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

***STATEMENT FROM NEW YORK COUNTY DEFENDER SERVICES
ON THE DEATH OF JOSHUA VALLES***

(NEW YORK, NY) – Stan Germán, Executive Director at the New York County Defender Services, issued the following statement:

“New York County Defender Services is devastated that our client, Joshua Valles, passed away last weekend after being incarcerated in pre-trial detention at Rikers Island.

“Mr. Valles had no criminal record and was charged with nonviolent property-related offenses. The offenses for which he stood charged are - on their own - not eligible for pre-trial detention under the bail reform laws enacted in 2020. However, the court was able to set bail in the amount of \$10,000, pursuant to the ‘harm plus harm’ provision added in the 2022 bail reform rollbacks. Thus, while he was clearly in crisis when he entered the criminal legal system, instead of receiving a helping hand or an investigation into his needs, he was jailed at Rikers Island for more than a month.

“Mr. Valles was clearly struggling and had been for some time. At the time of his tragic death, our defense team, including his attorney, a forensic social worker and corrections specialists, were working to get him released from jail and connected to the services he so desperately needed. Unfortunately, the process of assessing his needs and connecting him to the appropriate community-based programs was hindered by his incarceration. While detained at Rikers Island, Mr. Valles was separated from his family, treatment providers, and other support systems –which further destabilized his already fragile state.

“An autopsy recently confirmed that Mr. Valles died of a skull fracture, in stark contrast to earlier reports by the Department of Correction that he was taken to the hospital because of a ‘headache.’ There is something clearly amiss in what the department is reporting publicly. We urge an immediate investigation by the New York State Attorney General into the murky and troubling circumstances surrounding Mr. Valles’ death. Mr. Valles’ family deserves to know what really transpired to lead to his tragic death on Rikers Island.”

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