



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio Announce Affordable Housing Protection for Low-Income New Yorkers Living with HIV/AIDS

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL February 13, 2014

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Governor Andrew Cuomo, Albany, NY (February 13, 2014)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio today announced a new affordable housing protection for low-income New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS. With today's announcement, New Yorkers who are permanently disabled by HIV/AIDS and receive rental assistance will pay no more than 30 percent of their income toward their rent. Without this protection, more than 10,000 New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS are denied affordable housing and required to pay upwards of 70 percent of their disability income toward their rent.

"This action will ensure that thousands of New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS will no longer be forced to choose between paying their rent or paying for food and other essential costs of living," Governor Cuomo said. "By implementing a 30 percent income cap for low-income renters with HIV/AIDS, we are protecting New Yorkers in need and making our communities stronger, healthier, and more compassionate for all."

Mayor de Blasio said, "I'm very proud to work with Governor Cuomo to provide some measure of security to people struggling with the debilitating effects of HIV-AIDS. And we come to the table ready to shoulder two-thirds of this program's costs because we are committed to lifting up the most vulnerable among us. This is the mark of a compassionate city."

Senator Brad Hoylman said, "Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio deserve our highest praise for their decision to extend the affordable housing rent contribution cap to low-income people in the State's HIV/AIDS rental assistance program. Their decision will prevent homelessness and dramatically improve the health and well-being of more than 10,000 vulnerable New Yorkers with HIV/AIDS. The Governor and the Mayor's decision is also extremely smart budget and public health policy because it will reduce emergency shelter and healthcare costs and the rates of HIV transmission associated with unstable housing."

Assemblyman Robert J. Rodriguez said, "Much praise is due to Governor Cuomo for supporting our legislation and prioritizing affordable housing protections for more than 10,000 low-income New Yorkers living with AIDS. The 30% Rent Cap is a smart policy that will keep people stably housed and better positioned to stay healthy. Affordable AIDS housing is not only a priority for my district, but a priority of the entire Black, Hispanic, Puerto Rican and Asian Legislative Caucus. We applaud the Governor for taking this long important step to tackle the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which disproportionately impacts communities of color."

Currently, the primary housing program for low-income New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS is tenant-based rental assistance. As with other state housing programs for people with disabilities, residents with income from disability benefits are expected to contribute a portion of those benefits toward their rent. Unlike all other state disability housing programs and federally funded housing assistance, however, New York's HIV/AIDS rental

assistance program did not include a 30 percent cap on the tenant's required rent contribution.

Right now, many people living with HIV/AIDS in emergency shelters and supportive housing could live independently but cannot afford to move out because they would pay substantially more in rent in the rental assistance program. By creating this affordable housing protection, the State can better target the limited number of supportive housing beds for those who need them most.

Studies show homelessness and housing instability are significant public health issues that increase the risks of HIV acquisition and transmission and adversely affect the health of people living with HIV. The conditions that lead to homelessness for some individuals, coupled with the numerous challenges of being homeless, result in a substantially higher risk of HIV acquisition. People who are homeless or unstably housed have HIV/AIDS infection rates that are three to nine times higher than individuals with stable housing.

Dan Teitz, executive director of the AIDS Community Research Initiative of America said, "This affordable housing initiative pays for itself by keeping people in their apartments and out of costly shelters. It improves HIV health outcomes and is associated with better access and adherence to medication."

Sean Barry, executive director of Vocal New York said, "This action furthers Governor Cuomo's and Mayor de Blasio's mission of reducing spending and creating a healthier, stronger, more fiscally responsible New York by preventing unnecessary healthcare expenses, including emergency room visits and hospital stays, which are associated with homelessness and unstable housing."

Ted Houghton, executive director at Supportive Housing Network of New York said, “Today’s action will improve lives and save money. What could be better?”

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