



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

Elected Officials, Tenants, Workers and Advocates Launch “SOUND Housing Campaign” To Fully Fund New York’s Public Housing

DANIEL L. SQUADRON July 19, 2009

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Campaign Calls for State and City to Provide Long-Owed Funds

For Maintenance, Repairs, and Resident Safety

New York, NY—State Senator Daniel Squadron, Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh, dozens of their colleagues in Federal, State, and City government, public housing residents, NYCHA employees, and tenant advocates announced today the formation of the Save Our Underfunded NYCHA Developments (SOUND) Housing Campaign. The campaign will be a coordinated effort to ensure that the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) gets its fair share of State and City funding and that funds are properly spent on basic maintenance and repairs, safer and more reliable elevators, security cameras, and other measures to keep buildings and hallways safe and clean.

The SOUND Housing Campaign calls on the State and City to:

- Fully fund \$64 million for State-built developments;
- Fully fund \$30 million for City-built developments;
- Stop requiring NYCHA to pay more than \$70 million for police and sanitation services; and
- Invest \$100 million from the Federal stimulus package in weatherization of NYCHA

developments.

In addition to Senator Daniel Squadron and Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh, the SOUND Housing Campaign is supported by elected officials from all five boroughs, including: Congressional Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee Member Nydia M. Velázquez (D-Brooklyn/Manhattan/Queens); Senate President Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens) and Conference Leader John Sampson; (D-Brooklyn); Assembly Housing Committee Chair Vito Lopez (D-Brooklyn) and Public Housing Subcommittee Chair Keith L. T. Wright (D-Manhattan); City Council Housing Committee Chair Erik Martin Dilan (D-Brooklyn) and Public Housing Subcommittee Chair Rosie Mendez (D-Manhattan); Congressmembers Carolyn Maloney (D-Manhattan/Queens), Gregory W. Meeks (D-Brooklyn/Queens), Jerry Nadler (D-Manhattan/Brooklyn) and José E. Serrano (D-Bronx); Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum; Borough Presidents Ruben Diaz, Jr. (D-Bronx), Marty Markowitz (D-Brooklyn), and Scott Stringer (D-Manhattan); State Senators Eric Adams (D-Brooklyn), Neil Breslin (D-Albany), Thomas K. Duane (D-Manhattan), Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester), Liz Krueger (D-Manhattan), Velmanette Montgomery (D-Brooklyn), Kevin Parker (D-Brooklyn), Eric Schneiderman (D-Manhattan/Bronx), José M. Serrano (D-Manhattan/Bronx), and Toby Stavisky (D-Queens); Assemblymembers Inez Barron (D-Brooklyn), Michael Benjamin (D-Bronx), Michael Benedetto (D-Bronx), William Boyland, (D-Brooklyn), Alec Brook-Krasny (D-Brooklyn), Karim Camara (D-Brooklyn), Nelson L. Castro (D-Bronx), Vivian Cook (D-Queens), Jeffrey Dinowitz (D-Bronx), Adriano Espaillat (D-Manhattan), Vanessa L. Gibson (D-Bronx), Richard N. Gottfried (D-Manhattan), Carl Heastie (D-Bronx), Hakeem Jeffries (D-Brooklyn), Micah Z. Kellner (D-Manhattan), Rory Lancman (D-Queens) Joe Lentol (D-Brooklyn), Alan Maisel (D-Brooklyn), Grace Meng (D-Queens), Cathy Nolan (D-Queens), Daniel O'Donnell (D-Manhattan), Felix Ortiz (D-Brooklyn), Audrey Pheffer (D-Queens), Adam Clayton Powell (D-Manhattan), Peter Rivera (D-Bronx), Annette M. Robinson (D-Brooklyn), Linda B. Rosenthal (D-Manhattan), Matthew Titone (D-Staten Island), Darryl Towns (D-Brooklyn) and Helene

Weinstein (D-Brooklyn); Councilmembers Maria Baez (D-Bronx), Gale Brewer (D-Manhattan), Bill de Blasio (D-Brooklyn), Inez E. Dickens (D-Manhattan), Julissa Ferreras (D-Queens), Dan Garodnick (D-Manhattan), Alan J. Gerson (D-Manhattan), Robert Jackson (D-Manhattan), Letitia James (D-Brooklyn), Melinda Katz (D-Queens), Melissa Mark-Viverito, Kenneth Mitchell (D-Staten Island), Annabel Palma (D-Bronx), James Sanders (D-Queens), Al Vann (D-Brooklyn), and David Yassky (D-Brooklyn); Reginald Bowman of the Citywide Council of the NYCHA Tenant Association Presidents; Gregory Floyd, President of Teamsters Local 237; Judith Goldiner of the Legal Aid Society; Victor Bach of the Community Service Society; Damaris Reyes of Good Old Lower East Side and Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (GOLES/PHROLES); Peter Cheng of the Indochina Sino-American Community Center; Anne Washington of Community Voices Heard; Kenneth McIntosh of Two Bridges Houses; Charlotte Miles of Lillian Wald Houses; and Michael Steele of Rutgers Houses.

“More than 1 in 20 New Yorkers make their lives and their homes in NYCHA developments. For a decade, the State has shamefully turned its back on its obligation to these New Yorkers. NYCHA needs basic resources to provide services for its residents, and the State and City must step up with the funding they owe to allow that to happen,” said State Senator Daniel Squadron (D-Brooklyn/Manhattan). “Elected officials, tenants and advocates are joining together to form the SOUND Housing Campaign, and we won’t rest until we win necessary funds for maintenance, repairs, and safety in NYCHA developments.”

“For many years, NYCHA residents have suffered from the effects of a willful failure at all levels of government to meet our obligations to support public housing. We are launching the SOUND Housing Campaign today because we understand that it will require a cooperative, sustained effort to secure the resources necessary to maintain safe and livable conditions in our public housing and to provide the services that residents of our communities need and deserve,” said Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh (D-Manhattan), who

represents 18,000 NYCHA residents on Manhattan's East Side.

"The SOUND Housing Campaign will add an important voice to those already calling for improved maintenance and care of New York City public housing. More than 400,000 of our city's residents rely on NYCHA, and I look forward to working with SOUND to ensure the preservation of safe and affordable housing options for all New Yorkers," said Congressmember Nydia M. Velázquez (D Manhattan/Brooklyn/Queens), a member of the Congressional Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee.

"Funding for public housing is a moral imperative. As someone whose district houses the largest collection of public housing facilities in the borough of Queens, I know the absolute importance of a stable and well-funded public housing system to preserve and protect the quality of life of thousands of low and middle income New Yorkers. I applaud my colleague, Senator Daniel Squadron, for his commitment to improving public housing and look forward to continuing our work together," said State Senate President Malcolm A. Smith (D-Queens).

"I'm a long-time supporter of public housing; it's time we give it the support it needs," said State Senate Democratic Conference Leader John Sampson (D-Brooklyn).

"Given the current fiscal environment, it becomes even more critical to ensure that affordable housing is available now and remains on the top of our agenda for those citizens of our city who need it most," said Councilmember Annabel Palma (D-Bronx).

"Our city's public housing has long been a jewel, the envy of the nation. In recent times, due to starvation funding levels, it has lost much of its luster and has become a challenge to its residents. As a person literally born in public housing, I call upon City and State government to restore public housing to its former glory. We do this by adequately funding it," said Councilmember James Sanders (D-Queens).

“While working New Yorkers are struggling through difficult economic times, the very least we can provide them is safe, clean, and well-maintained housing,” said Councilmember David Yassky (D-Brooklyn). “NYCHA should be fully funded and the SOUND Housing Campaign is an important vehicle through which we can assure we are keeping our solemn obligation as elected officials to New York’s working families.”

“I support all efforts, including the SOUND Housing Campaign, to protect and save our homes in public housing,” said Reginald Bowman, Chair of the Citywide Council of New York City Housing Authority Tenant Association Presidents. “City, State and the Federal government have collectively eliminated and reduced the capital and operational funds for New York City Public Housing. For more than a decade, the City and the State government have eliminated all funding and the Federal government has reduced its support by more than 20 percent. These reductions have come while the New York City Housing Authority pays ‘payments in lieu of taxes (PILOTS)’ to the City as well as additional money for police and sanitation services and receives nothing in return. How can we pay into the City and receive nothing back? This situation has caused a consistent budget deficit, and an alarming reduction in staff and services in the NYCHA agency. As the voice of the public housing community of New York I am calling on all representatives in the City and State government to restore line item funding for public housing, and the Federal government to restore full funding. We the residents in public housing will be mobilizing the residents that represent 1 in 12 New Yorkers in rental apartments to take political action for our issues and homes.”

“We call on the State and City to stop turning their backs on public housing residents and fully fund this critical housing resource,” said Judith Goldiner, Supervising Attorney at the Legal Aid Society.

“When State and local government fail to support the public housing they built, they threaten the homes of hundreds of thousands of low-income, working New Yorkers,” said Victor Bach, Senior Housing Policy Analyst at the Community Service Society.

“We have been organizing public housing residents to fight for their right to decent housing and happily join our elected officials in the SOUND Housing Campaign as it works for so many of our principles. It is long overdue that the City and the State recognize the needs of public housing residents—by fully funding NYCHA in their respective budgets,” said Damaris Reyes, Executive Director of Good Old Lower East Side and Public Housing Residents of the Lower East Side (GOLES/PHROLES).

“People in public housing deserve to live in a safe, clean, and decent environment. Occasionally, we hear horror stories of tenants getting stuck in malfunctioning elevators for hours or even for days. This is unacceptable and appropriate funding should be available for proper maintenance of the building infrastructure,” said Peter Cheng, Executive Director of the Indochina Sino-American Community Center.

“Public housing has been neglected for far too long. We need the City, State, and Federal government to fully fund public housing and sustain this housing stock for low-income families in New York City. By joining forces with our allied elected officials, we intend to win critical resources for public housing and demonstrate that the trend of eliminating public housing nationwide can and must be reversed,” said Anne Washington, public housing resident and Board Member of Community Voices Heard.

“I, along with the Executive Board of the Two Bridges Houses Tenant Association, represent the 250 families who are tenants of our development. We have eroded floors in our garage and the ceiling is falling apart, creating an unhealthy and unsafe condition for tenants as well as housing workers. From elevators to paint jobs to windows malfunctioning to

mailboxes, we have been promised upgrades and repairs and there has been no renovation in 34 years, which is a problem. Funding for NYCHA is important, which is why we support the SOUND Housing Campaign,” said Kenneth McIntosh, Tenant Association President of Two Bridges Houses.

“Funding for NYCHA is important. Developments are not being kept up and the maintenance and repairs are not being dealt with because there is no money to pay staff. The lack of funds hurts the community. It cuts caretakers, grounds crews, supervisors, and community and senior centers. Supervisors are being fired and others are forced to take on more than one development, which isn’t right,” said Charlotte Miles, Tenant Association President of Lillian Wald Houses.

“Along with my board we feel that we are getting short changed. Every other City agency gets funding, so why not NYCHA? This money is really needed to maintain NYCHA. We have leaks in our walls that need to be repaired. Every two to three months you need another plaster job. We are asking City and State government officials to reinstate the funds that were taken from us,” said Michael Steele, Tenant Association President at Rutgers Houses.

ABOUT THE SOUND HOUSING CAMPAIGN

A major aim of the SOUND Housing Campaign is to address NYCHA’s structural deficit, which is projected to be to \$137 million in Fiscal 2009-2010 and has contributed to service cuts, inadequate maintenance, and other problems throughout New York City’s public housing.

While NYCHA operates 344 public housing developments, only 323 of these receive direct Federal funding. The other 21 developments were built outside of the Federal program by the State and the City, which provided the required operating subsidies until 1998 and 2001 respectively, when these funds were cut from the State and City budgets. As a result, NYCHA

must redistribute Federal funds intended for the 323 Federal developments, thus reducing support for all public housing throughout the five boroughs. While there have been restorations of some funding for NYCHA in some years, the failure of the State and the City to meet their obligations to cover the full costs of these developments currently contributes almost \$100 million annually to NYCHA's deficit. The SOUND Housing Campaign calls for full restoration of these funds in the State and City budgets.

In addition, the City and NYCHA have entered agreements under which NYCHA uses housing funds to make payments to the City to cover the costs of more than \$70 million for police and sanitation services annually. The SOUND Housing Campaign calls for an end to these payments.

The SOUND Housing Campaign also supports the investment of capital funds to ensure the safety and physical soundness of public housing, and calls upon the State to invest \$100 million in NYCHA from Federal stimulus funds that are available for weatherization projects.