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

***Joint Defender Statement in Response to Mayoral Summit on Criminal Justice***

**(NEW YORK, NY) – The Bronx Defenders, The Legal Aid Society, and the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem**, organizations who participated in this weekend’s Mayoral Summit on Criminal Justice, released the following statement:

“We thank the Mayor for bringing together leaders in criminal justice from across New York City to brainstorm non-legislative solutions to the problems that are driving and keeping people ensnared in the criminal legal system.

The communities we serve have been under-resourced for generations, from health care to housing, and education to employment opportunities. The lack of robust community-based resources drives New Yorkers, overwhelmingly and disproportionately from low-income communities of color, into the criminal legal system, and this reality has turned first responders, courts, and jails into de facto mental health service providers. Underfunding of critical legislative reforms further perpetuates these inequities and problems.

What is clear from this summit is that we share an interest in resolving these issues. We must all commit to investing in community health services and data proven solutions to the mental health crisis before, during, and after entanglement with the criminal legal system. We must also provide the resources necessary to make discovery reform successful, expand alternatives to detention and incarceration, and help people connect to the services they need.

We look forward to working with all criminal legal system stakeholders to find the solutions and resources necessary to address the issues that drive and keep people ensnared in the criminal legal system.”

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