



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

Kavanagh, Hevesi, Over 200 Elected Officials & Advocates Call for \$100B Nationally—\$10B for NY—for Emergency Housing & Rental Assistance

BRIAN KAVANAGH April 16, 2020

| ISSUE: **HOUSING, COVID-19**

| COMMITTEE: **HOUSING, CONSTRUCTION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 16, 2020

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New York State Coalition Calls for \$100B Nationally—and \$10B for New York State—for COVID-19 Emergency Housing and Rental Assistance

Funds Would Be Used to Implement Proposed New York State Legislation S8140/A10248 and Cover Other Critical Housing Needs

New York State Senator Brian Kavanagh and Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, joined by a coalition of state and local elected officials and other New York leaders, are calling on Congress to include \$100 billion in additional stimulus funding—with \$10 billion for New York State—for housing and rental assistance.

On Tuesday, over 200 State Senators, Assemblymembers, City Councilmembers, County Executives, Citywide elected officials, tenant advocates, and landlord organizations sent a letter to Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand along with the New York Congressional delegation. The group requested a substantial infusion of federal funds specifically for rent subsidies.

"Rental assistance is critical to ensuring that vulnerable New Yorkers are not disproportionately affected by the current lockdown. People who are homeless and housing insecure are being exposed to COVID-19 at significantly higher rates, which has serious implications on their ability to weather this crisis and recover both physically and

financially," said **Assemblyman Andrew Hevesi, Chair of the NYS Assembly Social Services Committee**. "Rental assistance has also become crucially important for all of the New Yorkers who will no longer be able to pay their rent in the next few months through no fault of their own. It is incumbent upon government to protect our neighbors and I thank my colleagues and friends for working together to achieve this goal."

State Senator Brian Kavanagh, who chairs the NYS Senate Housing Committee, agreed. "Not only has COVID-19 cost New Yorkers their lives and their livelihoods," stated Kavanagh, "but hundreds of thousands of residents face the grim prospect of also being severely burdened by rent they cannot pay and losing their homes. As we work to contain the suffering this deadly pandemic is causing, we must devote funds to protecting tenants and stabilizing the housing market. Our legislation offers a clear path to help tenants remain in their homes and provide landlords with sufficient funds to pay their mortgages, maintenance costs, and property taxes."

Kavanagh, joined by Assembly Housing Committee Chair Steven Cymbrowitz, recently introduced state legislation, S8140A / A10248, to provide emergency rental assistance vouchers to help keep New Yorkers who have lost jobs or income due to the COVID-19 crisis from losing their homes.

Under the voucher program, the government will pay for rent that exceeds 30% of an individual's or family's current monthly adjusted income, for rent up to 250% of the fair market rate for the area.

The legislation has 27 cosponsors in the Senate and 18 in the Assembly, and has received broad support from tenant groups and landlords alike.

"The legislation that Senator Kavanagh and I sponsored will assist tenants and homeowners during this unprecedented public health and economic crisis, keep people in their homes as they get back to work, and maintain the stability of our communities," **Assemblyman Cymbrowitz** said. "It is critical that we ensure the support of our Senators and

Congressmembers to make this COVID emergency rental assistance program a reality."

"While the most recent stimulus helps Americans pay their bills for the present, more assistance is necessary to ensure that those who are most vulnerable have the means to stay in their homes," exclaimed **Assembly Member Pamela Hunter**. "Many of our essential workers are struggling to pay rent as parts of the economy remain closed. To ensure public health and a better financial recovery going forward, housing stability is critical."

NYC Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr., chair of the Council Committee on Housing and Buildings, said, "The COVID-19 pandemic should not result in anxiety and fear that homelessness, displacement, and housing insecurity accompany the threat of illness. We need to grant peace of mind to New Yorkers and to families across the country – our shared communities must remain whole in the wake of this pandemic. That is why a \$100 billion federal investment in rental assistance is critical. With \$10 billion in rental assistance for New York State, we can ensure that countless families have the housing security they deserve. Thanks to all colleagues who join in this call for this federal investment and for the partnerships across government that advance our shared goal of safeguarding New Yorkers."

"At this unprecedented time in our Nation's history we must do all we can to keep people safe," stated **Rochester City Council President Loretta C. Scott**. "That means finding solutions to keep people in their homes and to link others with permanent and affordable housing. This legislation provides a path forward that works for tenants and landlords alike. Housing is a human right, and during this global pandemic, it must be a top priority, I am hopeful that additional stimulus dollars can be made available to ensure that citizens in Rochester and across our state can remain safely in their homes."

"We support the request for more federal stimulus funding that is dedicated to addressing the burden that COVID 19 has placed on tenants," said **Judith Goldiner, Attorney-in-Charge of the Civil Law Reform Unit at The Legal Aid Society**

. “We applaud the bill introduced by State Senator Kavanagh and other state legislators that will provide immediate relief to our clients and any and all vulnerable individuals in the form of emergency rental vouchers.”

Tim Hathaway, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse NY concurred. "In these stressful times, stable housing is more important than ever. Not only is it necessary in the public health sense, but it provides safety and security for families who are struggling in a myriad of ways because of the pandemic. No parent should be worried right now about having a roof over their head... and no child should ever have to worry about that. PCANY supports this request for federal funding and urges the Administration to act."

Shelly Nortz, Deputy Executive Director for Policy, Coalition for the Homeless, added, "The COVID-19 pandemic has already taken the lives of dozens of homeless New Yorkers, and displaced countless others from the most tenuous and unstable housing situations throughout New York. It teaches us that crowding large numbers of poor people into congregate shelters and cramped single rooms is a deadly practice that must end. The solution lies in the provision of adequate rental assistance for all who need it to keep their apartments or move out of shelters and off the streets. Housing is Healthcare and it is the only long-term solution available to save lives in the new normal laid bare by this crisis. We are so grateful to Assembly member Hevesi and Senator Kavanagh for their tireless advocacy on behalf of our homeless neighbors,"

"COVID-19 has upended the lives of many New Yorkers," stated **Assemblyman Joe Lentol**. "We need to help those who are in danger of losing their homes, who live in shelters, and who are not sure how they are going to pay next month's bills. Investing in emergency COVID-19 housing assistance will help bring financial stability and peace of mind because stable housing means stable lives. No one should live in fear of future financial repercussions through no fault of their own due to the COVID-19 crisis. If corporations can get a bailout, so

can the people."

"The New York State Council of Churches calls on the Federal Government to give as much as possible for not only short term assistance but for more permanent housing solutions. We need immediate funds to help homeless and precariously housed people get out of harms way. We also need federal dollars for permanent housing which gets people out of the very expensive and precarious shelter system and keeps them out once the COVID crisis is over," said **Reverend Peter Cook, Executive Director, NYS Council of Churches.**

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Attached is a copy of the letter that was sent to Congress by the New York State Coalition and a copy of state legislation S8140 / A10248.

RELATED LEGISLATION

2019-S8140

- Introduced

- ◦ In Committee Assembly
 - In Committee Senate

- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly

- On Floor Calendar Senate

- ◦ Passed Assembly

- Passed Senate

- Delivered to Governor

- Signed By Governor

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Establishes a COVID-19 emergency rental assistance program

March 30, 2020

In Senate Committee [Housing, Construction and Community Development](#)

Sponsored by [Brian Kavanagh](#)

Do you support this bill?