

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

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Legal Aid, NYS Legislators and Advocates Urge Governor Cuomo to Sign the NYS Tenant Safe Harbor Act into Law

Gov. Cuomo Has Less Than Two Days to Act on Critical Legislation to Save More Than 100,000 New Yorkers From Imminent Eviction

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, New York State Senator Brad Hoylman, New York State Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz, Coalition for the Homeless, impacted tenants and other advocates called on New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo to enact the NYS Tenant Safe Harbor Act (S8192/A10290) during a [virtual press conference](#) held earlier this morning. The Governor has only a few days to sign the legislation, which would provide desperately needed rent relief to more than 100,000 tenants impacted by the COVID-19 crisis across New York.

This legislation would strengthen Governor Andrew Cuomo's 90-day moratorium on evictions by prohibiting landlords from evicting tenants for non-payment of accrued rent who have lost income during the current State of Emergency, along with other critical protections.

Judith Goldiner, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit of The Legal Aid Society said: "This pandemic has already led to the loss of millions of jobs across the country. With unemployment rates skyrocketing, we must protect the most vulnerable of tenants in New York who will not be able to pay rent during this crisis. More than 100,000 New Yorkers are at risk of imminent of eviction and The Legal Aid Society calls on Governor Andrew Cuomo to enact this legislation to ensure that these families are able to stay in their homes."

“More than 1 million renters in New York have lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic. If we don’t take further action, we could be facing a massive rental apocalypse by the end of the summer. The Tenant Safe Harbor Act would help financially struggling tenants stay in their homes and avoid evictions. It passed both houses of the New York State Legislature with overwhelming margins — all it needs is a signature to become law. I’m proud to have worked with Assembly Member Dinowitz and Senator Krueger to craft this bill, and grateful to the Legal Aid Society for their advocacy and for organizing today’s event,” said **New York State Senator Brad Hoylman**.

Assembly Member Jeffrey Dinowitz (D-Bronx), Chair of the Assembly Judiciary Committee, said: “The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented turmoil to the lives of millions of New Yorkers, many of whom are experiencing diminished income and increased expense as families struggle to keep themselves healthy and safe. The Tenant Safe Harbor Act will prevent a massive surge in homelessness by keeping families in their homes, families which have made incredible sacrifices over the past three months as they stay home for the benefit of public health. It is imperative that the Governor signs this legislation into law.”

Deborah Diamant, Director of Government Relations and Legal Affairs at the Coalition for the Homeless, said: “The Tenant Safe Harbor Act is a vital immediate measure to prevent widespread displacement in New York State as we continue to advocate for the Federal government to provide rent assistance and other aid in sufficient amounts. All levels of government must immediately create comprehensive solutions that prevent our housing crisis from growing exponentially. The Tenant Safe Harbor Act recognizes that tenants, of which more than 32 percent statewide were already rent burdened prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, have suffered tremendous financial loss and personal upheaval during the past few months, and that our court system should not serve as a further destabilizing force in their lives. By prohibiting judges from issuing possessory judgments and warrants of eviction in non-payment proceedings brought against tenants financially impacted by the pandemic, the tenants hardest hit, who are overwhelmingly Black and Latinx and also experiencing the highest rates of infection, will still have the stability that a home provides as they work to rebuild their lives. We must not let the pandemic further ravage our most vulnerable communities by permitting our court system to shepherd more people into homelessness.”

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org