



May 24, 2021

Mr. Michael P. Hein, Commissioner  
NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance  
40 North Pearl Street  
Albany, NY 12243

**Re: NYS COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program**

Dear Commissioner Hein:

We respectfully write your office on behalf of the Association for A Better Long Island and Long Island Builders Institute, the leading advocates of the region's economic development community, regarding the NYS COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). Specifically, we urge the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to expeditiously administer the over \$2B in ERAP funds so that Long Island's residents severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic can receive assistance immediately.

As you are aware, the federal government provided NYS with over \$2B to assist tenants impacted by the pandemic with rental assistance. Yet, as reported in a recent May 23, 2021 Newsday article, on Long Island, only about 1% of this federal assistance has been provided to struggling tenants. This is extremely disturbing, especially since, in late 2020, NYS was only able to provide \$47.5m in assistance out of a fund of \$100m.

As stated in our prior April 9, 2020 letter regarding ERAP, a direct rental assistance program is the only economically sound option when trying to help those impacted by the pandemic. The nonpayment of rent by residential tenants will lead to a wide ranging crisis, creating a cascading series of devastating effect that initially harms tenants and will then impact local municipalities. Residential landlords, many of which are small companies, use such rental payments for their real property taxes. The inability to provide such payments to our state and local governments will substantially reduce the revenues required by our municipalities to fund much needed health and safety programs for our residents. Only through a program of continued support for both the tenant and the landlord will our economy be able to continue to operate, even in these very difficult times. Therefore, it is urgent that NYS begin to expeditiously administer the \$2B in federal funds to assist tenants with rent.

Furthermore, we urge OTDA to administer a rolling application program, rather than a program that has an open and closed application period. The benefit of a rolling application period allows OTDA to process & administer ERAP funds immediately and not wait for the application period to close before processing applications and administering funds.

**The Association For a Better Long Island and Long Island Builders Institute urge NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to expeditiously administer the ERAP so that Long Island's residents severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic can receive assistance immediately.**

Sincerely,



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Kyle Strober, Executive Director  
*Association for a Better Long Island*



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Mitch Pally, CEO  
*Long Island Builders Institute*

cc: Governor Andrew Cuomo  
Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chairman, NYS Senate Housing Committee  
Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz, Chairman, NYS Assembly Housing Committee  
LI NYS Assembly Delegation  
LI NYS Senate Delegation



May 24, 2021

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Senator Roxanne J. Persaud  
Chair, Senate Committee on Social Services  
LOB 409  
Albany, NY 12247

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins  
LOB 907  
Albany, NY 12224

Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Social Services  
LOB 844  
Albany, NY 12248

State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie  
Chair, Committee on Rules  
LOB 932  
Albany, NY 12248

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

Senator Brian Kavanagh  
Chair, Senate Committee on Housing,  
Construction and Community Development  
LOB 512  
Albany, NY 12247

Commissioner RuthAnne Visnauskas  
New York State Division of Homes and  
Community Renewal  
38-40 State Street  
Albany, NY 12207

Assemblymember Steven Cymbrowitz  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Housing  
LOB 943  
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, Speaker Heastie, Senator Kavanagh,  
Senator Persaud, Assemblymember Cymbrowitz, Assemblymember Rosenthal, Commissioner  
Hein, and Commissioner Visnauskas:

As members of the real estate industry representing thousands of property owners statewide, we again write to you to reiterate the importance of quickly establishing a program for distributing federal aid for rental arrears assistance and providing a date for when New Yorkers can expect the program's application portal to launch.

Every day the State fails to launch a distribution program creates more unnecessary burden for renters and property owners. Nearly every other state, including our neighbors in New Jersey and Connecticut, has launched its program and yet five months after the first allocation for rental arrears we have yet to be told an official date for application intake and review. The current delay is even more concerning in light of the State's poor track record to date in allocating rent relief, with recent reports noting that the previous \$100 million program has distributed just \$47 million to approximately 16% of the households that submitted applications since September.

We share a common goal of full participation by eligible tenants and owner acceptance of the rental arrears' payments. As we have previously stated, we are willing to be partners in efforts to educate New Yorkers on portal usage, application materials, and questions on program design. We cannot coordinate those efforts, or set a date for educational webinars, without a date for the portal launch.

With billions in federal assistance at risk of being lost if not spent by the end of the year, it is your responsibility to get this program online so tenants impacted by the pandemic can remain safely housed and owners can meet their property taxes and other financial obligations.

We anxiously await portal launch.

The Building and Realty Institute

Community Housing Improvement Program

Under One Roof

Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors

Association for a Better Long Island

NYS Builders Association

The Real Estate Board of New York

Long Island Builders Institute

The Small Property Owners of New York

New York State Association of Realtors

Rent Stabilization Association



April 9, 2020

Chairman Brian Kavanagh  
NYS Senate  
Committee on Housing, Construction  
and Community Development  
LOB Room 512  
Albany, NY 12247

Chairman Steven Cymbrowitz  
NYS Assembly  
Committee on Housing  
LOB Room 943  
Albany, NY 12248

**Re: NYS S.8140A – COVID-19 Rental Assistance Program**

Dear Chairmen Kavanagh & Cymbrowitz:

The Association For A Better Long Island and Long Island Builders Institute, the leading advocates of the region's economic development community, strongly support this legislation.

Covid-19 has had a significant impact on residents as well as various industries, ranging from small to large businesses, and has posed a threat to the safety and public health on Long Island. The economic impact of COVID19 is yet to be fully known. Each day, property owners are receiving notification from tenants regarding their inability to pay rent. While property owners are making necessary accommodations during this crisis, a COVID-19 emergency rental assistance program would act as a critical bridge to assist residents and businesses.

While Senators have proposed alternative options toward assisting tenants, steering federal, state & local funding directly to the tenants is the only appropriate and economically sound option when trying to help those impacted by the pandemic. In a March 30<sup>th</sup> [City & State article](#), economist Josh Mason, of the progressive nonprofit Housing Justice for All, an organization our community rarely agrees with, said directly providing tenants funding to make rent payments is "much better, for all sorts of reasons, rather than to have a sort of disorderly wave of rents not being paid and mortgages going into default and the financial institutions are in distress." We stand in agreement with Mr. Mason's statement. If all tenants halt rental payments, property owners will fail to make mortgage and property tax payments, pay utility bills and maintain properties. We only need to review the wreckage of 2008 where mortgage payments ceased, causing loan servicers to default on investor payments, and that in turn led to economic ruin that took years to right. In sum, alternative options do not focus on those individuals, families and

businesses adversely impacted by COVID-19, rather blindly give assistance to everyone, regardless if they are continuing to receive a paycheck and capable of paying rent.

Furthermore, the nonpayment of rent by commercial and residential tenants would lead to a devastating effect on local municipalities. Commercial and residential landlords, many of which are very small companies, use such rental payments for their real property taxes. The inability to pay such payments to our state and local governments, will substantially reduce the revenues being used by our municipalities to provide much needed health and safety programs for our residents. Only through a program of continued support for both the tenant and the landlord will our economy be able to continue to operate, even in these very difficult times.

**The Association For a Better Long Island and Long Island Builders Institute strongly support S.8140A, establishing a COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program.**

Sincerely,



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Kyle Strober, Executive Director  
*Association for a Better Long Island*



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Mitch Pally, CEO  
*Long Island Builders Institute*

cc: Governor Andrew Cuomo  
LI NYS Assembly Delegation  
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