



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

## Forwarding: NYC Launches 1st-Ever Tenant Resource Portal to Help Renters Avoid Eviction

BRIAN KAVANAGH August 10, 2020

| ISSUE: TENANT PROTECTIONS, HOUSING, COVID-19, NEW YORK CITY



### **New York City Launches First-Ever Tenant Resource Portal to Help Renters Avoid Eviction**

August 10, 2020

NEW YORK—Mayor de Blasio today announced the launch of the NYC Tenant Resource Portal, the city’s first-ever online resource to help residential renters access free resources from the City to help prevent evictions and keep tenants stably housed. The portal, launched

through Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants (MOPT), the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit (PEU), and the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), features an eviction prevention tool to help renters navigate free public and private resources that can stabilize their housing situations.

"The City is doing everything in our power to support vulnerable families as they deal with a public health and economic crisis," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "With the launch of the Tenant Resource Portal, we are unveiling the first, City-hosted platform where tenants at risk of eviction can go to find a unified directory of all the housing-related resources they may need."

The portal is free and accessible to all residential tenants. Tenants will respond to a series of questions about their unique circumstances and be directed to the most relevant resources, such as help navigating an illegal lockout or eviction. The portal also has up-to-date information on the general status of evictions in New York City Housing Court. Tenants who do not have access to the internet can call 311 and ask for the "Tenant Helpline," which was launched in partnership with 311 and HRA's Office of Civil Justice (OCJ) in April of this year, where they will be connected to a PEU Tenant Support Specialist to receive free, individualized assistance.

"I commend the Mayor's Office for developing a portal to connect New York tenants with information and resources to help them weather the ongoing public health and economic crises without losing their homes," said **State Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Senate Housing Committee**. "The portal should serve as a small but important step, in the face of the daunting need for substantial rent relief and a more comprehensive eviction moratorium. I look forward to working with the City on additional initiatives to protect tenants, homeowners, and homeless New Yorkers."

“The launch of this portal is one of many efforts our administration has made to protect tenants during these unprecedented times -- from providing a 311 helpline for tenants, to working with our public housing and our affordable housing to keep tenants stably housed even as their tenants face changes in their income, to expanding our legal assistance to tenants,” said **Deputy Mayor Vicki Been**. “This new resource will point tenants who are at risk of eviction in the right direction, so they can know their rights and get the help that is available. Our goal is to be as proactive as possible, by providing information and resources, to help tenants avoid eviction.”

Through this effort, MOPT, PEU, and DoITT have brought together resources from multiple City agencies, City-funded nonprofit legal service organizations, and Community Based Organizations, improving and streamlining how tenants can learn about the options that may be available to them.

“This portal is one of the various outreach and engagement efforts we deployed to make sure New York City tenants know their rights during this emergency,” said **Ricardo Martínez Campos, Deputy Director of the Mayor’s Office to Protect Tenants**. “We are committed to making sure all tenants have access to the City’s tenant protection resources, and empower them to face landlords that try to illegally evict them.”

“The creation of this portal has been underway for many months, and when COVID-19 hit we knew we had to pivot our focus towards helping tenants navigate the uncertainty of housing court and eviction during an unprecedented time in our City,” said **Rachel Flaherty, Project Leader for the Mayor’s Office to Protect Tenants**. “We’re excited and grateful to have partnered with the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit and the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications to build this tool to provide New Yorkers with more clarity on housing court and eviction – two things that are never easy to navigate, but especially right now.”

“The new tenant portal will help New Yorkers receive the free assistance they need and deserve, especially during the current pandemic which has left so many people in our communities facing greater housing instability,” said **Omar Khan, Director of the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit**. “I encourage all tenants who need assistance to use the portal or contact PEU’s outreach specialists via the 311 Tenant Helpline. In addition to the portal and Helpline, PEU’s Tenant Support Unit will continue proactively connecting with vulnerable tenants to ensure all New Yorkers get the support they need during this unprecedented situation.”

"The Tenant Resource Portal will help connect New Yorkers with vital resources to keep residents and families stably housed during these uncertain times," said **Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications Commissioner and Citywide Chief Information Officer Jessica Tisch**. "I am proud of our partnership with the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants and of DoITT's continued work to build systems that assist in protecting, feeding and informing New Yorkers throughout this pandemic."

“As New York City continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we are doing all we can to help New Yorkers avoid evictions and secure their homes,” said **Department of Social Services Commissioner Steven Banks**. “From investing in programs that stop evictions, like legal assistance in housing court, to helping New Yorkers pay the rent, protecting tenants has been part of our prevention first strategy. The Tenant Resources Portal will help renters facing challenges navigate the tools available to them in these unprecedented times, including free legal assistance, providing New Yorkers with a platform to more easily access the resources they need to stabilize their housing situations.”

"With many struggling to pay rent and provide for their families during this difficult time, it is important that all New Yorkers know that many services—including housing help—are available regardless of immigration status, English proficiency, income, or housing situation,"

said **Bitta Mostofi, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs**. "The new Tenant Resource Portal will make it easier than ever for New Yorkers to access, navigate, and better connect to vital information and resources to address their housing insecurity."

"We're building a network of support for New Yorkers as they continue to face down the pandemic and the resulting economic crisis," said **HPD Commissioner Louise Carroll**. "This free new tenant resource portal will bring much needed housing assistance resources to the average person's fingertips and with a user-friendly experience. I applaud the work of the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants, the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit and the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications on this innovative website."

"We will not stand by and let our neighbors lose their homes through no fault of their own, an issue that afflicts New Yorkers from all walks of life," Said **Sarah Desmond, Executive Director of DOB's Office of the Tenant Advocate**. "Tenant protection is another way we build a fairer city for all, and this portal will help people find the resources they need, exactly when they need it most. In the meantime, the Department of Buildings will continue fighting construction harassment in all its forms."

"Tenants facing the possibility of eviction often don't know where to turn for guidance during this stressful time. This is a tragedy, because so many families and individuals can avoid eviction entirely if they're connected to the right resources," said **Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz (D-Brooklyn), Chair of the Assembly Housing Committee**. "I commend the City for launching this new tenant portal, which will help thousands of New Yorkers learn about the various options that are available to help them remain in their apartments and communities."

"Reliable, accessible information serves an invaluable asset in this challenging moment. When tenants know their rights and have access to resources, like free legal services, they are

equipped to uphold their rights. That's what makes this new Tenant Resource Portal such an important tool. Up to date information a click or 311 call away means greater housing security for all tenants," said **Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr, Chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings.**

"During these difficult times it is critical that we do all that we can to preserve housing stability," said **Council Member Adrienne Adams.** "Our objective and priority must be to ensure that tenants have easy access to all available resources in order to prevent evictions but the resources will not be effective without widespread awareness. The launch of the Tenant Resource Portal is a welcome addition for the renters of New York City."

"Fearing the loss of one's home is terrifying, especially during a time when almost everything feels uncertain. Many resources throughout the city are available for tenants during times of need, and it is important that these resources are be accessible to those who need them most. This new portal brings them together in one place, making the resources easier to access and navigate. I will be encouraging my constituents to visit this new, streamlined site," said **Council Member Debi Rose.**

###