



August 14th, 2020

Dear Governor Andrew Cuomo, Majority Leader of the NY Senate Andrea Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker of the NY Assembly Carl Heastie:

We are in the midst of an unprecedented crisis that threatens the life and safety of working class New Yorkers. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their jobs, and the COVID-19 pandemic continues to threaten the health of all New Yorkers, but especially that of essential workers, the elderly and those with health conditions, and homeless New Yorkers. Those affected by unemployment and COVID-19 are disproportionately Black and brown. While there is much that must be done to provide stability and relief to New Yorkers, and much that must be done to address systemic racism within all of our institutions, an issue that demands immediate attention is housing.

Today, almost half of all renters in New York State are at risk of eviction. Black and brown renters are disproportionately affected (bit.ly/censuscancelrent). At the same time, homeless New Yorkers are at particular risk of contracting and dying from COVID-19. As the eviction moratorium lifts, millions of renters are facing eviction and the number of people living in already crowded, dangerous shelters could increase.

This scenario is unacceptable. To allow it to happen would be unjust, cruel and racist. But if the state does not act boldly and decisively to protect working class New Yorkers, this may be our reality.

As rank and file union members of the many city agencies that serve renters and homeless New Yorkers, we understand that the system is not equipped to withstand the shock of hundreds of thousands of evictions, and that the consequences to our communities would be irreparable.

To protect working class and homeless New Yorkers from the deadly threat of COVID-19, we are calling on the Governor and the New York State Legislature to:

1. **Extend the eviction moratorium** on renters until one year after the state of emergency ends, by passing the Eviction Moratorium bill (S8667/A10827)
 - a. Landlords should not rush to further exacerbate an already untenable housing crisis. This bill prevents landlords from filing possessory or monetary judgements in court. No one should be evicted or go into debt during this crisis because of income lost through no fault of their own.
2. **Cancel rent** for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis, by passing the Rent and Mortgage Cancellation Act of 2020 (S8802/A10826)
 - a. Tenants need direct and automatic housing relief. If the state of New York does not provide immediate and universal relief to all tenants, there WILL be people left behind. Without universal relief, large numbers of New Yorkers will lose their homes in the midst of a public health crisis. Direct relief is crucial to pair with eviction protections so tenants do not accumulate arrears that cannot be resolved when eviction moratoria expire.
3. Immediately **provide single occupancy hotel rooms for homeless New Yorkers** living in congregate shelters and on the streets. **Ensure that shelters are safe places to live and that homeless New Yorkers have access to the medical and sanitation services** they need.
4. **Provide permanently funded rental subsidies for homeless New Yorkers and all others who have a need.** Owners involved in such a program must enter into operating agreements that include good cause eviction, tenant opportunity to purchase, and strong rent control.
5. **Protect and fully fund public housing.** Ensure increased City funding for NYCHA as planned prior to the pandemic and oppose the transfer of public housing into the hands of private real estate developers.

While this is far from everything that is needed to address the inequalities in our housing system and ensure a decent home for all, the above demands must be met to avoid the suffering of millions of New Yorkers and the collapse of our rental housing and homeless shelter systems.

Signed,
District Council 37 Progressive Caucus

CC: Henry Garrido, Executive Director of DC 37