



Property owners, advocates call on state to pay tenants' back rent

A dozen landlords, tenant groups, builders and real estate agents signed letter to Hochul

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Feb. 1, 2022

ALBANY — A letter signed by the leaders of multiple home builder, real estate and property owner associations calls for the state to put \$2 billion toward rental assistance programs.

When Gov. Kathy Hochul revealed her executive budget proposal in January, she included \$2 billion for pandemic recovery initiatives that would be decided by the Legislature.

The letter urges Hochul and the state Legislature to use all of the \$2 billion to rejuvenate the Emergency Rental Assistance Program, citing the need of tenants behind on their rent payments that outstripped the availability of money. There are still more than 188,000 pending applications, although the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, which administers the program, made 108,242 payments worth \$2 billion as of Jan. 18.

ERAP only covers the previous 12 months of unpaid rent, the letter states, falling short for tenants who haven't paid their rent since 2020.

The letter reads, in part: "The immediate availability of state funds could allow for the money to flow more quickly to renters in need. By partnering with courts across the state, these funds could be distributed to prevent nonpayment proceedings from progressing and keep struggling renters in their homes."

Hochul at one point requested a new infusion for New York after money the federal government distributed across the country was reallocated when it wasn't needed.

Hochul asked for nearly a billion dollars, but the federal government agreed to allocate \$27 million.

In conclusion, the letter noted the groups' aversion to evictions, calling it "absolutely the last resort for our members, who make up the majority of the owners and operators of rental housing in New York."

The letter was signed by the leaders of The Building and Realty Institute of Westchester, Community Housing Improvement Program, the state Association of Realtors, the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors, the Real Estate Board of New York, the New York Capital Region Apartment Association, Rent Stabilization Association, The Small Property Owners of New York, Long Island Builders Institute, NYS Builders Association, Coalition of Western NY Property Owners and Association for a Better Long Island.