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

NY Prisons Reach Shameful Milestone: 2,000 New Yorkers in Custody Have now Tested Positive for COVID-19

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society condemned Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Department of Correction and Community Supervision (DOCCS) for failing to take necessary steps to control the spread of COVID-19 at prisons throughout New York State as [2,040 New Yorkers in DOCCS custody have now tested positive for the virus.](#)

"This shameful milestone was totally avoidable had Governor Cuomo and DOCCS heeded the calls from advocates, medical professionals and other experts for immediate decarceration of medically vulnerable individuals," said **Stefen Short, Supervising Attorney with the Prisoners' Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society.** "Absent significant intervention by Governor Cuomo or DOCCS, it is apparent that the situation will only worsen and that the consequences will be even more tragic. The State must act immediately to release those who are medically vulnerable. This step is critical to protect vulnerable people and to allow those who remain in custody to practice social distancing, the only measure that can stem the spread of the virus in DOCCS facilities."

Last week, Legal Aid released an analysis of DOCCS data which revealed that 14 different New York State prisons saw a significant increase in positive COVID-19 cases in just eight days, between December 3, 2020 and December 11, 2020. The increase totaled 142 new cases, which brings the DOCCS count of incarcerated New Yorkers who have tested positive for the virus to 2,040. Since the pandemic began, 18 people in DOCCS' custody have succumbed to the virus.

This recent jump merely highlights what has become crystal clear: that, with the onset of New York's second COVID wave, the virus is spreading uncontrollably in DOCCS facilities.

Link to analysis: <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/DOCCS-COVID-Difference-in-Cases-12.3-to-12.8.xlsx>

According to the analysis, the following facilities saw COVID increases over an eight-day span: Attica C.F., Bare Hill C.F., Bedford Hills C.F., Cayuga C.F., Clinton C.F., Gowanda C.F., Great Meadow C.F., Groveland C.F., Hudson C.F., Marcy C.F., Mohawk C.F. (Walsh Regional Medical Unit), Wende C.F., Woodbourne C.F., and Wyoming C.F.,

Late last month, 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.

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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. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>