RTCNYC Tool 8.3b

Faith Leaders for the NYC Right to Counsel

December 13, 2016

Honorable Bill de Blasio

Mayor of City of New York

City Hall

New York, NY 10007

Honorable Melissa Mark-Viverito

Speaker of the City Council

City Hall

New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio and Speaker Mark-Viverito:

As Faith Leaders from many faith traditions from throughout New York City, we write to you to express our support for your efforts to address our city’s crisis of homelessness and our critical shortage of affordable housing **and to urge you to exercise your leadership in the 2016 legislative session in making New York City the first city in the country to guarantee the right to legal counsel in housing court for tenants up to 200% of the poverty line**. With our homeless population at an all-time high, and the displacement pressures on New York’s households, caused by rampant real estate development, increasing daily**, it is unacceptable that those who have helped make our city the great and diverse place that we love are forced out of their homes solely because they are unable to defend themselves in housing court.**

At the very heart of each of our faith traditions is the call to stand with those most in need. It is for this reason that faith leaders have endorsed the efforts to help prevent unwarranted rent increases, provide subsidies for homeless families departing the shelters, produce supportive housing for most vulnerable, and to provide over $50 million for legal assistance in housing court which has resulted in a nearly 25% reduction in evictions. But despite these efforts, the number of homeless New Yorkers has continued to rise. As the City balances the need to produce more housing against the need to protect its residents from displacement, **we believe that the commitment of the Mayor’s office and the City Council to ensure that its neighborhoods are preserved and existing residents are fully protected from preventable and illegal evictions is crucial to the life and health of the city we all love.**

As you know, many New Yorkers have expressed serious concern that the efforts to build and preserve 200,000 units of housing, and the rezoning and development that the plan calls for, will result in the displacement of many current New York City residents. **A strong commitment from the Mayor and City Council to enact Intro 214-A THIS YEAR along with other anti-displacement initiatives will send a powerful message to members of our congregations** **and the general public that this** **development will be balanced with a comprehensive and historic commitment to ensure that** **this new housing will not be developed at the expense of New York’s low income and working class residents** - and will help to affirm the public’s faith that New York City is truly committed to help all New Yorkers to live full and decent lives. **It’s time to make history!** We look to both of you for your continued strong leadership on this issue.

In Faith,

Faith Leaders for the NYC Right to Counsel

Reverend Kenneth Alston, Jr. Elpida Community Church, Baptist

Rabbi Renni S. Altman, Associate Dean, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, Rabbinical Program

Reverend Elyse Ambrose, Associate Pastor, The Church of the Village

Reverend Gilder Anderson, Thessalonia Worship Center, Bronx, NY

Reverend Anne Auchincloss, Deacon, The Episcopal Church of the Epiphany, Manhattan

Reverend John Backe, Pastor, Christ Lutheran Church, Staten Island

Reverend Reginald Bachus, Associate Pastor, Abyssinian Baptist Church

Kirk Barrell, President, Emmaus House-Harlem

Reverend Dr. Stephen Bauman, Senior Minister, Christ Church United Methodist

Chris Berry, Social Justice Committee Member, The Riverside Church

Reverend Elijah Bennett, New Mount Carmel Baptist Church

Maya Bhardwaj, Economic Justice Organizer, Faith In New York

Raj Bhushan, Past President, Sathya Sai Baba Center of Manhattan

Reverend Dr. Robert L. Brashear, Chair, Interfaith Assembly, Pastor, West Park Presbyterian Church, Manhattan

Reverend Yolanda Brown, Senior Pastor, Center of Destiny Christian Fellowship

Reverend Dr. Fred Burrell, Friendship Baptist Church, Bronx, NY

Reverend Dr. Joe Albert Bush, Pastor, Walker Memorial Baptist Church

Reverend Peter Cook, Executive Director, New York State Council of Churches

Bishop James I Clark, Jr, Co-Chair, Mayor’s Clergy Advisory Commission

Reverend Beatrice M. Cowans, East Mount Olive Baptist Church

Reverend Dr. Charles A. Curtis, Pastor, Mount Olivet Baptist Church, NYC

Sister Carol De Angelo, Director, Sisters of Charity of New York, Peace and Justice

Reverend Karl A. Delk, President, Brooklyn Baptist Evangelical Union, Inc.

Reverend Keith Dennis, St. Luke Baptist Church, NYC

Swamini Sri Devi, President, Lalitamba Mandiram Ashram, Manhattan

Reverend James Duckett, Fort Motte Baptist Church

Mary Dugan, co-chair, Peace and Justice Taskforce All Souls Unitarian Church

Reverend Alistair Drummond, Pastor, West End Presbyterian Church, Manhattan

Reverend Dr. James Fairbanks, Editor, Saving Justice, Bronx

Reverend Ronnie Faison, Travelers Rest Baptist Church

Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Director, New York City Labor Religion Coalition

Reverend Ronald Fields, Member, Committee for Witness to Society and the World, Presbytery of New York City

Reverend John Flack, Pastor, Our Saviors Atonement

Reverend Paul B. Feuerstein, President/CEO, Barrier Free Living

Reverend Robert Foltz-Morrison, Executive Presbyter, Presbytery of New York City

Marc Greenberg, Executive Director, Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing

Reverend Dr. Gwen Hadley Hall, Associate Pastor, Christ Temple Baptist Church

Reverend Ouida W. Harding, East Mount Olive Baptist Church

Reverend Arthur W. Harris, Pastor, Rescue Baptist Church, NYC

Reverend Peter Goodwin Heltzel, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Theology, Director, Micah Institute, New York Theological Seminary

Reverend Elijah Henry, New Zion Baptist Church

Adriane Hill, Director of Vocational Discernment, New York Theological Seminary

Reverend Isaiah Holland, Good News Baptist Church

Reverend Robert Jones, Jr., Second St. John Baptist Church

Reverend Jes Kast-Keat, Associate Minister, West End Collegiate Church, Manhattan

Very Reverend Patrick J. Keating, CEO, Catholic Migration Services

Reverend Wendy Kelly-Carter, Assistant Minister, Mount Olivet Baptist Church

Dr. Anne Klaeysen, Leader, New York Society for Ethical Culture

Reverend Martha Korienek, Associate Rector, Grace Church in New York

Reverend Clyde Kuemmerle, Executive Director, Ecclesia New York

Reverend Shepherd Lee, Pastor, Baptist Temple Church, NYC

Rabbi Ellen Lippmann, [Kolot Chayeinu / Voices of Our Lives](http://www.kolotchayeinu.org/)

Rabbi Marc Margolius, West End Synagogue, Manhattan

Carol Mcloughlin, LCSW, Chair Person, Social Justice Committee, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Queens

Reverend John Merz, Episcopal Church of the Ascension, Brooklyn

Reverend Frank Morales, Pastor, All Souls Episcopal Church

Reverend James Morrison, President, Baptist Ministers' conference of Greater New York and Vicinity

Reverend Patricia Moore, Assistant Minister, Mount Olivet Baptist Church

Reverend Eric D Mull, St John's Lutheran church by the Sea, Long Beach

Reverend Daiken Nelson, Founder and Guiding Teacher, Pamsula Zen Center

Roshi Enkyo O’Hara, Abbot, Village Zendo

Reverend James Osei-Kofi, Associate Pastor, Bethesda Healing Center, Brooklyn

Reverend Dr. Martha Overall, Priest, St. Ann’s Church of Morrisania

Rabbi Shuli Passow, Director of Community Engagement, Congregation B’nai Jeshurun

Rosemarie Pace, Director, Pax Christi Metro New York

George Plagianos, Co-Director, AXIOS Eastern Orthodox LGBT Christians

Dr. Evelyn J. Perkins, Convent Avenue Baptist Church, Harlem, NY

Reverend Dr. Raymond Rivera, President, Latino Pastoral Action Center, Bronx

Reverend John Scott, St. John’s Baptist Church

Tariq Shahid, Malcolm Shabazz Mosque

Bishop Andrew St. John, Rector, Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration, Manhattan

Reverend Scott Stearman, Ph.D., Pastor, Metro Baptist Church, Manhattan

Dr. Diane Steinman, Director, NYS Interfaith Network for Immigration Reform

Reverend S. Shinryu Thomson, Teacher, Village Zendo

Reverend Dr. Betty Spencer, Pastor, Lowly Nazarene Baptist Church

Reverend Isaac Stucks, Jehovah Jireh Baptist Church

Hemant Wadhwani, Hindu American Seva Charities

Reverend Dr. William L. Watkins, Jr., Abyssinian Baptist Church, NYC

Rabbi Simkha Y. Weintraub, LCSW

Reverend Wells, Manhattan Baptist Church

Moshe Wiener, Executive Director, Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island

Reverend Denis K. Williams, Christian Universal Temple of Corona

Reverend Wayland Williams, Jr., Pastor, LaGree Baptist Church

Reverend Dr. Yvette Wilson-Barnes, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Union Theological Seminary

Reverend Helen Wingate, Greater Faith Baptist Church, Bronx, NY

Reverend Gloria Peters Wynn, Pastor, New Zion Pilgrim Baptist Church

Brother Anthony Zuba, Parochial Staff, Parish of Holy Cross – Saint John the Baptist

*87 --- Organizational affiliations are listed for identification purposes only ---*

For info about the Faith Leader Sign-on Campaign, contact Interfaith Assembly, Marc Greenberg, ED,

[Marc@iahh.org](mailto:Marc@iahh.org), 917-913-0098/212-316-3171, iahh.org