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Legal Aid Exposes Bronx Landlord’s Retaliatory Practice of Evicting Tenants who Protest Deplorable Living Conditions

In Response, Attorneys Call on Albany to Enact “Good Cause” to Equip Residents of Unregulated Units With Basic Tenant Protections

NEW YORK, NY – The Legal Aid Society [called on Albany lawmakers](#) to enact “[Good Cause](#)” legislation in response to a Bronx landlord’s cruel practice of retaliating against tenants who protest deplorable living conditions. If “Good Cause” were law, these tenants would have basic protections against harassing tactics employed by landlords, including frivolous eviction lawsuits and exorbitant rent increases.

“Millions of New Yorkers currently reside in unregulated apartments, and it’s both bad policy and morally unacceptable that these tenants are deprived of any protections to defend against unscrupulous landlord tactics,” said **Margarita Gomez, staff attorney in the Bronx Housing Office at The Legal Aid Society**. “It’s especially problematic that current law essentially allows landlords to retaliate with impunity against tenants who protest deplorable living conditions, and this is a key reason why Albany must enact ‘Good Cause’ eviction legislation this session.”

Legal Aid represents a family of ten – a couple and their eight children, ages six to twenty – who reside at 540 Van Nest Avenue in the Bronx. The family faces eviction as their landlord, Jagjit Hora, has refused to renew their lease. They previously lived in a local shelter and secured their home through the CityFHEPS housing voucher program, which paid Hora an advance of \$15,219.02 for six months of rent.

Immediately upon moving in, the family discovered that Hora had divided the unit and rented part of it to another tenant. Hora also refused to provide essential services such as hot water, cooking gas and heat.

The tenants complained to the City about the lack of essential services, and their complaints eventually led to a housing proceeding brought by the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) on March 8, 2021, against Hora in which the court ultimately ordered him to pay a fine of \$2,500.

After the tenants complained about repairs, their one-year lease expired and Hora refused to renew it, subsequently filing a holdover eviction lawsuit – a proceeding unrelated to non-payment.

Upon further investigation, Legal Aid attorneys discovered that Hora also owns six other non-regulated apartments through different LLCs and has brought at least six holdover proceedings in buildings where tenants have complained about lack of services and conditions.

HPD also commenced an enforcement action against Hora, undertaking some of the repairs, and charged Hora approximately \$20,000 on his August 2021 property tax bill for this work. On January 31, 2023, the building was placed in the Alternative Enforcement Program, an HPD program for severely distressed buildings, where it remains today.

Background on “Good Cause” Eviction Legislation:

Last month, Legal Aid released an [analysis](#) of City data which revealed that since the statewide eviction moratorium lapsed last year, [executed evictions](#) in New York City have increased almost every month.

While it is unclear which of these evictions are related to non-payment or a holdover, it is safe to conclude that many of these tenants would have benefited if “Good Cause” were enacted statewide, given the depth and breadth of the legislation.

Legal Aid Housing Court attorneys currently represent New Yorkers in hundreds of no-cause holdovers across the five boroughs, often involving the most vulnerable tenants, whose eviction would be avoided should “Good Cause” pass into law.

The legislation has robust support across the state, with nearly [70 percent of New Yorkers, including policy and political science experts](#) from all levels of government, in favor of passing Good Cause. [Leaders of New York’s largest labor unions](#) and [New York State Attorney General Letitia James](#) also support Good Cause.

Other jurisdictions, including Oregon, Washington and New Jersey, have these protections codified as law, and Los Angeles [enacted](#) a similar measure last month.

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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 145 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. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>