



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 15, 2015

Press Contact: Tommy Meara

718-309-3506

tmeara@kivvit.com

**LABOR UNIONS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS PRAISE THE CITY COUNCIL'S
EFFORTS TO REFORM THE HOUSING PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT**

New York City, NY – Today, the New York City Council, led by Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal, will introduce legislation that seeks to bring greater transparency and accountability to the Housing Preservation Department (HPD). If passed, this legislation will create an “ombudsman” position within HPD that is responsible for tracking issues with contractors related to wage theft, labor violations, or shoddy construction. The bill also would refine the language used to describe a responsible contractor to ensure the City does not continue to work with contractors that do not have respect for the law or workers’ rights.

“In a joint Contracts and Housing and Building Committee hearing this April, construction workers on City-funded projects described experiencing racism and sexual abuse on the job, in addition to wage theft. I am deeply disturbed that the City continues to fund projects using contractors with a history of illegal and abusive treatment towards their own workers. As the Chair of the Committee on Contracts and an advocate of fairness for all, I will continue to be relentless in stopping labor law violations, large and small, before they begin. This bill aims to stop that bad behavior in its tracks and bring more transparency to HPD. I am grateful to Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito for her leadership in this area, and I look forward to protecting hardworking employees across this City,” said **Contracts Committee Chair Helen Rosenthal, prime sponsor of the bill.**

Prominent New York City labor unions and housing advocates praise the New York City Council for their efforts to reform HPD.

“On behalf of the 17,000 members of the Mason Tenders District Council, and all the honest, hard-working men and women of New York City, I want to thank Speaker Mark-Viverito for the leadership she has shown, said **Robert Bonanza, Business Manager Mason Tenders District**

Council of Greater New York. “We share her commitment to ensuring that New York City’s affordable housing programs are conducted with respect for the law and workers’ rights. I am confident with the Speaker’s involvement, as well as Councilmember Helen Rosenthal’s support and commitment we can attain those goals.”

“Today Speaker Mark-Viverito has once again shown that she, as well as Councilmember Rosenthal are among the staunchest advocates for the working men and women of New York City,” said **Mike Prohaska, Business Manager, Construction & General Building Laborer’s Local 79.** “Thanks to their leadership and the introduction of this bill, the men and women who work on building affordable housing, as well as the residents who ultimately wind up living in affordable housing units, will finally be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.”

“Today Speaker Mark-Viverito took the first step in finally bringing transparency and openness to HPD,” said **Edison Severino, Business Manager, Asbestos, Lead and Hazardous Waste Laborer’s Local 78.** “With hundreds of millions of taxpayers’ dollars committed to the various affordable housing programs, it is absolutely vital that tighter accountable standards be implemented and that all individuals involved be held to the highest standards. Today, Speaker Mark-Viverito and Councilmember Rosenthal have taken a major step in that direction.”

“We are thrilled to see that Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal have taken such a bold step forward on the path to reform HPD,” said **Barrie Smith, President of 100 Black Construction Workers.** “The introduction of local law LS 4679 will ensure that contractors guilty of wage and labor violations, and who leave our neighborhoods reeling from the effects of shoddy construction, will be held publicly accountable for their actions.”

“We applaud Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and City Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal, on the introduction of Local Law LS 4679,” said **Matt Ryan, Executive Director of ALIGN.** “Bringing greater accountability to Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) is a great step forward in reforming what has long been an agency plagued by the lack of transparent contracting practices.”

“Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and City Councilwoman Helen Rosenthal have shown great leadership in protecting our most vulnerable communities with the introduction of Local Law LS4679,” said **Cecil Corbin Director of Policy Initiatives at We Act.** “Poor quality construction in our neighborhoods often lead to leaks, mold, and inferior heating systems, all of which can exacerbate the already high levels of asthma we experience. Implementing oversight in the quality of publicly subsidized construction is an important step in how government can be our partner in promoting healthier communities.”

#