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

Statement on the Passing of Manish Kunwar, the Ninth New Yorker to Die in NYC Department of Correction Custody in 2023

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society issued the following statement on the passing of Manish Kunwar, a Legal Aid client and the ninth New Yorker to die in the custody of the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) this year:

“We are devastated and outraged by the news of the passing of yet another Legal Aid client at Rikers Island.

“Manish Kunwar was incarcerated at the Eric M. Taylor Center for only seven days before he died at the young age of 27. We extend our sincere condolences to Mr. Kunwar’s family, friends, and community at this extremely difficult time.

“Mr. Kunwar’s case yet again highlights the harm of incarceration in lieu of treatment. If our client had access to the services he needed and stable housing, today’s tragedy could have been avoided.

“The carceral system is no place for people struggling with mental or substance abuse issues, and all criminal legal system stakeholders must pursue alternatives that prioritize community-based resources over the confines of a cage.

“DOC’s continuous failure to ensure the well-being of those New Yorkers in its custody and inability to administer basic jail functions is unacceptable. We call for immediate answers from DOC and for a full and transparent investigation into the circumstances that led to Mr. Kunwar’s tragic death.”

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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. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>