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Contact:

Redmond Haskins
The Legal Aid Society
(929) 441-2384
rhaskins@legal-aid.org

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

Legal Aid To Mayor de Blasio: Force Homeless New Yorkers From Hotels And We'll See You In Court

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society today warned Mayor Bill de Blasio that if his Administration caves to the racist NIMBYism from some residents of the Upper West Side and forces vulnerable New Yorkers from their hotel rooms back to congregate shelters before it is safe to do so, Legal Aid will immediately file litigation seeking a temporary restraining order on behalf of the Coalition for the Homeless and the nearly 18,000 single adults who sleep in Department of Homeless Services shelters each night.

Judith Goldiner, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society, stated - "These hotel rooms have afforded some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers safe refuge from exposure to COVID-19 in the City's saturated shelter system, where at least 96 people have already died from contracting the virus. The public health crisis is not over, and moving people experiencing homelessness back into overcrowded shelters could spark a second wave of COVID-19, putting lives at needless risk. The COVID-19 mortality rate for single adults in shelter is in fact 79 percent higher than it is for the New York City population as a whole, according to the Coalition for the Homeless.

The City has continually stated that these New Yorkers - many of whom are medically vulnerable and immunocompromised - will be moved only when public health guidance deems it safe to do so. There is currently no scientific evidence to support moving people from hotel rooms to congregate facilities. The Mayor is clearly only responding to threats of litigation from a vocal group of well-resourced community members of the Upper West Side.

Should the Mayor make the wrongheaded and cruel decision to force our clients from safety, we will immediately file a temporary restraining order in court on their behalf."

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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. www.legalaidnyc.org