

Senator Pam Helming

Representing the 54th New York Senate District



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Senator Helming Calls on Senate Majority to Get Small Landlord Relief Bill to Governor's Desk

Senator Helming is calling on the Senate Majority to deliver Senate bill S.6481 to the Governor, a bill she co-sponsored which would earmark \$100 million in already-approved emergency rental assistance funds to landlords whose tenants vacated their units while owing rent. This eligibility expansion was requested by several local small landlords who contacted Senator Helming, and was an issue raised during the Senator's recent housing roundtables. The bill was passed by both the Senate and Assembly.

"The failure to prioritize the signing of this bill is yet another nonsensical delay by the Senate Majority in getting much-needed rental relief to small landlords. This \$100 million in state funds is in addition to the \$2.3 billion in federal relief money in the Emergency Rental Assistance Program. This bill would allocate that \$100 million to landlords whose tenants left the property with rental arrears. This will help more small landlords in our communities. It was passed unanimously in the Senate, and the Senate Majority leadership must get this bill to the Governor's desk immediately," said Senator Helming.

"In our area and across the state, it's the 'mom-and-pop' rental property owners who are the hardest hit. They are our neighbors. They want to keep their tenants in their homes but they need to be paid. When small landlords suffer these destabilizing losses, they can't afford to keep their properties. Collectively, we risk the loss of local ownership of rental properties, the quality of local housing stock, and that impacts our local communities and economy," added Senator Helming.

“Small landlords, who are private, non-corporate property owners, have borne the financial weight associated with eviction moratoriums and now the lag in ERAP funding. This is unnecessary and unacceptable. The laws and orders early in the pandemic denied us access to accountability and due process in court, which then ushered in a wave of non-payment above and beyond what any other industry had to endure. Today, there are small landlords in the Finger Lakes region reporting over \$288,000 in rental arrears from tenants who have abandoned their apartments, leaving no forwarding address. The Senate bill giving eligibility for additional funding to these landlords would go a long way in righting the wrongs dealt to landlords over the past 16 months,” said Deb Hall, Administrator, Finger Lakes Landlords Association.

Senator Helming added that she spoke this week with Commissioner Michael Hein of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), the state agency administering the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP), to share her concerns with the delay in disbursing funds and the reported website problems causing frustration for applicants. The Senator said the conversation was productive and she is hopeful the distribution of funds will begin soon.

As ranking member of the Senate Housing, Construction and Community Development Committee, Senator Helming recently led two roundtables with stakeholders in the housing community to prepare for an efficient reopening of local housing courts as the state’s eviction moratorium ends on August 31. Senator Helming is currently compiling recommendations from participating experts to New York’s Office of Court Administration.

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