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

***Statement on Long-Awaited Report Concerning the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision***

(ALBANY, NY) - The Legal Aid Society issued the following statement in response to the long-awaited [report](#) concerning the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS):

“The deaths of Robert Brooks and Messiah Nantwi were horrific, preventable tragedies that exposed profound failures of safety, accountability, and culture within New York’s prison system. This report makes clear that their deaths did not occur in a vacuum, documenting chronic understaffing, inadequate training, deficient programming, weak accountability, and a deeply entrenched culture of impunity among correction officers. The report also documents persistent racial bias and discrimination, including widespread reports from incarcerated people that they were treated differently because of their race or ethnicity and admissions from former correction officers that officers used racial slurs against Black people in custody.

“The report also documents DOCCS’s continued failure to implement and comply with the HALT Solitary Confinement Law. Investigators found little or no required out-of-cell programming in several restrictive housing units, people held in solitary confinement for more than 50 or 60 days despite legal limits, and one person who reportedly spent 140 consecutive days moving through restrictive housing units.

“The report found that the lack of therapeutic programming and congregate activity made it harder for people to move out of restrictive housing, potentially prolonging their isolation. It also concluded that some units functioned primarily as places to serve disciplinary time, rather than as the safe, structured, and therapeutic environments required by law.

“These findings reinforce the urgency of our pending litigation and underscore a central point: the problem is not HALT, but DOCCS’s failure to comply with it amidst a broader backdrop of accountability failures. New York cannot respond to violence and dysfunction by unlawfully isolating people while denying them the programming and out-of-cell time the law requires. DOCCS must confront the systemic failures documented in this report and comply with the laws enacted to protect the safety and dignity of people in its custody.”

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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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