

April 1, 2025

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

Legal Aid Demands Investigation into NYPD's Illegal Practice of Arresting and Detaining New Yorkers Who Should Be Released with Appearance Tickets

In the Past Two Weeks, Two New Yorkers Have Died in NYPD Custody as Arraignment Wait Times Grow

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society [sent](#) a [letter](#) to the New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) demanding an immediate investigation into the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) unlawful practice of conducting full custodial arrests and detaining people who should be issued appearance tickets and released. As a result of the NYPD's failure to comply with State law, the number of people charged with low-level offenses languishing in custody awaiting their arraignment has ballooned. And within the past two weeks, two New Yorkers have [died in custody](#), as arraignment wait times grow.

New York Criminal Procedure Law states that, with limited exceptions, police officers must [issue appearance tickets](#) rather than arrest individuals suspected of committing violations, infractions, misdemeanors, and certain class E felonies otherwise known as "low-level offenses".

Despite this mandate, in the first two months of 2025, the NYPD significantly increased custodial arrests and detention for people charged with low-level offenses, detaining 75 percent of people charged with petit larceny for arraignment in January and February compared to only 45 percent in 2021.

Moreover, the proportion of people who were custodially arrested and detained for arraignment for non-criminal violations in February 2025 has quadrupled compared to February 2024. This staggering increase is creating longer arraignment wait times and exposing more and more people to dangerous conditions of confinement.

For example, before he died, on the three days when [Soso Ramishvili](#) was held in NYPD custody awaiting arraignment, 237 other individuals waited over 24 hours in Brooklyn to see a judge for arraignment.

The increase in custodial arrests appears to be caused in part by the NYPD's refusal to issue appearance tickets

to New Yorkers otherwise eligible for release, but who lack photographic identification. The law, however, explicitly states that there is “no requirement” that a person present photographic identification in order to be issued an appearance ticket in lieu of an arrest, and a “person’s self-identification” can be sufficient to determine their identity.

It is clear the NYPD is using a slim exception to the appearance ticket mandate as cover for its aggressive targeting, arrest, and detention of vulnerable, low-income New Yorkers.

“The NYPD’s continued disregard for State law has already resulted in the endangerment of the people we serve, forcing them to needlessly languish in custody due to officers’ refusal to comply with an established mandate,” said **Meghna Philip, the Director of the Special Litigation Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “No New Yorker should be subjected to the myriad health and safety risks – including death – posed by detention. We demand an immediate and thorough investigation into the NYPD’s dangerous arrest and detention practices and urge DOI to hold the NYPD accountable for any noncompliance with the law.”

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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 nearly 150 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>