



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Gustavo Rivera

## Senator Rivera Visits Tenant Associations to Promote Emergency Rent Relief Program Ahead of Moratorium Ending

GUSTAVO RIVERA July 28, 2021

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### Senator Rivera's Team Assists Tenants with Online Applications to Prevent Evictions

(Bronx, NY) - Senator Rivera is visiting tenant associations across Senate District 33 in the Northwest Bronx to ensure eligible tenants can apply to the New York State Emergency Rent Assistance Program (ERAP). ERAP was enacted as part of the 2021-2022 State Budget which allocated \$2.35 billion in federal funds to provide New Yorkers with relief to avoid evictions due to COVID-19.

Through ERAP, households affected by COVID-19 can qualify for up to 12 months of past due rent, three months of future rent and up to 12 months of overdue utility bills. Individuals do not need to have a lawful immigration status to qualify for the program. Digital inequities, language barriers, and technical difficulties on the website are challenges for many community members in the Bronx. Senator Rivera's office is helping tenants overcome those barriers to prevent evictions and deliver rent relief to neighborhoods by offering appointments to complete ERAP applications and assistance in English and Spanish.

According to the New York Right to Counsel Coalition and CASA Bronx, one in four eviction cases across New York State were filed against Bronxites in the last year. They examined housing court data from June 2020 to date and saw that over 79,000 eviction cases were filed

despite the state eviction moratorium and other eviction prevention measures. **Eight of the ten zip codes with the highest rates of eviction are in the Bronx neighborhoods where communities of color and large immigrant populations were severely impacted by the pandemic.** In neighborhoods that Senator Rivera represents, namely Fordham, Kingsbridge, and University Heights sections of the Bronx, landlords have sued over 50 families per 1,000 units.

“My district was the eviction epicenter before the pandemic. In the last year, 26% of eviction cases that were filed across the state were filed against Bronxites. I fought for a state rent relief program that would help my neighbors in the Bronx who are on the brink of displacement and homelessness. My team and I are committed to ensuring that my constituents get every dollar in rent relief that they are eligible for, which is why we are engaging directly with tenant associations across the district to help Bronxites through the application process,” said State Senator Gustavo Rivera, 33rd District, the Bronx.

The statewide moratorium for most housing court cases ends on August 31, 2021. Tenants who have submitted **hardship declaration forms** are protected from eviction but may be facing a monetary judgment that could result in eviction when the stay ends. Tenants can pause eviction cases against them once they confirm their ERAP application has been submitted and tenants who receive rent relief funds to pay back rent arrears are protected from eviction through the next year. More information about the program is available at [otda.ny.gov/ERAP](https://otda.ny.gov/ERAP).

The NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), who operates the programs, is only accepting applications online and the website has been prone to technical difficulties, which have created barriers for constituents applying for ERAP. Further concern, **U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer wrote to OTDA's Commissioner** urging the state to release rent relief funds when it was the only state that had yet to release any. OTDA announced

that they have distributed just \$117,000 in funds as of last week. The state is at risk of losing the federal funding that hasn't been spent in September.

“The successful rollout of ERAP is critical to ensuring that we prevent a devastating eviction crisis across New York State. I strongly believe that we need to extend the eviction moratorium beyond August 31 to allow time to resolve technical issues on OTDA’s application website, ensure New Yorkers in the communities most at risk are successfully applying for the program, and distribute rent relief funds to prevent non-payment eviction cases against tenants, particularly in the hardest hit communities where priorities in the law apply,” said State Senator Gustavo Rivera.

Bronx constituents who are interested in inviting Senator Rivera to their tenant association meetings or other community events to learn about ERAP and eviction prevention measures can contact the Office of State Senator Gustavo Rivera at [grivera@nysenate.gov](mailto:grivera@nysenate.gov) or by calling 718-933-2034.