



November 7, 2014

Kristin Proud
Commissioner
New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
40 North Pearl Street
Albany, New York 12243

Dear Commissioner Proud:

We are writing about changes to the New York Solutions to End Homelessness Program (STEHP) for the 2014-2019 contract cycle that has resulted in the loss of \$1.19 million in funding to five nonprofit organizations providing eviction prevention services to our constituents in Manhattan. At a time when New York City faces record homelessness, government should not be cutting funding to the very programs designed to protect the most vulnerable and keep them in their homes.

As you know, the STEHP program provides vital funding to organizations serving low-income households (at 30% of AMI). In addition to street outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing and FEPS applications, the program funds eviction prevention services, which include rental assistance, legal advice and representation, tenant organizing support, case management, financial counseling and food and urgent need assistance, to name a few. Since the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) made its decisions and announced its awards for the 2014-2019 cycle earlier this month, our offices have been contacted by five Manhattan groups providing these services (Housing Conservation Coordinators, Nazareth Housing New York City, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, University Settlement Society of New York and Urban Justice Center), each of which has not received STEHP funding to provide eviction prevention services this cycle, despite having been funded to provide these services in the previous contract cycle.

Robust eviction prevention programs, like the ones provided by these groups, ensure that New Yorkers, who are living on the edge, low-income individuals, seniors, disabled persons and those existing on fixed incomes, can stay in their homes. Despite the critical importance of the programs, it would appear that OTDA, without any notice whatsoever, chose not to fund many of the long-established and universally respected eviction prevention service providers in Manhattan.

Each day, our offices refer many constituents who are facing imminent eviction to the aforementioned groups; countless other tenants in Manhattan are referred to them through City programs and others still walk in each day. Together, the groups served more than 4,000 tenants last year alone, with a combined success rate of well over 95 percent. In the absence of STEHP funding, the groups will now be required to reallocate resources to other programs, lay off staff or potentially close altogether. Who will provide these critically important services to the tenants living in our districts?

We would like to request a meeting with OTDA to discuss this issue and to create solutions that will address the immediate funding shortfalls this year to ensure that our constituents do not experience a gap in services that will likely result in displacement and even homelessness. In addition, we would like to identify ways by which we can prevent this situation from occurring in the future.

In advance of that meeting, we request that OTDA provide our offices with the following information:

1. A detailed explanation of OTDA's funding priorities for the 2014-2019 funding cycle and the ways in which those funding priorities have changed since the last funding cycle.
2. A detailed breakdown of STEHP funding by region and service type for the last 10 years.
3. A detailed explanation of the way by which OTDA reached its decision not to fund any of the aforementioned organizations.
4. A breakdown on the scoring of the aforementioned organizations' applications.
5. A list of any and all organizations in Manhattan that received STEHP funding to provide eviction prevention services in Manhattan, including the following information for each organization: catchment area, current and future eviction prevention staffing levels, demonstrated capacity to provide services and their history providing such services in the area.
6. Promptly schedule post-application debriefings with the organizations mentioned above that have requested them. We also ask that you provide the status of scheduling these debriefings.

New York City continues to struggle through a prolonged affordable housing crisis, where rents have increased exponentially and incomes and other benefits have stagnated or have been reduced. Far too many tenants are under near-constant siege by landlords looking to increase their bottom lines, and our offices have seen a marked increase in the number of eviction cases over the course of the last several years. Against this backdrop, we should be fortifying the organizations that are fighting alongside our constituents on the front lines of this battle with additional resources and support.

Please contact Assemblymember Rosenthal's Chief of Staff, Lauren Schuster, at 212.873.6368 or schusterl@assembly.state.ny.us should you have any questions and to schedule the meeting. Thank you for your attention to this pressing issue. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Linda B. Rosenthal
Member of Assembly – 67 AD

Gale A. Brewer
Manhattan Borough President

Adriano Espaillat
State Senator – 27 SD

Brad Hoylman
State Senator – 31 SD

Liz Kruger
State Senator – 28 SD

Bill Perkins
State Senator – 30 SD

José M. Serrano
State Senator – 29 SD

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Member of Assembly – 74 AD

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Member of Assembly – 73 AD

Robert J. Rodriguez
Member of Assembly – 68 AD

Keith L.T. Wright
Member of Assembly – 70 AD

Margaret S. Chin
Council Member – CD 1

Inez E. Dickens
Council Member – CD 9

Corey Johnson
Council Member – CD 3

Ben Kallos
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Mark Levine
Council Member – CD 7

Ydanis Rodriguez
Council Member – CD 10

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