



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

## In Response To Month-Long Outage At Astoria Houses, Senate Deputy Leader Gianaris Announces “NYCHA Utility Accountability Act” Requiring Rent Relief During Outages

MICHAEL GIANARIS October 29, 2020

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NEW YORK – Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris announced new legislation to provide rent relief for NYCHA tenants who experience utility outages. The NYCHA Utility Accountability Act would reduce rent payments by 10% for the duration of an outage. Senator Gianaris highlighted the bill during a visit to Astoria Houses on Thursday, where

residents of 1-04 Astoria Boulevard have been without gas service since September 23rd and NYCHA has refused to publicly commit to a timeline for repairing service.

“Months-long utility outages are unacceptable for any New Yorker, whether in private or public housing,” said **Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris**. “NYCHA residents should not be expected to pay full rent, which typically includes utilities, when they are not receiving the service. My proposal would ensure we treat all our neighbors with respect and create financial urgency for NYCHA to make needed repairs on a faster timeline.”

"For many Astoria families, years of willful neglect and routine austerity have rendered public housing uninhabitable. The ongoing utility outages so many in our neighborhood are experiencing are only the latest example of intolerable conditions and unacceptable mismanagement in New York's public housing system. Yet as these problems persist, every year we throw away billions in subsidies to private developers to build luxury condos for the ultra-wealthy, said **Incoming Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani**, who will sponsor the bill in the Assembly in January. “Only deep reforms to New York's housing policy can begin to correct this injustice. But we can start by changing our priorities and providing our most vulnerable neighbors with the relief they need and deserve immediately. This bill does exactly that, and I'm honored to support it."

Senator Gianaris' NYCHA Utility Accountability Act would reduce a tenant's rent obligation in an amount prorated per day of utility outage by the greater of 10% of the tenant's actual rent or \$75 per month. Affected utilities include gas, heat, water, and electric service. In addition to providing relief for impacted tenants, this legislation would provide a financial incentive to fix service more quickly.

Astoria Houses residents are not alone in being without gas service. According to NYCHA's

own service portal, outages exist at properties across New York City dating back to November 2019. Residents in 1-04 Astoria Boulevard were provided with hot plates for cooking by the beleaguered housing agency, which are an insufficient replacement for gas stoves.

Senator Gianaris has been a longtime advocate of improving quality of life for NYCHA tenants. He has secured major funding for a job training program for NYCHA residents through a partnership with LaGuardia Community College and Urban Upbound. When NYCHA failed to successfully test for lead in Queensbridge Houses, Senator Gianaris went in and performed tests himself and pushed for faster lead testing in these developments.