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Contact: Susanna Blankley, s.blankley@newsettlement.org, 917-691-0544; Andrew Scherer, ascherer@andrewascherer.com, 917-484-0979

EVERY SINGLE COMMUNITY BOARD IN MANHATTAN, BROOKLYN AND THE BRONX SAY YES TO RIGHT TO COUNSEL FOR UNREPRESENTED TENANTS

New York, NY – Today, the Manhattan Borough Board voted to pass a resolution on behalf of the 12 community boards in Manhattan, supporting **Intro 214-A**, a bill before City Council that would make it a right for tenants to have attorneys in Housing Court. The vote today comes after months of board meetings where every community board in Manhattan voted to pass individual resolutions, and months after the Borough Boards in the Bronx and Brooklyn passed resolutions supporting Intro 214-A. These votes represent support from a total of **42 community boards**.

This massive show of support comes after an [independent study](#) was released earlier this month showing that Intro 214-A will not only pay for itself but will also save the City \$320 million per year, with over 5,200 fewer families and over 1,100 fewer individuals ending up in homeless shelters due to eviction.

“It is no wonder that the community boards in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan support the right to counsel for tenants facing eviction. Those boroughs are home to the biggest share of evictions: over 85% of eviction cases filed in court last year were in those three counties. These boroughs are also home to the bulk of the city’s tenants, home to the tenants most under displacement pressures, and have seen the most homelessness in the five boroughs,” said **Jenny Laurie, Executive Director of Housing Court Answers**.

“I’m overjoyed by the support we’ve received from the community boards,” says **CASA Leader and Bronx tenant Randy Dillard**. “The communities in the areas most impacted by evictions have made a bold statement that the City should invest in making representation a right and should lead the nation in progressive housing policy. The forces of displacement are real in our community and Right to Counsel provides a game changing policy solution.”

Intro. 214-A was introduced by Council Members Levine and Gibson, and would provide attorneys for tenants and homeowners who are facing eviction and foreclosure in Housing Court.

“The challenges tenants face in housing court are not confined to one neighborhood or one borough. Tenants can take heart in the support expressed by leaders in the Bronx, Brooklyn, and now Manhattan. Today's vote is another step forward towards our ultimate goal of achieving justice for tenants in every corner of this city,” says **City Council Member and bill sponsor Mark Levine**.

“With today’s vote, New Yorkers from every corner of the city have collectively voiced their support for a right to housing court counsel. As eviction rates rise, the protections provided by Int. 214-A have never been more urgently needed. I thank the borough boards for joining Council Member Mark Levine and I in the fight for the right to counsel and pledge my continued support and advocacy for tenants everywhere,” said **City Council Member and bill sponsor Vanessa Gibson**.

“We support the right to counsel as legal services providers with a firsthand view of the stakes at play when a family is facing eviction. Our increasingly gentrifying neighborhoods and increasing rents have highlighted that a right to counsel in housing court is vital to tenants facing the grim prospect of losing their home. Years of high rent guidelines board rent increases, illegal deregulation of apartments, and landlord friendly state legislation have contributed to the affordable housing crisis we have today and has contributed to the record number of families residing in homeless shelters. With the myriad of factors working against tenants, a right to counsel is the strongest tool in the fight to preserve affordability for low and middle income families and protect our neighborhoods. Tenants defending their homes should not have to proceed without a lawyer needed to assert their rights and utilize the legal protections available to them,” says **Adriene Holder, Attorney in Charge of the Civil Practice, Legal Aid Society**.

“If a landlord and a tenant go to court and the tenant doesn’t have an attorney, the scales are tipped. When someone's home is on the line, this is unacceptable,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “Manhattan community boards and councilmembers know the solution to our city’s affordable housing crisis hinges on preservation, not just construction, and preservation requires that tenants be able to defend themselves in Housing Court actions. Both as a matter of values and of policy, Intro 214-A must pass and tenants must have a right to counsel.”

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