



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## Leaders Ortt & Barclay: Put Tenant & Landlord New Yorkers First

ROBERT G. ORTT March 31, 2021

| ISSUE: **CARES FUNDING**



ALBANY, NY -- Senate Republican Leader Robert Ortt and Assembly Republican Leader Will Barclay, along with members of the Senate and Assembly Republican conferences, called on the Cuomo Administration along with the Senate and Assembly majority leaders to get their act together and take steps that are necessary to release tenant and landlord relief that New Yorkers need.

The Republican Conferences were recently made aware of \$1.3 billion in federal COVID-19 Assistance being held up by the Governor's Office. This \$1.3 billion is included in the second

round of CARES Act relief assistance given to states, which in turn must be specifically distributed to tenants and landlords.

In typical Albany form, this federal relief is being held up by the Cuomo Administration dating as far back as December 31, 2020. It is no secret the Governor's office has been under intense scrutiny for making political decisions during this pandemic. With this funding, the same type of politics is being played with money that should have been in the hands of tenants and landlords long ago. During these grueling economic times when relief is desperately needed, there is no excuse for playing these games.

"These monies are a win for both tenants and landlords. Since COVID began, we have heard cries from tenants who beg for rent relief to prevent them from being evicted. Now that Washington, D.C. has given us the ability to provide this relief, the State of New York is dragging its feet. This relief needs to get into the hands of tenants who can't make rent, and landlords who can't pay their property taxes and utility bills. Financial hardships for landlords and tenants have a negative ripple effect felt across our local economy. Now is not the time for that -- we must set aside the politics and actually govern," said Leader Ortt.

"It's been more than three months since Washington approved funding to help tenants and landlords manage the financial disasters they've experienced during the pandemic. However, Albany has done nothing to get that money into the hands of people who desperately need it. We have a September 30th deadline that will be here before we know it. New York State already missed one deadline with CARES Act funding and needed a last-minute extension. Considering the severity of the rental crisis at hand, it would be wise not to let history repeat itself," said Leader Barclay.

"There is no excuse for delaying this critical relief for tenants and landlords experiencing real economic hardship. This is a failure of state government and a disservice to these New

Yorkers. Release the money today. Get it done,” said Senator Pam Helming, ranking member of the Senate Committee on Housing, Construction, and Community Development.

“It is inconceivable that New Yorkers facing this unprecedented pandemic recovery have not been given much-needed relief because of political distractions and administrative incompetence. Landlords and tenants have fallen through the cracks and the governor does not seem interested in doing what is needed to protect their fiscal interests and long-term well-being. We are calling for immediate action; we have received the funds, using it is supposed to be the easy part,” said Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick, ranking member on the Assembly Committee on Housing.

“The housing and rental economy is a critical part of our state’s overall financial health. We rely on a delicate ecosystem in which tenants must be able to pay rent and landlords must be able to make mortgage payments. This money being held captive by the Governor’s office threatens this balance. The \$1.3 billion set aside for these individuals will help landlords pay bills and relieve an enormous amount of stress on tenants struggling,” said Assemblyman Colin J. Schmitt, member of the Assembly Committee on Housing.

The federal dollars allocated to New York State, per federal guidelines, must be used by September 30th. If the funds are not used by September 30th, the United States Department of Treasury is obligated to claw these funds back and reallocate them to other states. For this reason the State Legislature must step up and intervene on behalf of tenants and landlords. Both the Senate and Assembly leadership should be imploring Budget Director Robert Mujica and Governor Cuomo to put tenants and landlords first by sending a Message of Necessity and giving the Legislature the ability to pass an appropriation bill that would enable state agencies to distribute these federal relief funds to tenants and landlords in a timely manner.

“The Governor’s leadership is failing, and it's increasingly clear he is unable to manage our state. With scandal after scandal swirling around him, critical functions of government like providing COVID relief funding are being ignored. It has become increasingly apparent that this Administration revolves around what is best for the Governor -- not what is best for New Yorkers. Learning about these untapped funds that can benefit the economy is maddening. I call on my colleagues across the aisle to work with us now so we can get this money into the hands of those who need it the most. Albany is engrossed in scandals of the Governor’s making, and we need to stop neglecting business that impacts everyday New Yorkers,” concluded Senator Ortt.

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