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*****MEDIA ADVISORY*****

Press Conference on Thursday, March 14th at 10:00 a.m. in front of 118 E 103rd Street

East Harlem Tenants, Elected Officials Will Gather to Announce New LawsUIT by Legal Aid and Legal Services NYC Alleging Landlord Stole Security Deposits to Avoid Financial Ruin

Tenants are also on rent strike over dangerous living conditions including a hole in a roof, blocked fire exits

New York, NY – Nearly 40 tenants across five buildings in East Harlem (112, 118, 122, 124, and 126 East 103rd Street) are suing their landlord, Isaac Kassirer and his firm Emerald Equities, in a suit alleging that the troubled real estate firm has stolen tens of thousands of dollars’ worth of security deposits and unlawfully commingled them with the landlord’s own operating funds—a move Emerald Equities has tried before.

The suit, filed by The Legal Aid Society and Legal Services NYC, also asserts that the buildings contain so-called rent-impairing violations of living conditions, including a hole in the roof and blocked fire exits, that legally allow tenants to withhold all rent. Tenants are seeking a judge’s order stating that the landlord is not allowed to collect rent that accrued after the rent-impairing violations existed for six months, as allowed by law, as well as attorneys’ fees. The suit is filed in New York County Supreme Court.

This lawsuit comes after months of efforts to get Emerald Equities to fix these issues and come clean about the stolen security deposits. Emerald has been leaking money for years, and recently defaulted on a nine-figure loan. Now, they’ve entangled their tenants into a crisis brought on by their failed get-rich-quick scheme: using Wall Street funding to purchase dozens of rent-regulated buildings and trying to flip them to market-rate apartments by harassing tenants into leaving.

Tenants are being organized with the help of Community Voices Heard, with legal services provided by Legal Services NYC and The Legal Aid Society.

Reporters will be able to tour a building to examine and photograph its deplorable living conditions.

WHO:

Tenants of 112, 118, 122, 124, and 126 East 103rd Street
Councilwoman Diana Ayala
Public Advocate Jumaane Williams
Community Voices Heard
Legal Services NYC
The Legal Aid Society

WHAT: Press Conference following first complaint filing, followed by apartment tours

WHERE: In front of 118 E 103rd Street

WHEN: Thursday, March 14, 10:00 a.m.

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