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## **Senate Housing Committee Approves Major Legislation**

### ***Housing Access Voucher Program to Provide Rental Assistance to Prevent Evictions and Homelessness***

### ***Stronger Housing, Building, and Fire Codes Across the State, Including a Path to Legal Safe Basement Apartments in NYC***

*New York, NY* – State Senator Brian Kavanagh, Chair of the Senate Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development, announced that members of the Senate Housing Committee advanced numerous significant bills during their second meeting of the new legislative session, held on January 31st.

#### ***Housing Access Voucher Program***

Homelessness is a statewide crisis. At any given moment, more than 90,000 New Yorkers are homeless, and many more experience homelessness during the course of a year. Even as the State allocates long-term capital funding to build new supportive and affordable housing, the most effective and immediate way to respond to the most urgent needs is to provide cash vouchers to pay the rent of New Yorkers who would otherwise be homeless or in danger of eviction. To help address these intersecting crises, the Committee advanced the following legislation:

- **[S0568A \(Kavanagh\)](#)** Creates the Housing Access Voucher Program, which provides rental subsidies to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, to ensure all New Yorkers will have access to housing they can afford.

#### ***Strengthening Housing, Building, and Fire Code Enforcement and Making Housing Safe***

Since 2019, the Housing Committee has put a strong emphasis on strengthening New York's enforcement of housing, building, and fire codes. In 2019 and 2020, the Committee held joint hearings and participated in a formal investigation of code enforcement by local governments with the Committee on Investigations and Government Operations. The Committees issued a joint report with numerous recommendations, some of which have been enacted in the ensuing years, and several more of which were on today's agenda. In 2021, flooding brought on by Hurricane Ida killed at least 11 people in basement and cellar apartments in New York City, highlighting the need for greater enforcement of safety standards and the need to make these dwellings safe and legal. In response to a fire at the Twin Parks North West housing complex in the Bronx that claimed 17 lives, including 8 children, on January 9, 2022, the Senate advanced additional proposals in May of last year. Several of those that have not yet been enacted as part of that initiative were also included on today's agenda. The Committee advanced the following bills today:

- [S2276](#) (**Kavanagh**) **Legalizing New York City Basement & Cellar Apartments and Making Them Safe:** Authorizes New York City to establish a program to legalize the conversion of basements and cellars into safe and legal housing.
- [S0333](#) (**Jackson**) Requires routine inspection of non-fireproof buildings for compliance with housing maintenance code and construction codes.
- [S1059](#) (**May**) Requires additional training programs for code enforcement personnel.
- [S1939](#) (**Bailey**) Increases the state code enforcement powers of the Secretary of State.
- [S2196](#) (**Rivera**) Increases penalties for violations of building and fire code standards in NYC, and ensures that penalties are imposed when hazardous conditions are not corrected within 14 days.
- [S2348](#) (**Myrie**) Prevents property owners from using illegal construction to harass tenants by expanding the definition of harassment to include illegal construction such as subdividing rooms or erecting or demolishing walls in violation of fire and building codes, when these actions cause or are intended to cause residents to vacate their homes or to surrender or waive their rights.
- [S2418](#) (**Comrie**) Expands remedies for violations of New York State uniform fire prevention and building code.
- [S2505](#) (**Kavanagh**) Mandates the creation of a statewide registry of all residential rental housing, to facilitate code enforcement and other efforts to maintain housing quality and safety.

#### *Medical Marijuana Use*

- [S2263](#) (**Sanders**) Prohibits the eviction of tenants for the certified medical use of medical marijuana

“These bills reflect the challenges New Yorkers face in securing access to the affordable, safe, secure housing they need,” **said Senator Kavanagh**. “With the Housing Access Voucher Program, we’re working to address the homeless and eviction crises with real solutions and resources. And as we have for several years running, and will continue to do in subsequent meetings this year, we are advancing substantial improvements in every aspect of our systems for establishing and enforcing fire, building, and housing safety standards. The members of the Senate Housing Committee—and the Senate as a whole—are committed to advancing legislation that will address the entire breadth of the housing crises in our state.”