

BRONX, NY (April 28) – Today, rent-stabilized tenants at 1230 Woodycrest in the Bronx demand that their notorious landlord, Isaac Kassirer is held accountable and fix hazardous living conditions that have gone unchecked for years, including rodents, roaches, mold, leaks, plumbing problems, inconsistent heat and hot water, and dysfunctional elevators. Tenants [sued](#) their landlord in May 2022 with the organizing support of [New Settlement](#)’s membership-driven tenant organizing project, [Community Action for Safe Apartments \(CASA\)](#), and represented by Bronx Legal Services’ Tenant Rights Coalition. Earlier this month, the court imposed ordered the landlord to pay \$270,000 in civil penalties over their failure to make court ordered repairs in timely manner, tenants are now withholding rent until repairs are made, and today attended a court hearing.

"My bathroom is constantly leaking, and we have cockroaches and mice all over our apartment," said **longtime tenant Carmen Rangel**. "I have to keep a cat, because if not the mice would be dancing all over my apartment. This hearing is our moment to reclaim our rights."

"Why are we living in these conditions?" said **CASA and 1187 Anderson Tenant Association Leader**. "Landlords are saying they can't do repairs because of the COVID crisis but my issues started in 2016, so what was their excuse then? My building is also on rent strike, this hasn't been easy, but we are here, and we will not stop fighting, I stand with 1230 Woodycrest."

"We welcome the hearing so we can finally get justice and live in decent apartments," said **tenant leader Julius Bennett**. "We filed a lawsuit against the landlord to get what we deserve: safe, clean and decent homes!"

- **Pictures of living conditions** [here](#)
- **Read the lawsuit** [here](#)
- **Read the civil penalty order** [here](#)

The fight for repairs is the latest battle tenants have waged with their landlord, who has hidden behind shifting names over the past several years. (The deed was signed by notorious real estate investor Isaac Kassirer, whose company was called Emerald Equity Group LLC. But after bad press, the company scrubbed "Emerald" from its public presence. Gary Kassirer still remains associated with the management company). Currently the 41-unit building has a total of 96 open HPD housing code violations. In addition to the repairs in the building, last winter, 1230 Woodycrest and 1187 Anderson tenants received shut off notices from Con Edison, because the landlord has neglected to pay the bills. Tenants held a rally on March 1st to demand the landlord pay their bills and held a townhall with their elected officials on April 5th.

"Since the start of their rent strike, the Tenant Association has been in an active fight for safer living conditions," said **Senator Jose M. Serrano**. "They have conveyed their concerns about repairs that have gone undone and unhealthy living conditions in their apartment. Everyone deserves safe, affordable, and decent housing regardless of where they live, or their financial status. Many thanks to New Settlement, Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA), and Bronx Legal Services’ Tenant Rights Coalition for their work on this issue."

This press conference is the culmination of a series of actions that residents have taken against their landlord. Last year, tenants successfully defeated their landlord’s illegal attempt to remove their rent stabilization after tenants received notices from NYS Division of Housing and Community Renewal (DHCR), the state agency that regulates rent stabilized buildings in New York, informing them that their Isaac Kassirer of Emerald Equity Group filed an application with the agency to deregulate 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 that have been gentrified. Tenants organized to fight the application and won a decision denying the landlord’s application in February 2021. Read DHCR’s decisions [here](#)

"These tenants deserve better," said **Shardae Rookwood, a paralegal at Bronx Legal Services’ Tenant Rights Coalition**. "They have been through hell and back and yet continue to fight for better living conditions and justice of every tenant in their building. We are heartened that the court is taking action to show landlords everywhere that they can't just ignore orders to repairs and must do right by their tenants. We hope this court and courts across the city continue to penalize bad acting landlords for not living up to their end of the bargain. We stand with these tenants and CASA and will not stop fighting until justice is served."

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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.