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

***Legal Aid Releases Report Highlighting the Harmful, Ongoing Impacts of
Correction Officers' Wildcat Strike on Incarcerated New Yorkers***

***Attorneys Propose Recommendations to New York State to Ensure Safety,
Wellbeing of People in Prisons***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society today [released](#) a [report](#) detailing the ongoing and immense damage inflicted upon incarcerated New Yorkers as a result of the unauthorized strike by New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) staff, which lasted for weeks and impacted dozens of upstate prisons.

According to personal accounts from twenty-four New Yorkers incarcerated in prisons affected by the unauthorized work stoppage, conditions in the prisons deteriorated rapidly during the strike, and these facilities continue to be plagued by health, safety, and human rights violations.

"I can't get out of my cell and I can't see mental health and it's really weighing me down," said a person incarcerated at Coxsackie Correctional Facility. "I feel like I'm deteriorating."

Incarcerated persons' access to critical medical and mental health care was severely limited during the duration of the strike, and many shared similar accounts of missed medical appointments and an inability to receive treatment for chronic conditions.

One individual, housed in a mental health unit at Attica Correctional Facility, suffers from epilepsy and reported being unable to see a medical professional despite experiencing multiple seizures during the strike. "I've told DOCCS staff each time I have the symptoms leading to a seizure," they stated, "yet they still did not get me treatment or remove me from the environment that exacerbates symptoms and induces seizures."

Others detailed the egregious lack of access to regular, nutritious – or even edible – meals during the strike.

“I’m hungry every day,” said an incarcerated person housed at Wyoming Correctional Facility. “I don’t feel like people understand how hard this is not just on your body but your mind.”

Another person housed at Cape Vincent Correctional Facility reported being served a piece of inedible frozen chicken. “When I bit into it,” they said, “half of my tooth chipped off. I have the piece of tooth with me and have been asking every day to go to the dentist to see if they can put it back together.”

In addition to food and medical care issues, dozens of incarcerated New Yorkers detailed in their reports the “brutal” toll that prolonged isolation has taken on their mental and physical health. People housed in impacted prisons reported being locked in their cells for days on end, unable to contact their family, friends, or legal counsel. Many also reported being unable to shower or clean their living spaces.

“I have anxiety and PTSD and the conditions and stress we’re under from these strikes make it worse,” stated an individual housed in a restrictive unit at Cayuga Correctional Facility.

Instances of misconduct by DOCCS staff and members of the National Guard – who were [deployed](#) by Governor Kathy Hochul to impacted prisons during the strike – were also detailed by several individuals. A person housed at Midstate said they were assaulted by a National Guard member and, weeks later, still hadn’t received proper medical treatment for the injuries they suffered. “I don’t even know who to report things to,” they said.

Moreover, many expressed frustration with officers’ purported justifications for the illegal strike, explaining that officers’ claims of increased violence since the passage of the [Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement \(HALT\) Act](#) – a landmark human rights law that limited the use of solitary confinement in prisons and jails throughout the State – were not consistent with their lived experiences.

“Since HALT came into play, they never gave it a chance,” said a person housed in protective custody at Attica. “It used to be that corrections was about controlling you and beating you, but corrections now is about rehabilitation and the guards don’t understand that—or maybe they don’t want to.”

Others described their fear of being hurt, or even killed, by officers since the killing of [Robert Brooks](#) by DOCCS staff.

“What happened to [Robert Brooks] was only a glimpse of something I know all too well, of what happens behind the prison gates of DOCCS,” said a person housed at Wyoming. “It’s terrible that brutality is such common knowledge here.”

In light of the accounts from incarcerated individuals detailing the deplorable conditions they endured, and continue to endure, as a result of the illegal strike, Legal Aid’s report also includes recommendations that must immediately be taken by DOCCS and New York State officials in order to prevent further harm.

These measures include ensuring that all incarcerated people have unmitigated access to medical and mental health care, as well as a call to expand the use of body-worn cameras and establish comprehensive camera coverage in all prison facilities to maintain transparency and accountability for DOCCS staff.

Additionally, the report stated that DOCCS must fully comply with the HALT Act and ensure that no incarcerated

individual is subjected to the devastating physical and emotional toll that results from extended periods of solitary confinement and isolation.

“The reports from incarcerated New Yorkers make it abundantly clear that DOCCS utterly failed in its obligation to keep the people in its custody safe and treat them with dignity during and immediately following the strike,” said **Kayla Simpson, staff attorney for the Prisoners' Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society**. “Access to medical care, food, and communication with people outside prison walls are among the most basic needs New York State is required to provide for the people it deprives of liberty, yet DOCCS has been continuously unwilling and unable to do so, to the detriment of the people we serve. As the strike continues to wind down and officers return to their posts, DOCCS must prioritize the safety, health, and dignity of people in custody, and ensure an end to these inhumane conditions.”

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