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Legal Aid Files Lawsuit on Behalf of Bronx Tenants Displaced After Fire

Litigation Seeks Immediate Repairs in Building with Hundreds of Housing Code Violations So Tenants Can Return Home

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society’s Housing Justice Unit-Group Advocacy, filed a [lawsuit](#) on behalf of 12 rent-stabilized tenants in the Bronx, seven of whom have been displaced to City shelters after a fire ravaged their building located at 2490 Davidson Avenue in September 2022.

The fire caused severe damage to common areas of the building and resulted in City agencies issuing vacate orders. The complaint seeks immediate repairs to the building – which has a total of 260 housing code violations from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) – so tenants can safely return to their homes.

The lawsuit was filed against landlords Shkurt Dedvukaj, Paul Dedvukaj, Creston Real Estate Advisors Inc, and 2490 Properties LLC, for failing to make repairs and neglecting hazardous conditions, including electrical system problems and failing to maintain the emergency exit door in a code-compliant manner.

Many of the families who attempted to flee the building during the September 2022 fire were trapped inside the burning building by the non-functioning emergency door, which had been

cited as a violation due to the door having an illegal lock. As a result, most tenants suffered some degree of smoke inhalation, and one tenant reported that it took “10 men” to open the door, including firefighters. This harrowing experience, made worse by the landlords’ gross negligence, further traumatized the families.

“The landlords’ failure to make repairs at 2490 Davidson Ave. has not only impacted our clients’ quality of life, but literally put their lives at risk and caused irreparable emotional harm, said **Jason Hadley, Staff Attorney with The Legal Aid Society**. “We now seek a court order to force the landlords to expedite needed repairs, allowing them to return back to their homes, and demonstrate to the court that they are capable of properly maintaining the building going forward.”

“The residents of 2490 Davidson have lived in appalling conditions for far too long. The landlord’s callous refusal to maintain this property remained even in the face of City enforcement programs that include escalating fines, like the City’s Alternative Enforcement Program, is unacceptable. I welcome The Legal Aid Society’s legal intervention on behalf of these neighbors. Landlords cannot continue to dismiss their responsibility to ensure the safety of tenants; they must be held accountable for the harm they cause to tenants and families,” said **Council Member Pierina Sanchez**

In 2014, the maintenance problems at 2490 Davidson Ave had landed the building in the Alternative Enforcement Program, an HPD program for severely distressed buildings, where it has remained since. Due to the landlords’ lack of care for the building, HPD has also filed litigation against the landlords for false certifications of violations, failing to provide heat and hot water, and in order to effectuate emergency repairs of lead paint.

Yolanda Vicente, a long-term tenant of the building who has been living in a homeless shelter since she was displaced, said “I have lived at 2490 Davidson Ave for 18 years. Before the fire, the landlord would ignore our requests for repairs, and was not maintaining the building, including the boiler. There were many times when we lacked sufficient heat during the winter. We also had ongoing mold in our apartment for years. When the fire happened last September, our apartment was completely damaged and we lost everything. After the fire happened, the landlord told us that we would be able to move back in 6 months, but I recently saw my apartment in January and still no work has been done to fix it. Living in the shelter has been very hard on my family, and I am frustrated that the renovation work has not even started and the landlord has not provided or offered any other assistance to us.”

Any Hernandez, Ms. Vicente’s sister and roommate added: “I have a daughter who is two years old. Being displaced from our home at 2490 Davidson has been difficult for us. We cannot cook properly in the shelter and, because of the rules on visitors, I cannot have my older 11 year-old daughter visit us like she used to, and my younger daughter misses her dearly. The owners of 2490 Davidson have not given us any information on when we can return to our home, and I just feel that they don’t care about us.”

The Housing Justice Unit-Group Advocacy is funded by the City’s **Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection (AHTP) Program**, which has served over 75,000 New York City tenants. AHTP is a

crucial program that works with low-income tenant and housing groups, largely from communities of color, against landlord harassment, discrimination, and displacement and to promote and preserve affordable housing by improving housing conditions and enforcing and expanding tenant rights throughout New York City.

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