



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John C. Liu

Liu, Kim introduce legislation defining squatter in NYS housing law

JOHN C. LIU April 10, 2024

| ISSUE: **SQUATTERS, SENATOR LIU, NYC, LEGISLATION**



BILL ESTABLISHES THAT SQUATTERS ARE NOT ENTITLED TO TENANT PROTECTIONS

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Flushing, NY – In response to recent reports of squatters who take over private property in New York, State Senator John Liu and Assembly Member Ron Kim introduced legislation, **S8996/ A9772**, on Monday that will add strength and clarity to New York State’s housing laws by adding the definition of squatter.

Including this definition in real property law will help to distinguish legal renters from those who unlawfully intrude and take over property. It also defines squatters as those without legal rights to the premises they occupy.

The legislation identifies the term “squatter” as one who enters onto a property or building without title, right, or permission, and therefore is not subject to the same rights and protections of lawful tenants, occupants or owners. This legislation also makes it clear that squatters do not get any rights or protections even after 30 days.

State Senator John Liu stated, “Recent incidents of squatters taking over private homes have hit a raw nerve for many in our community, whose homes are often their life savings. Housing law in New York State is often complicated and nuanced, but there’s one thing we all agree on: People who intrude into others’ homes should not have rights in state housing law, and this legislation codifies just that in simple and straight-forward language. We need to immediately enact this legislation and continue examining even stronger measures to protect homeowners without inadvertently putting renters at risk.”

State Assembly Member Ron Kim stated, “In New York City, squatters, cosplaying as tenants, are taking advantage of property owners when in fact, they are breaking the law. Criminals looking to exploit property owners do not enjoy the same rights as tenants and will be brought to justice. Our legislation makes clear under no uncertain terms that squatters are thieves and do not have any rights in the state of New York. Thank you to my colleagues for taking up this issue, and we will work towards its passage over the coming days.”

Today’s press conference was held outside the Queens house of squatter victim Dr. Young Seh Bae, who was successful in removing squatters from the residence she purchased in hopes of housing elderly disabled residents for her non-profit, Community Inclusion and Development Alliance.

Dr. Young Seh Bae stated, “Last year squatters took over our house, causing us incredible hardship when we were only trying to provide community service. We need to make sure these kinds of scams stop happening, and I am very grateful that our legislators are looking to strengthen our laws so that others don’t have to endure similar difficulties.”

State Senator Roxanne J Persaud stated, “Squatters have jeopardized the livelihood of homeowners far too long. By introducing this legislation, the rights and protections of legal renters will be clearly defined and those who take advantage will be legally held accountable. This bill seeks to protect the hard earned assets of property owners and allows them to further secure their economic stability.”

State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky stated, “Incidents of squatters must be addressed. We must close the loophole and this legislation does that. That’s why I am a co-sponsor.”

State Senator Leroy Comrie stated, “It is time for the state legislature to take a hard stance against squatters who twist existing loopholes through acts that would, by any other circumstance, constitute theft. This legislation is desperately needed, amongst our Queens residents, especially our seniors and homeowners, who have been living in fear and confusion as to how the law could possibly allow for such abuses. I am proud to stand with my colleagues to resolve this matter and hope for this bill’s swift passage.”

State Assembly Member Ed Braunstein stated, “Reports of homeowners returning to their properties and finding squatters, only to discover that the squatters cannot be removed without a lengthy and costly eviction proceeding, have been deeply disturbing to hear. Trespassing individuals in these situations are abusing a law meant to protect lawful tenants and they absolutely should not be afforded the same rights and protections. I am proud to co-sponsor this bill, which seeks to close this loophole and protect New York homeowners from these unlawful opportunists, and I continue to urge New York City leadership to work

to tackle this issue at the local level.”

State Assembly Member Nily Rozic stated, “Squatting not only undermines property rights but also poses challenges for our communities. This important legislation will ensure that we can keep our neighborhoods safe for all.”

State Assembly Member Grace Lee stated, “This legislation sends a message to small landlords in our communities that we recognize the challenges they are facing when ‘professional squatters’ take advantage of them. To address our housing crisis, small landlords must be protected and supported so they can provide high-quality housing to our communities, and this bill will help achieve that.”

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