



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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BRIAN KAVANAGH May 25, 2021

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Kavanagh, Cymbrowitz Introduce Revised NYC Housing Authority ‘Trust’ Proposal to Seek Higher Levels of Federal Funding and Improve Conditions for Residents

New public agency would permit more operating support for up to 25,000 apartments, with federal

approval, and a better contracting process for high-quality renovations, with all tenant rights protected
Legislation expected to be subject of further negotiations in the coming weeks

Albany, NY — Senator Brian Kavanagh and Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz, the Chairs, respectively, of the Senate and Assembly Housing Committees, announced introduction of revised proposed legislation ([S6999A/A7805](#)) that would create a new public agency — the New York City Public Housing Preservation Trust — that would provide a mechanism for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) to seek higher levels of funding from the federal government to renovate and manage up to 25,000 apartments. Under the proposal:

- The Trust would enable NYCHA to apply for federal Tenant Protection Voucher (TPV) subsidies allocated by Congress and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which have been set at a much higher level than conventional public housing subsidies for many years.
- The State would authorize a more effective procurement process, compared to NYCHA's low-bid contracting, for faster complete renovations of buildings, using TPV funding or any new capital funding the federal government provides. The bill also includes requirements for electrification, renewable energy, and decarbonization.
- The legislation would guarantee residents all public housing tenant rights, including no displacement, rents capped at 30% of income, succession rights, citywide and local resident associations, and resident management options. Four residents would sit on the Trust's nine-member board.
- NYCHA would remain the permanent owner of the land and buildings. NYCHA's obligations under judicial settlements and federal oversight would carry over to the Trust.

“We have had a long hard struggle in New York to get our public housing back on track,” said Senator Brian Kavanagh. “For so many years, inadequate funding for maintenance and capital repairs, operational difficulties, and failures of basic services have undermined the quality and safety of the homes of about half a million New Yorkers. While this proposal is subject to further negotiations in the legislative process, it offers a promising approach and better tools to address these unacceptable conditions -- without making public housing any less public or diminishing the rights of tenants in any way.”

“Recognizing that there’s still more work to be done to ensure that this is the right path forward to achieve a successful plan for NYCHA’s recovery from historic disinvestment, I’m introducing this legislation now to ensure there is a public forum in which residents, legislators and other stakeholders can learn about this innovative proposal and have a voice in shaping NYCHA’s future as a public entity and protecting the rights of residents,” said Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz.

“The proposed Public Housing Preservation Trust would allow NYCHA to seek greater federal investment and operational changes to upgrade apartments, preserve public housing for future generations, and ensure tenants are able to stay in their homes. The legislation is a step towards finding a viable, long-term solution to solve the humanitarian crisis in public housing and ensuring that more than 500,000 NYCHA residents are able to live in clean, affordable homes,” said U.S. Representative Ritchie Torres.

“This landmark move pushes for the operational overhaul our NYCHA residents deserve,” said Housing and Economic Development Deputy Mayor Vicki Been. “After decades of disinvestment from the federal government, nearly half a million New Yorkers can take heart in the fact that change is on the way. I applaud Senator Kavanagh and Assemblymember Cymbrowitz for championing the creation of the NYC Public Housing Preservation Trust; their dedication to protecting the rights of current and future residents

and keeping NYCHA 100 percent public advances an equitable recovery for all who call New York City home.”

“This Public Housing Preservation Trust, a fully public entity, will enable NYCHA to access valuable federal subsidies and have a more effective procurement process, while keeping residents rights and protections,” said Greg Russ, Chairman and CEO, New York City Housing Authority. “New Yorkers have demanded for decades a long-term solution and today the bill sponsors are providing one, preserving public housing in New York City for generations to come.”

“The Trust is the first plan that I have seen that both protects tenant’s rights and invests in our housing,” said Rose Bergin, Resident Association President Isaacs Houses. “For too long residents have had to endure repair backlogs and a lack of services. The Trust offers us a real solution to a problem that we have been dealing with for many years. I look forward to working with the Sponsors of the bill and NYCHA to make this a reality.”

“The Public Housing Trust gives us an opportunity to get repairs done and needed improvements for current residents and for the next generation,” said Claudia Coger, Resident Association President at Astoria Houses. “In addition to the improvements to our homes, the Trust will bring jobs to our community. The time has come to push forward an idea that is both new and bold”

"The more things change, they should change with value," said Inez Turpin, Treasurer of the Campos Plaza II Tenant Association. “Change can be a fear factor, but in the long run, it can be a benefit for everyone. We want to be comfortable in our homes. This is where we live and we should take pride in that.”

“If we don’t change, then what will we have to look forward to in the future for our children and grandchildren,” said Barbara Hardy, Vice President of the Campos Plaza Tenant Association. “I pray everyone will be on board with the Blueprint for Change, because the time is right for it.”

“It is all about being able to adapt and that is what the Blueprint calls for,” said Edward Jacobs, President of the Baruch Addition Tenant Association. “This is 2021, not 1940. Let’s get with the program.”

“The Legal Aid Society supports the creation of a public NYCHA Preservation Trust that will enable NYCHA to make widespread and necessary repairs to tens of thousands of public housing apartments, ensure that our clients are living in safe and healthy homes, and keep public housing public,” said Judith Goldiner, Attorney in Charge, Civil Law Reform Unit, The Legal Aid Society. “We are hopeful that, together with capital funding support from Washington, NYCHA will be able to bring all of its remaining public housing units into a full state of repair and without turning to privatization under the RAD/PACT conversion process.”

“We need to fight for the Biden infrastructure package—the American Jobs Plan—to commit at least \$80 billion to public housing, with a NYCHA allocation of close to \$40 billion,” said Victor Bach, Senior Housing Policy Analyst, Community Service Society. “At the same time, NYCHA needs to be prepared to raise the capital it needs to restore decent resident living conditions. The Preservation Trust is the only available option that will accomplish that and keep our public housing public—publicly owned, managed, and funded, The legislation also sees that current resident rights and protections are sustained.”

“Passage in Albany,” said Gregory Floyd, President of Teamsters Local 237, which represents over 7,000 NYCHA employees—referring to the bill creating the Trust—“will mean long term

protection for New York City's largest number of affordable housing units, and improvements for tenants."

"This is smart, innovative, and forward-looking legislation that will improve the quality of living for NYCHA tenants, while creating thousands of good construction jobs that will provide the wages and benefits that will support new middle-class careers," said Gary LaBarbera, President of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York. "This plan stands to be the largest investment in our public housing system in more than half a century, and it comes at an opportune moment, as New York's low-income communities need economic stimulus, jobs, and safer and healthier living conditions more than ever."

"NYCHA's public housing is the single largest resource of deeply affordable housing in our city, and it plays a critical role in the stability of our communities and in the lives of its more than 400,000 residents. The public trust will provide a fully-public transfer that will give NYCHA the ability to leverage its resources and create flexibilities to address its \$40 billion capital needs backlog, and to deliver the safe and healthy housing that NYCHA residents deserve," said Rafael E. Cestero, President & CEO, Community Preservation Corporation. "I applaud Senator Kavanagh, Assemblyman Cymbrowitz, and NYCHA Chair Russ for crafting a thoughtful solution that ensures our public housing will be far better equipped to deal with its many needs while also keeping its tenants protected."

"The CLPHA strongly supports the Blueprint for Change proposal as a promising and innovative plan to reverse the decades-long deterioration of aging, underfunded public housing and create new public housing preservation models for the nation," said Sunia Zatterman, Executive Director, Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA). "It reflects the best thinking of our time on how to stabilize and sustain an invaluable public asset that has been starved of critical resources and in need of organizational modernization."

A massive infusion of capital investment is essential to remedy the decades of disinvestment and to undertake the type of comprehensive building, system, and unit modernization that is long overdue. The scale of this investment will have significant racial and economic equity impacts on residents, neighborhoods, and the entire city. It ensures public oversight, ownership, and affordability in perpetuity. The Blueprint for Change is a desperately needed and long-overdue comprehensive plan to put the nation's largest public housing portfolio on a path to sustainability."

"New York City's architects understand how essential it is for our public housing to remain public. Unfortunately, much public and social housing in New York, and across the country, has been privatized," said Benjamin Prosky, Executive Director, American Institute of Architects New York. "The Trust represents the best chance for NYCHA to remain a public agency while regaining sound financial footing. The Trust will also enable NYCHA to make essential repairs and improvements that will increase the quality of life of its residents. "

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