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

Report: In Response to Pressure, DHS Delays Its Plan to Add Burdensome Requirements for Homeless New Yorkers to Secure Safe Living Accommodations

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society and the Coalition for the Homeless** issued the following joint statement in response to a [report](#) that the New York City Department of Homeless Services will delay its plan to add burdensome requirements for homeless New Yorkers to secure safe living accommodations:

“It should not take a bad headline for the City to do what is right for some of our most vulnerable neighbors. Per the CDC, persons ages 65 and up and those who are immunocompromised have shouldered the brunt of COVID-19 deaths, and these populations should have unfettered access to single-occupancy hotel rooms so they can be better protected from the ongoing pandemic. The City’s burdensome and unnecessary plan to require additional documentation from these New Yorkers would only result in a large number of our clients being moved back to crowded shelters settings, where they would be at high risk of contracting the virus that causes COVID-19.”

Background

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 a hotel in lower Manhattan by early next month, but the City also expressed plans to require burdensome and unnecessary measures for New Yorkers to be allowed to move to other single-occupancy hotel rooms, requirements that would 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-19 complications, the City planned to severely limit the criteria it deems worthy of a single-occupancy hotel room. This limited criteria would no longer consider 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](#).

Following [outrage](#) from The Legal Aid Society, the Coalition for the Homeless, and other advocates, as well as [an article in Gothamist/WNYC](#), the City said it would reverse course and halt the implementation of the new criteria while the parties in the *Butler* litigation negotiate the proposed changes.

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