



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Senator Hoylman and Assemblymember Epstein Introduce Bill to Guarantee NYCHA Residents' Access to Clean Water and Food During Water Disruptions

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL September 19, 2022

| ISSUE: **NYCHA REPAIRS, NYCHA**

NEW YORK — State Senator Brad Hoylman and Assemblymember Harvey Epstein introduced a bill ([S.9557](#)) to create a process for ensuring public housing residents are provided food and water when their cooking and drinking water is disrupted.

This past week, residents of the Jacob Riis Houses on the Lower East Side of Manhattan could not drink or cook with tap water due to possible water contamination. While tenants were provided with bottled drinking water, the almost 4,000 residents of the complex were not provided meals and were reliant on donations or paying out of pocket for meals.

This bill would require public housing authorities with housing complexes containing one hundred or more units to provide three meals or meal vouchers and drinking water for all residents of buildings affected by a disruption lasting longer than 24 hours. Tenants should not have to bear this extra cost while the public housing authority restores their water.

State Senator Brad Hoylman, said: “The nearly 4,000 residents of the Riis Houses could not use their tap water for ten days due to faulty tests showing water contamination. Residents could not cook their own meals, leaving them to pay more out of pocket or depend on

charity to feed themselves and their families. The response to this crisis was unacceptable. Our bill will ensure that NYCHA residents will always have access to these basic necessities.”

Assemblymember Harvey Epstein, said: “The situation at Riis Houses has been extremely challenging for residents, who have been unable to drink or cook with the tap water for a week. I appreciate the effort to provide water and food to residents but we can’t leave it to chance whether those essentials are going to be provided in the event of future disruptions. While we work to prevent future problems with water quality, we need assurance for our neighbors that if an incident does occur, they have food and water. I’m proud to introduce this legislation with Senator Hoylman to ensure that going forward residents’ basic needs are met.”

Daphne Williams, President of the Riis Tenants Association, said: “I wholeheartedly support this bill, and I can speak on behalf of my residents that they do, too. This time was very stressful, and NYCHA needs to be more transparent about what they do with our water. It’s essential to us: our families and kids use it to eat, drink, and bathe. This situation continues to be very stressful for the tenants, and this bill will help address future issues.”

Council Member Carlina Rivera, said: “While residents of Riis Houses waited to learn if they were exposed to serious health risks, they also had to find a way to feed their families without using running water. They couldn’t cook at home, and had to buy meals at a higher cost than groceries. Residents should not be made to pay for the mistakes of the City. We will continue to hold NYCHA accountable for the unacceptable situation at Riis Houses, and I’m grateful to my colleagues Senator Brad Hoylman and Assembly Member Harvey Epstein for moving to ensure our City agencies are responsible for supporting families should something like this happen again.”

Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Senate Housing Committee, said: “During my recent visits to Riis Houses, I was pleased to see that NYCHA, other City agencies, and community organizations were providing residents with bottled water, water stations, and food during the water service disruption. An extended water service disruption can lead to significant financial, physical, and emotional distress. This bill will ensure that it is the formal policy of New York to relieve public housing residents of the burdens associated with prolonged water disruptions. I commend my colleagues Senator Brad Hoylman and Assemblymember Harvey Epstein for introducing this bill and I am proud to lend my support.”

Democratic Congressional Nominee Dan Goldman, said: “The crisis at the Jacob Riis Houses is just the latest in a long history of examples of NYCHA failing to treat its tenants with the dignity and respect they deserve. I want to thank State Senator Hoylman for his powerful advocacy on this issue, and for introducing this crucial legislation to ensure public housing tenants receive basic necessities such as food and water. When government fails to properly protect public housing residents, it has a moral obligation to step up and ensure their health and safety.”

###