



REPEAL VACANCY DECONTROL

VACANCY DECONTROL HURTS IMMIGRANTS

May 5, 2009

The deregulation of rent regulated housing through vacancy decontrol has been disastrous for New York's immigrants, according to a report by the New York Immigrant Housing Collaborative. Vacancy decontrol has drastically reduced the supply of affordable housing in immigrant communities.

The New York Immigrant Housing Collaborative found that the severe affordability problems immigrants face are made worse by vacancy decontrol, predatory equity, gentrification and rapid rent increases. The report established that immigrants are more likely to live in overcrowded and illegal conditions, fueled in large part by vacancy decontrol. Immigrants are more likely than native-born New Yorkers to live in rent-stabilized housing, and live in many neighborhoods where rents have increased dramatically. Rent regulation protections provide a stable stock of rental housing units and should be strengthened in the face of accelerating deregulation.

Immigrant renters in New York City confront serious challenges finding safe, decent and affordable housing. Like all renters, immigrants have faced an economic squeeze over the past decade, as rents have risen while incomes have remained flat. The problem is only getting worse. From 2002 to 2005, the city lost more than 205,000 units that were affordable to the average household. The housing

crunch has a critical impact on immigrants who have lower average incomes than native-born families but higher rent burdens. For unsubsidized low-income renters – a group that includes a disproportionate share of immigrants – the typical share of income spent on rent rose from 43 percent to more than half, in just three years. Nearly 82% of low-income immigrant tenants pay more than 30% of their income in rent. Tenants in immigrant communities routinely pay more than two-thirds of their income for rent and over 80% of household income is spent on housing costs.

In addition to paying more of their income in rent, immigrants also face more housing quality problems such as overcrowding, dangerous conditions, abuse and harassment. Rent regulation is an essential tool for protecting tenant rights and preventing maltreatment. Vacancy decontrol and lax rent regulation enforcement encourage landlord harassment and abusive practices and have fed the growth of predatory equity in immigrant communities.

The New York Immigrant Housing Collaborative joins many immigrant organizations and allies in calling for the repeal of vacancy decontrol.

Source: New York Immigrant Housing Collaborative, "Confronting the Housing Squeeze: Challenges Facing Immigrant Tenants and What New York Can Do," 2009, www.thenyic.org

Vote for S2237-A — The bill to REPEAL VACANCY DECONTROL

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