

Finance Chair,

Before the Pandemic in Syracuse, according to a Benchmark Study by the Maxwell School at Syracuse University in 2019, an average of 11,000 residents was evicted each year in Syracuse. Syracuse's population is 142,874 and 66% of residents rent where they live. Nearly 55% of renters spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs, including rent and utilities. This rate of the housing cost burden is well over 60% in some of our census tracts.

There is a shortage of affordable decent housing in Syracuse. Many tenants in Syracuse live in deplorable conditions. Code violations remain unfixed sometimes for years. 1 out of every 4 children has Childhood Lead Poisoning caused by un-remediate lead paint in their housing. Lead paint was not even addressed directly as an issue in Syracuse until just the last year. Yet rents paid for unacceptable housing continues to increase.

There is a great concern for increased homelessness when Housing Court reopens and evictions start up again. Where will homeless families go? There is not anywhere near enough shelter space for these newly homeless people. Doubling up with family or friends may well not be safe because of COVID-19 for some time to come. Many of our families have suffered multiple traumas including loss of jobs, family members, or health insurance.

At the same time, they are behind on rent, utilities, and bills. In Syracuse, we feel safe in saying more than the national average of 1 in 7 families do not have enough food. Children have fallen behind in school because online schooling is more difficult. The need for Childcare has increased with remote learning. Women are more likely to leave the job market to supervise their children. The need for mental health services now and after the Pandemic will increase dramatically. The one thing a family with all those issues going needs to worry about is how they are going to pay the rent.

Syracuse Tenant Union has been a shining light in the dark to tenants in Syracuse. As Syracuse Tenants Union has been fighting for years now to get the Good Cause bill and ETPA. New York State needs to understand that Syracuse is here and we are hurting too. One of the best things a government should do is take care of the most vulnerable without taking decades to act. Syracuse tenants need more money to pay rent now! The NYS needs to pass the following bills and put money into the budget for relief.

- **COVID-19 Housing Relief and Recovery for All (Salazar/Niou)**
- **Housing Access Voucher Program (Kavanagh/Cymbrowitz)**

Sincerely,
Palmer Harvey, Syracuse Tenants Union

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