

# New York City Council Introducing New Rent, Debt Protection Measures

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The New York City Council is taking up legislation that would give tenants more time to pay rent and debts Wednesday, as a way of trying to stabilize the city's brutalized economy.

The [COVID-19 legislative relief package](#), introduced at the council's [first-ever remote hearing](#), includes new protections from harassment for all renters, according to a release from Speaker Corey Johnson.

The package features a "NYC Essential Workers Bill of Rights" that prevents the firing of essential workers without just cause, provisions for paid sick leave for gig workers and premiums for essential, non-salaried employees at large companies.

"These bills provide relief where it is needed most right now, including protecting tenants from eviction. It's essential that New Yorkers get the rent cancellation they need, but in the meantime, we need to give renters peace of mind that we won't let them suffer irreparable harms," Johnson said in a statement.

"We must take these steps to help make sure that New York City remains the vibrant, diverse and exciting place it was before COVID ravaged our neighborhoods."

If enacted, the bills would allow renters to have more time to repay rent and to halt evictions and collections of debt. It follows Gov. Andrew Cuomo's statewide 90-day eviction moratorium. Landlords who harass tenants that have been affected by the virus could face a penalty of as much as \$10K, per the statement.

Threatening a commercial tenant that has been impacted by the virus could also be considered a form of harassment under the legislation and may result in a penalty up to \$50K. Personal liability on leases could also be suspended.

"Harassment and retaliation against COVID-19 impacted tenants pose an urgent risk, and tenants must be protected against unscrupulous landlords during these extremely difficult and uncertain times," Council Member Ritchie Torres said in the statement.

As of Wednesday, more than 15,000 people have died from the virus in New York State, and a drastic shutdown of the city has resulted in major economic pain. Landlords, both on the residential and [commercial side](#), had been anticipating a slew of [unpaid rent](#) in April.

While many say this month has not been as bad as they were expecting, May is uncharted territory and [expected to bring widespread problems](#) in unpaid rent and loan waiver requests, as the impact of the lockdowns and the virus becomes more intense.

