

In Effort to Combat Homeless Crisis, CM Levine, Gibson, Advocacy Groups, Champion Right to Counsel for Low-Income Tenants in Housing Court

Former NYS Chief Judge Lippman, NYC Comptroller Stringer, NYC Public Advocate James, and dozens of other elected officials and advocacy groups will be in attendance to show their support for the bill, which has also been endorsed in today's editorial by the New York Times

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

[Contact: _____]

WHEN : Monday, September 26, 2016 at 10am

WHERE: City Hall Steps. City Hall Chambers

WHO: Council Members Mark Levine and Vanessa Gibson, NYC Public Advocate Letitia James, NYC Comptroller Scott Stringer, former Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, Manhattan BP Gale Brewer, Bronx BP Ruben Diaz Jr., Brooklyn BP Eric Adams, several other city and state elected officials, legal services providers, tenant advocacy groups, faith leaders, unions, and the NYC Bar Association.

New York, NY - There will be a press conference and public hearing on Int. 214A-2014, a local law that will provide legal representation for low-income tenants who are subject to eviction, ejection or foreclosure proceedings. This bill is sponsored by Council Members Levine and Gibson, and signed by 40 additional City Council Members.

Unlike in criminal court, there is no right to counsel in housing court. Tenants without resources must fend for themselves. Today, only about 20% of those facing eviction are represented by an attorney-- compared to nearly 100% of landlords. The resulting unlevel playing field has been disastrous for tenants. In 2015 alone, nearly 22,000 New York City families were evicted. This wave of evictions is driving our homeless and affordable housing crisis. The IBO reports that eviction is the single most common reason that families in New York City end up in shelters, and over the past decade, the share of families citing eviction as the cause for their homelessness has increased dramatically. Evictions are also leading to a loss of affordable housing, as over half of the units vacated are rent stabilized, and many of those apartments then go market rate. The impact of having an attorney is invaluable. Controlled studies show that having legal representation during housing court proceedings reduces the chances of eviction by 77%, and in some cases landlords simply drop their cases after learning the tenant has an attorney. Since the Mayor and the City Council have dramatically increased funding for anti-eviction legal services over the past two years, from \$6 million in FY14 to over \$60M in FY17, evictions in 2015 dropped 18.1% from the previous year. In addition to former NYS Chief Judge Jonathan Lipmann, a broad coalition of leaders and organizations have coalesced around the movement to expand representation in housing court. Supporters include not just nearly every major tenants rights and affordable housing group in the city, but also SEIU 1199, DC37 and advocacy groups as diverse as LiveOn NY, Coalition for the Homeless, the National Center for Access to Justice, and the National Coalition for a Civil Right to Counsel.

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