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**MAYOR DE BLASIO CALLS FOR STRONGER RENT LAWS**

*De Blasio: End vacancy decontrol, eliminate vacancy bonus, make improvement rent increases temporary instead of permanent*

*Affordable housing for more than two million New Yorkers at stake as rent laws come up for renewal on June 15*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio today called for stronger rent laws that will stem the loss of affordable apartments to deregulation. More than 35,000 affordable apartments have left rent regulation since it was last extended in 2011, putting enormous pressure on working families and pushing longtime tenants out of fast-gentrifying neighborhoods. Mayor de Blasio called for a slate of reforms to protect rent-stabilized apartments, including ending vacancy decontrol, eliminating the vacancy bonus and making improvement surcharges temporary.

“This is a vital priority for New York City. Our working families and our neighborhoods are depending on stronger rent laws. Rent is the number one expense for New Yorkers. Unless we change the status quo, tens of thousands of hardworking families will be pushed out of their homes. This has to be a city for everyone. It cannot just be a city of luxury apartments out of everyday New Yorkers’ reach,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“Preserving and strengthening New York’s rent laws is one of the Assembly Majority’s top priorities this year. We need to keep rents affordable and make sure that people are able to remain in their homes free of harassment so that our neighborhoods can grow and thrive. These are the same principles that Mayor de Blasio is fighting for and I am pleased to work with him in our effort to make New York’s rent laws as strong as possible,” said **Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie**.

New York City’s rent-stabilized apartments provide affordable homes for more than 1.4 million low-income tenants, and more than 700,000 moderate- and middle-income New Yorkers. Together, they make up the bedrock of New York City’s diverse neighborhoods. But this vital housing reservoir is fast drying up, as bad actors force tenants from their homes and a hot real estate market puts more and more pressure on rents. If nothing is done to strengthen rent laws before they expire on June 15, tens of thousands more apartments will be converted to market rents in the years ahead and entire neighborhoods could be rendered unaffordable.

The City’s proposed rent regulation reforms work together as a two-pronged strategy that stems the loss of units through the elimination of Vacancy Decontrol, and helps to keep the rents of those units affordable by ending the Vacancy Allowance and making the Individual Apartment Improvement and Major Capital Improvement increases temporary and not a permanent addition to tenants’ rent.

**Reforms to Protect Rent-Stabilized Housing:**

- **End High-Rent Vacancy Decontrol:** The City is calling for the elimination of vacancy decontrol. Currently, a vacant apartment with a rent of \$2,500 per month may be deregulated.
- **End the Vacancy Allowance:** The City is calling for eliminating the 20 percent increase in monthly rent when tenants vacate an apartment. This allowance has created strong incentives for bad actors to pressure tenants out of their homes in the hopes of faster-rising rents.
- **Make Individual Apartment Improvement (IAI) and Major Capital Improvement (MCI) Increases Temporary:** The City is calling for the current permanent rent increases for building-wide or individual apartments to be made temporary. Costs from increased services or improvements to individual apartments would be spread over 10 years, while building-wide or system improvements could be spread over 7 years. Long-term rent would be unaffected, and would reset after the fixed period.

The de Blasio administration is also ramping up protections for rent stabilized tenants, including free legal representation for tenants in up to 15 neighborhoods and is launching a new Tenant Harassment Prevention Task Force with State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman to combat illegal practices that push tenants out of their apartments.

“Rent regulation is one of the City’s most important affordable housing programs and one of the best tools we have for fighting income inequality. It’s crucial that we stand with tenants by strengthening rent laws, and that state lawmakers do their part to stop the loss of affordable housing. We must all work together to protect working families from tenant harassment and strengthen the middle class,” said **Public Advocate Letitia James**.

“Ensuring adequate affordable housing is available to all New Yorkers is made up of a tripod of actions: building more affordable housing, holding bad landlords accountable and reforming policies that phase out affordable housing. Today’s announcement is a key step towards ensuring that the latter is accomplished and that our existing affordable housing stock is protected for years to come,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

“Rent stabilization is our city’s single most effective affordable housing program, but flaws like vacancy decontrol and the broken Major Capital Improvement system mean our city is hemorrhaging affordable apartments we can’t replace,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “After two decades without, New York City’s tenants finally have a mayor willing to stand up for these key reforms to stem the loss of affordable housing.”

“I’m extremely grateful to Mayor de Blasio for making it a priority to strengthen New York City’s rent laws before they expire this legislative session. I have 50,000 rent regulated apartments in my district and it’s crucial that they’re preserved as affordable housing for the next generation of New Yorkers,” said **State Senator Brad Hoylman**.

“I applaud Mayor de Blasio’s call for crucial changes to rent regulations. After 20 years of an exploding crisis of affordability, we finally have a mayor who will fight for people’s homes, one who understands the issues and acknowledges that there is no future for our city without preserving the rapidly shrinking base of affordable housing. Maybe this year we can see rent regulation reform driven by policy, not politics,” said **State Senator Liz Krueger**.

“Mayor de Blasio’s call to significantly strengthen rent law is a huge deal,” said **State Senator Daniel Squadron**. “For years, Senate Republicans have opposed our efforts to fix rent regulation laws, as apartments continue to be destabilized. For many members of the majority, the main interest in rent laws is financial – but

this year, as the mayor's call makes clear, the interests of communities and individuals must come before those of campaign contributors. I look forward to pushing with Mayor de Blasio to repeal deregulation, strengthen rent laws that protect tenants, and keep New York affordable."

"I applaud Mayor de Blasio's effort to combat the skyrocketing housing market by eliminating vacancy Decontrol and Vacancy bonus and making Major Capital Improvements increase in rent temporary," said **Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte**. "These well-meaning tools served only to push the price of affordable housing beyond the reach of most New Yorkers. Now is the time for bold policies which can address the crisis that we find ourselves in and I believe that the Mayor is proposing such."

"As a member of the New York State Assembly Housing Committee and Chair of the Subcommittee on Regulated Mortgage Lenders, I am fully aware of the fight for affordable housing in the city of New York. I applaud the Mayor's stance on ending vacancy decontrol which has been dwindling our stock of rent regulated apartments in New York and robbing working class families of truly affordable homes. These measures supported by Mayor de Blasio will strengthen rent laws and preserve the number of the affordable apartments in New York City," said **Assembly Member Walter Mosley**. "Furthermore, I take pride that Mayor de Blasio is supporting my bill to reform Individual Apartment Improvements rent adjustments which are loosely regulated and used repeatedly as a tool by unscrupulous landlords to raise rents."

"As a proud co-sponsor of A.1865, which would repeal vacancy deregulation and save thousands of units of affordable housing across New York City, I applaud Mayor de Blasio for his efforts to protect our city's hard-working tenants. Many of my colleagues and I, in the People's House, fully support the mayor's call for the end of vacancy decontrol. Landlords should not be entitled to perpetually collect payments from tenants for improvements, that have been, many times over, fully paid for. The mayor is right: improvement surcharges should be temporary and never permanent. These few changes to New York's rent laws will go a long way in keeping rents affordable, protecting not only tenants' rights, but also the tenants' human rights," said **Assembly Member N. Nick Perry**.

"Vacancy decontrol has created an unstable situation that has contributed to the exponentially increasing loss of affordable housing stock and the rapid displacement of families in New York City," said **Assembly Member Victor Pichardo**. "I applaud Mayor de Blasio for taking a strong stance by supporting my neighbors and tenants all over this state."

"The city stands at a defining time, and we must take bold and decisive action to preserve affordable housing lest the City become a place for the wealthy only, and increasingly, the super wealthy," said **Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal**. "As the prime sponsor of bill A.1865-A, which would repeal vacancy deregulation, we must act now to put an end to a practice that essentially rewards landlords who harass and neglect their rent-regulated tenants. In addition, we must reform the MCI process, which provides landlords with a windfall in the form of a permanent rent increase that remains in place long after the capital work has been paid off. This year must be the year of the tenant, and it is imperative that we renew and strengthen the rent laws, which keep housing affordable for millions of New Yorkers. I welcome Mayor de Blasio's strong support in the upcoming struggle for our city's very soul."

"Mayor de Blasio has once again reaffirmed his commitment to renters in New York. As a Member of the Assembly, it is important to have as much support as possible as we will soon be debating these important issues. Ensuring that New Yorkers have access to an affordable place to live is a priority for me during this year's legislative session and it is important to have the Mayor as an ally in this fight," said **Assembly Member Luis R. Sepulveda**.

"I applaud Mayor de Blasio's call for rent regulation reform. Skyrocketing rents as a consequence of vacancy de-control, vacancy bonuses, and capital improvements have caused terrible hardship. I don't want to see more seniors and low-income residents squeezed out of their homes. I don't want to see more young people unable to

afford to live in the very neighborhoods in which they grew up. We need real rent reform and I look forward to working to that end,” said **Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon**.

“We applaud the Mayor for his call to strengthen the rent laws and end failed statewide policies, like vacancy decontrol and the vacancy allowance, that put so many affordable apartments in the outer boroughs in jeopardy. The reforms proposed by the Mayor are a major priority for working class tenants in neighborhoods all over New York City who will otherwise be at risk of losing their place in our city,” said **Javier H. Valdés, co-Executive Director of Make the Road New York**.

“Low-income New Yorkers rely on rent regulation to keep their homes affordable and to prevent eviction. Sadly, because of loopholes in the laws, landlords are able to push out long term tenants and destabilize neighborhoods. Mayor de Blasio has shown real leadership in advocating for major reforms which will protect rent regulated tenants and stop displacement,” said **Judith Goldiner, Attorney in Charge, Civil Law Reform Unit, The Legal Aid Society**.

“In New York, there are one million homes that are rent regulated, making it easier for working families and seniors to pay rent,” said **Jonathan Westin, Executive Director of New York Communities for Change**. “Saving these homes and keeping them affordable is a civil rights Issue! More than 60 percent of NY families in rent-stabilized apartments are Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic or Asian. We stand with Mayor de Blasio on his call for stronger rent laws.”

“Bill de Blasio is the first mayor in the forty-five years I have been doing this work who has gone to bat for stronger rent laws in Albany. Every renting family in the city, as well as the suburban counties, is grateful to him. The mayor’s support can be a game changer in the six weeks remaining before the rent laws are renewed,” said **Michael McKee, Treasurer, Tenants Political Action Committee**.

“Affordable housing is one of the best ways to address the out-of-control income inequality in our city and provide greater security for working New Yorkers. The members of 1199SEIU passionately support the strengthening of rent regulations to ensure that everyone – including working families, seniors, students, immigrants and creatives – can afford to live here and build a better future. Rent regulations will not only protect tenants, but will also protect the spirit and vibrant diversity of our great city,” said **Kevin Finnegan, Political Director of 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East**.

“Affordable housing is essential to the health and welfare of our communities. It is a cornerstone of public health. Stronger rent laws that protect affordability, such as those proposed by Mayor de Blasio, serve to maintain New York City’s vibrance and vitality,” said **Jill Furillo, Executive Director of the New York State Nurses Association**.

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