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

***Legal Aid Condemns Governor Cuomo for Excluding
Incarcerated New Yorkers from COVID Vaccine Distribution
Plan, Despite Cases Spiking Across State***

(NEW YORK, NY) – Mary Lynne Werlas, Director of the Prisoners’ Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society, today released the following statement responding to Governor Andrew Cuomo’s [announcement](#) of ongoing COVID-19 vaccination efforts:

“In the past week alone, 3 people died of COVID-19 in state prison while the Governor’s office has done nothing but issue press statements deflecting blame. Given what we know about the high risk of the coronavirus spread in congregate spaces, we must immediately vaccinate those living and working within jails and prisons as confirmed COVID-19 cases across the State continue to skyrocket.

Moreover, the Governor’s efforts to shift the blame to the Department of Health are spineless and simply false—it is his office that is responsible for decisions regarding vaccine distribution, and those decisions should have been made months ago. While the Governor continues to withhold vaccine distribution to incarcerated individuals and DOC staff, people are suffering and dying of COVID-19 within the walls of our state prisons and jails.”

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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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