

# THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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

## ***Legal Aid Prepares Lawsuit Against City Over Rushed Plan to Move Homeless New Yorkers With Disabilities From Harmonia Shelter to Other Facilities That Lack Necessary Accommodations***

## ***Mayor de Blasio's Knee-Jerk Capitulation to UWS NIMBYism has Created a Housing Crisis for Hundreds of Homeless Families now Forced to Leave Accessible Shelter***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society announced that it is [preparing an Article 78](#) lawsuit against the City over its plan to force homeless New Yorkers with disabilities from the Harmonia shelter in Manhattan to other facilities scattered around New York City that lack necessary services to accommodate their needs. This crisis emerged after the City's knee-jerk decision to uproot men living in safe refuge at the Lucerne Hotel in the Upper West Side to the Harmonia Shelter in Midtown Manhattan, a facility that serves homeless New Yorkers in adult families, 80% of whom are disabled.

Legal Aid has learned that the City has not properly assessed the needs of residents of the Harmonia Hotel to ensure that any future facility where they may be housed can accommodate their disability and medical issues, as required by law. Legal Aid has also learned that Harmonia Shelter staff who work with this particularly vulnerable population may be laid off as that shelter will be converted to a single men's facility.

“Mayor Bill de Blasio’s pathetic and shortsighted surrender to Upper West Side NIMBYism has unsurprisingly disrupted the lives of other vulnerable New Yorkers at various shelters around New York City, all in the midst of a public health crisis,” said **Judith Goldiner, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “If the City continues to fail at its job of ensuring that these families have the proper accommodations, as prescribed by law, we will file an Article 78 seeking a temporary restraining order in New York State Supreme Court.”

### **Client case 1**

- Family - husband and wife in their 50s - require a placement in or near the Bronx, as their network of doctors is located in the borough, and an apartment with space that will allow their home health aides access and space for medical equipment. Both have other medical needs that put them at risk for COVID-19. The couple also requires an elevator or first floor unit as they both use wheelchairs. The City currently has plans to move this family to a shelter in Brooklyn and the only accommodation noted by the City was related to mobility impairments.

### **Client case 2**

- Family - husband and wife in their late 40s and early 50s, respectively - who require placement in Manhattan to be close to their medical providers as the wife has limited mobility. His conditions also entitle him to a kitchen unit and the wife qualifies for a private bathroom because of her medical issues. Both clients need an elevator as well. The City currently has plans to move this family to a different shelter and the only accommodation noted by the City was related to mobility impairments.

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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](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*