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

***Legal Aid, Coalition for the Homeless Statement on the Deaths of at Least Ten Unhoused New Yorkers in Five Days***

**(NEW YORK, NY) — The Legal Aid Society and the Coalition for the Homeless** released the following statement in response to the deaths of at least ten unhoused New Yorkers over the past five days, amid severe cold weather in New York City:

“We agree with the Mayor that we need to expand outreach services to help more New Yorkers. After more than a decade of relentless sweeps, many unhoused New Yorkers have learned to avoid outreach by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) entirely — because too often, DHS outreach has meant losing their belongings, hostile interactions with law enforcement, and not receiving meaningful help.

“Moreover, outreach workers lack the ability to offer unhoused New Yorkers the one thing they need most: permanent housing. Rebuilding that trust and increasing the supply of affordable housing will take time and cannot be accomplished overnight. The City also lacks the staffing capacity to check on every known unsheltered person in the critical hours before severe weather.

“While the City may be taking steps now, decades of systemic failure cannot be reversed with a few days of outreach or warming buses. Forty years of mismanagement of homelessness and the shelter system cannot be undone in a single emergency response.”

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*The Legal Aid Society is a nonprofit law firm that exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For 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 the people we serve and helps improve our communities.*

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