



December 9, 2019

Dear Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart Cousins, Speaker Heastie --

We're writing as a coalition of over 70 organizations that represents many thousands of tenants, homeless New Yorkers, and public housing residents across the state.

In 2019, we fought hard to pass the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 -- landmark legislation that is already reducing evictions in New York. But millions of New York's tenants, especially those who live in public housing, still need greater protection.

Funding public housing should be one of your top priorities for the 2020 state budget.

Public housing across the state is in severe disrepair, yet our state keeps funneling billions in subsidies and tax breaks to corporate landlords and developers. These issues are directly connected: subsidies and tax abatements for landlords and developers are coming at the expense of investments in repairing and rebuilding public housing.

The key culprits here are the 421-a and 485-a programs that cost our state upwards of \$4 billion annually, but only benefit corporate landlords and wealthy developers.

That's why, to fund public housing, we're calling on you to eliminate 421-a and 485-a. They are costly, wasteful programs and harmful to tenants and communities.

In the 2020 budget, you should invest the \$4 billion that usually goes into 421-a and 485-a directly into fully funding public housing.

The deterioration of public housing in New York is the result of decades of disinvestment at the federal, state, and local level. But there is plenty that state government can and should do with \$4 billion annually to improve conditions for public housing tenants.

The crisis of public housing is a statewide crisis.

At Johnson Houses, a large public housing development in Manhattan, residents are sick from mold and lead paint. Yet the state still fails to fund public housing, while one of the largest landlords in the world -- the Related Group -- enjoys 421-a subsidies to develop Hudson Yards: one of the most expensive luxury real estate projects in New York's history.

Meanwhile, residents of Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority at 95 Perry Street live in unsafe conditions, while 485-a subsidies fund luxury housing at One Canalside.

The same story is true for thousands of other public housing residents in our state.

In our incredibly wealthy state enough resources exist to ensure every resident has the housing stability that they need to thrive – including New Yorkers who live in public housing.

But 421-a and 485-a completely undermine the fundamental goals of protecting housing stability and preserving long-term affordability. 421-a and 485-a cost our cities upwards of \$4 billion annually, provide us with no benefits, and must be eliminated. That money should instead go to public housing and community infrastructure across the State.

Fully funding public housing is critical to healthcare, education, and economic stability for our state. It's also one of the few sources of permanently affordable housing that can create a bulwark against gentrification and displacement in neighborhoods with rising rents.

As a state, we must decide if our tax policy and state budget should continue to enrich billionaires, or if we can to provide dignified and truly affordable housing for those who need it most. In this year's state budget, we urge you to end 421-a and 485-a, and to fully fund public housing. It's in your hands.

Sincerely,

Members of Housing Justice for All:

Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development  
Central Park Gardens Tenants Association  
Churches United for Fair Housing  
Citizen Action of New York  
Citywide Tenant Union of Rochester  
Community Service Society  
Community Voices Heard  
Cooper Square Committee  
Crown Heights Tenant Union  
Empire State Indivisible  
Fifth Avenue Committee  
GOLES  
Greater NYC for Change  
Housing Conservation Coordinators  
Justice for All  
Kingston Tenants Union  
Labor-Religion Coalition of NYS  
Make the Road NY  
Met Council on Housing  
MinKwon Center for Community Action  
Nassau County DSA  
Neighbors Helping Neighbors  
New York Communities for Change  
Nobody Leaves Mid-Hudson  
Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition  
NYC-DSA

PUSH Buffalo  
Red Hook Initiative  
Safety Net Activists  
Syracuse Tenants Union  
Tenants PAC  
United Tenants of Albany  
United Neighbors Organization  
VOCAL-NY  
WeACT for Environmental Justice  
West Side MoveOn/Indivisible Action Group  
Westside Neighborhood Alliance  
Zara Tenants Coalition