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June 4, 2014

Honorable Bill de Blasio  
Mayor  
City Hall  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

We write concerning two bills pending before the State Legislature that, if passed, would legalize short-stay rentals in residential buildings, gut the City's enforcement system, and have serious repercussions on the housing and homelessness crises in New York City. Knowing that the preservation of affordable housing is a priority for your administration, we implore you to make your voice heard in Albany by issuing formal memoranda in opposition to A.7848/S.5039 and A.7495/S.5637, joining the more than 40 New York City housing advocacy organizations that have expressed their opposition to both bills.

Illegal hotels have plagued New York City for over a decade, and this problem has recently reached a critical new stage. With the arrival of online sites brokering illegal hotel activity, such as Airbnb, we have seen a rise in short-term stays on a larger scale, often bringing unsavory and illegal activities into apartment buildings. The short-term commercial use of residential units creates a host of problems for our communities, ranging from quality of life issues for tenants to grave fire and safety hazards for tenants and visitors to our city. Residential buildings do not have to comply with the strict safety, security, and fire prevention regulations required of commercial hotels.

In addition to the horror stories that we hear from constituents living in residential buildings overrun by short-term stays, a serious consequence of illegal hotels is the loss of thousands of affordable apartments. At a time when we have record homelessness, the continued growth of illegal hotel use is exacerbating the housing crisis in New York City. While Airbnb and similar companies would like us to believe that they provide the City with a service and – if laws are passed to accommodate them – they would provide revenue for the City to create affordable housing, it is impossible to build enough affordable housing units to replace the units we continue to lose.

Along with many of our colleagues on the state, city, and federal levels, we are members of the Illegal Hotels Working Group, a coalition of elected officials, tenants, and tenant advocates that

has worked on this issue since 2005. In 2010, together we passed legislation to strengthen the laws against illegal hotels by clarifying the definition of “permanent residence.” This law does not apply to situations where tenants or owners rent a room in an apartment while remaining present in the apartment, or to one and two-family homes. Please help us ensure that our hard work to protect affordable housing and our communities is not undone.

We strongly urge your administration to issue memoranda opposing the two existing bills mentioned above, and to strongly oppose any legislation that weakens the current laws or threatens the viability of the City’s existing enforcement system. Please stand with us in this important fight to protect the rights of tenants and preserve affordable housing in New York City.

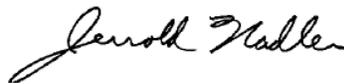
Attached, please find an Illegal Hotel FAQ, a list of community organizations that support the Illegal Hotels Campaign, a memo of opposition to both pending bills from the Real Rent Reform Campaign, and recent articles that highlight the dangers posed by illegal hotels. We are at your disposal to further discuss any of these issues.

Please have a member of your staff contact Sarra Hale-Stern in Senator Liz Krueger’s office at 212-490-9535 if you would like to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,



Gale A. Brewer  
Manhattan Borough President



Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



Adriano Espaillat  
State Senator



Brad Hoylman  
State Senator



Liz Krueger  
State Senator



Bill Perkins  
State Senator



Gustavo Rivera  
State Senator



Jose M. Serrano  
State Senator



Deborah J. Glick  
Member of Assembly



Richard N. Gottfried  
Member of Assembly



Margaret Markey  
Member of Assembly



Joan Millman  
Member of Assembly

Walter T. Mosley  
Member of Assembly

Daniel O'Donnell  
Member of Assembly

Feliz W. Ortiz  
Member of Assembly

Dan Quart  
Member of Assembly

Jose Rivera  
Member of Assembly

Linda Rosenthal  
Member of Assembly

William Scarborough  
Member of Assembly

Margaret A. Chin  
City Councilmember

Daniel R. Garodnick  
City Councilmember

Corey Johnson  
City Councilmember

Ben Kallos  
City Councilmember

Mark Levine  
City Councilmember

Rosie Mendez  
City Councilmember

Ydanis Rodriguez  
City Councilmember

Helen Rosenthal  
City Councilmember

cc: Anthony Shorris, First Deputy Mayor  
Alicia Glen, Deputy Mayor  
Vicki Been, Commissioner, Housing Preservation and Development  
Elizabeth Glazer, Criminal Justice Coordinator, Office of the Mayor  
Emma Wolfe, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Office of the Mayor