

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Monday, October 2, 2017

**CONTACT:** Rini Fonseca-Sabune • 646-459-3010

## Icon Realty Tenants Applaud Attorney General's Settlement

**Tenants rejoice as Icon settles with AG and City Council passes 12 Stand for Tenants Safety bills to strengthen tenants' rights and end construction-as-harassment.**

**New York, NY** - Icon Community United (ICU), the organized tenants of ICON Realty Management owned buildings, cheered last Wednesday as Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, along with Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio, announced a settlement between ICON and the Tenant Harassment Prevention Task Force. This settlement requires the real estate company, headed by Terrence Lowenberg and Todd Cohen, to correct building violations, conduct construction safely in ICON-owned buildings, and pay \$500,000 to New York City and New York State.

ICON tenants across the East Village, Lower East Side, and Brooklyn have dealt with widespread issues. Tenants of 128 2nd Ave., 445 E. 9th St., 57 2nd Ave., 222 E. 12th St., 522 E. 9th St., 56 W. 11th St., and other buildings have experienced issues such as:

- Extended cooking gas outages
- Disruptions of essential services (heat, hot water, etc.)
- Numerous lawsuits brought against tenants
- Mix ups with rent payments
- Intensely disruptive construction
- Lead contamination
- Obstructed entry ways

For years, tenants have alleged that ICON has worked to remove rent regulated tenants and conducted construction in careless ways. Yesterday, the Attorney General's office reached an agreement with ICON which requires them to adopt policies and procedures to prevent future violations and safety risks. This includes clearing all building code violations, implementing "safe construction practices," providing tenants with abatements for periods when essential services are disrupted, and establishing a tenant liaison and independent monitor to ensure ICON's compliance with the agreement. Per the settlement, ICON will also pay \$300,000 to the State of New York and over \$200,000 in penalties, fees, and costs to New York City's Housing Preservation & Development and Department of Buildings.

On the same day that this settlement was reached, City Council voted to pass the 12th and final bill from Stand for Tenant Safety's legislative package, which will create a Real Time Enforcement unit within the Department of Buildings (DOB). This unit will dramatically cut DOB's response time to complaints filed by tenants, eliminating the ability of property owners to do work recklessly and without permits. ICON tenants see both developments as huge, and incontestably linked, victories for tenants. The ICU feels these victories would not have been possible without organized tenants having come together to force these issues.

Icon tenants from various neighborhoods around New York City weighed in with their opinions about the settlement and the new legislation:

“Thank you Attorney General Schneiderman, Gov. Cuomo & Mayor De Blasio for working with tenants to put a stop to the odious treatment and displacement of tenants in rent regulated buildings,” said **Susan Pillay, a 35-year resident of 441 E. 9th Street, East Village**. “Landlords have a responsibility to comply with safe construction practices, and we are hopeful that both the A.G.'s decision - coupled with new laws to curb landlords' use of construction-as-harassment - can lead to a better relationship between tenants and landlords, thus ending the intolerable disruptions caused by unsafe construction, dust, debris, and lack of essential services.”

“Not long after Icon purchased our building in 2013 we suffered one indignity after another - from the elevator being made inoperable, to the loss of all gas to the building for nearly two years, to the lead dust proliferation that our building, which has a number of children, infants, and elderly people, endured. It felt as though ICON was putting tremendous pressure on tenants to leave. Ultimately, they succeeded in dislodging several tenants by what looked like a tenant harassment strategy. Simultaneously the remaining tenants endured yet another cycle of demolition and construction as they worked on those newly vacated units,” said **Jeffrey Houlihan, a 26-year resident of 56 W 11th Street, West Village**. “We were also not surprised at all to learn that the owners would be willing to file false statements with DOB in order to expedite this process.”

"I applaud the Attorney General's decision and success with holding ICON accountable for their recurring construction practices. Since ICON purchased the building I live in, I have experienced the gamut from, multiple ceiling collapses to extensive water damage, due to mismanaged work by ICON. Incessant construction dust, and inordinate noise and vibrations, were the norm" said **Teri Aderman, a 33-year resident of 295 DeGraw Street, Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn**. "However, with the recent actions of the Attorney General, and our City Council, I will remain hopeful that ICON will employ more stringent methods in upcoming construction/demolition activity."

“We join tenants across the city applauding the Attorney General actions with ICON. Construction as harassment is an issue that affects tenants in North Brooklyn in daily basis,” said **Rolando Guzman, Deputy Director of Community Preservation at St. Nick’s Alliance**. “Several ICON tenants in North Brooklyn had to deal with excessive dust, disruption of essential services due to aggressive and disruptive construction in their buildings. The actions of the Attorney Office sends a clear message to landlords in New York City: no more construction as harassment.”

"We applaud the Attorney General and City Council for taking these monumental actions. They were prompted by a huge groundswell of tenant organizing around these issues," said **Cooper Square Committee's Director of Organizing Brandon Kielbasa**. "Issues in Icon Realty buildings were widespread and egregious. This settlement is a very important milestone; however it is not the end of the campaign. Tenants intend to utilize the settlement to its fullest extent. The ICU will remain vigilant."

**About Icon Community United**

Icon Community United (ICU) is an association of tenants living in properties owned by Icon Realty in New York City that aims to empower tenants and fight harassment.

**Stabilizing NYC**

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.