



**The Council of the City of New York
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Press Release

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Council Member Antonio Reynoso, The New York City Council Progressive Caucus, City Council colleagues, and the Protect Our Places Coalition call for legislative action to protect our City's non-profit organizations

New York, NY—Today, Council Member Antonio Reynoso joined with fellow NYC Council colleagues, The NYC Council Progressive Caucus, and community organizations from the Protect Our Places coalition to call for the passage of Intro 245.

Each year, hundreds of non-profit organizations are included on the tax lien sales list as a result of unpaid tax and water bills. This debt is then sold to third party collectors. However, according to state law, nonprofit, charitable, and certain other social service organizations qualify for tax exempt status. But because of opaque and complicated tax exemption policies, many nonprofits have difficulty coming into compliance, or are simply unaware that they need to register for an exemption, and are therefore included in the City's annual tax lien sale.

"We have two tax exempt corporations whose exemptions have been lost or miscalculated to amounts much more than legal. In both cases, either the low income property or the Fifth Avenue Committee have paid money to the City that was not actually owed in order to avoid the lien sale, and then paid even more money to a private attorney to correct the problems. These are funds that are being diverted from our community programs." **Michelle de la Uz, Executive Director, Fifth Avenue Committee, Inc. & Neighbors Helping Neighbors, Inc.**

"We are a mosque centric community struggling with constructing the mosque to accommodate our growing Muslim communities with Education, Community involvements and religious services. Denying property tax exemptions year after year puts the entire community at risk of losing everything. Tax Lien sale for places of worship is unfair and very unfriendly to communities" **said Kobir A Chowdhury, President, Masjid Al Aman**

"While administrators of individual not-for-profits across the city are enduring onerous struggles to keep places in community hands, the transfer of community places to for-profit investors is a systemic problem: 234 not-for-profit organizations have property heading to the summer 2018 lien sale. 596 Acres, part of the Protect Our Places Coalition, along with Council Member Reynoso and the Progressive Caucus, are committed to protecting the places that keep our neighborhoods by and for our neighbors." **said Mara Kravitz and Stephanie Alvarado, Directors of Advocacy and Partnerships, 596 Acres**

I have recently introduced Intro 245, a piece of legislation that would remove properties that are eligible for a tax exemption or are in the process of securing an exemption from the tax lien list. Additionally, this bill would require the City to better inform nonprofits on how they can stay off of the tax lien sales list in the future.

"Every day, New York City's non-profit and charitable organizations carry out the invaluable work of serving, protecting, and advocating for the New Yorkers who need it most. And they usually do it with very limited resources. It should be a priority to remove any obstacles that unfairly block these organizations from providing critical services and support to New Yorkers. Thanks to the leadership of Council Member Antonio Reynoso and members of the Protect our Places Coalition, Intro 245 will help to keep more nonprofits' doors open in the face of improperly charged debt," **said Council Member Helen Rosenthal (Manhattan, District 6).**

"Not for profits are the anchors of our communities and the tax lien sale leaves them vulnerable to disappearing into the maws for real estate speculators. We are proud to work with Council Member Reynoso and the Progressive Caucus on a strategy for protecting our communities' places," **said Paula Z. Segal, Senior Staff Attorney in the Equitable Neighborhoods Practice at the Community Development Project.**

"I'm grateful to Council Member Reynoso for introducing this common-sense legislation to protect our community charities and houses of worship from bureaucratic bungling," **said Councilman Kalman Yeger.** "While it is incredibly easy for a charity to lose its exempt status with the city's Department of Finance, it is far too difficult to reclaim the status – even if the error is the city's. This bill will protect our organizations from being forced into debt over taxes, which should have never been imposed in the first place. I urge my colleagues to join us in passing this important bill."

"It's unfortunate that so many of our city's most important community assets have been placed in such an unfavorable position. I am convinced that the passing of Intro 245 will put a stop to this absurd practice." **said Stephanie Clotaire, student at The City College of New York**

We believe that this bill offers comprehensive reform to protect these organizations from unnecessary financial burden and provides them with the information needed to avoid ending up on the tax lien sales list in the first place. It is time that we pass this bill to protect our non-profits and the vital role that they play in our communities.

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