



## THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***

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### **Groundbreaking Tenant Protection Act Becomes Law**

*Legislation creates a new layer of protection for tenants in all five boroughs*

CITY HALL – Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn, together with Council Members Daniel R. Garodnick and Melissa Mark-Viverito, joined over 300 tenants and housing advocates at a rally on the steps of City Hall to support the signing of the Tenant Protection Act. First mentioned in Quinn’s 2007 State of the City Address, Local Law No. 7 of 2008 will create a new umbrella of protection for tenants who are being harassed by their landlords.

“This bill is not just another tool in the fight to preserve affordable housing; it will allow more people to feel safe in their homes,” **said Speaker Christine C. Quinn.** “After more than a year of hard work, I am proud to say that starting today, the Tenant Protection Act is the law of the land. I want thank all of my colleagues in the Council and the many advocates who worked long and hard on this bill and the Mayor for signing it into law.”

Under the old legal framework, tenants were limited to taking their landlord to Housing Court only for violations relating to the physical condition of the apartment or failure to provide essential services. For instance, if a unit lacked hot water for a prolonged duration, a tenant could take their landlord to court and get their hot water turned back on. However, if turning off the hot water was just the latest episode in a long period of repeated violations, the only recourse was to challenge the landlord on each and every violation.

Local Law No. 7 creates a violation for harassment in and of itself, providing a new layer of protection for renters in New York City. Some of the actions that qualify as harassment under this legislation include: using force or making threats against a lawful occupant, repeated or prolonged interruptions of essential services, using frivolous court proceedings to disrupt a tenant’s life or force an eviction, removing the possessions of a lawful tenant, removing doors or damaging locks to a unit, or any other acts designed to disturb a lawful occupant’s residence. The law also prevents similar actions by third parties working on the landlord’s behalf.

Civil penalties for judicial findings of harassment range from \$1,000 to \$5,000.

The bill also responsibly balances protections for tenants with safeguards for landlords. If a landlord has three harassment allegations dismissed by judicial proceedings over a period of ten

years, a tenant will then have to receive approval from a judge to file another harassment claim. Landlords may also qualify for a reimbursement of attorney's fees if a claim is deemed to be frivolous.

“Today we are taking concrete steps to end the harassment of tenants,” **said Council Member Dan Garodnick**. “It is a growing problem in New York City, and we are finally giving tenants the tools they need to fight back. With the signing of Local Law 7, we are also protecting our stock of affordable housing from those landlords who will stop at nothing to drive tenants out and deregulate their apartments.”

“Local Law Number 7 will serve as a life jacket for the most vulnerable New York City tenants,” **said Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “For too long, our system did not provide adequate protection for tenants experiencing systematic harassment. Starting today, we will be able to assist in the preservation of existing affordable housing and ensure that tenants have new standing in housing court.”

“Allowing landlords to force tenants willy-nilly out of their apartments would set a bad precedent in the city,” **said Housing and Buildings Chair Erik Martin-Dilan**. “The Tenant Protection Act will protect defenseless residents from being arbitrarily ousted from their homes. I want to thank the Speaker, the Mayor, and the many advocates who spent countless hours getting this bill right.”

“This is a major victory for ordinary New Yorkers who insisted on better protection for their homes and families,” **said Irene Baldwin, the Executive Director of ANHD**. “The leadership and members of the City Council deserve a lot of credit for passing a law that recognizes the serious threat harassment poses to our neighborhoods; the Tenant Protection Act will provide meaningful protections to poor and working class people all around the City.”

“With this law in place, my landlord will no longer be able to harass me night and day to get me out of my home,” **said Maria Quintanilla, a tenant from Bushwick and a member of Make the Road New York**. “Because of Local Law 7, NYC tenants and I will no longer have to live with so much fear of our landlords.”

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