



Progressive Caucus of the New York City Council

For Immediate Release: Wednesday, February 01, 2017

Contact: Zara Nasir, 212-482-6673, znasir@council.nyc.gov

City Council Passes Three-Quarters Housing Bills

New York, NY— The New York City Council Progressive Caucus commends today’s passage of Three-Quarter Housing bills. The five bills, sponsored by Council Members Corey Johnson, Donovan Richards, Ritchie Torres, and Jumaane Williams, aim to tackle the problem of unregulated unsafe and poor quality “three-quarter” houses by making stable housing more accessible for three-quarter-house residents. The dwellings, frequently in dismal condition, often house vulnerable New Yorkers who may struggle with homelessness, mental illness, or addiction.

"Packing vulnerable New Yorkers into small rooms is an abomination and the existence of these houses says that we need to do a lot more as a city and state to ensure that they have a safe and secure place to lay their head at night," **said Council Member Donovan Richards, co-chair of the Progressive Caucus and primary sponsor of Intro 1166.** "The living conditions many of these men and women deal with are not the productive environments that they need to help them transition into a stable lifestyle. I'd like to thank MFY Legal Services and the Three-Quarter House Tenant Organizing Project for helping us keep the focus on the needs and rights of these individuals."

"This package shows the real success that can come from advocates and Council Members working together to address an issue that affects some of the city's most vulnerable residents," **said Council Member Antonio Reynoso, co-chair of the Progressive Caucus.** "Together, we are able to help improve conditions in these facilities, end exploitative practices, and protect the rights of those who are struggling to get back on their feet."

"The exploitation of vulnerable New Yorkers at transitional homes is an issue we must solve quickly and decisively," **said Council Member Ben Kallos, Vice Chair for Policy of the Progressive Caucus.** "By requiring reporting from the agencies tasked, New Yorkers will all have a better idea of how serious this issue is, who the bad actors are and what progress is being made. This package of bills forces more transparency that will better our chances at finally getting finding a solution to this issue."

"I want to congratulate my colleagues for their tremendous work on the Three-Quarters Housing bills," **said Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Vice-Chair for Budget Advocacy of the Progressive Caucus.** "It is crucial that we ensure that every New Yorker has all the resources they need should they have to be relocated from dangerous housing conditions. The City needs to do it everything it can to address this problem and protect tenants."

"No one should be allowed to exploit low-income tenants and deprive them of their basic rights," **said Council Member Corey Johnson, primary sponsor of Intro 1164.** "This legislation is going to restore

justice to many tenants in New York and ensure that they're informed of their rights against illegal eviction. At a time when our nation's affordable and public housing stock is in jeopardy, New York City must stand up for the rights and dignity of our tenants. I'm proud to have joined with Council Members Jumaane Williams, Donovan Richards, Ritchie Torres, many of our colleagues in the Council and the Three-Quarter House Reform Coalition in demanding justice for these underserved New Yorkers."

"The City's on-going affordable housing crisis and limited housing options has contributed to the existence of three-quarter houses that take advantage of extremely vulnerable individuals with nowhere else to go. Today, we are taking legislative action in order to protect tenants from being taken advantage of by abusive landlords who want to make a profit off the Medicaid system and government resources. My first bill would prohibit landlords from using medical treatment status as a way to discriminate against tenants and prohibit conditioning occupancy in a residence based on a person seeking, receiving or refraining from medical treatment. My second bill would eliminate time limits for a person to apply for relocation services when a vacate order is in effect for the location where the person lives. These bills confront the two major problems faced by three-quarter houses' residents," **said Council Member Ritchie Torres, primary sponsor of Intro 1167 and 1168.**

"As legislators it is our responsibility to advocate and act on the best interest of some of the most vulnerable New Yorkers. The City's housing crisis has opened the doors for unscrupulous and illegal housing operators to profit from vulnerable residents, denying those in drug treatment programs some of the most basic protections afforded to tenants. This industry has operated in the shadows for far too long and is overdue for regulation." **said Council Member Jumaane D. Williams, primary sponsor of Intro 1171.**

"For too long, unregulated three quarter houses have lured and exploited New Yorkers desperate for housing. By requiring the mayor's task force on three quarter houses to report its data, we can better evaluate this issue and move forward toward constructive solutions that respect the rights and safety of vulnerable residents," **said Council Member Deborah Rose.**

"It is shameful that vulnerable individuals seeking assistance were routinely exploited for monetary gain," **said Council Member Stephen Levin.** "Instead of safe shelter and medical care, our most needy were shaken down to fill the coffers of bad actors. This bill lays the groundwork to ensure our residents receive the attention and shelter they deserve."

The Three-Quarters Housing bill package includes:

- **Intro 1164** would require HRA to send information about tenancy rights to all recipients of the public assistance shelter allowance to inform those most at risk of illegal eviction and homelessness.
- **Intro 1166** would require the City's Task Force on Three-Quarter Housing to publicly report on its activities, and establish public oversight over the City's efforts to curb use of these illegal dwellings.
- **Intro 1167** would remove the 90-day deadline for vulnerable tenants to establish their eligibility for relocation services from HPD, opening access to vital housing resources for many individuals who make initial unsuccessful attempts to find alternative solutions to homelessness.
- **Intro 1168** aims to prevent unscrupulous and abusive landlords from profiting from referrals to substance abuse treatment programs that may not be suitable for a tenant's needs.
- **Intro 1171** would expand the types of acceptable documentation of residency that HPD must accept when someone is applying for emergency relocation services.

###