



ASSEMBLYMAN KEITH L.T. WRIGHT'S COMMUNITY UPDATE

May 2014

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Education for Inmates: A Real Chance for Rehabilitation

Greetings, friends and neighbors!

In New York State, there are more than 54,000 individuals who are currently incarcerated and another 36,000 on parole. According to data from the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics, in a 15 state study, over two-thirds of individuals released from prison were rearrested within three years. While New York's recidivism rate of 40% falls well below the national average, we are failing to provide these men and women with the help they need to rebuild their lives and become productive and successful members of society. It is well known that African-American and Latino men and women are arrested and incarcerated at disproportionately higher rates than their White counterparts; these facts continue to weaken and destroy our families and communities. Those who are re-entering society following long periods of incarceration struggle to find suitable and stable housing, support services and worst of all, employment opportunities. It seems that at every turn, the system is designed to spin the revolving door of incarceration.

In the early 1990's Congress eliminated funding for most college education programs in prisons. Sadly, New York State went on to enact legislation that disqualified inmates from eligibility for the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). After years of struggling with societal and economic consequences of isolating a large segment of the population, there is finally hope for change. Earlier this year, Governor Cuomo introduced a proposal to provide education for prisoners and bring the promise of a future after incarceration to the thousands of inmates in New York. Education for inmates is not only the moral thing to do, if our goal as a society is to rehabilitate offenders, it is also the smart thing to do. It costs approximately \$60,000 a year to house an inmate but only \$5,000 a year to educate them.

For many years, the overcrowding of prisons has remained a spotlight issue in criminal justice reform but there are several factors that contributed to this crisis: the use of mandatory sentences for low-level offenses and the gross manner in which our society ostracizes prisoners upon release so that in most cases, they have no choice for survival but to return to a life of crime. We are running out of time to save our communities. With every day that goes by without meaningful reforms like education in our prisons, we are condemning more and more individuals and families to a lifetime of struggle.

As a lifelong resident of this vibrant and culturally rich community, I stand in full support of Governor Cuomo's proposal. Our society has nothing to gain from viewing prisons and the incarceration of our mothers, fathers, sons and daughters as a necessity but the last few decades have shown that we most certainly have a great deal to lose.

Community Happenings

On **Thursday, May 8th**, I invite you to join me and the People Against Landlord Abuse and Tenant Exploitation (P.A.'L.A.N.T.E.) as we discuss the current status of the Tenant Interim Lease Apartment Purchase Program (TIL).

The TIL Program, administered by NYC Housing Preservation & Development (HPD), was created to assist tenants in City-owned buildings to develop low-income cooperatives where they could eventually purchase their apartments for \$250. Today, thousands of low-income families have been waiting, some for more than ten years, for the opportunity to purchase their apartments through TIL. While there has been some progress, there is still a long road ahead.

I hope you will join me for this very important conversation.

Thursday, May 8th, 2014
6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Isabella Geriatric Center
515 Audubon Avenue
New York, NY 10040

For more information about this event please contact Francisco Polanco at (212) 866-5809 or via email: fpolanc1@gmail.com

TEAM WRIGHT AT WORK

Ms. Jones came visited our district office for assistance because her landlord alleged she owed thousands of dollars in rent arrears and various fees. The landlord also refused to repair violations in the bathroom and kitchen. Ms. Jones has a Section 8 voucher and in 2012 her apartment failed inspection. Section 8 refused to pay their portion of the rent until the violations were remedied. Her landlord at the time was Vantage Management, who was notorious for harassing and targeting subsidized tenants. She met with Cathleen McCadden, Senior Coordinator, who worked to resolve the mold and other repairs. During this time the property was sold to a new owner. The new management company was willing to work with Team Wright to investigate and verify the amounts actually owed by Ms. Jones. After collecting all the necessary documentation, Ms. McCadden requested an audit of her account and the new owner found Ms. Jones did not owe any rent or fees. Now, Ms. Jones has submitted a transfer request from Section 8 and is planning to move to another development within the next few months.

BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

On **Thursday, May 22, 2014**, from 9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Citi Community Development will be sponsoring a FREE fundraising workshop, presented by Gregory Cohen, Senior Associate of Cause Effective, which will teach important skills for board members of non-profits including:

- How to set goals that stimulate and measure progress
- How to sharpen your case for support
- How to identify priority targets for personal attention; and
- Who should be the asker

All participants will learn the basic steps in making a face-to-face ask and will complete a practice ask

The workshop will be presented at the **Borough of Manhattan Community College, Richard Harris Terrace 199 Chambers Street, New York, NY**

ALBANY UPDATE

Earlier this week, Mayor Bill de Blasio unveiled his highly anticipated housing plan which details a multi-year strategy for making housing affordable for every New Yorker. The proposal includes reforms to provide relief for rent-burdened households and enhancements for programs that provide critical services for seniors and other supportive services.

At a special meeting of the NYS State Assembly Housing Committee, we were joined by New York City Housing Preservation & Development Commissioner, Vicky Been, who provided the Committee with an overview of the Mayor's housing proposal and the agency's plans to improve the administration of tenant programs.

KID'S CORNER

Community Healthcare Network invites patients who are mothers of children, newborn to school-aged, to their 2014 Baby Prep Rally where they will be offered a free shopping event for baby and kid-friendly essentials

***While supplies last. First come, first serve*

Tuesday, May 13th 11 – 4 p.m.
at CHN's Helen B. Atkinson Health Center, 81 W115th Street
New York, NY 10026

For more information or if you have any problems we can help solve, please do not hesitate to contact our office directly. We are always here to help.

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