



Memo Of Support: Good Cause Eviction
Bill Number: S3082/A5573

Hello,

My name is Lana Orin, I live in East Harlem, and I am a member of Tenants & Neighbors.

In the beginning of 2021, my landlord refused to renew my lease, effectively evicting me from my apartment at 3333 Broadway in West Harlem. I always paid rent on time, even during the pandemic when I was living off of unemployment, but I began advocating for the safety of our families and pets when they started installing outswing casement windows that had no screens or child guards. I refused to stay quiet about the neglect and corruption by management in my building, and my landlord, Urban American, wanted me out. **As a market rate tenant, I had no options to protect myself from their retaliation. Good Cause Eviction would have given me that option.**

Less than a month before my lease was set to expire, my landlord's lawyer sent me a lease non-renewal and refused to explain why. I had a really stressful time looking for a place to move since I had been laid off due to the pandemic and unemployment insurance wasn't enough to meet the requirements of most leases.

Urban American did not care that they were leaving me without a home in the middle of the pandemic. **To a landlord who owns 19 buildings with thousands of units, I meant nothing to them. Market rate tenants deserve protections from landlords who view them as nothing more than a check every month.**

I was extremely lucky and grateful that I managed to find an apartment that accepted Insurent within a week of needing to move. However, I know many people in similar situations who are not as lucky. **The threat of displacement without recourse is something no one should have to bear.**

Even though Urban American tried silencing me by evicting me, I refuse to abandon my fight to protect the tenants of 3333 Broadway, who are now scared to speak up after hearing about what management did to me.



Living conditions at 3333 Broadway continue to worsen, yet there are many tenants who have lived in the building since the beginning and can't speak up for concerns they will lose their lease. Many apartments are deteriorating with moldy, crumbling ceilings due to leaks from faulty plumbing, roach and mice infestations, broken outlets from damaged interior structure, and now tenants are afraid to open their windows if they have children or pets.

Quality of life has only been decreasing amongst all these smoke and mirror upgrades. Even the new elevators are breaking down and many elderly are forced to walk up to 35 stories to get back home. **Tenants need to be able ask for repairs without the fear of unjustified evictions.**

Before I was evicted, I ran for the Tenant Association and management canceled the election less than a week before and self appointed their own TA with tenants who were not working to protect us. **It's clear management did not want us to be organized, and would do anything to stop us. Yet what is there to stop them? This is why we need Good Cause Eviction.**

I started speaking out when pets in my building began falling out of the windows and dying despite being told numerous times that the windows were safe. First it was my neighbor's cat Kleopatra that fell 27 stories in August 2020, then the cat Tofu who fell 31 stories in December 2020. I have a cat who became my sole companion that I needed to protect as well. There were many more pet deaths and close calls with children but tenants were too traumatized to come forward, especially in fear of harassment from management and in a time where we heavily relied on our pets for emotional support to get through the pandemic.

When tenants like myself raised the issue, management kept denying responsibility. They continued to say the windows were safe despite the pet deaths and obvious design flaws, such as slamming shut when it was windy and having pests as large as pigeons flying into people's apartments.

Upgrades forced onto tenants should be for the safety of all tenants, not just for aesthetic purposes to increase curb appeal. **In a building with 1200 units and thousands of tenants, we could have had enough power to hold Urban American accountable, but without Good Cause protections, we remained fearful and divided.**

If a landlord would rather go through the effort of evicting tenants instead of taking that time to fix potentially fatal issues in their building, they don't deserve to own property to rent out. Maintenance shouldn't be secretly disposing the bodies of our fallen deceased pets into the



building dumpster when it was the landlord who failed to protect us from unsafe window replacements. It must be illegal for a landlord to silence tenants and their safety concerns by evicting them from their building that they were trying to protect.

My hope is to change the window laws, create pet protection laws and make sure we prevent further disasters like Surfside and the gas explosions of East Harlem and the Lower East Side. Buildings are only getting older and need to be maintained properly. The only way we can facilitate all these changes is to organize and freely utilize code enforcement without the fear of retaliation and eviction.

Everyone deserves a stable and safe home, and the right to fight for it. I wish Good Cause Eviction existed in New York when I needed protection, but what happened to me does not have to happen to anyone else. I am asking that you support and pass Good Cause Eviction.

Sincerely,
Lana Orin
Member of Tenants & Neighbors

Tenants & Neighbors is a grassroots, member-led organization that works with tenants to build and effectively wield power to preserve and protect affordable housing in New York State.