



## 100+ Organizations Urge de Blasio to Issue Eviction Moratorium and Close Housing Courts

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**New York, NY**—Over 100 organizations across the city, spearheaded by the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition, [sent a letter to NYC Mayor Bill de Blasio](#) urging him to issue a citywide eviction moratorium and close the city’s housing courts to protect tenants during this unprecedented public health crisis. Late today, the Office of Court Administration imposed a one-week moratorium on evictions in New York City, effective immediately.

“It is unjust to allow New Yorkers to continue to pack the city’s housing courts in order to defend their homes, especially as all other large gatherings are being prohibited, and it is truly inhumane to allow New Yorkers to lose their homes amidst this public health crisis.” said **Susanna Blankley, Coalition Coordinator at the Right to Counsel NYC Coalition**. “A one-week moratorium is a small step in the right direction, but it’s far from enough. Museums are closed longer. Asking tenants to be on the brink of eviction from week to week, especially during this crisis, is simply unfair. An eviction moratorium should be in place at least as long as a risk to public health remains.”

In the letter, the organizations released a set of five demands to the Mayor, calling on him to use his power to do the following:

1. Impose a moratorium on evictions and the City's Department of Investigation should immediately direct all City Marshals to cease executing warrants of eviction as long as a risk to public health remains.
2. Support the call to the state for a moratorium on evictions and a statewide rent freeze.
3. Immediately suspend further action on all pending NYCHA eviction, termination of tenancy and termination of Section 8 subsidy proceedings.

4. Institute a NYCHA moratorium on commencing any new eviction, termination of tenancy or termination of Section 8 subsidy proceedings.
5. Direct the Department of City Administrative Services to close all housing court facilities and NYCHA administrative hearing offices to stop the spread of COVID-19.

“As the number of New Yorkers confirmed with COVID-19 increases, we demand immediate action in the form of a moratorium on all evictions, for all City Marshals to cease executing warrants of eviction until further notice, and for housing court to close except for emergencies,” said **Judith Goldiner, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**. “A one week moratorium is simply insufficient, and we cannot have elderly and immunocompromised people in a filthy court risking their lives. The Mayor did this during Hurricane Sandy and other emergencies, and it is unconscionable for evictions to continue during this public health crisis.”

In a press conference yesterday, while the city did not issue a full NYCHA eviction moratorium, Deputy Mayor Vicki Been said that NYCHA would not execute warrants of eviction, with exceptions for cases where there is criminal activity.

“Just because there is an allegation of criminal activity in a NYCHA case, that doesn't make an eviction any less of a health risk to the community. And of course, it doesn't make eviction during a pandemic any less inhumane,” said **Molly Rugg, an attorney in the Civil Defense Practice at Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem**.

Today, the mayor also announced the closing of NYCHA’s Office of Impartial Hearings, where NYCHA termination of tenancy hearings take place, for two weeks.

“We applaud the mayor’s initial steps, but it’s not enough,” said **Lorena Lopez, tenant organizer at Catholic Migration Services**. “New Yorkers are being asked to help and support each other through this stormy time, and making exceptions to a moratorium sends a different message. Also, most NYCHA cases are seen in housing court, which is still full of the most vulnerable members of our communities. Therefore, closing 803 Atlantic is a good, but small step for everyone to be protected in a public health crisis. The city’s housing courts need to be closed down!”

Mayor de Blasio has also committed to abiding by the new regulations to prohibit gatherings of over 500 people. However, in Bronx Housing Court alone, there are over 1,000 people in housing court every day.

“The courts are crowded, busy places—not unlike theaters and arenas—and are just the types of places the Mayor has been closing or warning people to avoid,” said **Jenny Laurie, executive director of Housing Court Answers**. “Tenants with eviction notices, even if elderly, ill or at risk, cannot stay home when their homes are at risk!”

In the U.S., San Jose, CA, and Miami, FL—two cities with fewer confirmed cases of COVID-19 than NYC—have already placed a moratorium on evictions.

“It is unthinkable that New York families are facing eviction and homelessness while we are in the midst of such a grave public health crisis. Other cities around the nation have taken action to stop evictions and New York City must do the same,” said **Marika Dias, Director of the Tenant Rights Coalition at Legal Services NYC**. “The current overcrowding in our housing courts puts everyone there at risk, not to mention the broader community. We need a moratorium on evictions and courts should close their doors to all eviction cases immediately. Now, more than ever, our top priority must be humane and decisive action to protect our communities.”

“As the largest city in the country, NYC has the opportunity to set an example for the nation by putting a moratorium on evictions,” said **Randy Dillard, tenant leader at Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) in the Bronx**. “It’s the humane thing to do. We should not be focused on landlords’ profits right now, but rather tenants’ health and homes.”

*The Right to Counsel NYC Coalition is a tenant-led, broad-based coalition that formed in 2014 to disrupt Housing Court as a center of displacement and stop the eviction crisis that has threatened our families, our neighborhoods and our homes for too long. Our Coalition is made up of tenants, organizers, advocates, legal services organizations and more. Our work is rooted in principles of equity, dignity, humanity, diversity and justice. After a hard fought, 3 year grassroots campaign, we won and became the first city in the nation to establish a Right to Counsel for tenants facing eviction. Our campaign has inspired a movement across the country.*