



September 4, 2020

Written Testimony to New York State Senate

Submitted by Jose Hernandez, Member Leader, Make the Road New York

Joint Public Hearing: The Unified Court System and COVID-19 Judiciary, Codes and Housing, Construction and Community Development Committees

Hearing Date: August 21, 2020

As a member of Make the Road New York, I am submitting written testimony to the New York State Senate to call for the immediate halt of all eviction proceedings throughout the state of New York and call on the New York Senate to immediately pass a real universal eviction moratorium as outlined in the proposed **Emergency Housing Stability and Displacement Prevention Act** (Sponsored by Zellnor Myrie/ Assembly member Karines Reyes - S8667/A10827).

As a directly impacted community member, I write to express my objection to the reopening of the courts allowing for eviction proceedings to begin against tenants like me whom have suffered most from the COVID-19 pandemic. Evictions have devastating impacts on families, and an eviction during a pandemic could lead to deadly consequences.

As I think about my 10-year-old son, and my wife, I worry about the real harms this pandemic has caused us. For too many families, income loss has halted our ability to make rent payments. While some qualify for unemployment and stimulus benefits, this is not the case for many immigrant households. According to a study at Make the Road New York - 150 Days Later: Unemployed and Excluded – 60% of unemployed U.S. citizen respondents have not received federal or state economic aid and 98% of unemployed undocumented families have not received federal or state economic aid.

The stress of thinking about displacement and homeless is overwhelming. Evictions are inhumane and have proven to negatively affect the health of tenants. Especially during a pandemic, where will families go. How will we stop the spread of COVID-19 with tens of thousands of more families flooding an already overburdened

shelter system in New York City and New York State. 32,000 New Yorkers to date have passed due to this pandemic, 80 of those lost were members of Make the Road New York. What more will it take to have you, our legislators, take this issue seriously and move to action in a way that protects renters and our broader communities?

Recently, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) took emergency action to protect tenants and the public health, when our state politicians have not. It is a sad day for all New Yorkers when the federal administration in Washington outdoes Governor Cuomo and our State elected officials in taking emergency action to protect tenants during this pandemic. However, the federal order does not go far enough.

The CDC's moratorium essentially kicks the can down the road. The order does little for New Yorkers in addressing the real problem; no access to income to pay rent. For families like my own, once any eviction moratorium is lifted, we will not have access to five, six or seven months of back rent. I struggled to pay my rent based on my income month to month, how am I supposed to cover all the debt accumulating in back rent?

Make the Road New York urges the State Legislature to act by passing the Emergency Housing Stability and Displacement Prevention Act (S8667/A10827) which sets in place a universal eviction moratorium for residential and commercial tenants and lasts for the duration of the crisis plus one year. **Make the Road New York also urges the State Legislature to act by passing the Rent and Mortgage Cancellation Act of 2020 (S08802/A10826)** which forgives rent and rent debt for tenants who have been unable to pay rent and owe money to their landlords from the period of March 7, 2020 through the end of the crisis, plus 90 days. The rent, eviction and homelessness crisis is solvable. Let's work together to help, not hurt, renters.