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April 26, 2018

Hon. Bill de Blasio
Mayor
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor de Blasio:

I write to urge that your office treat the tenants of this city's public housing with the bare minimum of decency required by law, and to urge you not to defend against a lawsuit for justice for NYCHA tenants that simply asks The New York City Housing Authority to fix its heat and hot water issues and provide these wronged tenants with fair financial remedies.

During this past winter, tenants in NYCHA developments all over the city faced incredibly dire circumstances due to extreme cold weather. In many cases, these tenants did not have heat and/or hot water in their apartments, and were forced to live in unacceptable, if not inhumane, conditions in their homes. This was especially problematic during the "bomb cyclone" that struck the city in January, which led to sustained temperatures well below freezing.

As per both city and state law, NYCHA, serving as a landlord, is obligated to establish and maintain certain housing standards. Under the city's laws, heat must be provided between October 1 and May 31 when temperatures fall below a certain temperature. Moreover, the state Multiple Dwelling Law requires owners to provide both hot and cold water 24 hours a day. NYCHA clearly failed to provide these, and has admitted doing so.

A recent lawsuit filed by the Legal Aid Society and Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP, demands that NYCHA compensate tenants financially for going without necessities of heat and hot water. If these tenants had a private landlord The City would not be questioning their right to an immediate fix of the problem and financial compensation, nor should they. However, your administration has decided, to date, that, rather than provide tenants with their just compensation as required by law, it will waste its resources fighting this lawsuit in court.

NYCHA is a landlord, just like any other landlord, and the agency's commitment to its tenants is clear in the law. When housing is not habitable, there should be consequences. Fighting tooth and

nail to avoid the legal requirements of the agency is wrong, and will only serve to further erode the reputation of NYCHA among its more than 400,000 residents, if not all New Yorkers.

It is a matter of principle, ethics, and law--- these tenants deserve compensation that accounts for a lack of basic services. This is a significant issue about fair treatment of lower income people in New York City and about their right to habitable premises.

Give the Department of Housing and Urban Development's recent announcement that it would seek to raise rents on NYCHA and other public housing residents across the nation, it only makes sense that our city does not shirk its financial responsibilities to these tenants. We must protect New York City's economically vulnerable and those otherwise vulnerable in these shocking and difficult times for our Nation. The Mayoral Administration must do the right thing and heed the call of these tenants for just action.

NYCHA needs to meet its legal requirements to its tenants as quickly as possible. They are entitled to compensation. There should be no delay.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruben Diaz Jr." with a period at the end. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ruben Diaz Jr.