



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Sean M. Ryan

Senator Sean Ryan And Assemblyman Bill Conrad Urge New York State To Finalize Regulations And Begin Distributing \$2.4 Billion In Emergency Rental Assistance

SEAN M. RYAN May 14, 2021

| ISSUE: **NYS SENATE DISTRICT 60, NYS SENATOR SEAN RYAN, OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE, COVID-19 EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**



SENATOR SEAN RYAN AND ASSEMBLYMAN BILL CONRAD URGE NEW YORK STATE TO FINALIZE REGULATIONS AND BEGIN DISTRIBUTING \$2.4 BILLION IN EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE

Letter To Office Of Temporary And Disability Assistance Outlines Need For Expedited Application Process For Program That Will Benefit Tenants And Landlords

TONAWANDA – Today, May 14, 2021, New York State Senator Sean Ryan and New York State Assemblyman Bill Conrad urged the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to expedite plans to allow tenants and landlords to apply for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. The legislators made the announcement in the Town of Tonawanda, and were joined by Chris and Allison Burton, landlords who manage 38 rental units in the greater Buffalo area.

The New York State budget, passed in April, utilized \$2.4 billion of federal funding from President Biden’s American Rescue Plan to create the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. This rent relief program, administered by the OTDA, was designed to help tenants and landlords facing pandemic-related financial hardships. However, the OTDA has not yet outlined regulations regarding distribution of the program’s funding.

In December 2020, New York State instituted an eviction moratorium to combat housing instability resulting from job loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic. New York State legislators recently extended the eviction moratorium until August to protect renters waiting to apply for rent relief. In a letter to OTDA Commissioner Michael P. Hein, the legislators urged the OTDA to expedite the Emergency Rental Assistance Program’s online application portal for tenants and landlords.

Senator Sean Ryan said, “The Emergency Rental Assistance Program will provide critical financial support to renters and property owners impacted by the pandemic, but no one will get that support until the OTDA opens the application process. We have extended the eviction moratorium as a temporary source of relief for renters, but the slow rollout of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program leaves those renters’ landlords in a tough spot. In Western New York, most landlords are mom and pop operations, and rely on rental income to pay their mortgage each month. Until this program gets up and running, many will struggle to pay their bills and have no recourse available to them.”

Assemblyman Bill Conrad said, “How many of us could comfortably forgo our income for more than a year? Our small landlords have endured the strain of the pandemic along with their renters, and with little to no rent money coming in, some have had to drain their savings or take out loans to maintain their properties while trying to pay their own bills. The State must acknowledge the consequences of the eviction moratorium on landlords – and that means quickly making funding available through a streamlined application process so landlords and tenants can continue to work together to ensure we don’t see an eviction crisis as we’re nearing the end of this pandemic.”

A copy of the legislators’ letter appears below:

May 14, 2021

Commissioner Michael P. Hein

New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

40 North Pearl Street

Albany, New York 12243

Dear Commissioner Hein:

We write today regarding the Emergency Rental Assistance Program and urge the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) expedite the online application portal for tenants and landlords to apply for this critically important program.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted our daily lives, and significantly impacted our economy. Our nation lost more than 22.2 million jobs when the pandemic hit – including 1 million here in New York. So far our country has recovered only 12.4 million of those jobs. The ripple effect of the pandemic has hit every facet of our economy, including housing. In order to prevent mass evictions and people experiencing homelessness, New York State put in

place an eviction moratorium soon after the pandemic started. The eviction moratorium has kept people in their homes, but it has also significantly impacted landlords. In the last year, we have urged the federal government to provide relief funding to make landlords whole, and ensure their financial stability. We were very thankful to see that relief finally come through thanks to President Biden's American Rescue Plan.

The federal government has provided \$2.4 billion to New York State to address rental assistance. The state budget we passed this year utilized the federal funding to create the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, administered by OTDA. The American Rescue Plan was signed into law on March 11 of this year. OTDA has known about the aid coming from the federal government for 2 months, but has still not outlined regulations regarding the distribution of this funding. Due to OTDA's slow rollout of this program, we have had to extend the eviction moratorium until August for individuals who lost employment as a result of the pandemic, complicating the situation even further. Landlords in other states like Vermont and Connecticut are already seeing action, as these states are actively distributing rental relief funding. It's time for New York to act with urgency, and get this funding out the door.

Our temporary eviction moratorium is a relief to renters, but it does not assist property owners, who are also struggling to pay their bills and mortgages while their tenants are unable to pay rent. Further, housing courts in New York State are either only operating virtually, are behind on the caseload, and/or the eviction cases are on hold, as they are in Buffalo Housing Court. This leaves no way for landlords to seek recourse in a reasonable amount of time. Landlords are facing difficult decisions as they wait for New York to distribute federal rent relief funding. They are trying to show compassion, while the thought of foreclosure weighs heavily on their minds. We have a solution in place, and we need OTDA to put this solution into practice immediately. We strongly urge OTDA to prioritize

regulations for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program to ensure New Yorkers can apply for assistance as soon as possible.

Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to hearing from you regarding this important matter.

Sincerely,

Sean M. Ryan

New York State Senator - District 60

William C. Conrad

New York State Assemblymember – District 140

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