



NYC
community land
initiative



March 29, 2022

Governor Kathy Hochul
Lieutenant Governor Benjamin
Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins
Assembly Speaker Heastie
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul, Lieutenant Governor Benjamin, Senate Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins, and Assembly Speaker Heastie:

We, the Housing Justice for All (HJ4A) and New York City Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI) coalitions and 36 undersigned organizations, are excited to see support for community land trusts (CLTs), limited equity cooperatives, and other forms of social housing in the Governor's and legislative budget proposals. Social housing preserves public investment in perpetuity, challenges speculative real estate investment, and builds collective wealth in Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), low-income, and immigrant communities across New York State. **We urge you to cultivate New York State's social housing sector by passing the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) [[S221/A3353](#)] as well as including \$50M for the CLT Acquisition Fund and \$1B for social housing conversions in the final budget.**

What is social housing?

According to the [Community Service Society](#), social housing models:

- Create housing in the public interest by redefining it as a public good, like mass transit, libraries, and schools;
- Strive toward social equality by reducing racial and income-based segregation;
- Prioritize democratic resident control, through meaningful resident participation in building governance.

New York State has tens of thousands of social housing units, including the approximately 61,000 limited-equity cooperative Mitchell-Lama apartments in 80 developments and nearly 26,000 Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) cooperative apartments in 1,100 buildings. There is a growing number of Community Land Trusts (CLTs) across the state, like the Fruit Belt CLT in Buffalo, City Roots CLT in Rochester, the Albany CLT, as well as Cooper Square CLT and more than 15 other emerging and established CLTs in New York City.



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By shielding housing from speculative investment, social housing protects residents from both the impact of drastic neighborhood disinvestment and displacement associated with gentrification. Social housing developments helped stabilize neighborhoods through disinvestment in the 1970s and 1980s, and helped keep low- and moderate-income New Yorkers of color in their homes when their neighborhoods gentrified in the 1990s and 2000s. Further, because social housing models remain affordable in perpetuity, they preserve the value of public subsidies more efficiently than time-limited affordable housing models.

Funding for social housing in the FY 2023 budget proposals

Social housing has been sidelined in New York State over the past few decades. We are heartened by the Governor's commitment to invest \$50M in a pilot program for permanently-affordable, community- and resident-controlled housing. We were also glad to see the Assembly and Senate committing state resources to social housing development, including the Senate's \$40M CLT Acquisition Fund and the Assembly's \$1B Foundations for the Future program, which would support limited-equity cooperative development.

Growing the NYS Social Housing Sector

If enacted, the Governor, Senate, and Assembly proposals would go a long way toward making New York State the center of social housing development and preservation. Both of the proposed funding streams need a legal framework that centers existing residents. The **Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA) [S221/A3353]** would create a new legal right for tenants to make the first offer and give first refusal when their building goes up for sale. Tenants would also be able to assign their rights to a pre-approved nonprofit or public housing authority. TOPA would create a pathway for residents, existing CLTs, and other nonprofit developers to convert existing multifamily rentals into permanently-affordable and resident-controlled social housing. Without the expansion of tenants rights that TOPA provides, many low-income New Yorkers will continue to fall victim to unscrupulous landlords and predatory real estate investors.

In the final budget negotiations, we urge you to include **\$50M for the CLT Acquisition Fund**. Given the diversity of housing markets in New York State—some experiencing active disinvestment, while others gentrify—this fund should support both new development as well as acquisition and rehabilitation of existing older structures. Further, because CLTs are a model that is highly adaptable to local conditions, this fund should support the development of various housing types on CLT land, including rentals, mutual housing associations, and owner-occupied homes.



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We also call for flexibility in the **\$1B Foundations for the Future program** to support both acquisition and new development of a variety of social housing models, including limited equity cooperatives and mutual housing associations. In cities like Newburgh, Rochester, Buffalo, and New York City, this funding can be used to support the conversion of distressed multifamily rentals into social housing.

Signed (list in formation),

New Economy Project

Housing Justice for All

Community Service Society

Center for NYC Neighborhoods

Chhaya Community Development Corporation

Community Voices Heard Power!

East New York Community Land Trust

Equality for Flatbush

East Harlem El Barrio Community Land Trust

City Roots Community Land Trust

Cooper Square Committee

TLIO Community Land Trust

Western Queens Community Land Trust

Cooper Square Community Land Trust

WESPAC Foundation, Inc.

Brownsville Partnership

Southern Door Community Land Trust

Genesee Co-op Federal Credit Union

PUSH Buffalo

New York City Community Land Initiative

NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives

Center for Family Life

Habitat for Humanity NYC & Westchester

NYS Community Equity Agenda

Churches United For Fair Housing - CUFFH

Woodside on the Move

Long Island Housing Services, Inc.

For the Many

We Stay/Nos Quedamos

Housing Rights Initiative

Good Old Lower East Side-GOLES

Brooklyn Level Up

Hester Street

TakeRoot Justice

City-Wide Tenant Union of Rochester

Partnership for the Public Good