November 20, 2026

Contact:

Press@legal-aid.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On Transgender Day of Remembrance, Advocates Honor the Life and Legacy of Grace Detrevarah, Call on City Council to Pass Legislation Protecting Transgender New Yorkers in City Jails

Intro. 134 Would Strengthen Housing Protections for Transgender, Gender Nonconforming, Nonbinary and Intersex New Yorkers Incarcerated in City Jails

(NEW YORK, NY) — The Legal Aid Society and fellow advocates today, on Transgender Day of Remembrance, honored the life and legacy of Grace Detrevarah, a longtime advocate for transgender New Yorkers impacted by the criminal legal system, and urged the New York City Council to swiftly hold a hearing on and pass Intro. 134. The bill, which would strengthen housing protections for transgender, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, and intersex (TGNCNBI) individuals incarcerated in City jails, has yet to receive a hearing despite having the support of a majority of Council members, with 26 co-sponsors.

In tribute to Detrevarah, Intro. 134 will be renamed the Grace Act for Dignity and Respect in Custody, a name developed through thoughtful collaboration among advocates, community members, and her loved ones.

"On this Trans Day of Remembrance, we're commemorating the life and activism of Grace Detrevarah. She dedicated her life to fighting for liberation for queer and trans people of color, including and especially those who were swept up by a criminal legal system that saw them as targets. It's on all of us to carry on her legacy and to fight for freedom and justice for incarcerated trans people," said **Council Member Tiffany Caban, primary sponsor of Intro 134.**

"Grace devoted her life to advancing the safety, dignity and rights of transgender New Yorkers impacted by incarceration, and it is fitting that legislation protecting the very community she tirelessly served will be renamed in her honor," said **Mar Henriquez, Learning & Community Engagement Specialist with the LGBTQ+ Law and Policy Unit at The Legal Aid Society.** "On Transgender Day of Remembrance, we mourn the lives lost to anti-transgender violence and call on the City Council to honor Grace's legacy by swiftly passing Intro. 134, which would establish a presumption of gender-aligned housing, prohibit discriminatory housing determinations and codify critical protections for TGNCNBI New Yorkers in City custody. No person should be forced to sacrifice their identity, dignity or safety simply because they are incarcerated."

"Grace Detrevarah was more than an advocate; she was my sister, my friend, and a force to be reckoned with. Her love, courage, and unwavering commitment to fighting for incarcerated individuals and our transgender community touched lives in ways words can never fully capture. She reminded us that no one should ever be forgotten, silenced, or denied their humanity. I will miss her dearly, but I refuse to let her legacy fade. We honor Grace by continuing the fight, raising our voices, and making sure the doors she fought so hard to open remain open for others. Rest peacefully, my sister. Your fight lives on through us," said **Chanel Lopez (she/her), Director of LGBTQ+ Affairs for Governor Kathy Hochul**.

"Her advocacy brought formerly incarcerated transgender individuals, activists, correction officers, and elected officials into one room, where she moderated pivotal discussions that helped catalyze systemic change," said Yanery Cruz, Executive Director of the New York City Council LGBTQIA+ Caucus, reflecting on Grace Detrevarah's legacy. "On a personal level, Grace stewarded her relationships, both personal and professional, with benevolence. Her name reflected her spirit," said **Yanery Cruz (she/her), Inagural Executive Director of the NYC City Council LGBTQAI+ Caucus**.

"Destination Tomorrow supports renaming Intro 134 the Grace Act for Dignity and Respect in Custody in recognition of Grace Detreverah's continued advocacy for trans and queer people in custody and as they return home. As a Black trans woman who experienced harm while incarcerated, I know what it means to fight for your safety on the inside and then come home and face barriers to housing, employment, and care. Grace keeps showing up for our people through both. Honoring her work means making sure our siblings are safe and treated with dignity in custody and have the support they need to thrive when they come home. Now the city must make that promise real. Every trans person in custody deserves to be treated with respect, to be safe, and to be heard when they say they're being harmed. Our dignity is ours from the moment we walk through those doors. It should never be something we have to earn," said **Tabytha Gonzalez (she/her), Director of Policy & Advocacy, Destination Tomorrow – The Bronx LGBTQ Center**.

"Grace fearlessly spoke truth to power. As a Black trans woman who survived incarceration, violence, and discrimination, she could have spent her life after release reclaiming the years that had been taken from her. Instead, she gave all of her energy to fighting for others still enduring what she had survived. She worked tirelessly to improve conditions of confinement for transgender people and to build safe, affirming reentry programs, all to end that violence. Naming Intro 134 in Grace's honor is a fitting tribute to her life and legacy. This bill will advance the goals Grace fought for: improving and saving the lives of the most vulnerable transgender people," said **Deborah Lolai (they/she), Clinical Professor of Law at Fordham Law School**.

###

The Legal Aid Society is a nonprofit law firm with one simple yet powerful purpose: 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. www.legalaidnyc.org