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July 13, 2021

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

Legal Aid, Jenner & Block Secure Temporary Halt to Transfers of Homeless Disabled New Yorkers from Hotel Rooms Back to Crowded Local Shelters

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society’s Josh Goldfein and Jenner & Block Partner Dawn Smalls issued the following joint statement in response to a ruling issued by United States District Court for the Southern District of New York Judge Gregory H. Woods halting the transfers of homeless disabled New Yorkers from hotel rooms back to crowded local homeless shelters:

“Today’s decision affirms that the City rushed the moves of homeless New Yorkers from safe placements in hotels back to crowded shelters without meeting its obligations, endangering the lives of New York’s most vulnerable residents. The City cannot phase out the hotel program without ensuring that it meets its obligations under Butler. We thank the court for recognizing that the City must meet this obligation as prescribed by law.”

Background: <https://legalaidnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/07-08-21-LAS-Jenner-Block-File-Motion-in-Federal-Class-Action-Lawsuit-to-Halt-Citys-Transfer-of-Disabled-New-Yorkers-from-Hotel-Rooms.pdf>

“Coalition for the Homeless is very pleased with today’s decision and thanks our lawyers at The Legal Aid Society and Jenner & Block LLP for their dedication to our clients. As the court-appointed monitor of the single adult shelter system, we will monitor the Department of Homeless Services’ (DHS) compliance with today’s order, and expect DHS to follow its legal obligations to ensure that our clients with disabilities and/or medical conditions are assigned to placements that best meet their needs. However, we are disappointed that we had to seek judicial

intervention to force DHS to end its feverish rush to exit hotels and send individuals back to congregate shelters where they are at greater risk for contracting the virus that causes COVID-19. No matter how many premature, city-funded reopening parties Mayor de Blasio holds, the pandemic continues and our clients still need access to hotel rooms and permanent, affordable housing to protect themselves,” said **Deborah B. Diamant, Esq., Director of Government Relations and Legal Affairs at the Coalition for the Homeless.**

“This decision will help protect the health and safety of thousands of homeless people who are being rushed back to congregate shelters based on the Mayor’s cruel plan. The Mayor should take this opportunity to stop the transfers and listen to those affected by his decision: hotel residents themselves. Homeless New Yorkers are calling on the City to keep them in safe hotel rooms and focus their energies on helping people move from hotel rooms into permanent housing. The Mayor should listen. We have many options for housing homeless New Yorkers right now: emergency implementation of Intro 146 to increase CityFHEPS voucher amounts, using available Section 8 vouchers allocated through the American Rescue Plan, and using all vacant HPD apartments. With all these options for permanent housing, moving homeless people from hotels to dangerous congregate shelters doesn’t make any sense and is cruelty that needs to stop now,” said **Helen Strom, Supervisor of the Benefits and Homeless Advocacy Unit at the Safety Net Project at the Urban Justice Center.**

“This outcome helps to ensure the right that people with disabilities should receive and further these accommodations are necessary to account for people’s safety and wellbeing,” said **Dr. Sharon McLennon-Wier, Executive Director of the Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY.**

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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

Jenner & Block LLP is a law firm with global reach, with offices in Chicago, London, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. The firm is known for its prominent and successful litigation practice, global investigations, and experience handling sophisticated and high-profile corporate transactions. Its clients include Fortune 100 companies, technology companies, large privately held corporations, emerging companies, Native American tribes, and venture capital and private equity investors. The American Lawyer recognized the firm as the #1 pro bono firm in the United States 10 times in the past 14 years. In 2021, the publication also recognized the firm as the #2 international pro bono firm, and in 2018, named the firm as its first "Pro Bono Champion." In 2020, Reuters Legal named the firm its inaugural "Pro Bono Hero."