



CITY OF NEW YORK

MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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CHRISTINE BERTHET
Chair

ROBERT J. BENFATTO, JR., ESQ.
District Manager

August 6, 2014

Catherine R. Kinney
Chair
Catholic Charities
The Archdiocese of New York
1011 First Avenue 11th Floor
New York, NY 10022

Monsignor Kevin Sullivan
Executive Director
Catholic Charities
Archdiocese of New York
1011 First Avenue, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10022

**Re: St. Joseph's Immigrant Home
425 West 44th Street**

Dear Chair Kinney and Monsignor Sullivan:

On July 21, 2014 members of the Housing, Health and Human Services Committee of Manhattan Community Board 4 (CB4) heard from tenants, advocates, attorneys and elected officials regarding the current situation at the St. Joseph's residence in Hell's Kitchen. The Board is distressed that the plan to increase the rent by \$150 for nearly all of the tenants—a nearly 50% increase for some—is going forward. Many of the residents of St. Joseph's have lived in the building for several decades. They are devoted to the simple, spiritual lifestyle that the Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Conception Convent espouse.

The tenants are hard-working immigrants from all over the world who have been fortunate to find a unique, affordable living situation in a city where affordable housing is extremely difficult to obtain. Raising tenants' rent, without regard to tenant income, will put many of these tenants in economic hardship and at risk of eviction. The threat, by the St. Joseph's management, of being sued in Housing Court is a grave concern as tenant "black-listing" may hinder the tenants ability to find other housing. We also wish to emphasize that finding comparable alternative affordable housing is simply not realistic for the majority of these low income women.

The numerous advocates, attorneys and elected officials involved with this building have reached out repeatedly to Nancy Clifford, the administrator of the residence, to no avail. Ms. Clifford and Mother Mary Jennifer Carroll, the managing agent of St. Joseph's, insist that their hands are

tied and that there are simply no alternatives to this 50% rent increase. The community's attempts to present other sources of cost savings, affordable public financing and offers to facilitate meetings with local affordable housing developers have been met only with resistance. This callous disregard of the tenants is a blatant rejection of the mission of Catholic Charities, to ***“uphold the dignity of each person as made in the image of God by serving the basic needs of the poor, troubled, frail and oppressed of all religions.”***

The members of Community Board 4—which includes both affordable housing developers and members of the clergy among others—are eager to work with all concerned parties to reach a compromise that both keeps St. Joseph's affordable for low-income women and cuts operating costs for the Daughters of Mary. CB4 requests to meet with you and discuss ways that the building owner can defray costs through grant and low cost loan programs. Both Joe Restuccia and Barbara Davis, the co-chairs of the Board's Housing, Health and Human Services Committee, have developed many affordable housing developments in the Hell's Kitchen community and would be happy to offer their expertise and knowledge.

The St. Joseph's tenants understand they are very fortunate to have found such a unique and affordable housing situation. They also understand that operating costs have risen and therefore are willing to pay incremental rent increases. However, for tenants of any income, a rent increase of 50% is difficult or impossible for many to afford. CB#4 believes, working with Catholic Charities and the Daughters of Mary, we can jointly find a way to implement an increase in such a way that would not displace or cause hardship for these faithful long term low income women. We request a meeting with Catholic Charities and the Daughters of Mary to bring this matter to a successful resolution.

Sincerely,

[signed 8/4/2014]

Barbara Davis, Co-Chair
Housing, Health &
Human Services Committee



Joe Restuccia, Co-Chair
Housing, Health &
Human Services Committee



Christine Berthet
Chair
Community Board 4

CC:

Brad Hoylman, NYS Senator
Richard Gottfried, NYS Assemblymember
Jerold Nadler, Congressman
Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President
Corey Johnson, NYC Councilmember
Nancy Clifford, St. Joseph's Residence