BACKGROUND
Governor Cuomo ordered a 90-day freeze on mortgage payments for homeowners in New York that are facing financial hardship due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Crisis. This action was necessary to protect the millions of New Yorker’s whose financial stability is at risk due to the crisis. However, the Governor has provided no such benefit to renters in New York State.

While he has frozen evictions temporarily, this does nothing to address the income that so many New Yorkers have lost due to the crisis and subsequent closure of businesses across the region. As the table on the left shows, the median household income of homeowners is over twice that of renters in New York State.

RENTERS IN NEW YORK
Overall, New York State is nearly 50 percent renters. As the chart to the graph to the left shows, 1 in 3 homeowners with a mortgage are housing cost burdened (paying >30% of their gross income in housing costs) while 1 in 2 renters are housing cost burdened (paying >30% of their gross income in rent). While far more renters are cost burdened, they are also much more likely to be severely cost burdened (paying > 50% of their gross income in rent). Over a quarter of renters in New York are severely cost burdened compared to 15 percent of homeowners with mortgages.

As you may be able to deduce from the numbers already presented, renters also pay a higher share of their income (32%) towards housing than homeowners (23%). While homeowners deserve protection during these trying and uncertain times, renters have demonstrated an even deeper need that must be addressed immediately.
SUSPEND RENT & PROTECT NEW YORK’S MOST BURDENED RESIDENTS

HOUSING COSTS ACROSS NY
The map below shows where in New York, by census tract, renters pay more than homeowners (in red), homeowners pay more than renters (yellow/orange), and the costs are similar (white). To control for income, the costs being compared are the housing costs as a percentage of income rather than gross housing costs.

As you can see on the map, most of the state is marked in red, indicating that renters pay a higher share of their incomes to rent. In fact, we found that renters pay a higher proportion of their income than homeowners on 75% of census tracts in New York State.
HOW WE MOVE FORWARD
This crisis illuminates the need for a robust public sector that can guarantee housing as a right—a NY Homes Guarantee.

This crisis has shown that our communities are only healthy if all of us are healthy and nothing is more fundamental to health than safe and permanent housing. If our health is tied to that of our neighbors, we must consider every person in our community, including renters, homeowners, public housing residents, and unhoused individuals and families. The stress of facing housing insecurity can weaken one’s immune system and perhaps even worse, crowding unhoused people into shelters can increase the risk of exposure to COVID-19, all while warehoused apartments and condos remain vacant.

If we are to stabilize New York during this time of great need, we must protect its most vulnerable residents. As outlined in this document, renters consistently pay higher proportions of their income on housing, earn less, and are more likely to be severely housing cost burdened than homeowners. Given this background, the initiative to protect homeowners without addressing the vulnerabilities to renters is severely shortsighted.

DEMANDS
To address these needs, we have the following demands:

RENT SUSPENSION NOW
No one should be displaced because they cannot pay the rent, especially when they are able to work during a global health crisis. While an eviction moratorium and mortgage suspension were good first steps, the millions of New Yorkers who rent are still not fully protected. **We need automatic forgiveness of any rent, mortgage, and/or utility payments owed or accumulated during the length of the current crisis**.

Additionally, there needs to be a rent freeze enacted immediately. **No one’s rent should increase over the duration of this crisis.**

RECLAIM OUR HOMES & INVEST $10 BILLION IN HOUSING
92,000 people are homeless. Millions more are housing insecure. It’s time to invest billions of dollars in social housing. The government owns and subsidizes enough housing to house all homeless people in NY state; they must open this housing and house people now to keep everyone safe.

- 92,000 people are homeless. We cannot continue the status quo. **People who are living in a shelter or are living on the street should be rehoused immediately.** Shelters are one of the most unsafe places to be in this moment. From a public health perspective, it’s vital that we rehouse every single homeless family immediately—as an entitlement. We must act as quickly as possible to get every single homeless household rent assistance immediately and permanently.


- Investment in public housing, subsidized housing, and housing owned by not-for-profits: These affordable housing models often operate on a small margin and should be able to continue to operate in this moment. (Landlord Hardship.)