



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

CC: Commissioner Lisette Camilo  
Department of Citywide Administrative Services  
1 Centre Street  
New York, NY 10007

June 29, 2020

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

We are writing to request that you direct the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to find a permanent relocation for Brooklyn's housing court, located on 141 Livingston Street. As legislators who represent the borough of Brooklyn, we have serious concerns that the reopening of the housing courts before the full resolution of the COVID-19 crisis would be premature and dangerous. Given the conditions and structure of the housing court's building, we believe that reopening the building too soon would pose an unacceptable risk to public health and exacerbate the crisis, and we urge you to secure an alternative location.

As you know, the COVID-19 crisis has forced all of us in government to re-evaluate and rethink how to serve the public during this crisis and into the future. Based on feedback from our constituents and community based organizations who work in the housing court every day, we are convinced that this building is no longer a viable location for Brooklyn's Housing court. While we were reassured that, in a letter to State Senator Krueger dated June 14, 2020, Chief Judge DiFiore stated that "the return of in-person proceedings in Housing Court is not imminent and is subject to no existing timeline," we remain concerned that the current building at which the housing court operates will remain unsafe well into the future.

Until the public has access to effective treatments and vaccines for the virus — both of which could be years away — there are numerous and considerable barriers to the safe use of the housing court's building. There is only one public entrance into a room that, under normal conditions, is usually crowded. Once past that room, tenants pass through a narrow hallway to elevators. The elevators themselves are only used by those who cannot climb stairs, and are extremely small, slow, and therefore crowded. Meanwhile, the stairways are also unusually narrow and unable to accommodate safe social distancing.

It does not end there, as the majority of the building is simply too narrow and tight to allow for social distancing. To get to the clerks' windows, tenants line up in a narrow hall. To wait for the clerks to process papers, tenants wait in a very crowded waiting room which usually has standing room only. Conditions are so crowded that the fire department has been called to address unsafe overcrowding. The offices of legal service providers and city agencies such as HRA are no respite from the crowdedness, as their offices are tiny, as is the cashier's room.

Every floor with courtrooms has an open elevator lobby and then two narrow corridors with courtrooms. Many people have to wait in the narrow corridors for their case to be called or to talk to the landlord's attorney. Some of the courtrooms have a small windowless tiny room for conferences. Some have slightly larger rooms with windows for conferences behind the judge's bench. It is highly unlikely that these rooms could be used safely for more than one person.

While all of this is reason enough not to use the building in the future, there are still more risks inherent to this building. There is no clean and private space for nursing mothers. The public restrooms are small and dirty and frequently lack adequate supplies of paper towels and hand washing soap — objectionable conditions that in our present context would be beyond unacceptable. And the list goes on.

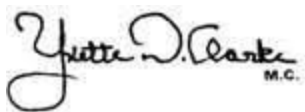
In a city of renters, it is vitally important that members of the public have the opportunity to resolve disputes between tenants and landlords. Yet in a post-COVID-19 future, this building, which already was operating beyond its capacity, clearly cannot accommodate this need safely. We urge you to commence an immediate and expedient search for an alternative building.

Furthermore, we also request that DCAS no longer lease this building at all, as it was never meant to be a court and was an unacceptable space for an extremely busy housing court long before this crisis. It is imperative that an alternative location be secured so that when in-person services resume in the future, users of these courts will have space that is suitable, comfortable, and most importantly, safe to use. We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zellnor Y. Myrie', with a stylized, flowing script.

Zellnor Y. Myrie  
New York State Senator, District 20  
& undersigned:



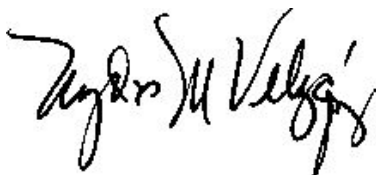
*Congressmember Yvette  
Clarke*



*Congressmember Hakeem  
Jeffries*



*Congressmember Jerold  
Nadler*



*Congressmember Nydia  
Velazquez*



*State Senator Andrew  
Gounardes*



*State Senator Brian  
Kavanagh*



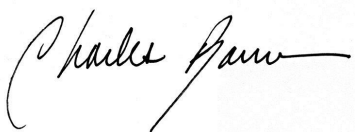
*State Senator Kevin Parker*



*State Senator Velmanette  
Montgomery*



*State Senator Julia Salazar*



*Assemblymember Charles  
Barron*



*Assemblymember Steve  
Cymbrowitz*



*Assemblymember Mathylde  
Frontus*



*Assembly Member Joe Lentol*



*Assemblymember Felix Ortiz*



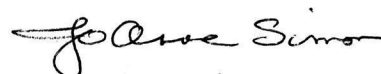
*Assemblymember N. Nick Perry*



*Assemblymember Walter Mosley*



*Assemblymember Diana C. Richardson*



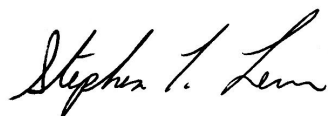
*Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon*



*Councilmember Alicka Ampry-Samuel*



*Councilmember Brad Lander*



*Councilmember Stephen Levin*



*Councilmember Carlos Menchaca*