



Assembly Member **AL TAYLOR** *Reports to You*



Winter 2018

71st Assembly
District

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Housing Development Fund Corporations (HDFC) Forums

In the 1970s, many landlords abandoned their buildings because they no longer saw value in making repairs and providing heat and hot water to their tenants. Building infrastructures fell into a state of disrepair and loans were needed in order for roofs to be rebuilt, functional heating units to be installed, and electrical/plumbing systems to be upgraded.

In response to this crisis, New York City’s Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) created the Housing Development Fund Corporation (HDFC) program. This meant that the brave tenants that had decided to remain in their buildings were instantly given the opportunity of becoming property owners (shareholders) of their apartments. Many became chief executive officers, chief operating officers, and property managers on the board of directors for these HDFCs. As shareholders, tenants were given the responsibility of preserving their landmarked/historic buildings and providing a safe environment for family and neighbors. Thirty years later, many of these same HDFCs are prospering and doing well.

Unfortunately, not all HDFCs have been as successful. Many are facing foreclosure or third party transfers (TPT). In order to help with this issue, during the months of August through October, I hosted a series of HDFC forums throughout the 71st AD. The first session focused on a HDFC case study of my building and detailed how shareholders won the initial foreclosure case. The second forum examined regulatory agreements, and the third forum discussed the importance of proper board governance. The next round of forums will allow shareholders to ask specific HDFC questions to attorneys and will provide information about the various forms of predatory lending. Once these forums have concluded, my goal is to use information obtained from these discussions to conduct hearings to investigate the HDFC crisis.



Testifying Before the New York City Council

On October 31, 2018, Senator-elect Robert Jackson, my counsel, Darlene Bruce, and I testified before the New York City Council’s Committee on Housing and Buildings, chaired by Council Member Robert E. Cornegy, Jr. The hearing gave shareholders and their advocates an opportunity to explain why certain Housing Development Fund Corporations (HDFCs) should not be placed into the Third Party Transfer program (TPT).

It is my understanding that the goal of the TPT program, created by the NYC Department of Housing Development and Preservation (HPD), is to “save” HDFCs struggling with severe debt, operating with dysfunctional boards of directors, or ineffective property managers. In the TPT program, a third party investor assumes ownership of the building and HDFC shareholders become rent-stabilized tenants. The New York City Council has the authority to review and approve HPD’s list of HDFCs to be transferred out of the HDFC program and into the TPT program.

As an advocate for shareholders residing in HDFCs, I wrote letters to HPD and Council Members Levine and Perkins and I requested a moratorium on both the foreclosure and transfer of HDFCs into the TPT program.



Happy Holidays!

*May this season be one of
unity, joy, and peace to
all of you and your loved ones.*

With love,



Protecting Tenant Rights: Working Together with The Legal Aid Society to Pursue Justice

My office has partnered with The Legal Aid Society to review the legal issues faced by the tenants of the Dunbar Apartments. Residents have been forced to live in uninhabitable conditions. This includes many senior citizens who have been in need of handrails or ramps but have not been accommodated.

Since taking office, my staff has received numerous complaints from tenants regarding the deplorable living accommodations. In an effort to rectify these issues, my office has attended housing court proceedings and has met with management personnel of the Dunbar Apartments. However, after realizing that our efforts were falling on deaf ears, I decided that legal intervention was needed. As such, the Legal Aid Society has and will continue to meet with tenants to take the appropriate legal steps to advocate for the tenants' rights to cooking gas, heat and hot water, removal of the building code violations and the elimination of mold throughout the buildings.

Reports of Legionnaires' Disease



Over the past few months, there have been two outbreaks of Legionnaires' disease in which our neighbors have been exposed and two deaths have been reported. The first death resulted from the outbreak in July and the second death occurred during the October outbreak. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene identified the source of the Legionella bacteria as the cooling tower at the Sugar Hill Project on St. Nicholas Avenue and West 155th Street.

In response to the two outbreaks, the Health Department convened a panel of experts to examine the issue and provided recommendations to improve the cooling tower water systems. Additionally, the Health Department will introduce enhanced cooling tower regulations and will improve the regulatory oversight of the water systems and management relationships.

Legionnaires' disease is caused by the presence of Legionella bacteria in the water found in cooling towers, hot tubs, humidifiers, hot water tanks, and large air-conditioning systems. Symptoms include fever, cough, chills, muscle aches, headache, fatigue, loss of appetite, confusion, and diarrhea. They generally surface two to ten days after contact with the bacteria. Please call the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene if you believe that the water in your building may be contaminated.



"Tis the Season to Give"

I am honored that during my first summer as your Assembly Member, my office either sponsored or participated in several outdoor events, including barbecues and other fun-filled activities. We enjoyed getting our faces painted, popping popcorn, and stirring the cotton candy machines. Just before school opened, we partnered with Senator Benjamin, Council Member Perkins, and Friends of Public School Inc. to provide backpacks filled with school supplies.



NAACP Awards

Assembly Member Al Taylor standing together with award recipient, Michael Hardy, Counsel to the National Action Network, at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's Annual Awards Luncheon.



Domestic Violence Awareness Month

I partnered with Assembly Member Inez Dickens to sponsor W.A.R.M.'s (We All Really Matter) 8th Annual Domestic Violence Awareness forum. The key note speaker was holistic practitioner, Queen Afua.

Founded by Stephanie McGraw, a pioneer in women's rights, W.A.R.M., is a not-for-profit that addresses domestic violence in Upper Manhattan. Statistics show that one in every four women, and one in seven men, will experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Furthermore, women and children are disproportionately affected by domestic violence. That is why organizations such as W.A.R.M. are vital in our community because they provide support in times of dire need and distress.

Domestic violence affects us all and I will work towards the passage of bills that address this issue.

Assembly Member Taylor's Press Release Honoring the Victims of the Kroger Supermarket and Pittsburgh Synagogue Shootings

I was deeply saddened by the news of the shootings at the Kroger Supermarket in Kentucky on October 24, 2018 and at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh on October 27, 2018. I spoke out against the hate that motivated these attacks as both an Assembly Member in the State of New York and a leader in the community of faith. No community should have to live in fear of succumbing to such horrific acts of violence.

As the national political rhetoric grows increasingly divisive and hateful, the tragedies at the Kroger Supermarket and the Tree of Life Synagogue are a reminder that words have very real and very destructive consequences. We elected officials must recognize that our role should always be to advocate for the rights and safety of all in the communities we are elected to represent. Beyond condemning such abhorrent acts as unacceptable and unjust, our role should be to ensure that such terrible events can never be allowed to transpire again. That is why I supported Rabbi Hazzan Jeffrey Myers, the congregation of the Tree of Life Synagogue, the Squirrel Hill community, and the larger community of Jewish Americans who have shown incredible resilience and strength in the face of such a terrible loss.

As we mourn the deaths of the 11 people killed in the Tree of Life Synagogue and the two people killed in the Kroger Supermarket, we must grow closer to each other not only to mourn the lives cut short but also to heal and rebuild.

Hate has no place in any of our communities. We must stand together to prove that love will always win.



Victory in Opposition to Methadone Clinic



VICTORY!!! – I am proud to announce that the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) denied Argus Community Inc.'s application to operate a methadone clinic at 730 St. Nicholas Avenue. This victory was won because of the concerted efforts of the West 147th Street Block Association, Sugar Hill Neighborhood Coalition led by Carolyn Brown, Community Board 9, and elected officials who were in the forefront of this fight with me. The team of elected officials was comprised of Congressman Adriano Espaillat, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Senator Brian Benjamin, Assembly Member Inez Dickens, Council Member Mark Levine, New York State Comptroller Scott Stringer, and Attorney General-elect Letitia James.

I was among the first to join the community to voice our joint concerns to preserve the historic landmarked brownstone purchased for the purpose of operating a methadone clinic. I am supportive of programs to assist our community; however, the location of the landmarked brownstone was too close in proximity to our schools and churches.

Darlene Bruce, Esq., my counsel, is to be commended for her tireless efforts to assist the community to organize and build relationships with City and State administrators.



Assembly Member Taylor Talks at Yeshiva University

On October 17, 2018, I spoke to students of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work at Yeshiva University about my experiences both as a Reverend and a legislator. Discussion topics included my walk from the United Nations headquarters in NYC to Chicago's south side, my experience on the annual Jewish Community Relations Council (a sponsored trip to Israel for members of the Assembly), and the housing problems in Upper Manhattan. Students were informed of the social impact that these housing issues are having in the community and that upon their entry into the workforce their training will be instrumental when helping patients affected by these issues.



Community Discussion at River Terrace Apartments

On October 18, 2018, I held a community discussion at River Terrace Apartments' South Community Room, located at 157-10 Riverside Drive West. The discussion was open to all 71st Assembly District residents. Invited city agencies were present, including the Department of Transportation (DOT), Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). At the discussion, many of the immediate issues surrounding River Terrace Apartments were discussed including DOT's proposed "Safety City" initiative, which would exacerbate Riverside Drive West's traffic and congestion issues. Some of these traffic issues include the north side of Riverside Drive West turning into a "defacto bus depot"—as described by one constituent. Furthermore, the issue of rude and unprofessional bus drivers was also mentioned. Finally, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene gave updates about the Legionnaires' disease and answered constituent questions.



Helping Tenants Return to Their Apartments

On November 3, 2018, I attended a rally held in support of the tenants of 775 Riverside Drive. I spoke with the crowd and backed their demands to gain access to the building, as well as for the management company to begin renovating the premises.

The building was partially destroyed by a fire over a year ago and, as a result, tenants are still displaced and the entire building has remained vacant. In an attempt to begin discussions about the renovation process of the building and to understand the timeframe in which tenants would return to their apartments, on November 16, 2018, I facilitated a meeting between the building's landlord, Joel Wiener, and the President and Vice President of the Tenant's Association, Dakim Duncan and Sammy Devore.



Assembly Member Taylor celebrates Block Association Day, one of several similar celebrations that the Assembly Member attended in his district this summer.



Request to Test Water at Polo Grounds – Response to listening tour

In response to concerns raised by constituents about water quality, during the June "Listening Tour" at the Polo Grounds Housing Complex, Assembly Member Taylor contacted the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency and informed them that water testing has to be performed in the Polo Grounds.

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ELIJAH SILVERA

On November 17, 2018, there was a tree dedication to honor the life of Elijah Silvera at Jackie Robinson Park. Elijah Silvera was attending a day care in November 2017 when he was given a grilled cheese sandwich despite there being documentation disclosing that he had a severe dairy allergy.

I sponsored the Elijah Bill, No. A10031, which requires childcare service providers to have epinephrine auto injectors, commonly known as EpiPens, on site at all times and to provide comprehensive staff training.

