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

***Legal Aid, Milbank LLP Secure Working WiFi for 11,000+ Homeless Students at 240+ City Shelters***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society and Milbank LLP announced that [working WiFi has been installed](#) at more than 240 shelters citywide, serving over 11,000 homeless students, as required of the City per a [settlement](#) in *E.G. et al. v. The City of New York et al.* – a class action lawsuit filed in November 2020 against the de Blasio Administration for its failure to provide students who reside in City shelters access to reliable internet service so they can attend school remotely. The litigation was brought on behalf of Coalition for the Homeless and shelter residents with school-age children to ensure that homeless students could participate in remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

“Before we brought this litigation, the City had no viable plan to enable thousands of homeless students living at local shelters to reliably attend school remotely during an unprecedented pandemic,” said **Susan Horwitz, Supervising Attorney of the Education Law Project at The Legal Aid Society**. “Now that the work is virtually complete, a lack of internet access will no longer exacerbate the stark educational inequities that have historically plagued so many of our clients living in shelters. Now we will focus our support on the current organizing and legislative effort to expand internet access to all New Yorkers living in temporary housing across the state.”

“We are pleased that children living in the City’s homeless shelters now have access to wireless internet and are able to receive the sound basic education guaranteed to them by the New York Constitution and other state and federal laws,” said **Grant Mainland, a litigation partner at Milbank LLP**. “While we regret that litigation was necessary to achieve this outcome, we take pride in the important progress that was made through this hard-earned settlement.”

“Coalition for the Homeless is grateful to The Legal Aid Society and Milbank LLP for their relentless advocacy on behalf of homeless school-age children residing in Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration shelters. We are relieved that the City has finally completed installing wireless internet in the more than 240 shelters included in the *E.G.* settlement. However, the fight for access to this basic utility is not over yet, and the State and City must work together to ensure reliable wireless internet access is available to *all* individuals sleeping in shelters so that they can search for housing, find work, apply for benefits, attend telehealth appointments, and stay connected with loved ones,” said **Deborah B. Diamant, Esq., Director of Government Relations and Legal Affairs at Coalition for the Homeless**.

## Background

Legal Aid and Milbank first raised this matter with the City in spring 2020 and issued a subsequent demand letter.

Instead of immediately opening up or installing WiFi networks to ensure that students in shelters could participate in remote education, the City instead responded by changing the cellular carrier for some students' DOE-issued tablets used for remote learning.

Many families living in shelters who received new tablets reported that they had no cellular service at their shelter site and continued to experience disruptions in the school day. Many DHS and HRA shelters are located in underserved parts of the City which are also cellular dead zones.

Legal Aid and Milbank learned that the lack of reliable internet access was not an isolated issue plaguing only a handful of families at a few shelters, but one affecting numerous shelters and thousands of students across New York City and in various shelter systems.

In April 2021, Legal Aid and Milbank secured a settlement compelling the City to install WiFi at every shelter citywide that serves school-age children.

The legal claims raised in this litigation included the City's violations of the Education Article of the New York Constitution, the New York State Education Law, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

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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](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*