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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

***Legal Aid Files Lawsuit Against City and Landlords of Collapsed Bronx Building Demanding Repairs to Address “Immediately Hazardous” Housing Violations***

***Tenants Continue to Suffer Dangerous Conditions, Including Gas Outages, Exposure to Harmful Construction Dust, Vermin Infestations, and Landlord Harassment***

***Elected Officials Call on Landlords to Repair Conditions and Allow Displaced Tenants to Return Home***

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society filed a [lawsuit](#) against the landlords of 1915 Billingsley Terrace – the Bronx building that partially collapsed on December 11, 2023 – seeking immediate repairs to over 133 housing violations, more than half of which are classified as “immediately hazardous.” The litigation also seeks to lift a partial vacate order to allow displaced tenants – many of whom have been living in homeless shelters – to return to their homes. Additionally, the lawsuit seeks to force the landlords to rebuild the collapsed section of the building and restore units to their original layouts and square footage.

The lawsuit was filed against landlords David Kleiner, Yonah Roth, 1915 Realty LLC, and Mo Doe, along with the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).

The dangerous conditions include an outage of cooking gas to the entire building, harmful construction dust in common areas, an overall lack of janitorial services in the building, and infestations of cockroaches, rats, and mice in common areas and inside individual apartments.

Moreover, the landlords have engaged in blatantly illegal behavior that has harassed and endangered the tenants by forcing them to sign agreements stipulating that the conditions in their apartments were fully repaired, despite the deplorable conditions, in exchange for receiving the keys to their apartments. Some displaced tenants did not even know the conditions of the apartments prior to signing the agreement.

The landlords have also failed to provide adequate security for the building. Despite the vacated units allegedly having been secured by the landlord, when the tenants returned to their apartments, they found that looters had gained access to the units and had robbed tenants' personal belongings. The tenants reported the looting directly to the landlord and made numerous police reports.

Prior to the partial collapse in December 2023, the landlords had been put on notice since at least 2014 that the façade of the building was “unsafe” and in violation of the law. A DOB filing described “cracked brick, vertical cracks at sills and water tables, loose and damaged mortar, a slightly bowed section of parapet and cracks at the parapet interior.”

“Our clients and all tenants of 1915 Billingsley have suffered tremendously at the hands of their landlord – however, their hardships did not begin when the building partially collapsed, but years before that as the unsafe conditions of the building worsened,” said **Zoe Kheyman, staff attorney for Legal Aid’s Civil Practice**. “Landlords must make immediate repairs so that the City can lift the partial vacate order and the tenants can return home. While the work is being done the landlord and the city must ensure that the families who have been allowed to return are not exposed to lead dust, mold and other toxins.”

“Even before the December collapse of their building, the residents of 1915 Billingsley Terrace had long been denied safe, healthy, stable homes. For years, residents logged what became hundreds of complaints, many hazardous to health and safety, like leaks, mold, and constant heating outages. There were even active violations issued by the Department of Buildings for structural issues. Since the partial collapse and as residents have begun to reoccupy their homes, my team has fielded daily complaints of continued mistreatment from the landlords: from being coerced to sign likely illegal documents, to experiencing ongoing apartment deficiencies,” said **Council Member Pierina Sanchez**. As the local representative, I am thankful for Legal Aid Society and other organizations’ ongoing support of our neighbors, and as the Council’s Chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, I am truly calling to question our city’s enforcement regimes and capacities. We must do better at keeping New Yorkers safe within their homes.”

“It’s no secret that tenants in low-income neighborhoods are the most susceptible to unprincipled tactics by self-serving landlords. I commend the Legal Aid Society for taking legal action against the landlords of 1915 Billingsley, who have subjected tenants to prolonged hardships,” said **New York State Senator Robert Jackson**. “It’s crucial to hold these landlords accountable and ensure swift repairs of hazardous housing violations, ensuring no one lives in the shadows of fear within their home. Regardless of address or income, every tenant deserves this fundamental right and we must remain steadfast in upholding this - it’s time to end the reign of negligent landlords.”

**Assembly Member Yudelka Tapia**, said: “The residents of 1915 Billingsley Terrace have suffered enough, including being robbed due to the lack of security at the building and being forced to live in homeless shelters. Tragedies like this are evidence that our neighborhoods need strong tenant protections to ensure access to safe and stable housing. The Bronx has the most housing violations per building in New York City, so it is critical that we continue to hold landlords and building owners accountable. I support the Legal Aid Society’s action against the landlords of 1915 Billingsley Terrace to force repairs of over 130 housing violations.”

“Our residents and families have a fundamental right and expectation to live in safe and quality housing in our borough, and when that is not the case, we must take action to protect our Bronx tenants,” said **Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson**. “I want to thank the Legal Aid Society for taking immediate action to hold the landlords of 1915 Billingsley accountable. Our tenants need to know that we will not tolerate negligent landlords in our borough and that their safety is our top priority.”

“The collapse at 1915 Billingsley could have been much worse, and tenants who were directly impacted have continued to face numerous challenges in the aftermath following the incident,” said **Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13)**. “As an immediate response, I introduced the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Landlord Accountability Act to require all LIHTC buildings, both new and existing, to prove complete architectural safety to receive the affordable housing tax credit to increase oversight of these buildings and prevent incidents like this from happening again. I commend all who have continued to bring much-needed attention to the pervasive issue of landlord safety non-compliance. It will take each of us working together to create solutions that will ensure no residents go through this ever again.”

The work of The Legal Aid Society’s Citywide Housing Justice Unit – Group Advocacy is supported by the City’s Human Resource Administration (HRA).

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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. [www.legalaidnyc.org](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*