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Hundreds of NYC Tenants Demand NYC Council to Pass Bills Condemning Predatory Equity Landlords

Groups Urge Council to Pass Three Bills Critical to Protecting Tenants from Landlord Harassment and Intimidation

New York, NY – Over 200 New Yorkers along with the Stabilizing NYC Coalition (SNYC), Stand for Tenant Safety Coalition (STS), and City Council members converged on Monday in front of City Hall to demand the City Council pass crucial legislation that would offer protections against abusive landlord practices and broaden access to affordable housing.

Countless New Yorkers have been victimized by predatory equity landlords who use dubious tactics to try and force tenants out of their homes. New York City's affordable housing market has dwindled in recent years, and through actions like deferred building maintenance, violating construction safety regulations, or adding on illegal fees to rents, predatory landlords harass tenants as way to force them out so they can put their apartments on the market at market value.

"Right now, landlords who routinely violate regulations that affect the health, life and safety of tenants are allowed to rack up the fines with little accountability. As a 34 year resident on the Lower East Side, if I break the law, I pay the price! Landlords are not above the law. The threat of foreclosure is an excellent way to force these scofflaws to pay up. I strongly support the passage of Int 0930!" said **Robert Pinter, tenant and activist from the Lower East Side.**

Tenants testified in the Committee on Housing and Buildings hearing in support of three bills that would help abate tenant harassment by predatory landlords and rental companies through the creation of a watch list, giving tenant claims more credibility, and increasing penalties on predatory landlords:

Intro 1210-2016 requires the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to create, maintain, and publish a watch list for multiple dwelling owners who have engaged in practices associated with predatory equity. It also requires the Department of Finance to help HPD in ascertaining financial information about the multiple dwelling buildings.

Intro 1211-2016 creates a rebuttable presumption regarding tenant harassment in multiple dwelling buildings that has a debt service ratio of less than 1.05 (putting them on the watch list). Tenant allegations of harassing acts or omissions committed by the owner that caused or were intended to cause tenants to vacate the dwelling will be believed to be true unless the landlord can prove otherwise.

Intro 0930-2015 would expand the Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Third Party Transfer program, which allows the City to foreclose and sell distressed residential buildings to pre-qualified third parties, to include buildings whose owners have incurred large amounts of unsatisfied building violations.

Intro 1210-2016 and 1211-2016 were both introduced by City Council Members Ritchie Torres, Daniel Garodnick, and Williams, while Intro 930-2015 was introduced by City Council Member Ben Kallos.

"Predatory equity is the dark secret destroying affordable housing in New York City. We must do whatever we can to shine a light on the practice and protect unsuspecting tenants from its impacts," said **City Council Member Daniel Garodnick**. "This legislation is a step in the right direction and will help us root out those who harm tenants, communities, and our city."

"Tenants are more than ever fearful of gentrification, rising rents and displacement, and actions by predatory landlords and lenders are aiding these fears. The legislative package to tackle predatory equity is the first-of-its-kind to confront this issue and would give us more information about the tactics used to push out tenants. We hope it will move quickly through the legislative process and brought to the full Council for a vote," said **City Council Member Ritchie Torres**, prime sponsor of Intros. 1210 and 1211.

"The threat of foreclosure against the worst landlords will finally mean buildings will get the long-ignored repairs residents have been waiting for," said **City Council Member Ben Kallos**, prime sponsor of Intro 0930. "For too long some landlords and building owners neither fixed recurring problems on their properties nor paid the ECB fines that go along with those violations. The legislation being championed by the STS coalition will both improve quality of life in New York City as well as force building owners to engage in real problems in this city."

"The abusive behavior of predatory equity landlords is destroying the homes of our New Yorkers." said **Public Advocate Letitia James**. "Tenants should never have to see themselves forced out of their home, nor should they ever have to endure poor living conditions or any form of harassment by their landlord. Unfortunately, too many hardworking tenants are victims of this toxic behavior because landlords care about nothing more than bottom line. These three new bills will help us put a stop to the many injustices that tenants face by holding these landlords accountable for their actions."

The passage of these three bills would be a tremendous step in the fight against tenant harassment and for the preservation of affordable housing options for New Yorkers.

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About the Stabilizing NYC Coalition

Stabilizing NYC is a coalition comprised of fifteen grassroots neighborhood-based organizations, a citywide legal service provider and a citywide housing advocacy organization who have come together to combat tenant harassment and preserve affordable housing for the New Yorkers who need it most. This project combines legal, advocacy and organizing resources into a citywide network to help tenants

take their predatory equity landlords to task for patchwork repairs, bogus eviction cases, and affirmative harassment.

About the Stand for Tenant Safety Coalition

Stand for Tenant Safety (STS) is a citywide coalition of community organizations who are fighting to protect the lives and homes of New York City tenants where landlords are using construction as harassment. Through this community driven effort, we demand the systemic reform of the Department of Buildings.

