Today, Bronx Legal Services, the Legal Aid Society, and Neighborhood Housing Services of New York City, Inc. (NHS-NYC) in partnership with the Office of the New York State Attorney General (OAG), the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), Enterprise Community Partners (Enterprise) and the Center for New York Cityâ€™s Neighborhoods (CNYCN), announced the Anti-Displacement Homeowner Help Desk Project, a new initiative that aims to help Bronx residents keep their homes and avoid the predicted wave of foreclosures, deed thefts, and scams following Covid-19.

The initiative will proactively reach out to vulnerable Bronx homeowners to provide them with foreclosure prevention resources, hold workshops to inform them of their rights, and connect them with experienced legal advocates.

“So many Bronx families have been devastated by Covid-19, putting their physical and financial health at risk,” said Alexis Lorenzo, Director of Foreclosure Prevention & Community Economic Development Unit at Bronx Legal Services. “We want to make sure Bronx homeowners have the resources and information they need to weather this storm and stay in their homes once moratoriums lift. Getting ahead of possible foreclosures, deed thefts and scams is key to protecting homeowners from displacement and helping them keep the equity they’ve spent their lives building. We look forward to engaging homeowners and providing them with the tools they need to keep their homes during and after the Covid-19 pandemic.”

Economists are predicting a major wave of foreclosures and displacements once federal and state moratoria expire. The Anti-Displacement Homeowner Help Desk aims to avert this wave by engaging homeowners and community stakeholders through educational workshops that inform and raise awareness of foreclosure prevention resources, and by connecting them to experienced advocates.

The initiative will focus on educating homeowners and community stakeholders in the targeted neighborhoods on the various forms of predatory scams that result in homeowners unwittingly transferring title to their most valuable asset, their homes, to unscrupulous speculators. It will serve as hub for connecting homeowners to free housing counseling services for home repairs, financial counseling, mortgage modifications, forbearance servicer requests and home loan refinancing. The project will also refer homeowners to free legal service providers for assistance on predatory scams that result in equity and deed theft, obtaining clear title to a home left to them by a deceased loved one, representation in foreclosure related court proceedings and in negotiations with entities seeking to foreclose on non-mortgage debt, such a common charge arrears, property tax liens, and water charge arrears.

Bronx homeowners can contact the Anti-Displacement Homeowner Help Desk by calling 1-855-466-3456 or visiting https://HomeownerHelpNY.org.

Tenants will continue demanding better living conditions and justice for those displaced by the fire and will call upon the court to impose penalties for missed deadlines on repairs.

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ABOUT NEW SETTLEMENTâ€™S COMMUNITY ACTION FOR SAFE APARTMENTS (CASA)
Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA), a project of New Settlement, is made up of community residents who work together to improve the living conditions in our neighborhood and maintain affordable housing through collective action. Our ultimate goal is to build a unified and empowered local community. CASA began in 2005, out of the need in the community to improve the poor housing conditions that persist for many families in our area of the Southwest Bronx.

ABOUT BRONX LEGAL SERVICESâ€™ TENANT RIGHTS COALITION
Bronx Legal Servicesâ€™s Tenant Rights Coalition, a program of Legal Services NYC, provides legal and advocacy services to tenants in the Bronx, assisting thousands of tenants to fight evictions, address bad housing conditions, and force scofflaw landlords to comply with the law. Bronx Legal Servicesâ€™s Tenant Rights Coalitionâ€™s work is funded by NYC Human Resources Administrationâ€™s Anti-Harassment and Tenant Protection program.