WINSTON & STRAWN LLP

Winston Wins Class Certification for Disabled New Yorkers Unlawfully Subjected to Solitary Confinement

JUNE 23, 2025

Winston attorneys, along with co-counsel The Legal Aid Society and Disability Rights Advocates, secured class certification for incarcerated New Yorkers with disabilities who filed a landmark lawsuit challenging the unlawful use of solitary confinement for disabled individuals in New York state prisons. This ruling allows the case to proceed on behalf of all impacted individuals, rather than being limited to the nine named plaintiffs.

The lawsuit, filed in May 2024, seeks to hold the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and the Office of Mental Health (OMH) accountable for systemic violations of New York's Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement Act (HALT), which prohibits placing disabled individuals in solitary confinement. The HALT legislation was enacted to protect New Yorkers from the catastrophic and frequently irreversible medical and psychological consequences of being placed in solitary confinement and recognizes that individuals with disabilities are uniquely vulnerable to the devastating impact of solitary confinement.

"We are proud to stand with our public-interest partners and courageous named plaintiffs as we pursue accountability and systemic change," said New York Partner Eva Cole. "With class certification in hand, we will continue to litigate to secure relief for all of those impacted."

The judge also denied the State's motion to change venue to Albany County, ensuring the case remains in Kings County (Brooklyn) where five of the named plaintiffs resided prior to being incarcerated. New York Associate Michelle Tuma argued the venue motion.

In addition to Eva Cole and Michelle Tuma, the Winston team included Garrett Heller, Jeffrey Kessler, Andrew King, Corinne Kyritsopoulos, Lane Lerner, Melody Lin, Arthur Schoen, Nick Sloan, Meredith Stonitsch, Laura Toland, and Gabi Wolk.

Learn more about Winston's commitment to excellence in serving the public interest.

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