

May 12, 2023

Contacts:

Anthony Chiarito, The Bronx Defenders, (achiarito@bronxdefenders.org)

Redmond Haskins, The Legal Aid Society, (RHaskins@legal-aid.org)

Daniel Ball, Brooklyn Defender Services, (DBall@bds.org)

Shannon Anglero, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, (SAnglero@neighborhooddefender.org)

Lupe Todd-Medina, New York County Defender Services, (LToddmedina@nycds.org)

Brian Schatz, Queens Defenders, (BSchatz@queensdefenders.org)

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

NYC's Public Defenders Condemn Mayor Adams' Remarks Calling for More Criminalization and Forced Hospitalization of New Yorkers in Need

(New York, NY) – In response to Mayor Adams' remarks this week, **The Bronx Defenders, The Legal Aid Society, Brooklyn Defender Services, Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, New York County Defender Services, and Queens Defenders** issued the following statement:

“Mayor Adams used the language of compassion and care this week to reassert an anti-Black, anti-poor, and anti-homeless agenda. It is true that our government's approach to caring for New Yorkers who are unhoused or need mental health treatment is severely lacking and plagued by the same racism that afflicts our legal systems. But the Mayor's doubling down on criminalizing the unhoused and forcibly hospitalizing New Yorkers distracts from the policies and investments that would actually address the root causes of these issues.

“Black, brown, and unhoused New Yorkers, especially those struggling with mental health, have been criminalized their entire lives; their skin color or appearance made synonymous long ago with danger. That racism and dehumanization, which as public defenders we witness every day in the courts, has been reinforced over generations by our media and politicians. Mayor Adams' remarks this week are just the latest example.

“With so many experts and resources at the City's disposal, we can do better than caging people in jails and hospitals when they experience poverty or homelessness. The City must invest in rapid reentry housing, which is proven to give people stable homes and access to care that gets them back on their feet; guarantee a right to counsel for everyone in housing court; and invest mightily in affordable housing and all forms of social services. In short, the Mayor needs to call for investments in communities, not cages, if he truly cares.”

###