

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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

Legal Aid Demands Answers from Mayor Adams, DOC Commissioner Molina Following Recent Deaths of Two More Incarcerated Clients - Gregory Acevedo and Robert Pondexter

Defenders Condemn DOC Commissioner Molina for Failing to Take Responsibility for the Department's Mounting Death Count

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society condemned Mayor Eric Adams and New York City Department of Correction (DOC) Commissioner Louis Molina over the [recent deaths of two incarcerated clients](#), Gregory Acevedo and Robert Pondexter.

Last Tuesday, Mr. Acevedo, who was detained at the Vernon C. Bain Center near Hunts Point in the Bronx, was found in the East River, where he died later that evening at Mount Sinai Hospital in Queens.

Robert Pondexter, another Legal Aid client, suffered a catastrophic medical emergency while in DOC custody, and passed away last Thursday afternoon.

Legal Aid, in response to [reporting](#), also condemned Commissioner Molina for failing to take responsibility for the deaths occurring on his watch, and for his apparent cynical efforts to push Mr. Pondexter from DOC custody while he was on life support to avoid further negative press on deaths in custody.

Statement from The Legal Aid Society:

“Words cannot express our sadness and outrage over the passing of clients Gregory Acevedo and Robert Pondexter.

The circumstances surrounding these deaths warrant an immediate investigation and transparency. With each death this year, City Hall and DOC leadership have stonewalled the public and refused to provide timely and accurate information. The information provided by the New York City Board of Correction (BOC), the oversight body, suggests a reason City Hall has attempted such authoritarian control of information: the deaths in custody reviewed by BOC show a shocking incompetence and failure of DOC to carry out basic correctional duties.

Mayor Adams and Commissioner Molina have demonstrated that they will not or cannot keep people safe in local jails. They have forfeited any claim of legitimate authority to incarcerate, and broken the public trust, underscoring the need for appointment of a receiver and a complete overhaul of this agency and its entrenched culture of incompetence and violence. For the District Attorneys of New York to continue to condemn people to these dangerous facilities is unconscionable, and we again call on all criminal legal system stakeholders to facilitate the immediate decarceration of local jails.

Lastly, we expect the Department to be accountable for their actions in Mr. Pondexter's final hours. To date, the Department has failed to demonstrate accountability for the death toll, but instead rests in obfuscation and delay. We extend our deepest sympathy to both Mr. Acevedo and Mr. Pondexter's family, friends and community at this most difficult time and call for immediate answers from DOC on these tragic 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