



CITY OF NEW YORK

**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR**

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**CHRISTINE BERTHET**  
Chair

**Jesse Bodine**  
District Manager

December 2, 2015

Melissa Mark-Viverito, Speaker  
New York City Council  
250 Broadway Suite 1856  
New York, NY 10007

Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
1 Centre Street, 19th Floor  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: City Council--Intro 214  
Right to Counsel for Low-income New Yorkers  
Subject to Eviction, Ejectment, or Foreclosure Proceedings**

Dear Speaker Mark-Viverito and Borough President Brewer,

At the Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4) Housing, Health, and Human Services meeting on November 19, 2015, members discussed Intro 214, which proposes providing legal counsel for low-income tenants who are subject to eviction, ejectment, or foreclosure proceedings. By a vote of XX for, XX against, XX abstaining, and XX present but not eligible to vote, MCB4 voted to support this proposed legislation.

**Background**

In its years of experience supporting tenants in our District, MCB4 has learned that many of those who are facing eviction are often low-income individuals who cannot afford legal counsel. The city-wide numbers are startling. More than 90% of landlords who bring eviction proceedings are represented by lawyers, while less than 10% of tenants have legal representation in these proceedings. This disadvantage for tenants is compounded by the fact that eviction cases tend to be highly technical, complicated, and therefore hard to navigate without legal support.

It is also evident that homelessness in New York City is rising. The number of New Yorkers who spent each night in municipal shelters has risen 85% in the last ten years.<sup>1</sup> In previous surveys, about 37% of those admitted to the New York City shelter system have indicated that eviction was the leading cause of their homelessness.

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<sup>1</sup> Coalition for the Homeless – Basic Facts About Homelessness

Furthermore, the cost of eviction puts a strain on city resources, such as shelters, and social services for the homeless. The Right to Counsel NYC estimates that full legal representation in Housing Court costs between \$1,600 and \$3,200, while a bed in a municipal shelter costs \$36,000 per year. Additionally, in eviction cases involving rent-regulated apartments, landlords often use turnover as an opportunity to raise the rent on these units.

MCB4 believes that this Intro 214 will help counter the rise of eviction and homelessness rates and help create a more level playing field for tenants who face losing their homes. This bill is already co-sponsored by 38 of the City Council's 51 members and we urge Mayor de Blasio to adopt it.

Sincerely,



Christine Berthet  
MCB4 Chair



Barbara Davis, Co-Chair  
Housing, Health &  
Human Services Committee

Joe Restuccia, Co-Chair  
Housing, Health &  
Human Services Committee

cc: All Local Electeds  
Vicki Been, HPD Commissioner  
Corey Johnson, Councilmember