



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jesse Hamilton

## Senator Jesse Hamilton Launches Legislation Against Abusive Landlords and Announces Housing Task Force at Housing Forum

JESSE HAMILTON April 30, 2015

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Brooklyn, NY – At a Housing Forum yesterday, State Senator Jesse Hamilton unveiled new legislation to tackle the scourge of tenant harassment. The Abusive Landlord Act ([S. 4997](#)) will allow for prison sentences on landlords who harass tenants, increase the fine levied against unscrupulous landlords to up to \$10,000, and bolster collaboration between District Attorneys' offices and the Division of Housing and Community Renewal.

Senator Hamilton also announced a new Housing Task Force established in cooperation with housing advocates. The Task Force will shine a spotlight on the worst landlords in Central Brooklyn and provide grassroots support in tackling the housing crisis. Over the coming weeks, Senator Hamilton will hit the streets with housing advocates and concerned citizens, visiting the central Brooklyn buildings with a history of violations – listed on the Public Advocate Letitia James' Landlord Watchlist – and demand landlords start fixing overdue housing problems.

The forum was an opportunity for Prospect-Lefferts Gardens and Crown Heights community residents, and residents from across the district, to gather for the second in the series of Know Your Rights Housing Forums at St Gabriel's Church. Co-hosts of the event included Senator Hamilton, Borough President Eric Adams, Assistant Speaker Felix Ortiz, Council Member Mathieu Eugene, and District Leader Shirley Patterson. Partners in presenting the event included city department representatives and housing advocacy partners. In all, dozens of community residents attended the Housing Forum.

Senator Hamilton noted that housing is a pressing issue and that as home prices go up the increased danger from predators who try to pressure people out. He related his experience as an attorney in a housing courtroom – the story of an elderly tenant behind on rent facing potential eviction. When confronted with a stipulation agreement she did not fully understand, he urged her to take time out to fully understand and evaluate whether she could meet the terms of an onerous stipulation agreement a landlord was pressuring her towards.

Senator Hamilton stressed the importance of being educated, informed, and seeking out help. Getting the right counsel from a nonprofit group or your own attorney could be key – as was the case with the elderly tenant being pressured into an unfair agreement. This theme of having the right information to make informed decisions recurred throughout the

presentations by panelists at the forum.