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Contact:
Alejandra Lopez
The Legal Aid Society
ALopez@legal-aid.org
917-294-9348

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

Legal Aid Condemns SI Landlord Attorney for Using Racist Language in Eviction Filings Against 40 Staten Island Tenants

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society [condemned](#) attorney Nichole E. Lee for using crudely racist language in eviction filings on behalf of multiple landlords against dozens of local tenants. This inflammatory language prompted Civil Court Administrative Judge Anthony Cannataro to dismiss 40 pending eviction cases in Staten Island Housing Court.

In a notice to tenants, Lee replaced “coronavirus emergency” with “Chinese Wuhan virus emergency” in both English and Spanish on a New York State form. After becoming aware of the bigoted language, Legal Aid immediately reached out to the New York State Office of Court Administration (OCA) and the Court swiftly dismissed cases filed by these landlords.

“Racism has no place in our court system, and this latest example unfortunately serves as a microcosm of what our clients, mostly those from communities of color, suffer on a routine basis,” said **Teresa DeFonso, Attorney-In-Charge of the Staten Island Neighborhood Office at The Legal Aid Society**. “This attorney and others are put on notice that Legal Aid will pursue you in the courts and in the press should you resort to these deplorable and xenophobic tactics to bully our clients. Lastly, we thank OCA and Civil Court Administrative Judge Anthony Cannataro for quickly acting to dismiss these cases in the interest of justice.”

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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