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

Legal Aid Decries Governor Cuomo's Refusal to Offer Incarcerated New Yorkers the COVID-19 Vaccine as Another 174 People in State Custody Test Positive for the Virus

A Combined 4,502 New Yorkers Have now Tested Positive for the Virus in State Custody Since Last March

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** condemned Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) for refusing to offer vaccines to incarcerated New Yorkers as, per [data](#) released today, 174 more people in DOCCS' custody have tested positive for the virus in DOCCS custody since January.

This brings the total number of confirmed DOCCS cases to 4,502. 29 New Yorkers in DOCCS' custody have succumbed to the virus since the pandemic started last March.

Recognizing the heightened risk of COVID-19 that incarcerated people face as a result of being forced to live in congregate settings, [Massachusetts](#), under Republican Governor Charlie Baker, announced last month that his administration would immediately offer the vaccine to tens of thousands of people in state custody. [Virginia](#) and [Iowa](#) have also recently announced similar efforts.

“While governors in other states take decisive action to stem the spread of COVID-19 in carceral settings, Governor Cuomo has ignored the appeals of health experts, who agree that prisons and jails are high risk settings that should be prioritized for vaccine access,” said **Stefen R. Short, Supervising Attorney with the Prisoners' Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society**. “In view of these daily sizable increases in confirmed virus cases in DOCCS, it's unconscionable that Governor Cuomo continues to deny our clients lifesaving relief. We demand action now.”

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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