

May 23rd, 2019

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie:

We, members of the Upstate Downstate Housing Alliance and the Housing Justice for All campaign, are writing with urgency as session comes to a close and the State legislature is negotiating tenants' rights in New York.

Across the entire State, those who rent their homes are suffering from high rent burdens, unsafe living conditions, and the threat of eviction constantly hanging over their head.

This crisis is worse for communities of color. People of color are more likely to rent their homes, and are more likely to be evicted by an unscrupulous landlord. Gentrification is devastating New York's communities of color, from Brooklyn to Buffalo. Renters' rights are critical to stability and economic security for communities of color in New York.

In order to ensure these bills are as strong as possible, we vigorously encourage your houses to work together and agree to the most robust package, including our nine bills, without engaging in three-way negotiations including Governor Cuomo.

Your two houses have a history of standing up together, and refusing to negotiate with Governor Cuomo, in the fight for racial and economic justice in New York. From passing the Reproductive Health Act, to working to reform elections in New York -- you have a history of passing truly progressive legislation without allowing the Governor to weaken the bills by including him in negotiations.

We need you to do the same for tenants' rights.

History has shown us that Governor Cuomo is not on the side of renters. He has been governor for two previous rent law renewals, and in neither instance did he deliver any meaningful reforms for tenants facing rent increases and displacement from their communities. Now, nearly 100 people are evicted every day in New York.

At the same time, there is no bigger beneficiary from contributions from the real estate industry than Governor Cuomo.

Allowing someone with Governor Cuomo's record to be involved in negotiations around renewal of the Emergency Tenant Protection Act guarantees that tenants will not have the protections or the power they need to combat the predatory and extremely profitable real estate industry.

For too many decades landlords have had the upper hand; now we finally have the chance to change that. Rents are going up beyond what tenants can afford; almost a third of rent-stabilized tenants have a preferential rent; we are constantly seeing stories about \$4,000 toilets and million-dollar MCIs.

Even more dire, upstate tenants and tenants in small buildings everywhere in the state have no protection at all, and often face evictions just for complaining about conditions in their buildings or to facilitate gentrification in their neighborhoods.

These problems have led to a homelessness crisis in New York State not seen in nearly a century. And all of this has happened under Governor Cuomo's watch.

We look forward to working with you, your colleagues in leadership, and your conferences in passing the nine bills that comprise the Housing Justice for All platform, without the undue influence of the real estate industry that the Governor would bring.

Tenants cannot wait a day longer.

Sincerely,

Akron Mobile Home Tenants Association  
Association of Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD)  
Bronx Park East Community Association  
Carroll Gardens Association  
Citizen Action of NY  
Churches United for Fair Housing  
Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA)  
Community Voices Heard  
Cooper Square Committee  
Churches United for Fair Housing  
Flatbush Tenants Coalition  
Housing Conservation Coordinators  
Housing Rights Initiative  
Kingston Tenants Union  
LeFrak City Tenants  
Legal Services Staff Association, NOLSW/UAW 2320  
Make the Road NY  
Met Council on Housing  
Neighbors Together  
New York City DSA  
New York Communities for Change  
Tenants & Neighbors  
TenantsPAC  
Picture the Homeless  
Ridgewood Tenants Union  
Riverside Edgecombe Neighborhood Association (RENA)  
ST-PCV Tenant Association  
Upper West Side MoveOn/Indivisible Action Group  
United Tenants of Albany  
Urban Homesteading Assistance Board

VOCAL-NY  
Woodside on the Move