



July 21, 2020

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kirsten Gillibrand  
478 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

On behalf of the underlined signatories, which include leading housing and community organizations in New York State, we write to you in support of federal assistance for homeowners. We specifically urge you to include a Homeowner Assistance Fund, as well as key housing relief measures contained in S. 3620, S. 4098, and H.R. 7301, in any upcoming coronavirus relief legislation.

As you know, New York homeowners are in dire need of assistance. Before the pandemic hit, New York homeowners were already among the most housing-cost burdened in the U.S. Now, catastrophic COVID-related job and income loss threatens another foreclosure crisis that could eclipse the Great Recession. Combined with record homeless rates in New York City — primarily caused by a lack of affordable housing — a foreclosure crisis could have devastating implications for public health and safety.

We are already seeing alarming numbers of homeowners in jeopardy. More than 11% of New York borrowers are non-current on their mortgage, representing a 7% increase from April to May, and a 121% increase from last year. The impact from the coronavirus has pushed our state's delinquency rate to the third highest in the nation. Black and Latinx homeowners are particularly at-risk: already, 31% of Black homeowners in the state report being unable to make their May mortgage payments, compared to only 14% of White borrowers. Such a disparity threatens to expand our troubling racial wealth gap at a time when the imperative of racial justice is a priority for all of us.

With CARES Act unemployment insurance set to end this month, and the patchwork of State and Federal foreclosure moratoriums and forbearances expiring over the next nine months, a wave of foreclosures has been held at bay but not averted. Action is required to prepare for the immense increases in homeowner distress that we anticipate.

If enacted, the Homeowner Assistance Fund would provide New York state's homeowners with desperately needed foreclosure prevention assistance in light of the pandemic's economic fallout. Direct homeowner aid, especially in the form of mortgage assistance payments, is necessary to



avoid the loss of Black and Latinx homes and wealth. The need for housing counseling is equally apparent: there is extensive empirical evidence that counseling, even over the phone, effectively decreases the probability of default.

If New York homeowners desperately need assistance while federal funding is in full force, we are afraid to imagine our neighbors' needs after these programs expire. Because of this, we urge you to champion funding for homeowners in the Senate's upcoming pandemic assistance legislation. Without fully funded support programs, our public health and unemployment crises will trigger an unfathomable homeownership crisis.

We also strongly urge you to support amendments to the CARES Act (Sec. 4024 of H.R. 7301, Protecting Homeowners and Renters from Evictions and Foreclosures). It is vital to expand CARES Act protections to all homeowners regardless of who owns their mortgage, extend the foreclosure and eviction moratoria, and improve the post-forbearance options available to homeowners.

The following undersigned organizations support the views expressed in this letter:

Albany County Rural Housing Alliance, Inc.  
Allegany County Community Opportunities and Rural Development, Inc. (ACCORD)  
American Debt Resources, Inc.  
Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD)  
Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation  
Belmont Housing Resources for WNY, Inc.  
Benchmark Title Agency LLC  
Bridge Street Development Corporation  
Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A  
Broome County Habitat For Humanity  
Buffalo Urban League  
CAMBA Legal Services, Inc.  
Cayuga County Habitat for Humanity  
Center for NYC Neighborhoods  
Central Islip Civic Council, Inc.  
Chautauqua Area Habitat for Humanity  
Chautauqua Opportunities Inc.  
Chhaya CDC  
City Bar Justice Center



Civic Association of Cypress Hills  
Columbia County Habitat for Humanity  
Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation  
DC 37 Municipal Employees Legal Services  
Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk, Inc.  
Emergency Shelter Network  
Empire Justice Center  
Enterprise Community Partners  
Fifth Avenue Committee  
Friends of the North Country, Inc.  
Glens Falls Area Habitat for Humanity  
Habitat for Humanity New York City  
Habitat for Humanity of Greater Newburgh  
Habitat for Humanity of New York State  
Habitat for Humanity of Ontario County, NY  
Habitat for Humanity of Rockland, Inc.  
Habitat for Humanity of Suffolk County  
Habitat for Humanity of Tompkins and Cortland Counties  
Hispanic Brotherhood  
Housing and Family Services of Greater New York, Inc.  
Housing Assistance Program of Essex County, Inc.  
Hudson River Housing  
Human Services Council of New York  
IMPACCT Brooklyn  
Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness/Housing  
JASA Legal Services for Elder Justice  
Keuka Housing Council, Inc.  
Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc.  
Legal Aid Society of Rockland County, Inc.  
LISC NYC  
LISC NYS Housing Stabilization Fund  
Long Island Housing Services, Inc.  
Metro Interfaith Housing Management Corp.  
MHANY Management, Inc  
Mobilization for Justice, Inc.  
Neighborhood Housing Services of Brooklyn (Bedford-Stuyvesant), CDC, Inc.  
Neighborhood Housing Services of Queens CDC, Inc.  
Neighborhood Housing Services of Staten Island



Neighbors Helping Neighbors  
NeighborWorks Community Partners  
New York Disaster Interfaith Services (NYDIS)  
New York Legal Assistance Group  
New York State CDFI Coalition  
New York State Council of Churches  
New York State VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)  
NHS Brooklyn, CDC, Inc.  
Northfield Community LDC of Staten Island, Inc.  
Queens County Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project  
Restored Homes Housing Development Fund Corporation  
Richmond Senior Services  
Rockland Housing Action Coalition, Inc.  
Rural Housing Opportunities Corp.  
Syracuse Habitat for Humanity, Inc.  
The Bronx NHS CDC  
The Elevated Studio  
The Housing Council at Pathstone  
The Legal Project  
Thousand Islands Area Habitat for Humanity, Inc.  
Urban Architectural Initiatives RA P.C.  
Westchester Residential Opportunities, Inc.  
Western New York Law Center