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Legal Aid Calls on the City for Answers Following Tragic Death of Ryan Wilson in DOC Custody

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society called for answers from the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) following the tragic death of [Ryan Wilson](#), a Legal Aid client who died from an apparent suicide while in DOC custody at the Manhattan Detention Complex. Mr. Wilson was just 29 years old and his passing marks the second death in as many months of a New Yorker under the age of 30 in DOC custody.

[Christopher Cruz](#), another Legal Aid client, passed away in early October while held pretrial on cash bail at Rikers Island, presumed innocent of the charges against him, yet unable to purchase his freedom. The cause of Mr. Cruz's death remains unknown, and the City has disclosed little information regarding its circumstances.

Mr. Cruz and Mr. Wilson's deaths are emblematic of DOC's refusal to address dangerous conditions in its jails. Legal Aid has sued the City repeatedly to address conditions that cause or contribute to tragedies like these, including failures to screen people at reception, provide adequate mental health and medical treatment, and monitor the well-being of people who are confined.

"This is yet another heartbreaking and avoidable death, and it represents a colossal failure by DOC to protect our clients in its custody. We demand answers, and call for an immediate, swift, thorough and independent investigation into Ryan Wilson's tragic passing. His family and community deserve nothing less, and we extend our deepest sympathy to them on his loss," said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-in-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. "Time and time again, DOC has demonstrated its complete inability to safeguard New Yorkers in its care, the overwhelming majority of whom are jailed on allegations that have not been established, awaiting their day in court. As these tragedies mount, City Hall must be held accountable for these preventable deaths."

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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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