



Memo Of Support: Good Cause Eviction
Bill Number: S3782/A5573

At this pivotal point of uncertainty in New York's COVID and housing crises we must decide how to proceed in protecting tenants. We know that the statewide eviction moratorium has saved countless lives throughout the pandemic, but we also know that it cannot last forever. New York needs an immediate plan for when the statewide eviction moratorium expires AND a permanent plan for curbing evictions driven by speculation and harassment. In order to avoid an eviction cliff when the moratorium expires, **New York needs Good Cause Eviction NOW.**

Good Cause Eviction protects tenants not covered by rent regulations and prevents evictions for the sole purpose of harassment or rent increase. Good Cause also extends protections to month to month tenants and tenants with no lease -- renters that are more likely to be working class, low income, and immigrants. These protections give renters the freedom to organize and offers a code of conduct between landlords and tenants. Across neighborhoods Good Cause establishes tenant stability and helps curb displacement and gentrification by limiting speculation.

We have seen before that economic disaster can precede periods of housing speculation where skyrocketing rents fuel evictions which feed displacement. With the current COVID-19 economic disaster we must act to prevent another compounding of the existing housing and homelessness crisis. It is critical that our State act now to steady housing volatility and curb speculation.

VOCAL-NY is a 20 year old grassroots organization focused on ending mass incarceration, HIV/AIDS, the drug war and overdose, as well as homelessness. We provide direct harm reduction services for people who use drugs, and we run grassroots campaigns to enact public policy that will benefit our members and leaders.

We write in strong support of the Prohibition of eviction without good cause law ("Good Cause Eviction") (Salazar S3082/Hunter A5573). Good Cause Eviction protects New York tenants from harassment and displacement. In doing so this legislation:

- Prohibits eviction of tenants absent a showing of "good cause".
- Applies to nearly every building except owner occupied buildings with three or fewer units -- with certain exceptions for cases where a landlord or successor seeks to occupy a living space themselves.
- Protects tenants from eviction or attempted eviction without a determination of good cause by a court even if they have no lease or if their lease has expired or terminated.



- Examples of good cause include: illegal tenant activity, violations of obligations of tenancy, refusal to cure tenant created nuisance, tenancy causes violation of law subjecting landlord to civil or criminal penalty, certain cases where landlord intends to self-occupy, and tenant failure to pay rent that is not *unreasonable*.
- Creates a rebuttable presumption that a rent increase is unreasonable if it is more than the greater of 3% or 1.5x the annual change in Consumer Price Index.
- Provides that tenants can never waive or modify these protections.
- Provides that tenants suffering landlord fraud related to the provisions of good cause protections have cause of action for actual damages, injunctive relief, and attorneys fees.

In the two decades our organization has been in existence we have seen time and again how a lack of basic tenancy rights lead to unfair evictions, and cause our members and participants to enter the shelter system, and sometimes spend years there. Homelessness in New York State is not stagnant- its cyclical, with people entering and exiting the shelters everyday. This means we must take a holistic approach to this issue- we must do everything in our power to prevent evictions and displacement while also providing pathways out of shelter. Good cause eviction is an essential first step.

At a time of great uncertainty, when homelessness and housing insecurity continue to pose great threat to health and safety of New Yorkers well into the foreseeable future, enacting Good Cause Eviction serves as a just plan for transition to a fairer post-COVID New York. Good Cause will inject stability into New York's housing market, help curb speculation, and curb the longtime threat of displacement among communities across the state. We urge you to sign on and support this path towards sustainably protecting affordable housing and permanently expanding tenant protections statewide.

Sincerely,

VOCAL-NY