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

***FOIL: OCME DNA DATABASE GROWS BY 19,000 SAMPLES
IN TWO YEARS***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society released data today obtained through a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request which revealed that the New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) has grown its DNA database to 82,473 samples, almost a 19,000 increase since July of 2017. This database includes samples provided by the New York City Police Department (NYPD) and extracted from crime scenes and voluntary swabs. It also, however, includes samples surreptitiously obtained in precinct interrogation rooms from cells left on a water bottles or cigarettes, and DNA samples obtained during the 2015 Howard Beach DNA dragnet.

OCME's database has attracted increased criticism for storing DNA samples from New Yorkers who have never been convicted of a crime – individuals that have had their case either dismissed or who were acquitted – as well as people who were never even charged. Most have no idea that their genetic profiles are centrally stored and routinely compared against evidence collected in criminal investigations.

Moreover, there is no set procedure governing how individuals can petition to remove their DNA profile from the database. The Legal Aid Society has frequently been forced to bring litigation on behalf of clients – some as young as twelve years old – to have their samples expunged.

“Through the NYPD’s rampant collection of DNA, the OCME now has a completely unregulated databank of profiles from New Yorkers, including those who have never been convicted of a crime,” said **Terri Rosenblatt, Supervising Attorney of the DNA Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “Like other surveillance technologies employed by local law enforcement, this collection of DNA overtly targets communities of color and furthers the divide between the Department and over-policed neighborhoods. The Legal Aid Society calls on the New York City Council and Council Speaker Corey Johnson to hold immediate oversight hearings on this issue without any further delay.”

Justice in Every Borough.



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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 over 140 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.

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