



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Statement By Senator Liz Krueger On NYC Mayor's Office Of Special Enforcement Suit Against Illegal Hotel Operators

LIZ KRUEGER February 6, 2015

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New York – State Senator Liz Krueger released the following statement today in reaction to a lawsuit filed by the Mayor's Office of Special Enforcement (OSE) against the owners of four Manhattan residential buildings accused of operating illegal hotels:

"I applaud yesterday's action by the OSE to stop the illegal hotels operating out of these four buildings, two of which are in my district. Illegal hotel activity is a growing problem in New York City, removing thousands of desperately needed affordable units from the market, many of which are subsidized at taxpayer expense. Tenants in these buildings face serious safety and security concerns, as well as harassment and even eviction proceedings by unscrupulous building owners and managers who want to free up more units for this illegal – but lucrative – alternate use.

"This lawsuit demonstrate the vital work of the OSE in addressing the growth of illegal hotels, and the continued need for additional vigilance and resources to stem the tide of illegal hotel activity. Thank you to OSE staff, Mayor de Blasio, and the City Council for focusing more attention on this critical issue. I look forward to continuing to work with

residents, community groups, and my colleagues in government to preserve affordable housing and put dangerous illegal hotels out of business.”

The OSE lawsuit names four apartment buildings in Manhattan and their owners: 15 West 55th St., 19 West 55th St., 336 West 46th St., and 334 W 46th St. One of the defendants in the suit, 15 West 55th St Property LLC, was named earlier this week by Public Advocate Letitia James as one of the 30 top illegal hotel operators in New York City, and another defendant, Ben Zion Suky, is a defendant in a similar suit filed last month. The full complaint can be viewed by following this link: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/254851491/City-v-NYC-Midtown-LLC-Complaint>.

At a City Council hearing in January, Audrey Smaltz, a rent-stabilized tenant at 15 West 55th St., testified about the safety, security and quality of life concerns she and her neighbors have experienced as a result of illegal hotel activity in their building. Her testimony read, in part:

“That building has been my home and its tenants have been my neighbors for over 35 years. For many years, everyone in the building knew one another, and there was a genuine sense of safety and community. Now, things have changed a lot. My friends and neighbors are being replaced by strangers and tourists thanks to websites like Airbnb and others who allow people to rent out their apartments. Of the 37 apartments in my building, only seven are currently inhabited by rent stabilized tenants.

“The landlords are running an illegal hotel business. We don’t want that. We are all senior citizens. I am a woman of a certain age, and I want to live in the same safe peaceful building we have always lived in. Not only have we lost our sense of safety, but the landlord has chosen to ignore our requests for necessary repairs. Instead, they are doing extensive renovations to make the vacant apartments more appealing to short term tenants because

they make a lot of money with short term stays. Not long ago one of the tourists staying in our building wandered onto my terrace. It was a terrible, frightening experience, about 11 o'clock in the evening, that made me realize just how vulnerable a position my landlord has put me in by choosing to profit over the safety of our tenants and community.”

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