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Nilsa Orama
Chair

Angel D. Mescain
District Manager

Resolution

Date: June 23, 2020
Committee: Housing Committee
Vote: In Favor: 23; Opposed: 0; Abstentions: 9; Present not Voting: 0
Re: **Cancellation of Rent Payments, Mortgage Payments, and Utility Payments
in New York During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

WHEREAS Manhattan Community Board 11 (hereinafter “CB11”), whose primary mission is to advise elected officials and government agencies on matters affecting the social welfare of the district encompassing East Harlem, Randall’s Island, and Ward’s Island, considers affordable housing to be among the three most pressing issues affecting residents of Manhattan Community District 11;¹

WHEREAS the supply of housing that is truly affordable for the vast majority of East Harlem residents is extremely limited and incredibly far from meeting the demand;²

WHEREAS even before the COVID-19 public health crisis struck, approximately half of New York City tenants were rent-burdened, meaning over 30% of their income went toward rent;³

WHEREAS homelessness in New York City has reached its highest levels since the Great Depression, with over 60,000 individuals in New York City homeless shelters and thousands more who are street homeless;⁴

WHEREAS the primary cause of homelessness is lack of affordable housing;⁵

¹ http://www.cb11m.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/FY2020_Statement_MN11.pdf

² *Id.*

³ <https://cbcny.org/research/think-your-rent-high>; <https://www.hmgdjlw.com/blog/2019/12/over-50-percent-of-nyc-tenants-use-over-half-their-income-for-rent/>; <https://furmancenter.org/thestoop/entry/nyc-housing-insecurity-by-the-numbers>

⁴ <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/basic-facts-about-homelessness-new-york-city/>

⁵ *Id.*

WHEREAS CB11 recognizes that the COVID-19 public health crisis highlights and exacerbates preexisting racial and economic inequities, disproportionately affecting lower-income communities of color, in terms of infection rates, death rates, and financial hardship;⁶

WHEREAS the consequences of the COVID-19 public health crisis include high levels of unemployment, also unseen since the Great Depression, leading to increased housing instability;⁷

WHEREAS 78% of CB11's housing stock is rent-regulated and/or subsidized, and the vast majority of CB11 residents live in moderate-, low-, and very low-income households;⁸

WHEREAS the New York State eviction moratorium commenced on March 15, 2020 was a vital first step in protecting tenants in East Harlem and across the state during the pandemic;⁹

WHEREAS the New York State eviction moratorium ended on June 20, 2020;¹⁰

WHEREAS the New York State eviction moratorium has been extended through August 20, 2020 only for those tenants that can demonstrate eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits or financial hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic;¹¹

WHEREAS once the eviction moratorium is lifted, tenants and homeowners are at risk of homelessness and the deprivation of essential services due to their inability to pay their rent, their mortgage, or their utility bills;

WHEREAS there are currently a number of legislative proposals in Albany that seek to protect tenants and small homeowners in some fashion;¹²

⁶ <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/coronavirus-exposing-our-racial-divides/609526/>; [Systemic racism and coronavirus are killing people of color. Protesting isn't enough.](#);

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/08/april-2020-jobs-report/>; [COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups](#)

⁷ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/08/april-2020-jobs-report/>; <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/11/unemployment-rose-higher-in-three-months-of-covid-19-than-it-did-in-two-years-of-the-great-recession/>

⁸ http://www.cb11m.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/FY2020_Statement_MN11.pdf

⁹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/31/nyregion/coronavirus-landlords-eviction-tenants.html>

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ [Amid Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, Governor Cuomo Announces Moratorium on COVID-Related Evictions Will Be Extended Until August 20th](#)

¹² [Rent strike begins, but rent or mortgage relief remains uncertain](#);
<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2019/s8192/amendment/b>;
https://nyassembly.gov/leg/?default_fld=%0D%0A&leg_video=&bn=A10290&term=2019&Summary=Y&Memo=Y&Text=Y; [NY pols move to extend eviction moratorium amid pandemic](#)

WHEREAS those proposals, while marginally beneficial for tenants and small homeowners, fail to provide true relief;

WHEREAS there is growing recognition both in New York and nationally among prominent politicians and policy makers that any policy short of forgiveness of rent payments, utility bills, and mortgage payments for small homeowners, small landlords, and non-profit landlords, will miss the mark in addressing the needs of middle- and low-income households;¹³

WHEREAS historically federal and state governments have readily provided tax relief and bailouts to large corporate actors;¹⁴

WHEREAS it is imperative that our elected officials imminently enact legislation or take other actions to allocate the burden to those most able to bear it;

WHEREAS any such legislation or action should not force beneficiaries to navigate a complex bureaucratic process to attain relief; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that CB11 calls on Governor Cuomo, via executive order, and the New York State Legislature, via legislation, to:

1. Cancel all rent payments that have become due since March 15, 2020 and for 90 days after the state of emergency ends;
2. Cancel all mortgage payments for small homeowners, small landlords, and non-profit landlords that have become due since March 15, 2020 and for 90 days after the state of emergency ends;
3. Provide full and automatic forgiveness of all utilities payments for the duration of the public health crisis;
4. Freeze all rent levels for a period of two years since declaration of the state of emergency; and
5. Provide the right to a lease renewal to all tenants during the public health crisis and for 90 days after the state of emergency ends.

¹³ [Rep. Ilhan Omar Introduces Bill to Cancel All Rent and Mortgage Payments During the COVID-19 Pandemic; Biden Proposal: Cancel Rent and Mortgage Payments; https://www.cnbc.com/2020/06/01/why-activists-are-pushing-for-rent-forgiveness-during-the-pandemic.html](#)

¹⁴ [These 91 Fortune 500 companies didn't pay federal taxes in 2018; https://projects.propublica.org/bailout/list](#)

Sincerely,



Nilsa Orama
Chair

cc: Hon. Governor Andrew Cuomo (via email)
Hon. Jose M. Serrano, New York State Senate (via email)
Hon. Brian Benjamin, New York State Senate (via email)
Hon. Robert Rodriguez, New York State Assembly (via email)
Hon. Inez Dickens, New York State Assembly (via email)
Hon. Al Taylor, New York State Assembly (via email)
Hon. Carmen De La Rosa, New York State Assembly (via email)
Hon. Attorney General Letitia James (via email)
Hon. Bill Perkins, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Diana Ayala, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Keith Powers, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Ben Kallos, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President (via email)
Hon. Adriano Espaillat, U.S House of Representatives (via email)
Hon. Carolyn B. Maloney US House of Representatives (via email)
Hon. Jumaane Williams, New York City Public Advocate (via email)
Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, New York City Council (via email)
Hon. Scott Stringer, New York City Comptroller (via email)
Jeremiah Schlotman, Community Board 11
Denilyn Arciaga, Community Board 11

