called on Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Department of Correction and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to release two additional pregnant clients immediately. Legal Aid had included all ten of the women in a recently issued [demand letter](#) to protect them and their unborn children from serious complications from COVID-19. All of these women are serving sentences for non-violent crimes and some are held as a result of technical parole violations. Some are due to be released in just a few weeks, and all have release dates within a year.

Legal Aid issued this demand letter to Governor Cuomo’s Administration two days before state correction’s officials [announced](#) that DOCCS will begin reviewing and releasing incarcerated women who are pregnant or postpartum. However, Legal Aid raised concern that these reviews could take too long, and DOCCS had not communicated to Legal Aid whether these ten clients would be eligible for immediate release. Bedford Hills already has [39 confirmed cases](#) of COVID-19. One woman in the facility has become the first woman in New York State prisons to die from the virus.

The state prison system in New York is fast becoming an epicenter of COVID-19. As of May 5, 2020, DOCCS reports that 1,129 staff members, 401 incarcerated people, and 52 parolees in DOCCS

custody are infected. Per DOCCS, four staff members, 13 New Yorkers in custody, and four parolees have already succumbed to the virus.

“While we welcome the release of these eight women in response to our advocacy, we demand that DOCCS free our other two clients whose due dates are fast approaching,” said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “There is no justification to hold these women in custody further as the COVID-19 infection rate continues to climb, endangering the lives of everyone in prison. Any further delay is heartless and will keep our clients and their unborn children in serious danger.”

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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.

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