

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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Contact:

Redmond Haskins
The Legal Aid Society
rhaskins@legal-aid.org
(929) 441-2384

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

Statement on Passing of Legal Aid Client William Brown, 16th New Yorker to Die this Year Alone in City Jails

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society issued the following statement on the passing of William Brown, a Legal Aid client who died in New York City Department of Correction (DOC) custody last night at Rikers Island:

“We are saddened and outraged that another New Yorker, William Brown, has died at Rikers Island, which continues to grapple with an out-of-control humanitarian crisis. His death, the 16th this year alone, is unconscionable and could have been prevented had those in power listened to the calls from defenders and others to decarcerate our City jails.

These deaths represent a failure by DOC to keep our clients safe and alive. Without systemic changes that address the criminalization of poverty and the underfunding of mental health services, as well as a shift from the default reliance on law enforcement to respond to a myriad of societal issues, these tragedies will only continue.

We need solutions that strike at the root cause of these issues, including investment in preventive resources. We call on Albany to pass the pending Treatment Not Jail legislation to expand mental health services to interrupt the cycle of incarceration that claimed Mr. Brown’s life. All the money that the City spends to cage our clients continues to yield the same outcomes. We need wholesale change and urge the incoming Adams Administration and state leaders to deliver on this overdue priority.”

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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 145 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