



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Tony Avella

Release: Avella Commends Denial of Pan-Am Contract, Demands Action from Mayor

TONY AVELLA May 12, 2015

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(QUEENS, NY) Today, State Senator Tony Avella praised New York City Comptroller Scott Stringer's decision to deny a contract that would have established a permanent homeless shelter at the former Pan-Am Hotel. In a letter to Mayor Bill de Blasio, Senator Avella also formally called on the Mayor to immediately replace City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Commissioner Gilbert Taylor due to his inaction and inability to take charge of the City's increasing homelessness and shelter problems.

Stringer denied the contract on Monday, citing outstanding complaints and violations, including the discovery of rats last month, that have made the shelter unsafe for the hundreds of families living there. Since the temporary shelter, located at 79-00 Queens Boulevard, was established as an emergency location last June, Senator Avella has been advocating for the unsanitary and hazardous conditions in the building to be brought up to legal standards. These improvements would have included installing kitchen facilities in every room, as state law requires, if the site was approved as a permanent shelter.

Despite praising Stringer for taking a stand and refusing to give permanent status to the shelter, Senator Avella demanded Mayor Bill de Blasio and his administration take responsibility for the conditions at Pan-Am that have been allowed to grow progressively

worse instead of being addressed. Today, he called on Mayor de Blasio to immediately remove Commissioner Taylor and appoint a new leader.

“Clearly, the situation at Pan-Am is out of control. While we were waiting for this contract to be negotiated, and eventually denied, the City has wasted months trying to figure out what to do at Pan-Am instead of actively trying to find a home for the hundreds of families currently at this location. It is unacceptable that children and families must live under these deplorable conditions at a shelter that is supposed to provide assistance. While Commissioner Taylor sits back and allows our City’s shelters, like Pan-Am, to develop serious and disturbing health and safety problems, the issue of homelessness grows more severe every day, and more people become dependent on a system that is deeply flawed. It is time that the City steps up and finally finds a viable solution to help New Yorkers in need. I thank Comptroller Stringer for his decision to deny a permanent contract at Pan-Am and demand that Mayor de Blasio follow suit by implementing a new, more effective leader at DHS,” said Senator Avella.