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**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND TASKFORCE ON RACIAL INCLUSION AND EQUITY
ANNOUNCE CITYWIDE LANDLORD-TENANT MEDIATION PROJECT FOR
HOUSING SECURITY**

NEW YORK—Today Mayor Bill de Blasio announced a new program to provide housing security to tenants across the City who may be facing hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting immediately, the Citywide Landlord-Tenant Mediation Project will serve hundreds of New Yorkers each month by addressing rent-related issues in a mediation setting, outside of the housing court system, with a focus on hardest hit communities.

"As the City continues to beat back COVID-19, we must use every tool at our disposal to keep tenants safely in their homes, especially in communities that were already burdened by the affordable housing crisis," said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. "This project will ensure that New Yorkers aren't forced from their home during this unprecedented health and economic crisis."

"The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare institutional and economic inequities that communities of color experience every day, which the City is committed to addressing," said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. "This new program will break down barriers to affordable, stable housing for Black and Brown New Yorkers and help their neighborhoods come back stronger after this crisis."

Mediation puts decision-making power in the hands of the parties involved, which results in practical solutions for both landlords and tenants. Through this project, non-profit Community Dispute Resolution Centers (CDRCs) will assist tenants and small landlords in finding solutions to rental issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal is to resolve cases before they reach litigation and avoid the long-term effects of an eviction proceeding which can lead to displacement for vulnerable tenants and limit future housing options. The Mediation Project will handle cases in a setting where both parties feel safe, and priority will be given to tenants and small landlords who do not have legal representation.

The Racial Inclusion & Equity Taskforce brings an equity-based approach to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. In a survey conducted among community partners in the hardest-hit neighborhoods, nearly all respondents to the Community Voices Survey cited rent burden as a primary issue facing their communities, and many articulated its systemic impacts. Housing solutions like the Mediation Project allow the City to serve as a model for other cities in creating a direct line to a holistic and fair recovery for Black and Brown communities.

The City-Wide Landlord-Tenant Mediation Project will be managed by CDRCs in coordination with Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants (MOPT), and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit (PEU), with support from the

Human Resource Administration's Office of Civil Justice (OCJ). Eligible tenants will be referred to CDRCs in each borough, and each CDRC will manage case intake, provide mediation sessions, and monitor case follow up for tenants.

"Secure housing has never been more crucial to our health and well-being than now, during this pandemic," said **J. Phillip Thompson, Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives and co-chair of the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity**. "For families in hardest-hit communities struggling to afford rent each month, this new mediation tool will be invaluable in helping them resolve issues with their landlords without the threat of eviction."

"There is little more fundamental to our everyday lives than our homes, and the disparate economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic means that many renters find themselves struggling," said **Dr. Raul Perea-Henze, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services and co-chair of the Taskforce on Racial Inclusion and Equity**. "The Mediation Program allows us to address the concrete reality of landlord/tenant issues in a way that solves problems, rather than creating new ones."

"Access to stable and affordable housing is vital to the long-term recovery of communities most impacted by COVID-19," said **Sideya Sherman, Taskforce Executive Director and NYCHA Executive Vice President for Community Engagement & Partnerships**. "The Landlord-Tenant Mediation Project offers a safe forum for tenants and landlords to work together towards solutions that avoid eviction and help prevent displacement."

"We are fighting to keep a roof over the heads of all New Yorkers. Mediation is a common sense solution that will help prevent tenants from becoming homeless and help small landlord maintain safe, clean buildings," said **Deputy Mayor for Housing and Economic Development Vicki Been**.

"For thousands of New Yorkers hit hard by the crisis, the free Citywide Landlord-Tenant Mediation Project will be a valuable resource in solving issues with their landlords without facing the trauma of the eviction process," said **Louise Carroll, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development and chair of the Housing Subcommittee for the Racial Inclusion & Equity Taskforce**. "This project recognizes that continuing to do business as usual is not enough to address the historic institutional and economic inequities that place our communities of color at greater housing insecurity in this pandemic. I thank Mayor de Blasio, First Lady Chirlane McCray, and members of the Racial Inclusion and Equity Taskforce for their leadership on this issue."

The Landlord-Tenant Mediation Project will help ease the housing disparities laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic," said **Assembly Member Rodneyse Bichotte**. "My district, which includes Flatbush, Brooklyn, had the highest rate of death resulting from COVID-19 of any neighborhood in the city. The public health crisis caused by the Coronavirus pandemic has filtered down into our economy, housing and education systems. As a result, there is a great need for programs like this, which Mayor de Blasio and First Lady McCray have introduced to help communities like mine recover from the pandemic. No one deserves to be evicted from their home because of income lost as a result of COVID-19."

“COVID-19 demonstrated the stark differences in housing equity across New York City. In the City Council, I have worked to make housing more affordable, and in the wake of this pandemic, the ability to ensure tenants can stay in their homes despite fiscal hardship. I am glad the Mayor is taking action to improve relationships between tenants and landlords,” said **Council Member Keith Powers**.

“New York Peace Institute, the State-designated CDRC for Manhattan and Brooklyn, is thrilled to be partnering with the other local CDRCs and the City of New York on the Landlord-Tenant Mediation Project,” said **Jennifer Magida, Chief Executive Officer of the New York Peace Institute**. “For over 40 years, CDRCs have helped New Yorkers expedite the resolution of legal matters, avoid the significant cost of litigation, and move past their disputes. The many crises that have arisen over the last few months have amplified the value of dispute resolution and shed light on the need for new policies and programs that provide more conflict resolution mechanisms outside of the court system. We hope this project will lead to other similar initiatives to empower New Yorkers and address systemic inequity in the years to come.”

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