

Governor Kathy Hochul
Executive Chambers
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12247

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
188 State Street
Legislative Office Building 907
Albany, NY 12247

Speaker Carl Heastie
188 State Street
Legislative Office Building 932
Albany, NY 12247

March 12, 2024

Dear Governor Hochul, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Speaker Heastie,

New York's housing crisis is a statewide crisis. In the communities we represent, over 23 different towns and communities across our state, renters are being priced out of their housing and struggling to find affordable options near their friends, families, and jobs. Eviction filings have risen in 40 of New York's 62 counties following the lifting of the pandemic eviction moratorium. Every single week we hear from constituents who are afraid of losing their homes.

We write to urge our state's leadership to pass a strong version of Good Cause eviction protections (S305/A4454) that includes all communities in New York State. These protections must be universal across the state, and not require upstate municipalities to opt-in.

The Good Cause legislation as proposed by Senator Julia Salazar and Assembly Member Pamela Hunter will prevent arbitrary or retaliatory evictions by requiring landlords to have "good cause" (nuisance, breaking the lease, non-payment of rent) to pursue eviction. Tenants will be able to challenge yearly rent increases over a certain threshold, requiring the landlord to justify the increase. **The communities we represent are the most in need of Good Cause Eviction protections.**

As elected officials, we have worked to pass local policies to stabilize rents and expand affordable housing options. But our options are limited, not only by local politics but by state preemption. In Newburgh and Albany, and other cities where we passed local versions of Good Cause legislation to protect renters against evictions without cause, courts decreed that only the state legislature has the power to enact such protections. These efforts faced fierce opposition from real estate and corporate landlords - and were only possible in Democrat-controlled cities with robust tenant organizing. In communities without as many resources or with less favorable political conditions, it would be next to impossible to pass any meaningful tenant protections on the local level.

We ask our state leaders to pass a strong, statewide version of Good Cause protections to strengthen our communities. A weaker bill with significant carve outs for portfolio sizes or that requires upstate municipalities to opt-in would be unenforceable and leave out the vast majority of upstate tenants.

Statewide Good Cause legislation is needed to ensure that all renters across the state have the same rights in court to challenge unjust evictions and excessive rent hikes. Requiring our cities to opt in to these protections, as some lawmakers have proposed, would require city-by-city efforts to pass this legislation again, would confuse our local court systems, and would leave far too many renters who do not reside in towns that will make that effort out in the cold. Other proposals to limit the policy to portfolios above a certain size are entirely unenforceable – as limited ownership data is available.

For example, there are about 300,000 renters in the Mid-Hudson Valley. If we organized to pass good cause in every one of the "major" cities in the region (Newburgh, Kingston, Poughkeepsie, etc), that would cover at most 60-70,000 renters or less than 25% of renters in the region.

To reiterate, our state's leadership must pass a strong version of Good Cause Eviction that does not leave out upstate by requiring a local opt-in, or vast swaths of tenants through an unenforceable portfolio size exemption. Local preemption and the scale of our housing crisis requires our state's leaders to take action to protect the communities we represent.

Sincerely,

Brad Lander, *New York City Comptroller*
Kelly Kimbrough, *Albany Councilmember Ward 4*
Gabriella Romero, *Albany Councilmember Ward 6*
Sonia Frederick, *Albany Councilmember Ward 1*
Derek Johnson, *Albany Councilmember Ward 2*
Alfredo Balarin, *Albany Councilmember Ward 11*
Deborah Zamer, *Albany Councilmember Ward 14*
Owusu Anane, *Albany Councilmember Ward 10*
Meghan Keegan, *Albany Councilmember Ward 9*
Corey Ellis, *President Albany Common Council*
Kim Smith, *Rochester Councilmember At-Large*
Paloma Wake, *Beacon Councilmember, At-Large*
Dan Aymar-Blair, *Beacon Councilmember Ward 4*
Kris Haines-Sharp, *Ithaca Alderperson Ward 2*
Phoebe Brown, *Ithaca Councilmember Ward 6*
Sparrow Tobin, *Middletown Alderman Ward 4*
Gregory McCollough, *Ulster County Legislator*
Alexander Marion, *Syracuse City Auditor*
Rachel Barnhart, *Monroe County Legislator*
Maurice Brown, *Onondaga County Legislator*
Tiffany Kumar, *Ithaca Alderperson Ward 4*
Jacob Testa, *Red Hook Town Board Member*
Michael Chameides, *Columbia County Supervisor*
Thomas DePietro, *President of the Hudson City Council*
Giselle Martinez, *Newburgh Councilmember Ward 1*

Beau Harbin, *Cortland County Legislator*
Steve Noble, *Mayor of Kingston*
Robert Cantelmo, *Mayor of Ithaca*
Kayla Matos, *Ithaca Alderperson Ward 1*
Ducson Nguyen, *Ithaca Alderperson Ward 2*
Andrea Shaut, *Kingston Alderman-at-large*
Palmer Harvey, *Onondaga County Legislator*
Michele Hirsch, *Alderman Ward 9*
Donta Myles, *Niagara Falls Councilmember*
Andrew Joyce, *Albany County Legislator*
Sara Pasti, *Alderman Ward 1*
Megan Deichler, *Councilmember Ward 8*
Brandon Holdridge, *Chester Supervisor*
Genesis Ramos, *Orange County Legislator*
Jeanne Edwards, *Kingston Alderman Ward 4*
Mary Lupien, *Rochester Councilmember*
Michael Tierney, *Kingston Alderman Ward 2*
Veronica Pillar, *Tompkins County Legislator*
Nina Nichols, *Rensselaer County Legislator*
Patrick Kuehl, *Ithaca Alderman Ward 4*
Robert Dennison, *Kingston Alderman Ward 6*
Kamal Johnson, *Mayor of Hudson*

Evan Menist, *Poughkeepsie Councilmember Ward 2*

Reynolds Scott-Childress, *Kingston Alderman Ward 3*

Nedra Thompson, *Poughkeepsie Councilmember Ward 7*

Stanley Martin, *Rochester Councilmember At-Large*

Tony Krackeler, *Board of Education President Saratoga Springs City School District*

Natalya Lakhtakia, *Board of Education Trustee Saratoga Springs City School District*

Alexa Avilés, *New York Council Member District 38*

Claire Cousin, *Columbia County Board of Supervisors*

Beth Braxton, *Saratoga Springs City School District Trustee*