



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jeffrey D. Klein

Sen. Klein, Chief Judge Lippman, Others, Announce Opening of Bronx Foreclosure Center

JEFFREY D. KLEIN June 2, 2011

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BRONX, N.Y. – After two years of planning and hard work, Senator Jeffrey D. Klein, (D-Bronx/ Westchester) was joined by Chief Justice Jonathan Lippman, Bronx Administrative Judge Douglas McKeon and others today for the opening of the Bronx Foreclosure Center at Bronx Civil Court.

The Bronx Foreclosure Center will be a comprehensive resource for Bronx residents who are in danger of losing their homes. Affected homeowners will be able to receive free legal and housing advice from trained counselors that will help them know their rights and navigate the court process. It will be open from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Bronx Civil Court House is located at 851 Grand Concourse, Bronx.

“All too often, homeowners at risk of foreclosure don’t know their rights, or the help that is available to them,” Senator Klein said. “By having a Foreclosure Center in the Bronx Court House, homeowners at risk of losing the American Dream will be able to seek assistance and guidance faster and find ways to keep both their homes and their financial security.”

The program will be funded in part with \$175,000 that secured by Senator Klein in 2009-2010 budget, along with financial and staff support from the Bronx County Court Administration, Legal Services NYC – Bronx, The Bronx Legal Aid Society, the New York Legal Assistance Group, Brooklyn Housing and Family Services, among others.

The Center was modeled after an already successful program that was started in Queens by Chief Administrative Judge Ann Pfau.

"The Bronx Foreclosure Center, which provides in-court legal assistance and financial counseling for at-risk homeowners, serves as a model for how the court system can resolve foreclosure cases in a fair, speedy and comprehensive manner," **Justice Lippman said.** "It is a prime example of what can be accomplished through cooperation between the different branches of government and among the many private, public and nonprofit stakeholders affected by the foreclosure crisis. I particularly want to thank Senator Klein for recognizing that our legal system cannot work properly unless all litigants receive the legal assistance they need to get their day in court. It is no exaggeration to say that the Bronx Foreclosure Center would not exist but for Senator Klein's steadfast support and commitment."

Senator Klein has passed and had signed into law many landmark protections for homeowners gripped in the foreclosure crisis. One such victory came in 2009, when he was able to ensure that every homeowner facing foreclosure in the State of New York would be entitled to a mandatory settlement conference where they would have the ability to sit face to face with their foreclosing lender and hopefully work out an arrangement where they can make timely payments and stay in their home.

More than 200 letters in English and in Spanish have already been sent to Bronx residents facing foreclosure alerting them of the program

Judge McKeon said: " I am proud that in my short time as Administrative Judge of the Bronx Courts I am able to participate and assist in the opening of the Bronx Foreclosure Center. Allowing all Bronxites to get the help they need and deserve to navigate the legal system is the only way we can make the justice system efficient and work for all. I commend Senator Klein for taking up this cause two years ago and I am grateful we have a Borough President and Chief Justice who have been as committed as I to making this dream a reality."

Bronx Borough President Rubén Díaz, said: “I am deeply pleased to join State Senator Jeffrey Klein and Judge Douglas McKeon in announcing the opening of the Bronx Residential Foreclosure Center, right here at the Bronx County Building, located at 851 Grand Concourse. This is a unique collaborative between the Bronx Courts, the various citywide legal assistance and counseling organizations, and elected officials to provide free legal advice, counseling and assistance to homeowners facing foreclosure. My office has a long history of facilitating educational resources and counseling assistance to homeowners. As recently as this past March, we co-sponsored a loan modification event that drew hundreds of Bronx homeowners- testifying to the need for foreclosure assistance. The Bronx Residential Foreclosure Center will bring all these services under one roof for the benefit of all Bronxites in need.”

Chief Administrative Judge of New York State Courts Judge Ann Pfau, said: "The Bronx Foreclosure Center is an example of what happens when dedicated public servants such as Senator Klein and Justice McKeon come together and develop a program that will benefit distressed homeowners throughout the Bronx."

Justin Haines of Legal Services NYC – Bronx, said: "Still more than two years after publicly funded foreclosure prevention projects opened in the Bronx, almost every homeowner we meet has fallen prey to loan modification scammers, paying on average \$3000 for no results. With the earlier outreach and establishment of the clinic, homeowners will be able to connect with experienced foreclosure experts for no cost and be able to avoid scams. The clinic also will allow for better coordination of free foreclosure services across the borough. Now rather than waiting several weeks for an appointment, a homeowner can now just walk in and receive advice and some level of assistance."

Carol Finegan of Brooklyn Housing and Family Services, said: "Brooklyn Housing & Family Services is looking forward to being part of the team of Foreclosure Prevention Specialists that will finally bring comprehensive assistance to residents of the Bronx who have been victimized by mortgage scams and a debilitated economy."

Rose Marie Cantanno of NYLAG (New York Legal Assistance Group), said: "In my opinion, the new Bronx Residential Foreclosure Center is a much needed asset for Bronx homeowners. Too many homeowners are forced to navigate the complicated and confusing foreclosure process on their own. Every bank has attorneys working to protect its interests. Bronx residents deserve to have an even playing field in the court system. My hope is that this clinic is the first step in trying to reach every Bronx homeowner who needs assistance in saving the homes that they have worked so hard to attain in order to provide a better life for their families"

Oda Freidham, Legal Aid Society, said: "We are extremely pleased we are joining other legal and counseling agencies offering early and comprehensive foreclosure assistance through the clinic and we appreciate all the support the Bronx Supreme Court and Senator Klein have provided to make this happen."