

ALBANY OFFICES
ROOM 909 LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
(518) 455-2070

ROOM 315 STATE CAPITOL
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12247
(518) 455-2024



**THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK
ALBANY 12247**

**ROBERT G. ORTT
62ND SENATE DISTRICT
SENATE MINORITY LEADER**

DISTRICT OFFICE
175 WALNUT STREET
SUITE #6
LOCKPORT, NEW YORK 14094
(716) 434-0680

E-MAIL
ORTT@NYSENATE.GOV

WEBSITE
ORTT.NYSENATE.GOV

August 27, 2021

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of the State of New York
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Lawrence Marks
Chief Administrative Judge
New York State Unified Court System
25 Beaver Street
New York, NY 10004

Commissioner Michael P. Hein
New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
40 North Pearl Street
Albany, New York 12243

Dear Governor Hochul, Judge Marks, and Commissioner Hein:

We write to extend our support for your commitment to correcting the State's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). Hiring additional staff, and implementing a rapid review of the entire program should be helpful in getting New York's dedicated funding to rental relief out the door. However, there are other steps that could be taken to ensure that there is a steady flow of new applications for the program, as well as expediting the approval process, while addressing the critical needs of tenants and landlords.

For example, ensuring that housing courts across the State are open is critical. Whether you are in New York City or in the Town of Olean, housing courts bring tenants, landlords and their lawyers together. In fact, most of the State has housing issues resolved by smaller courts such as Justice Courts.

These smaller courts can play a pivotal role in helping tenants and landlords gain access to ERAP. By having the clerks of these courts notify the Office of Temporary Disability Assistance (OTDA) when an eviction action is filed, the agency could reach out to the tenant and landlord to begin the application process. In communities where community based organizations (CBO) have

contracted with OTDA, those local CBOs could reach out to the pertinent parties. This would kick-start community outreach across New York, while providing a stream of new applications to be considered by OTDA.

Commissioner Hein, you have indicated that the number of applications currently being considered will not be enough to deplete New York's funding for rental relief. By ensuring that smaller courts, including in Upstate New York, inform OTDA when they have eviction cases pending, tenants and landlords in our communities will have a chance to be part of a program designed to help renters and landlords economically recover from the pandemic.

Additionally, in areas where there is a high level of eviction cases such as New York City, Syracuse and Buffalo, it would make sense that OTDA have qualified, dedicated staff on-site to assist tenants and landlords with the cumbersome ERAP application process. We would request that, Judge Marks, you direct staff to these sites to help with this.

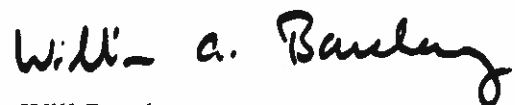
There is little doubt that these actions will help move funding out the door. These proposals are common-sense solutions to real life problems for New Yorkers facing housing instability. As stated before, our court system is the one place where all parties in an eviction proceeding gather. If a tenant is facing eviction, they most likely qualify for New York's rental assistance program. The court system is a natural intake mechanism for informing New Yorkers about ERAP and assisting them to complete the application process in a timely manner.

For these reasons, we urge you to consider the above-mentioned proposals that will help the State with disbursement of rental assistance and tenants and landlords recover from the economic crisis caused by COVID-19.

Sincerely,



Rob Ort
NYS Senate Republican Leader



Will Barclay
NYS Assembly Republican Leader