

**BRONX, NY** (March 1, 2022) – Hundreds of rent-stabilized tenants residing in 1187 Anderson Avenue, 1191 Anderson Avenue, 1195 Anderson Avenue, 1220 Shakespeare Avenue, 1210 Woodycrest Avenue, and 1230 Woodycrest Avenue announce a major victory that allows them to keep their apartments rent regulated and preserves affordability.

The recent decision was made not by a judge, but in the form of an Order and Determination from New York State’s Division of Homes and Community Renewal (DHCR), the agency which oversees rent regulation, which denied real estate investor Isaac Kassirer of Emerald Equity Group’s application to deregulate the apartments and orders the owner to issue rent-stabilized leases to all tenants. Tenants were organized with the help of New Settlement’s membership-driven tenant organizing project, Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA), and represented by Bronx Legal Services’ Tenant Rights Coalition. Assemblymember Latoya Joyner was also instrumental in this victory through her advocacy with DHCR, which often takes years to make decisions, and her strong support of this year-long fight.

“The tenant association is happy about this huge victory,” said **Julius Bennett, 1230 Woodycrest Avenue Tenant Leader**. “But the happiness is not full. Our landlord has not paid Con Edison for months and now we are suffering because of this dishonesty. The building is at high risk of getting the services shut off, we won’t have electricity in the common areas of the building or cooking gas. Enough is enough, we will continue the fight but we need support from our elected officials.”

“Fighting to protect hundreds of Bronx families in my district against the unscrupulous practices of Emerald Equities, I am very pleased that DHCR is enforcing a state law that is designed to assist tenants keep their homes,” **Assemblywoman Latoya Joyner (D-Bronx, 77AD)** said. “I look forward to building upon the strong partnership I have with local tenant leaders and being a vocal advocate for tenants throughout our community.”

In April 2021, tenants first received notices from DHCR informing them that their landlord Isaac Kassirer of Emerald Equity Group filed an application with the agency citing a J-51 tax credit following substantial rehabilitation back in the 1990s. J-51 is a loophole that allows for landlords to deregulate in certain situations in exchange for rehab work. Tenants believe the landlord’s application was an attempt to drive up rents to price them out, deny lease renewals, and push them out of their long-time homes to replace them with higher-paying tenants in the same vein as other neighborhoods have been gentrified.

Bronx Legal Services discovered that the construction in the 1990s was paid for with public funds from the Participation Loan Program, which is governed by Article 15 of the Private Housing Finance Law of the State of New York. This fact protects the buildings from being deregulated and DHCR cited the [statute](#) in its key decision rejecting Emerald Equity’s application.

But the tenants’ organizing efforts and struggle is not over. Tenants continue to demand to force their landlord to repair hazardous conditions in the buildings, including rodents, roaches, mold, leaks, plumbing problems, inconsistent heat and hot water, and dysfunctional elevators. In December 2021, 1230 Woodycrest and 1220 Shakespeare tenants also received a shut off notice from Con Edison, as the landlord has neglected to pay the bills. Tenants held a rally on March 1st to demand the landlord pay their bills.

“The tenants worked hard to organize their neighbors, even during the height of the pandemic, and their hard work paid off,” said **Eliza Schafler, an attorney at Bronx Legal Services’ Tenant Rights Coalition**. “We applaud DHCR’s decision, which recognizes legal protections available to preserve affordable housing for years to come. Unfortunately, Emerald Equity Group is still refusing to make repairs and pay the utility bills. These tenants have suffered for too long, they deserve better, and we will continue to fight for them.”

**Read DHCR’s decisions [here](#).**

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#### ABOUT BRONX LEGAL SERVICES’ TENANT RIGHTS COALITION

Bronx Legal Services’ Tenant Rights Coalition, a program of Legal Services NYC, fights poverty and seeks racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers. For 50 years, Bronx Legal Services has challenged systemic injustice and helped clients meet basic needs for housing, access to high-quality education, health care, family stability, and income and economic security. Legal Services NYC is the largest civil legal services provider in the country, with neighborhood-based offices across all five boroughs helping more than 110,000 New Yorkers annually. The work of Bronx Legal Services’ Tenant Rights Coalition is funded by NYC Human Resources Administration’s Anti-Harassment and Tenant Protection program

#### ABOUT NEW SETTLEMENTS’ COMMUNITY ACTION FOR SAFE APARTMENTS (CASA)

Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) is New Settlement’s housing organizing initiative. CASA is made up of community residents in our densely populated and underserved area of the Southwest Bronx who work together to build our knowledge and leadership to improve the living conditions in our neighborhood and maintain affordable housing through

collective action. CASA's multifaceted work combines building-specific tenant organizing, neighborhood-based campaigns, tenants' rights workshops, legal clinics, monthly community meetings and a leadership development program. CASA also heavily participates in the work of other coalitions that advocate for legislation to preserve affordable housing and better protect tenants.