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

The Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless Respond to City's Right to Shelter Compliance Plan

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society and the Coalition for the Homeless issued the following response to the City's Right to Shelter compliance [plan](#):

“The City's acknowledgment of its legal obligation to comply with the Right to Shelter consent decree and local laws is welcome. Too many people remain in shelters without real access to affordable housing. If meaningful pathways to permanence and stability existed, the City would not need to keep moving people from shelter to shelter.

“The Mayor should also use all available tools to reduce the shelter census and relieve capacity pressures, including fully utilizing CityFHEPS vouchers, expanding supportive housing placements, and expediting the leasing of vacant NYCHA units. Without maximizing these existing resources, compliance efforts will fall short.

“As we are just receiving this plan ourselves, the proposed timeline for closing and consolidating shelter sites is under review, and additional information about the specific sites being considered is needed to ensure that unhoused New Yorkers' rights are protected — particularly those of people with disabilities.

“While this is a step in the right direction, many questions remain. The City must be forthright and prompt in providing details, fully comply with its legal obligations, collaborate with stakeholders, and prioritize the well-being of those relying on the shelter system.”

Background

Last month, Mayor Zohran Mamdani signed [Emergency Executive Order 2](#), extending aspects of the City's ongoing state of emergency related to shelter operations and directing the Department of Social Services (DSS) and Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to develop a plan within 45 days to phase out facilities operating under prior emergency suspensions of local laws.

The Order extends certain provisions of prior emergency executive orders for five days and requires DSS and DHS, in consultation with the Law Department, to submit a plan to the Mayor by February 19, 2026, outlining how the City will transition away from reliance on emergency suspensions and modifications of local laws. The Order also clarifies which previously suspended laws and regulations will no longer apply to facilities operated by or on behalf of DSS or DHS, while maintaining other suspensions for facilities still subject to the Order.

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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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