

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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

Statement from Counsel for Michael Lopez, the 11th New Yorker to Die This Year in Department of Correction Custody

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society** released the following statement as counsel for Michael Lopez, the 11th New Yorker to die in New York City Department of Correction (DOC) custody this year:

“There are simply no more words to express the sadness and anger that all New Yorkers should feel today. Mayor Adams, DOC Commissioner Molina, District Attorneys and judges are responsible for these deaths, and their continued decisions to send people into dangerous conditions, and inability to address the root causes of that danger, amount to a refusal to recognize our clients as human beings.

Michael Lopez was caged at Rikers Island over crimes of poverty. He was held in an observation unit charged with ensuring his safety, yet he was still deprived of the services that he needed and deserved. Had Mr. Lopez been spared detention, he would have been connected to programming, and he would be alive today.

Regular deaths have become the status quo in DOC. The inability of the Adams administration to take immediate and bold action further demonstrates that they cannot be trusted to run the jails one day longer and the appointment of a receiver remains necessary. While these issues are addressed in the court system, Mayor Adams and Commissioner Molina must declare their own jail system patently unsafe and join our call for the wholesale decarceration of these facilities.

Our hearts ache for Mr. Lopez’s family, friends and community, and the countless other New Yorkers who have been touched by these tragic and completely avoidable deaths.”

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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 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