

# THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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## ***Legal Aid: Mayor de Blasio Abandons Reform, Imposes City's Most Draconian Solitary Confinement and Lockdown Regime in Decades***

**(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society** condemned Mayor Bill de Blasio for reneging on his signature policy initiative of reducing the dangerous abuse of solitary confinement in the City jails by suspending the human rights laws that protect people in custody from being locked indefinitely in cells with no recourse or respite.

By Executive Order, the Mayor not only gutted the New York City Board of Correction's recent regulations placing boundaries on punitive segregation and creating more closely supervised disciplinary units, but went even further to permit jailers to lock all people in custody - even those accused of no misconduct - into their cells 24 hours a day for no reason, by suspending the longstanding rights of pre-trial detainees in general population to spend some parts of the day outside of their individual cells.

The Mayor also permitted the jailers to chain individuals to desks when they are in school or programs. The Order further denies people access to the law library, which in jails is tantamount to depriving them of the ability to work with their counsel to prepare their defense. This executive action goes far beyond delaying implementation of the new jail disciplinary system—it eradicates laws that existed even before the recent restrictive housing reforms.

The Executive Order also includes a modest measure for addressing the on-going labor action by correction officers by which nearly thirty percent of the Department of Correction workforce is drawing a paycheck without ever coming to work. This unprecedented work stoppage has thrown the City's criminal justice system into chaos, delaying court productions and programming and jeopardizing the safety of staff and people in custody. The Executive Order merely states that staff who are engaging in this outrageous and dangerous abuse of their unlimited sick leave may be suspended briefly without pay – a paltry response to this scandalous abuse of taxpayer dollars and public trust.

“Mayor de Blasio has done a complete about-face by jettisoning the recent advancements New York City had made to curb the reckless use of solitary confinement and dangerous practices of locking people into cells with no supervision or oversight,” said **Mary Lynne Werlwas of The Legal Aid Society Prisoners' Rights Project**. “His action also revives the abhorrent practice of chaining Black and Brown people to desks with iron restraints. These abuses are even more dangerous in the current environment where correction staff have abandoned their

posts and are not even in the jails to provide basic human necessities. This is a stain on the City's human rights record without parallel in this administration and should be lifted immediately.”

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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>*