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

***Legal Aid Calls on Mayor Adams, Criminal Legal System Stakeholders for Answers Following Fire that Destroyed NYPD Brooklyn Evidence Center, Impacting Pending Criminal and Exoneration Cases***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, in a recently issued [letter](#), called on Mayor Eric Adams to work with the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and New York City’s District Attorneys to develop and publish information and a plan of action in response to the fire at the NYPD’s evidence center at Erie Basin Auto Pound in Brooklyn, NY on December 13, 2022.

The fire resulted in the loss of critical DNA evidence and will have far-reaching consequences for the ability of public defenders to exonerate wrongfully convicted clients who were waiting for testing to prove their innocence.

The letter urges the Mayor’s office to

- produce a list of evidence affected by the fire and indicate the cases impacted;
- share the information directly with impacted defendants and their counsel;
- and make public de-identified data about the number and status of relevant cases.

The letter also urges Mayor Adams to convene key criminal justice stakeholders - including local public defender organizations and wrongful conviction providers - to develop concrete solutions to ensure that wrongfully convicted citizens have access to justice.

“We were dismayed to learn of the loss of important DNA evidence in the fire that affected the NYPD evidence center in Brooklyn, and our clients deserve answers from City Hall and relevant criminal legal system stakeholders,” said **David Loftis, attorney-in-charge of the Post-Conviction and Forensic Litigation Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “Since the first DNA exoneration in 1989, preservation of biological evidence has proved critical in righting wrongful convictions. The recent fire in Red Hook extinguished the hopes of scores of people who were eagerly awaiting DNA testing to exonerate them, and this loss of critical evidence has far-reaching consequences for New Yorkers.”

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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 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.* **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**