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BRIAN KAVANAGH June 9, 2021

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Senate and Assembly Majorities Will Pass The Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act

(Albany, NY) Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie today announced the Legislature will advance legislation Wednesday to enact the

Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act. This legislation will allow the state to finance the purchase and conversion of distressed hotels and vacant commercial office space into permanent affordable housing by nonprofit organizations to ensure every New Yorker has access to a safe and affordable place to live.

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins said, “Since taking the Majority, and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have worked together to pass historic housing and tenant protections. The Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act builds on those efforts and continues to address housing issues that the pandemic has heightened. We are taking action to stand up for our unhoused neighbors, address these prominent issues in housing, and provide appropriate resources and education to help break the stigma associated with homelessness. I commend Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris for sponsoring this legislation to help some of our society's most vulnerable people.”

Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie said, “New York has been battling an affordable housing crisis since long before the pandemic, but it has undoubtedly intensified under the pressure of this health and economic crisis. The Housing our Neighbors with Dignity Act will allow us to create safe, decent and affordable housing for New Yorkers who need it most, a meaningful investment in the future of our communities as we continue to recover, reopen and reimagine.”

Bill Sponsor, Deputy Majority Leader Michael Gianaris, said, “New York has seen a decades-long affordable housing crunch exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing economic devastation,” said Senate Deputy Leader Michael Gianaris. “This legislation is a good way to tackle the dual problems of distressed properties and lack of affordable housing. I am thrilled this is passing, and that we have a funded program that will provide real relief going forward.”

Bill Sponsor, Assemblymember Karines Reyes said, "As the number of evictions grows in low-income neighborhoods of color, the need for affordable housing in New York has become all the more urgent. I am proud to sponsor this important legislation enabling the conversion of office units and distressed hotel properties into housing for more New Yorkers in need."

Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development, said, "The number of New Yorkers living in the shelter system or in public places for years at a time is a travesty, and HONDA is one very important step among many that we must take to end homelessness throughout the state. Converting distressed hotels offers us a unique opportunity to accelerate these efforts and to provide permanent affordable housing for homeless families and individuals. I commend our Deputy Majority Leader and sponsor of this bill, Senator Gianaris, as well as Assembly sponsor Assemblymember Karines Reyes, VOCAL-NY, the Community Service Society, Neighbors Together, Gateway Housing, and the other organizations who made this possible, for their determined advocacy on behalf of every New Yorker who is experiencing homelessness."

Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz, Chair of the Assembly Committee on Housing, said, "As our state recovers from this economically devastating pandemic more people than ever are being impacted by an affordable housing shortage and the threat of homelessness. By transforming shuttered hotel properties into housing units we will help provide homes for people in need while also addressing the alarming increase in distressed and unused commercial properties throughout the state."

The legislation being advanced by the Senate Majority and Assembly Majority, bill [S.5257C/A.6593B](#), sponsored by Senator Michael Gianaris and Assemblymember Karines Reyes, will enact the "Housing Our Neighbors with Dignity Act" which will provide a mechanism for the state to finance the acquisition and conversion of distressed hotels and vacant commercial

office space by nonprofit organizations for the purpose of increasing affordable housing across the state.

This new affordable housing must be made available to low-income households and people who were previously homeless. Units must be rent stabilized in localities that have adopted or opted in to the rent stabilization law. At least 50% of the units will be set aside for individuals who experienced homelessness immediately prior to applying for converted units; the other 50% will have an 80% AMI income cap for tenants, provided that the average income of all tenants in the projects does not exceed 50% AMI. The program would ensure prevailing wages for building service employees in projects located in NYC conforming to New York City, parallel to the City's current requirements. Supportive housing projects and small converted properties would be exempt from the prevailing wage requirement.

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