

May 18, 2010

The Honorable John Sampson  
New York State Democratic Conference Chairman  
409 Legislative Office Building  
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Sampson,

As a member of Kehilat Hadar and the Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing in New York City, I am writing to ask for your leadership in repealing vacancy decontrol. As a person of faith, I am concerned with the well being of our neighbors and matters relating to the poor and disadvantaged. Protecting the availability of affordable housing in New York is a matter that I consider a moral responsibility.

The New York State Assembly has already acted on this historic legislation. Now it is time for the New York Senate to pass this legislation as well so that a bill can be delivered to the governor for his signature this year. The repeal of vacancy decontrol is crucial to the protection of New York City's dwindling supply of rent-regulated housing that is a lifeline for middle-class, working and poor tenants.

Vacancy decontrol has a devastating impact on New York's affordable housing system. Through vacancy decontrol, New York City has lost at least an estimated 50,000 rent-regulated units since 2005 alone. Right now, at least another 100,000 units are estimated to be on the verge of deregulation. Rent-regulation is New York State's largest affordable-housing system, protecting more tenants than Mitchell-Lama, Section 8 or public housing. Undermining rent-regulation jeopardizes the ability of hard-working New Yorkers to find affordable housing; housing that will not consume so much of their income that they are left with too little to meet the other basic necessities of life. Vacancy decontrol encourages the worst of landlord abuses: tenant harassment, illegal rent increases, faked or cost-inflated apartment improvements. All of these tactics are employed to drive up rents to hit the deregulation threshold in order to displace current tenants in favor of tenants who will pay market-rate rents.

I am looking for you to demonstrate your commitment to the protection of rent-regulation by giving repeal of vacancy decontrol your highest priority this year.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Address: