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February 1, 2007

Speaker Christine Quirra
New York City Council
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Speaker Quirra:

Persistent and profound residential segregation is one of New York's biggest problems. Separation is the soil in which other problems - like educational segregation, services that vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, mutual mistrust, and even violence - are given room to grow.

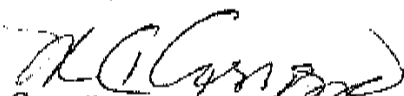
One of the ways by which segregation continues to be perpetuated is through private acts of bias. While housing discrimination has long been illegal under the City's Human Rights Law, our ability to enforce that law in respect to the City's more than 325,000 units of coop housing has been hampered by a simple but effective strategy explicitly promoted by the coop industry: deny families who have been turned down for admission to a coop the reasons for rejection.

Intro 119 offers a sensible and balanced remedy. While the bill explicitly preserves a coop's right to turn someone down for any legal reason, it would require that specific reasons promptly be given. If there were later to be fair housing litigation, the coop would be prevented from inventing a new set of reasons for the occasion. As is the hallmark of any good piece of legislation, Intro 119 is easy to comply with, but difficult to evade. The bill is supported by some 35 civil rights and allied organizations.

Like all civil rights legislation, of course, Intro 119 does have its detractors: some coop trade associations and coop lawyers have sought to stoke fear and misinformation, asserting that the coop way-of-life depends on secrecy. As Council Members, we must look at the greater public interest - an interest that surely demands the transparency that would be mandated by Intro 119.

We are confident that you support the ideals of transparency and the public good disclosure within the coop application process would serve. We urge you to work with us to see that Intro 119 - now sponsored by more than two-thirds of the Members of the Council - becomes law early in 2007.

Sincerely,


Council Member Maria del Carmen Arroyo


Council Member Robert Jackson

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