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UNH State Fiscal Year 2019-20 Budget & Policy Priorities **Rent Regulations**

Rent Regulations – Rent Regulations help to protect New York City tenants and keep apartments affordable for long-term residents, slowing displacement due to gentrification and rising rents. United Neighborhood Houses supports the renewal of Rent Regulations in 2019. Furthermore, we recommend several improvements to strengthen those laws. Specifically, **UNH supports the repeal of the vacancy bonus**, which has had the unintended consequence of providing a financial motivation for landlords to harass their long-term tenants, **as well as the repeal of the de-regulation laws** that have caused New York City to lose an estimated 152,000 regulated apartments since going into effect in 1997 while contributing to an incalculable loss in quality of life for regulated tenants facing harassment from their landlords.

Challenge and Opportunity – Rents in New York City have risen at rates much higher and faster than wages. More than half of New York renters are considered “rent burdened,” which means they pay more than 30% of their gross income to living expenses. Furthermore, at least 28% are “severely rent burdened,” which means they pay more than 50% of their income towards living expenses. Rent-regulated apartments help to counteract these trends, providing tenants protections that help them to stay put while regulating the amount landlords can increase the rent on those units year-by-year. Rent regulated units remain one of New York’s last affordable options.

While the Governor announced support for various rent reforms—including protections to tenants who are exposed to risk through a preferential rent, improvements to the processes for Major Capital Improvements (MCIs) and Individual Apartment Improvements (IAIs), and the repeal of vacancy decontrol—during his State of the State address, UNH urges the administration to do even more to remove the existing financial incentives to harass tenants in regulated units.

Though it's difficult to quantify exactly how many tenants face harassment in NYC on a yearly basis, a study conducted by the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics in 2016 came to the conclusion that several common harassment tactics as measured by complaints to 311, NYC Housing Preservation and Development, and Department of Buildings were statistically significant in predicting the loss of regulated units. From landlords who own one or two buildings to large LLCs operating real estate empires, today's market in NYC makes harassment of regulated tenants so profitable that it has become a viable business strategy. **Removing the vacancy bonus and all deregulation provisions would remove that financial incentive to harass and displace tenants.**

Benefits of Rent Regulation – Rent regulation preserves New York's free market affordable housing stock. Given the City's affordability crisis, the State must take action to preserve and strengthen these laws in 2019. The Rent Regulation Reform Act has proven, it is time to repeal those amendments that have led to tenant harassment and return to the full protections originally afforded to tenants as the law originally intended.

UNH Recommendation: Renew and strengthen the Rent Regulation Laws
by repealing the vacancy bonus and de-control provisions.

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