

March 12, 2020

Dear Mayor De Blasio:

We are deeply concerned about the impact that COVID-19 will have on New Yorkers who are at risk of eviction. We recently released a petition to Governor Cuomo and other state leaders calling for a moratorium on evictions and a rent freeze across NY State. While it's imperative that action is taken immediately at the state level, there is much that New York City can and must do to protect New Yorkers. New York City doesn't have to wait for the state. We can and must ACT NOW!

New York City Should:

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 until further notice.
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 our letter to the Governor states:

New York is facing a public health crisis that is made worse by a lack of adequate housing. COVID-19 impacts vulnerable New Yorkers the most: the elderly and those who are immunocompromised. For the 92,000 people who are homeless, this public health crisis puts them at a greater-than-average risk of exposure to the virus.

Many, many more cannot afford rent. New Yorkers are facing a loss of income -- either voluntarily or as the result of being forced to stay home from work for the protection of everyone's health. This makes it harder to pay already unaffordable rents. Without adequate housing, the most vulnerable New Yorkers are unable to fight COVID-19 and other deadly illnesses.

If more New Yorkers are evicted in the coming days and weeks, COVID-19 could start to spread more rapidly among those who become homeless. We cannot let that nightmare become a reality. San Francisco and San Jose are currently considering a moratorium on COVID-19 related evictions. We urge you to expand on their example and lead the nation by issuing a moratorium on evictions in the face of COVID-19 - a massive public health crisis that is hitting New York harder than most other cities in the country.

Housing Court is already unsafe for the elderly and the immunocompromised. The housing crisis is so bad that every day that court is in session, courtrooms and hallways are packed with defendants, lawyers, and supporters who are fighting eviction. To drag the most vulnerable New Yorkers into Housing Court, against the advice of public health professionals, adds the cruel insult of a severe health-risk to the injury of eviction.

Given the recommendations to cancel all large gatherings, we must remember that housing court is a large gathering. There are over a thousand people in the Bronx housing court alone, every day.

We are deeply disheartened by the callousness, ignorance and lack of action from the federal government. We need you to show leadership for the health and well-being of New Yorkers, and as an example for the nation. Our proposals are well within your power and would save the lives and homes of the city's most vulnerable. Just yesterday Miami issued a moratorium on evictions for the entire Miami-Dade County. And there is precedent for this in NYC: after 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy, NYC issued a moratorium on evictions. This crisis deserves

Stand with us in this crisis, in order to stop preventable illness, homelessness and displacement in this time of crisis, and freeze all evictions in New York NOW.

Sincerely,

Right to Counsel NYC Coalition
Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
National Organization of Legal Services, UAW Local 2320
Human.nyc
CAMBA Legal Services Workers United (UAW 2325)
Coalition for the Homeless
Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA), New Settlement Apartments
Cooper Square Committee
Chhaya Community Development Corporation
Housing Conservation Coordinators
The West Side Neighborhood Alliance
Akron Mobile Home Park Tenants Association
Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS)
United Neighbors Organization (UNO)
Lenox Hill Neighborhood House
New York Communities for Change (NYCC)
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC)
The Bronx Defenders
Red Hook Initiative
JustFix.nyc
Housing Court Answers (HCA)
New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)
Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD)
District Council 37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
Municipal Employees Legal Services (MELS)
New York City Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO
Legal Services Staff Association, NOLSW/UAW 2320
Tenants PAC
Woodside On The Move
Met Council on Housing
Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (NWBCCC)
Lefrak City Tenants Association
Housing Rights Initiative
Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB)
Housing Organizers for People Empowerment (HOPE)
Churches United for Fair Housing (CUFFH)
Communities Resist

Mobilization for Justice (MFJ)
Goddard Riverside Law Project
Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem
Fifth Avenue Committee, Brooklyn
Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Brooklyn
Crown Heights Tenant Union (CHTU)
Flatbush Tenant Coalition
Housing Justice for All
Central Park Gardens Tenants' Association
CAAAY Organizing Asian Communities
Tenants & Neighbors
City Employees Union Local 237 Teamsters
Artists Against Displacement
Coalition to Protect Chinatown and the Lower East Side
Strycker's Bay Neighborhood Council
The DOME Project
Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A
The Urban Justice Center
JASA/Legal Services for Elder Justice
GOLES
Make the Road NY
IMPACCT Brooklyn
Ridgewood Tenants Union (RTU)
Association of Legal Aid Attorneys – UAW Local 2325.
The Legal Aid Society
Bushwick Housing Independence Project
GAPIMNY: Empowering Queer & Trans Asian Pacific Islanders
CITIZEN ACTION
NYS Poor People's Campaign

Cc: Corey Johnson, City Council Speaker; Jumaane Williams, NYC Public Advocate; Eric Adams, Brooklyn Borough President; Ruben Diaz Jr., Bronx Borough President; Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President; James Oddo, Staten Island Borough President; Steve Banks, Commissioner of the New York City Human Resources Administration/Department of Social Services (HRA); Honorable Janet DiFiore, New York State Chief Judge; Dr. Oxiris Barbot, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Lorraine A. Cortés-Vázquez, Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging; Lisette Camilo, Commissioner of the Department of Citywide Administrative Services

