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Contact:

Redmond Haskins  
Director of Media Relations  
The Legal Aid Society  
[rhaskins@legal-aid.org](mailto:rhaskins@legal-aid.org)

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

***FOIL: Throughout the Pandemic, Over 1,000 Incarcerated New Yorkers Each Month Performed Hundreds of Jobs, Some Dangerous, Without Critical Employment Protections or Fair Wages***

***Legal Aid Calls on Albany to Pass Legislation to Eradicate Prison Slavery, Ensure that Incarcerated New Yorkers Have Basic Workplace Protections***

(NEW YORK, NY) — The Legal Aid Society released [never-before-seen information](#) today obtained via a Freedom of Information Law request that revealed that New Yorkers in the custody of the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) performed hundreds of jobs, some dangerous, for [Corcraft](#) - New York's prison industry - throughout the pandemic without critical employment protections or fair wages. The data set covers the period from April 2020 to July 2022.

Some of these jobs included asbestos abatement, industrial manufacturing, machine and salvage detail, and firefighting work.

Corcraft headcount of incarcerated individuals per assigned unit/facility:

<https://tinyurl.com/yckn88ta>.

Paid job titles among incarcerated individuals in custody:

<https://tinyurl.com/38sfndc4>.

Early in the pandemic, it was reported that incarcerated workers were denied personal protective equipment (PPE) while being forced to manufacture these same products, which included [hand sanitizer](#) and [face masks](#), but the sheer extent of their exploitation has never been fully revealed.

If incarcerated New Yorkers refuse to work they often face severe punishments, including keeplock and solitary confinement, extended incarceration through loss of good time credits, and loss of family visitation. They are paid wages from [10 - 65 cents an hour](#).

This forced labor system has its roots in slavery, and most incarcerated workers today are people of color. BIPOC New Yorkers, who total just [45%](#) of our state's population, make up [78%](#) of our incarcerated population.

“New York’s record on exploitation in our prisons is unparalleled, and it’s unconscionable that incarcerated people worked grueling jobs throughout the pandemic, manufacturing products to keep the public safe, yet were deprived of both a fair wage and critical workplace protections,” said **Jacalyn Goldzweig, paralegal casehandler with the Employment Law Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “To right this historic wrong, New York must pass legislation this year to abolish slavery in all its forms, affirming our progressive values that all New Yorkers deserve dignity and respect. Other states have acted on this front and New York must follow suit.”

## **Background**

In response to the brutal and rampant exploitation of incarcerated New Yorkers in prisons, a coalition of public defenders, advocates, formerly incarcerated people and others formed [13th Forward](#), a campaign in support of legislation that would [eradicate carceral slavery](#) and secure incarcerated workers guaranteed basic rights and safety protections, as well as a [fair wage](#).

The [No Slavery in NY Act](#) would enshrine in New York State’s constitution the abolition of slavery without exception, including for those convicted of crimes. The current lack of state constitutional protection has allowed New York to build a prison system so dependent on human exploitation and degradation that it is akin to modern-day slavery.

Its companion legislation, the [Fairness and Opportunity For Incarcerated Workers Act](#) would ensure that all workers in New York, including those who are incarcerated, receive basic labor protections, a fair wage, and protection against forced labor by threat of punishment.

Recently, [Alabama](#), [Tennessee](#), [Vermont](#), and [Oregon](#) passed historic abolition amendments, officially closing the prison slavery loophole in their constitutions nearly 160 years after the ratification of the 13th Amendment. They join [Utah](#), [Colorado](#), and [Nebraska](#) to have made this change since 2018.

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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](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*