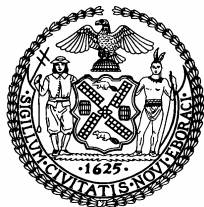


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SPEAKER MILLER, COUNCIL MEMBERS TO INTRODUCE URGENT BILL PROTECTING MITCHELL-LAMA TENANTS

***At-Risk Residents in over 25,000 Apartments Citywide to be Protected from Increased
Rents, Evictions And Forced Relocations***

City Hall, NY – Council Speaker Gifford Miller with Council Members Alan Gerson, Christine Quinn and Gale Brewer today joined the Independence Plaza North Tenants Association and other tenant advocates at a press conference at City Hall to introduce critical legislation that would protect over 25,000 Mitchell-Lama tenants.

Speaker Miller and Council Members will introduce the *Mitchell-Lama Conversion Protection Bill*, which is directed at building owners who plan to leave the Mitchell-Lama program and convert these City-subsidized properties to market-rate housing.

“Instead of exacerbating our City’s growing housing crisis, we should be making every effort to solve it,” Speaker Miller said. “At a time when tenants are already being hit with an unfair rent hike and the gradual erosion of rent protections, we have to say clearly that enough is enough.”

The bill calls on owners wanting to “opt out” of the Mitchell-Lama program to give 18 months notice to the City’s Housing Preservation and Development agency (HPD) as the supervising agency, and to the tenants. HPD’s rules now require only 12-months notice.

Also, the measure will give HPD the power to determine whether an owner has “substantially complied” with all rules and regulations before approving a buy-out, and to impose civil penalties. HPD also would be required to conduct a “Mitchell-Lama community impact study” to examine the effects of the “opt out” provision on tenants, including how many would be forced to relocate or otherwise could not afford the higher rents likely to be charged if the building ends its participation in the Mitchell-Lama program. In addition, the bill would impose a \$1,000 per unit administrative fee to offset HPD costs of managing the compliance of these rules.

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To highlight the effects of the recent announcement by an owner to “opt out” of Mitchell-Lama, Council Members referred specifically to the more than 2000 residents of Independence Plaza North in Tribeca, who last month received notice that the process of converting to market-rate housing was starting.

“We cannot allow Mitchell-Lama expirations to accomplish what the terrorists could not and drive Lower Manhattan residents from their homes,” said Council Member Alan Jay Gerson, who represents the residents of Independent Plaza North and a sponsor of this legislation. “Independent Plaza is in imminent danger of losing its affordability status, potentially driving seniors, families and children out of the place they’ve called home for over 25 years.”

"With the stock of affordable housing dwindling, we must ensure that Mitchell-Lama residents are not forced out of the communities they call home," said Council Member Brewer, whose district includes the largest number of Mitchell-Lama units in the city and is a sponsor of the bill.

Neil Fabricant, head of the Independence Plaza North Tenants Association in Tribeca, said: “We applaud the Speaker for stepping up to the challenge of representing the people who live in taxpayer-financed affordable housing developments that are being converted to market rates. We have to keep New York a place where it’s possible to live decently, even if you’re not a millionaire.”

Council Member Quinn, another key sponsor, said: “Mitchell-Lamas in my district and throughout the City are a critically important source of moderate and middle-income housing. The looming buyouts threaten the stability of tens of thousands of families, numerous neighborhoods and our City as a whole.”

“Preserving one of our country’s most successful affordable housing programs represents an important step in that effort – an effort to ensure that low and middle income New Yorkers can work and live in this City well into the future,” added Miller.

In the early 1960’s, the State Legislature created the Mitchell Lama program as a way to stimulate the development of over 150,000 units of affordable housing for middle-class New Yorkers, making it among the most successful housing development programs ever created.

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