



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

## Senator Gianaris, Congressman Crowley and Assemblywoman Simotas Call for Attorney General Investigation of Non-Profit New York School of Urban Ministry

MICHAEL GIANARIS December 27, 2016

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(Astoria, NY) – Senator Michael Gianaris, Congressman Joseph Crowley and Assemblywoman Aravella Simotas called on Attorney General Eric Schneiderman to investigate possible mismanagement of the non-profit, the New York School of Urban Ministry (NYSUM).

**Senator Michael Gianaris said,** “Claiming financial hardship to pressure low-income tenants out of their homes during the holidays is a new low. Needy residents should not be victimized by poor management looking to make more money off of their misery.”

**Congressman Joseph Crowley said,** “It is unconscionable that the New York School of Urban Ministry would look to evict its tenants in the midst of the holiday season and literally leave families out in the cold. At a time, when our city is grappling with an unprecedented homelessness crisis, we need to make sure we’re doing everything possible to keep people in their homes and protect them from unscrupulous landlords or any undue hardship that might result from their poor management.”

**Assemblymember Aravella Simotas said,** “The abrupt and shameful manner in which the New York School of Urban Ministry tried to force out its low-income tenants raises serious concerns about how this tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization is operating. Because the organization's actions towards these residents is so contrary to its stated mission and its plans for the building where they are living are so secretive, I think it's important to investigate all of NYSUM's practices as a so-called ‘charity.’”

During this holiday season, NYSUM blindsided and misled current low-income tenants at its Astoria dormitory, demanding residents vacate by December 31, 2016.

NYSUM Executive Director Pastor Peter DeArruda has confirmed his intentions to lease the building to a third party for more money, stating that NYSUM is facing financial hardships and can no longer afford to pay the existing operational costs. The 39-unit dormitory, located at 31-65 46th Street in Astoria, is fully paid off and clear of any mortgage.

The offices of Senator Gianaris, Congressman Crowley and Assemblymember Simotas offered Pastor DeArruda the opportunity to meet and discuss a potential solution to this disturbing situation. He did not respond to this request.

Since the inception of this problematic situation, in November, Senator Gianaris, Congressman Crowley and Assemblywoman Simotas have encouraged residents to remain in their homes and work with the Legal Aid Society, which will examine all documents and assist the residents.

Attached is a copy of the letter to Attorney General Schneirderman.

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