



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

## Senate Deputy Leader Gianaris, Assembly Member Reyes: HONDA Law Enacted, Now Let's Get To Work

MICHAEL GIANARIS August 16, 2021

| ISSUE: **HOUSING OUR NEIGHBORS WITH DIGNITY ACT**, **HONDA**, **HOUSING**, **HOMELESSNESS**, **HOTEL CONVERSIONS**



NEW YORK – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris and Assembly Member Karines Reyes announced the Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act (HONDA) is now law after being signed late Friday night. The new law creates a transformational fund to convert distressed hotels and commercial properties into permanent residences for homeless and housing vulnerable New Yorkers.

“New York has seen a decades-long affordable housing crunch exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic and ensuing economic devastation. HONDA will tackle the dual problems of distressed properties and lack of affordable housing made worse by the pandemic,” said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. “Now let’s begin the hard work of properly implementing HONDA and ensuring more New Yorkers have a home they can afford.”

“The Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act will create a multi-faceted recovery plan for New York State. The conversion of distressed commercial units into affordable housing units addresses the needs of our businesses and of our housing crisis,” said **Assembly Member Karines Reyes, R.N.** “During the pandemic, it has been made abundantly clear that the housing crisis is a public health crisis. The Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act will provide the state with the tools it needs to assist New Yorkers as we continue our recovery through the pandemic. I am very pleased that this idea will become reality, with its recent enactment.”

This legislation is supported by a wide variety of experts in the housing field, including advocacy groups like VOCAL-NY, the Community Service Society of New York, non-profit housing developer HousingWorks, a Strong Economy for All coalition, Neighbors Together, and other organizations.

The Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act would fund the state purchase of financially-distressed hotels and commercial properties to create permanent affordable housing for homeless and housing-vulnerable New Yorkers. The properties would then be operated by non-profit housing providers. It is hoped the funds to implement HONDA could reach over \$2.2 billion, mostly with dollars from the federal American Rescue Act. New York City currently has more than 50,000 people living in homeless shelters and countless others who are housing stressed.

**Paulette Soltani, Political Director of VOCAL-NY** said, “Homeless New Yorkers won back dignity they’d been denied for over a decade by Governor Cuomo, with the passage of HONDA. It took years of organizing and grassroots persistence to win, and we look forward to seeing homeless New Yorkers move into permanent, affordable housing created by this new law. Thank you to Senator Gianaris and Assembly Member Reyes for championing this critical bill, and to all of our allies for fighting alongside us.”

**Cea Weaver, Coordinator of the Housing Justice for All coalition** said, “With the passage of the Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act (HONDA), the State legislature has taken a clear step toward ending the historic crisis that has left 92,000 New Yorkers without a place to call home. HONDA will allow our State and non-profit housing providers to work together and turn distressed hotels and office buildings into permanent, subsidized, homes. We are grateful for Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris and Assembly Member Karines Reyes, who worked to pass this critical bill, as well as for the leadership of homeless New Yorkers across the State whose vision made this legislation possible.”

**David R. Jones, President and CEO of the Community Service Society of New York** said, “Today, we celebrate a hard-fought victory for people experiencing homelessness, for low-income tenants, and for front-line service workers: the establishment of the Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act as the law of the land in New York State. By taking empty commercial spaces and turning them into much-needed permanently and deeply affordable housing, this landmark legislation helps pave the way for a just and robust recovery for communities across the state.”

**Amy Blumsack, Director of Organizing & Policy at Neighbors Together** said, “In a year of unprecedented levels of homelessness and vacancies in office buildings and hotels, creating permanent affordable housing out of those distressed properties for unhoused New Yorkers is one important step in addressing the homelessness crisis in New York State. We look forward to seeing underutilized properties converted into homes through the Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act (HONDA), and we are grateful to work with Senate Deputy Majority Leader Gianaris and Assembly Member Reyes to increase access to safe, permanent housing for low-income

New Yorkers.”

**Rebecca Garrard, legislative director for Citizen Action of New York** said, “The Housing our Neighbors with Dignity Act is legislation which prioritizes the needs of New Yorkers who are unhoused and housing insecure over those New Yorkers with the most privilege. It is a vital recognition that we need a state that ensures safe and dignified housing for all, and in order to achieve this we need policies that advance this mission. We are deeply grateful to Senator Gianaris, Assembly Member Reyes, and all allies who ensured the passage of this legislation, and look forward to its effective implementation for the benefit of our members and their communities.

**Ted Houghton, President of Gateway Housing** said, “The signing of HONDA into law provides an important new tool in our efforts to reduce homelessness. Converting the city’s distressed hotels into permanent affordable housing instead of shelters is exactly what we need to do, to create decent homes for homeless New Yorkers, and to jumpstart the city’s post-pandemic recovery.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### 2021-S5257C

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- 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
  
- 

Enacts the "Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity act"

March 01, 2021

Signed by Governor

Sponsored by **Michael Gianaris**

Do you support this bill?