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

Legal Aid, Coalition for the Homeless Condemn City for Moving Elder and High-Risk Homeless New Yorkers From De-Densified Placements in Local Hotels Back to Congregate Shelters Despite Recent COVID-19 Infection Rate Surge

City Hall Also Now Adding Burdensome Requirements for Homeless New Yorkers to Secure Safe Living Accommodations

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society and the Coalition for the Homeless [condemned](#) the City over its plan to move elder and high-risk homeless New Yorkers safely housed in single-occupancy rooms in a hotel in lower Manhattan back to congregate shelter settings in the coming weeks despite the recent uptick in COVID-19 cases and data documenting that this population is especially at risk for severe outcomes from an infection.

According to [reporting](#), people ages 65 and up die from COVID-19 at far higher rates than the rest of the population, accounting for 81% of deaths during the Omicron wave. Homeless New Yorkers placed in congregate settings are at a much higher risk of contracting the virus than if they were placed in single-occupancy hotel rooms.

The Department of Homeless Services states it must exit the hotel in lower Manhattan by early next month, but the City is also requiring burdensome and unnecessary measures for New Yorkers to be allowed to move to other single-occupancy hotel rooms, requirements that will likely result in large numbers of elder and medically high-risk clients being moved back to congregate settings.

Rather than continuing to follow the [CDC's guidance](#) on factors such as age and medical conditions that put individuals at high risk of COVID complications, the City has severely limited the criteria it deems worthy of a single-occupancy hotel room. This limited criteria no longer considers an individual's risk of contracting COVID-19 when determining who may be eligible for a less dense setting, despite the fact that New York City is currently in a [high COVID-19 Alert Level](#).

“Instead of relegating our most vulnerable neighbors to crowded congregate settings, the City should focus its energy on moving these New Yorkers to permanent housing, where they will be safest,” said **Josh Goldfein, Staff Attorney with the Homeless Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society**. “With the current wildfire spread of COVID-19, this is the worst time to make the people at highest risk less safe, and the City has no justifiable reason for doing so short of the Administration’s ludicrous claim that the pandemic is a relic of the past.”

“The CDC makes clear that starting at age 50, older adults face increasingly serious COVID-19 risks, among them: hospitalization, including intensive care and use of a ventilator to breathe, and death,” said **Deborah Diamant, Director of Government Relations and Legal Affairs at Coalition for the Homeless**. “We are considering all legal options available to protect the most vulnerable homeless New Yorkers from these very real dangers. It is irresponsible and unacceptable for the City to needlessly place elderly and homeless New Yorkers at risk.”

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