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

***Legal Aid Statement in Response to Two Oversight Agencies Launching
Respective Probes into the Death of Charizma Jones***

***Ms. Jones Died Shortly After Release from Rikers Island Where She Was
Repeatedly Denied Medical Care***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society released the following statement in response to [reporting](#) that both the New York City Board of Correction (BOC) and the New York State Commission of Correction opened separate investigations into the [death of Charizma Jones](#), a 23-year-old woman who suffered a medical emergency while in New York City Department of Correction (DOC) custody at Rikers Island and, after being repeatedly [denied access to care](#) by DOC officers, later died at a local hospital:

“No human being should endure what Charizma Jones suffered at Rikers Island, and the complete lack of compassion and humanity DOC officers afforded Ms. Jones in her final hours as she pleaded for medical attention simply shocks the conscience. We hope both investigations proceed quickly and hold those involved accountable for their deplorable actions.

“DOC’s continued failure to ensure our clients’ access to medical care is not only one of the strongest indictments of the Department’s ability to administer basic jail functions, but it’s a gross violation of incarcerated New Yorkers’ rights.”

Background

Yesterday, Legal Aid sent a [letter](#) to BOC demanding an immediate investigation into Ms. Jones’ death. The letter states:

Ms. Jones’ medical records reflect an egregious denial of access to medical care by DOC staff in the weeks before her death. Correction officers repeatedly blocked medical staff’s access to Ms. Jones, citing her “medlock” status. But no security status can justify isolating a person in custody and depriving them of all

access to medical care. In Ms. Jones' case, DOC's actions were particularly appalling given that her symptoms were worsening and she was in obvious need of medical intervention and treatment.

Charizma Jones was admitted to the Rikers Island infirmary on April 28th of this year with a rash and fever. On May 4th, the DOC repeatedly interfered with the medical staff's efforts to evaluate and treat Ms. Jones. This interference included denying requests from medical staff to take her vital signs, stating that Ms. Jones could not be let out of her cell due to unspecified safety concerns.

On May 6th, DOC again denied medical staff access to take Ms. Jones' vital signs. EMS was later called to take Ms. Jones to the hospital. Ms. Jones did not return to Rikers Island and died in the hospital on July 14th.

Hospital medical records also suggest that Ms. Jones suffered an allergic reaction to antibiotic amoxicillin. Ms. Jones' condition was so severe that she spent her final hours in a coma at the Weill-Cornell Burn Center.

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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>