



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Comrie, Weprin Introduce Legislation to Postpone City Tax Lien Sale**

*Elected leaders call for Department of Finance to defer lien sale past pandemic*

*Bill would delay lien sale by one year following the end of the COVID-19 state of emergency*

**New York, NY**—State Senator Leroy Comrie & Assembly Member David Weprin introduced legislation that would postpone the New York City tax lien sale by one year following the expiration of the COVID-19 state of emergency order. The annual lien sale in which debt on tax delinquent properties is auctioned to private collectors was scheduled for May 15, 2020, but was delayed due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. As of now, the sale is scheduled to occur on September 4, 2020. The owners of properties eligible for the tax lien sale have until September 3rd to pay their debt or enter into a payment agreement with the Department of Finance.

Liens are sold to private lien servicing companies with special operating authorization by the city. Currently, these include Tower Capital Management, LLC and MTAG Services, LLC. Once a lien is sold, the property owner must arrange a payment agreement with the lien servicing company or risk legal seizure of their property.

In Senator Comrie's Southeast Queens district, a residential community that is still recovering from the subprime mortgage crisis, as many as 600 properties are eligible for the 2020 lien sale. In years past, Senator Comrie's office has worked closely with the Department of Finance to identify and assist property owners ahead of the annual lien sale, but COVID-19 has presented unprecedented challenges to doing community outreach.

"Homeowners facing the lien sale need ample time to consult with attorneys, enter into payment agreements, and learn about exemption programs ahead of the sale," said **Senator Leroy Comrie**. "COVID-19 has made this all but impossible to do on the scale that we need it to happen. The tax lien sale can't happen this year, and I'm going to raise hell between now and September 4th to see to it that it doesn't."

"With thousands in our city struggling with the economic effects of the COVID - 19 pandemic, including many homeowners in my Assembly district and across Queens, it is absolutely unconscionable to hold the tax lien sale in 2020," said **Assembly Member David I. Weprin**. "While I appreciate the City of New York's delay in holding the sale thus far, it is now clear that the lien sale must be canceled this year. I am proud to join Senator Leroy Comrie as the Assembly sponsor of state legislation to eliminate the 2020 lien sale in New York City and look forward to raising havoc with the Senator to protect low and moderate income homeowners and seniors from this threat to homeownership."

"I stand with all of my fellow elected officials from South East Queens in calling for New York City to cancel or postpone the tax lien sale on September 4, 2020," said **Senator James Sanders, Jr.** "That's why I am proudly co-sponsoring Senator Comrie's bill to cancel this year's tax lien sale so the necessary outreach can be done for homeowners to protect their homes."

"Due to the onset of COVID-19, our communities have not received appropriate outreach from the Department of Finance and the tax lien sale should not go forward as planned," said **Council Member Adrienne Adams**, Co-Chair of the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus. "We must ensure that financial hardships in the aftermath of the pandemic are not further heightened and I applaud Senator Comrie and Assembly Member Weprin for this thoughtful legislation."

"Back in March, we called on the City to cancel the lien sale, knowing full well that the financial hardships this global pandemic would cause," said **Council Member I. Daneek Miller**, Co-Chair of the Black, Latino, and Asian Caucus. "Postponement is not enough- the lien sale must be cancelled in its entirety. We've known for a long time that it disproportionately impacts communities of color, and it is especially egregious to continue with the sale given the already precarious economic situation thousands of families find themselves in."

Advocates joined Senator Comrie, Assembly Member Weprin, and Council Member Adams in calling for a postponement of the lien sale.

"Habitat NYC is known for building new homes but equally as important to our mission is our commitment to preserving affordable homes," said **Karen Haycox**, CEO of **Habitat for Humanity New York City**. "The cancellation of this year's tax lien sale is an appropriate decision and a strategic effort to preserve homeownership rates in our beloved city. We applaud Sen. Comrie for introducing a bill to cancel the 2020 lien sale until after the COVID-19 pandemic."

"We agree with Senator Comrie that the tax lien sale should be postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Now is not the time to amplify housing insecurity in communities of color or among seniors," said **Ivy Perez**, spokesperson for the **Coalition for Affordable Homes**, which represents over 30 affordable housing advocacy organizations. "Those same communities, most of them low- or moderate-income, have been hardest-hit by COVID-19, and the tax lien sale threatens to further destabilize them."

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