



THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

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CM CHIN REINTRODUCES BILL TO FORCE NEGLIGENT LANDLORDS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DISPLACED TENANTS

***New legislative effort comes as tenants of 85 Bowery
continue to struggle with displacement far from kids'
schools, workplaces and community support***

***Chin calls on landlord of 85 Bowery to pay for hotel rooms
in Lower Manhattan for all tenants displaced by recent
vacate order***



CITY HALL – Today, Council Member Chin joined Council Member Robert Cornegy, Chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings, Council Member Carlina Rivera and housing organizers from Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) to reintroduce legislation to make the worst landlords responsible for relocation costs of tenants forced from their homes.

“Tenants who pay their rent every month should not have to pay for the consequences of negligence by irresponsible landlords. This legislation is a common sense measure to provide badly needed funds to tenants who have been unjustly targeted by unscrupulous landlords,” said **Council Member Chin, prime sponsor of the legislation.** “By requiring bad landlords to fund temporary housing for residents displaced by a vacate order, this bill would ease the burden on displaced families, hold landlords accountable for their repeated offenses against tenants, and incentivize landlords to complete the required repair work in a timely manner so that tenants can return home as soon as possible. To any negligent landlord who thinks they can take a backseat to the suffering of displaced tenants, we will continue to hold you accountable. I look forward to working with Council Member Cornegy, my Council colleagues, and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development to get this common-sense legislation passed.”

The legislation would require landlords to cover relocation expenses by depositing money into an escrow account equal to at least 10 percent of the building’s rent roll for five years preceding the vacate order.

The legislation would not blindly apply to all landlords in the event of a vacate order; rather, it would apply to landlords with an egregious history of negligence and abuse. Originally introduced in 2014, Council Member Chin will now lead a renewed push to advance this vital legislation – this time, as a recently appointed member of the Council’s Housing and Building Committee, which is likely to consider the bill.

"For too many New Yorkers, especially New Yorkers of color, the affordability crisis in this city has forced them out of the neighborhoods they were raised in and for some, it has forced them out of housing all together," said **Council Member Robert Cornegy, Chair of the Housing and Buildings Committee.** “When landlords choose to force tenants out by refusing to maintain their buildings and then issuing vacate orders, they are only rubbing salt in the wound that is the affordable housing crisis we face. By holding landlords more directly accountable for the cost of displaced tenants, this bill will provide an important tool to help combat both nefarious landlords and the lack of affordability in this city.”

"Responsible tenants should not be punished for the actions of irresponsible, negligent landlords," said **Public Advocate Letitia James.** "This legislation will incentivize landlords to quickly and safely complete repairs, and ensure that tenants are not doubly punished when they are forced to vacate. I thank Council Member

Chin for continuing to fight for this important legislation to ensure every New Yorker has access to a safe and decent home."

Earlier this month, 29 families at 85 Bowery had to evacuate from their homes after a court-ordered Department of Buildings inspection determined that the building's structural integrity posed significant life-safety hazards. By requiring landlords to fund relocation costs, this legislation would incentivize timely repairs and help provide tenants with the flexibility of staying closer to their schools, workplaces and hospitals.

This week, after discovering that repairs would not be made by a city-ordered Feb. 1 deadline, Council Member Chin wrote a letter [*attached*] urging Joseph Betesh, the landlord at 85 Bowery, to pay for hotel arrangements in Lower Manhattan for the duration of repair work. Since Betesh has not yet made the commitment to cover arrangements for all the families, Council Member Chin will continue to mount pressure on Betesh to provide immediate relief to all the tenants he displaced.

"It is only fair that landlords are held responsible for the cost of temporary housing when their tenants must leave home because of a vacate order," said **Council Member Helen Rosenthal, co-sponsor of the legislation.** "This legislation will incentivize landlords to make badly-needed repairs in a more expeditious fashion, and is minor compensation for the incredible disruption to tenants' lives when they are forced out of their homes through no fault of their own. I commend Council Member Chin for leading the way on this important legislation, and I am proud to be a co-sponsor."

"This legislation is essential for the protection of our long-term residents, particularly for renters who face vacate orders due to dangerous conditions in their buildings," said **Council Member Carlina Rivera, who also represents a part of the Lower East Side.** "But what makes this legislation so important isn't just the monetary security it provides to families who must relocate. The financial expense this bill would place on landlords facing a vacate order will provide a compelling incentive for making key repairs and maintaining adequate services, which too many New Yorkers currently do not receive."



"The plight of tenants at 85 Bowery – their lives turned upside-down by an unscrupulous landlord – is infuriating," said **Yonatan Tadele, Housing**

Organizer at the Cooper Square Committee. "Being forced out of your home by a vacate order is stressful enough; to not have the resources to stay in your community, or to even find decent temporary housing, is unacceptable. With New York's real estate industry continuing to draw record profits, Council Member Chin's legislation is a fair way to handle the expenses associated with an emergency relocation. Ultimately, landlords must be responsible for protecting their tenants' interests."

*Letting a building fall into disrepair -- endangering the lives of the residents inside -- cannot be allowed to be a successful business model for unscrupulous landlords," said **Doris Koo, Interim Executive Director at Asian Americans for Equality.** "Taking away the financial incentives for demolition by neglect will make renting in New York City a safer and more secure place for everyone. Thank you Council Member Chin for fighting for tenants and communities here today."

"Vacate order cases have shown us over and over again that when landlords neglect to provide essential repairs, it is not them but their tenants who suffer the consequences," said **Melanie Wang, Chinatown Tenant Union Organizer, CAAAV.** "In Chinatown and in all of New York City, we cannot continue to allow landlords to ignore their most fundamental responsibility, which is to provide safe and decent housing. CAAAV applauds the resilience of every tenant who has fought and organized to protect their right to a safe home in the face of landlord negligence, and we support the re-introduction of this bill in the hope that it will give our City more tools to stand with tenants in their efforts to hold landlords accountable."

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