



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

## Senate Majority Passes Strongest Tenant Protections In State History

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL June 14, 2019

(Albany, NY) The Senate Democratic Majority today passed the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019, the strongest affordable housing and tenant protections legislation in state history. This legislation, a 2-way agreement with the State Assembly Majority, was drafted following multiple legislative hearings throughout the state and discussions with advocates, tenants, and stakeholders. This legislation will make these new pro-tenant regulations permanent, repeal vacancy deregulation, reform rent increases for major capital improvements, create transformational protections for all tenants throughout the state, and empower qualified communities outside of New York City to opt into rent stabilization.

“We made a commitment that the new Senate Democratic Majority would help pass the strongest tenant protections in history,” Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said. “The legislation we passed today achieves that commitment and will help millions of New Yorkers throughout our state. I thank my partner in legislative leadership, Speaker Carl Heastie and the Chair of the Senate’s Housing, Construction and Community Development Committee, Senator Brian Kavanagh for his leadership on this issue. I also want to recognize and thank Senator Zellnor Myrie and the members of the Senate Democratic working group which helped draft and advance this historic affordable housing legislation.”

The Senate Majority held a series of hearings across New York State, led by Chair of the Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development, Senator Brian Kavanagh, on rent regulation and tenant protections so that the final legislation would reflect the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders. Hearings were held in Syracuse, New York City, Albany, Newburgh, and Greenburgh. The hearings provided an opportunity for tenants, property owners, stakeholders, and New Yorkers from around the state the opportunity to provide testimony and discuss affordable housing concerns directly with their State Senators.

The Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019, Senate bill S.6458, will make the rent regulation system and tenant protection initiatives permanent, rather than having them sunset as was the policy in the past. This legislation also repeals high-rent vacancy deregulation as well as “vacancy bonus” and “longevity bonus” provisions. This omnibus bill also reforms potential rent increases for major capital improvements and for individual apartment improvements to better protect tenants. Additionally, this historic affordable housing legislation extends certain tenant protections statewide, implements protections for mobile and manufactured home tenants, and empowers qualified localities throughout the state to implement the rent stabilization system.

For additional information on the historic tenant protections and affordable housing legislation, please visit:

<https://www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/andrea-stewart-cousins/joint-statement-senate-majority-leader-andrea-o>

**Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris** said, “After years of displacement caused by rent laws that worked against them, New York’s tenants finally have a seat at the table thanks to a new Senate that is working with our Assembly partners to eagerly champion housing

affordability. This sweeping legislation provides the strongest tenant protections since the rent laws were enacted decades ago and I am proud to have worked with incredible grassroots organizers to deliver this historic progress”

**Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development and co-prime sponsor of the bill, said,** “Throughout this session — and indeed for many years now — New Yorkers have made one thing clear: our state needs stronger laws to empower and protect tenants and halt the displacement that has ravaged many of our communities. The Housing Committee held five hearings where we heard testimony from dozens of people all around the state, many of whom gave compelling and emotional testimony about the ways our current laws are failing them. After 13 years advocating in the Assembly and the Senate for housing justice, I’m proud to say that the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act represents enormous progress toward fundamental fairness for every New Yorker who rents their home. I would like to thank our legislative leaders Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Carl Heastie, my colleagues in the Senate and the Assembly, especially Senator Zellnor Myrie, whose work was an essential part of this effort, and the many tenants who courageously told their stories on behalf of millions of fellow tenants.”

**Senator Zellnor Myrie said,** “This bill is the strongest package of tenant protections New York has seen in almost a century. For decades, our communities have lost hundreds of thousands of rent regulated units, but with this legislation, we are putting power back in the hands of tenants. We are taking a historic step forward in the fight for housing as a human right, and I am proud to have stood with colleagues, advocates, and, most importantly, tenants, to lead this fight.”

**Senator Joseph P. Addabbo, Jr. said,** “Fairly protecting the rights of tenants and ensuring an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals and families has always been a priority for me. I believe the legislation we approved today achieved the goal of easing the

concerns of tenants, while also addressing the interests of small landlords.”

**Senator Jamaal Bailey said,** “Tenant rights are human rights. No one should ever have to live in deplorable conditions or be consistently harassed by a landlord. This legislature has demonstrated to be the most progressive in housing regulations. I want to thank Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie, and my colleagues, Senators Kavanagh and Myrie for their leadership and hard work on getting this legislation passed. The New York State Legislature is committed to protecting tenants.”

**Senator Brian Benjamin said,** “Before I was elected to the State Senate, I built affordable housing in my community, so I know first-hand how real the housing crisis that is facing working families in my district is. The legislation we are passing today is going to help keep those families in their homes. It’s a new day for tenants in New York, and I am so proud to be a part of the Democratic Majority that has delivered this victory.”

**Senator Alessandra Biaggi said,** “For the first time in our state’s history, New York is giving tenants and renters the full protection they deserve. This legislation will expand housing protections to residents across the entire state, close loopholes in our current rent stabilization framework that have allowed landlords to abuse tenants, and most importantly, keep New Yorkers in their homes to build stronger neighborhoods. This victory wouldn’t have been possible without the incredible organizing and dedication of tenants and advocates across District 34 and the state, and the leadership of Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie.”

**Senator Neil Breslin said,** “I am proud of the work the Senate Democratic Conference did to develop and pass sweeping rent law regulations. This package of bills ensures that no matter where you live in the state, your tenant rights are protected.”

**Senator Andrew Gounardes said,** “The Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act will provide New York’s tenants with the strongest protections they have ever had and will be a big step forward in addressing skyrocketing housing costs and homelessness. For the tens of thousands of working-class and middle-class families in my district who are renters, these sweeping tenant protections will provide much-needed relief.”

**Senator Brad Hoylman said,** “Today, the State Senate is voting to save the future of New York. There’s no more important issue than protecting tenants and addressing the housing affordability crisis in our city and state. The Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act will provide permanent rent regulation protections for tens of thousands of tenants in my district and strengthen their legal rights, thus saving them from being forced from their homes and preserving our local communities. I’m extraordinarily grateful to Senate Leader Stewart-Cousins, my colleagues Housing Chair Kavanagh and Senator Myrie, and Speaker Heastie for making this groundbreaking legislation possible.”

**Senator Robert Jackson said,** “This rent reform package is one of our most important legislative accomplishments in a session that has had a lot of highlights so far! It means so much to me personally. I’ve lived all my life in rent stabilized apartments, first in Sugar Hill and then for the last 41 years in the same Washington Heights apartment with my family. I also represent the neighborhoods in Northern Manhattan that have the highest concentration of rent stabilized housing in the city. We didn’t win all we were fighting for this year, but this Universal Rent Control package lays a strong foundation today for us to build even further tenant protections tomorrow.”

**Senator Liz Krueger said,** “Before I ran for the Senate, I had dedicated my career to helping tenants fight eviction. I was recruited to run in 2002 with exactly this bill in mind, because I knew that the people I was trying to help would never be secure in their homes unless we fixed our broken rent regulations. I’ve won and lost many important battles over the last 17

years. But today may be the most rewarding day of my political career. I'm so proud to be part of a united Democratic Majority that has delivered these historic protections to help New York families stay in their homes."

**Senator John Liu said,** "Today we take bold action to tilt decades-long power held by landlords back towards tenants. Rent regulations are not so much price controls as they are anti-gouging measures, written with renters and consumers in mind. None of this would be possible without our Leader Stewart-Cousins and the tireless efforts of Senators Kavanaugh and Myrie, and housing advocates across the state."

**Senator Rachel May said,** "The Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 will shift the balance toward helping renters throughout New York State to stay in their homes. Housing stability is key to stable employment, school success, neighborhood crime prevention, and much more. I was honored to be an Upstate voice at the table, advocating for protections against retaliatory eviction and for people in manufactured/mobile homes who are vulnerable to sharp rent increases on the land where their homes are located. This omnibus bill recognizes that tenants throughout the state deserve strong protections."

Senator Shelley Mayer said, "I am extremely proud to work with my Senate and Assembly colleagues to pass the strongest affordable housing legislation and tenant protections in state history. The Senate Majority held a series of public hearings throughout the state, including in Westchester, to listen to the concerns of residents and property owners. As a former Assemblymember and as a Senator, the overwhelming majority of constituents calls I receive are from residents in desperate need of affordable housing. In fact, as of 2018, 52% of renters in Westchester County were paying 30% or more of their income on housing, and 28% were paying 50% or more. The legislation that we have adopted today protects rent stabilized tenants, particularly with respect to MCIs; protects ETPA regulated housing stock from being further deregulated; and provides other rental tenants with greater protection. I

am proud to vote in favor of legislation that will help more New Yorkers afford to stay in their homes and the communities in which they grew up.”

Senator Jen Metzger said, “The housing and tenant protection legislation we are passing today will benefit upstate and downstate communities alike by providing important housing protections for seniors and other residents living on fixed, and low and moderate incomes. In my largely rural district, where manufactured housing on rented lots is one of the main affordable housing options, the legislation will prevent landlords from raising the lot rent unreasonably while providing other important protections. Renters in upstate communities will also benefit from new protections against retaliatory evictions and other unfair housing practices. This is an important win for affordable housing in New York, whether upstate, downstate, urban, or rural.”

**Senator Velmanette Montgomery said,** “At a time when housing costs have risen out of reach for most working New Yorkers, it is imperative that we protect one of our largest sources of affordable housing. I am so proud to stand with my colleagues to pass this historic package of rent reforms. For the first time we have been able to prioritize and protect the tenants of New York State.”

**Senator Kevin Parker said,** “I applaud my colleagues in the Senate Democratic Majority for making housing a priority this legislative session. It is important that our constituents have access to affordable housing, stabilized rent and the well needed tenant rights and protection they deserve.”

**Senator Jessica Ramos said,** “I ran for office to protect my neighbors from abusive and exploitative landlords. Today, I stand with my colleagues behind the strongest package of

rent protections in years. I am voting yes for all of my neighbors, for the 34,000 unregulated rental apartments in Senate District 13, and the 80% of tenant households in SD13 that are occupied by my neighbors of color. Thank you to all the advocates who fought so hard! Now, we need the Governor to sign it.”

**Senator Gustavo Rivera said,** “I am truly proud that the Senate Majority Conference passed the strongest and boldest affordable housing legislation and tenant protections in New York State’s history. These reforms are the result of the diligence of brave tenant advocates who have fought relentlessly to make this a reality for many years. With this package, we are defending and preserving our already depleted affordable housing stock to ensure that more New Yorkers are not unfairly displaced from their homes and the neighborhoods they love.”

**Senator Julia Salazar said,** “My own firsthand experiences, as a tenant previously in an apartment owned by a neglectful landlord and abusive management company, and the experiences of millions of tenants across the state have been the strongest motivation for me to advocate for this historic rent package. By closing deregulatory loopholes and adding critical protections from eviction for non-regulated tenants, we are acting to empower working families and the most vulnerable renters to stay in their homes and live without constant fear of displacement. I’m committed to continuing this fight until every tenant in New York is secure.”

**Senator Jose Serrano said,** “As a longtime advocate for tenants’ rights, I am thrilled that we have passed the strongest, most comprehensive tenant protections in recent history. For too long, low and middle-income New Yorkers have been victims of the affordable housing crisis—with many families suffering landlord harassment and displacement. I am especially pleased that the final legislative package includes measures from my legislation to eliminate the Vacancy Bonus. Preserving existing affordable housing is a key component of tackling the affordability crisis, and these reforms will ensure that tenants are able to remain in their



communities for years to come. This monumental victory could not have been possible without the tireless advocacy of tenants' groups from across New York City and the leadership of our Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart Cousins."

**Senator Toby Ann Stavisky said,** "Growing up in a rent controlled apartment, I understand the need to protect tenants. With our new majority, under the leadership of Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, we have delivered the strongest tenant protections New York State has ever seen. Today is an historic day. We will bring relief to millions of New Yorkers. Tenants have waited decades for change and reform and today that hope has become real. Housing affordability in New York is at a crisis level and our leadership brought tangible and substantive solutions."

**Senator Kevin Thomas said,** "Protecting tenant rights allows us to empower more New Yorkers to stay in their homes and communities. With this legislation, we are taking significant action to ensure that everyone in our state has access to stable, affordable housing."

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