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

***As COVID-19 Cases Continue to Skyrocket - Including
43 New Cases at Attica C.F. - Legal Aid Calls on Cuomo,
DOCCS to Release Medically Vulnerable Clients***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society called on Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Department of Correction and Community Supervision (DOCCS) to release New Yorkers who are vulnerable to COVID-19 as cases of the virus continue to skyrocket within New York State’s prison system, [including, as of November 30, 2020, 43 new confirmed cases at Attica C.F.](#) Since March, 18 New Yorkers have died in DOCCS’ custody from COVID-19 and over 1,800 have tested positive. For those who have been infected, the lingering effects and long-term complications of the virus remain unknown.

Multiple state prisons are grappling with new COVID-19 outbreaks, including Cayuga C.F., Clinton C.F., Fishkill C.F., Midstate C.F., Sing Sing C.F., and others.

Last week, Legal Aid condemned Governor Cuomo and DOCCS for failing to [promptly free vulnerable New Yorkers who qualify for New York’s early release initiative](#) under which incarcerated individuals who are within 90 days of their release date and who are serving sentences for non-violent, non-sex offenses are eligible for immediate release. The State’s failure to competently administer its early release initiative has trapped hundreds of medically vulnerable people in a prison system overrun with a deadly pathogen.

“With each new case comes further confirmation that DOCCS cannot contain this virus,” said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “Close to 2,000 incarcerated New Yorkers have already been infected by the virus in DOCCS facilities. Instead of releasing enough people to enable social distancing in its prisons, the State has ignored hundreds upon hundreds of applications for early release. This is indeed a matter of life or death. To prevent additional loss of life, Governor Cuomo and DOCCS must follow the lead of other states and release New Yorkers back to their families and communities.”

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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