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

Legal Aid, NYLAG, Dechert LLP Secure Court Order Requiring City to Eliminate All SNAP and Cash Assistance Delays that Have Long Contributed to Food Insecurity for Low-Income New Yorkers

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, New York Legal Assistance Group, and Dechert LLP have secured a [Preliminary Injunction Order](#) in *Forest et al v. the City of New York et al* – a class action lawsuit brought against the City for failing to process applications and recertifications for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and cash assistance (CA) within the 30-day timeframe required by federal and state law. These federal and state benefits are essential for low-income people to purchase food and other basic needs. The processing delays have caused tens of thousands of families to face food instability and unnecessary hardships.

The court order requires the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS) and Human Resources Administration (HRA) to come in full compliance with all federal and state processing requirements for SNAP and CA applications and recertifications, and eliminate the backlog of delays by March 2024.

The court order also includes a series of benchmarks and monitoring requirements that will be used to ensure that the City comes into full compliance, including a July 31, 2023 deadline to reduce the number of overdue SNAP applications and recertifications – those pending for more

than 30 days – to no more than 800 cases. Additionally, the City will be required to provide monthly reports that will be used to assess their progress.

“No family should ever be forced to forgo the critical necessities they are entitled to under Federal and New York law because of the City’s delays,” said **Kathleen Kelleher, staff attorney in the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “Our clients and all low-income families in New York City have suffered for far too long, and this court order will help bring the City’s long history of delaying access to vital, life-altering services to an end.”

“It is unconscionable that any family would be denied access to benefits they need to survive because of administrative delays they have no control over,” said **Abby Biberman, associate director of the Public Benefits Unit at New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)**. “This order will help to ensure that the rights of New Yorkers who rely on SNAP and cash assistance are upheld, that they are treated with dignity, and that the City is held accountable for meeting its legal obligations to New Yorkers in need of these vital benefits.”

“It is our collective responsibility to ensure eligible citizens have timely access to the benefits they are entitled to receive,” said **Mark Thierfelder, co-chair of Dechert**. “Working with The Legal Aid Society and New York Legal Assistance Group, we have taken a step towards greater accountability in providing much needed assistance for low-income 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 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

Founded in 1990, New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) is a leading civil legal services organization combating economic, racial, and social injustice by advocating for people experiencing poverty or in crisis. NYLAG exists because wealth should not determine who has access to justice. Our services impacted the lives of 113,000 people last year. www.nylag.org

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