

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Public Engagement Unit Announces Live Tenant Helpline to Keep New Yorkers in their Homes

First-of-its-kind call center has capacity to connect thousands of New Yorkers a month to needed tenant resources



Download photos and video of the Tenant Helpline here: [Google Drive link](#); [WeTransfer link](#).

July 17, 2023 The Mayor's Public Engagement Unit (PEU) has launched an important new resource for New Yorkers: a live operator Tenant Helpline. The implementation of live calls represents a permanent commitment to maintain and scale tenant support structures established during the pandemic. The new live call system, along with increased funding for the PEU's Tenant Support Team, will be a critical resource for New York tenants who face potential eviction, landlord harassment, or unacceptable living conditions.

Started in 2020, the Tenant Helpline is a one-of-a-kind tenant resource to inform New York City tenants about their rights and connect them to housing-related resources, including free legal services. Tenants call with issues ranging from concerns about paying rent to questions about leases, harassment and lockouts, and evictions. Because tenants who call the helpline are frequently experiencing a range of interrelated hardships, the Helpline has expanded to serve callers more holistically by connecting them with additional City programs like SNAP, Cash Assistance, Homebase, and One-Shot Deals, and helping them apply for State programs like rent relief and unemployment insurance.

Since the Tenant Helpline's inception, PEU has responded to more than 100,000 calls. Until now, tenants who called 311 for help were referred to a voicemail and received a call back within 48 to 72 hours from PEU's Tenant Support Specialists. With the new live answering capabilities and dedicated Helpline staff, the Public Engagement Unit will be able to more effectively support

tenants facing urgent housing crises. The improvements will mean significantly faster response times, increased capacity to answer more calls, increased staff efficiency, and a better customer experience.

"This new live PEU Tenant Helpline is a one-stop-shop where tenants can learn about their rights and connect with critical housing-related resources," said **New York City Mayor Eric Adams**. "Every day, New Yorkers work hard to build a better future for themselves, their kids, and their families, but we know that many are still struggling to keep a roof over their heads. This Helpline will ensure that New York City tenants have the resources they need in the most critical moments, and will no longer have to wait 48 to 72 hours for a call back for tenant help or talk to an answering machine. We are excited to launch this important new resource to reach more New Yorkers than ever before."

"I am so proud of our team at PEU for constantly working to improve the support that we provide to New York City tenants," said **PEU Executive Director Adrienne Lever**. "This new and improved Tenant Helpline is a critical component of PEU's tenant program, complementing our door-to-door outreach and proactive phone calls. In the midst of a challenging housing landscape, PEU is offering pathways for NYC's tenants in need to get the help they deserve."



PEU Specialists with the Tenant Helpline have already found the positive response has been overwhelming. "I received one call where someone had been trying many different helplines, and this was the first time she was able to connect with a real person. She was emotional hearing my voice. What we are doing at PEU is phenomenal and groundbreaking," said **PEU Tenant Helpline Specialist Deborah Alves**. "This is one of the best places to work and I'm proud of the work we're doing to help New Yorkers."

"To solve our housing crisis, we need to keep New York renters in their homes," said **New York City Deputy Mayor for Housing, Economic Development and Workforce Maria**

Torres-Springer. "This expanded Tenant Helpline will combat housing instability by connecting New Yorkers to the resources they need: from legal services to cash assistance."

"Tenants around New York City are in dire need of increased support to help address their urgent housing-related crises," said **New York State Senator Julia Salazar**. "The launch of the Public Engagement Office's live Tenant Helpline will provide tenants with much-needed, immediate assistance for a variety of issues ranging from landlord harassment to help obtaining repairs. Oftentimes, the concerns that tenants call 311 with are serious and necessitate speaking with someone live rather than waiting for a callback. I am excited to continue to refer my constituents to the PEU's Tenant Helpline now that their service has expanded."

“The threat of eviction, unacceptable living conditions, or landlord harassment creates a wave of anxiety in the minds of New Yorkers in need of assistance,” said **New York City Council Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala**. “In those moments when our constituents are struggling to figure out what to do, it can be daunting to put in a request for help and wait anxiously for a reply. A live Tenant Helpline will provide New Yorkers with access to someone who can help or point them in the right direction immediately. The Tenant Helpline is a critical tool for tenants in the midst of our housing crisis and provides crucial support for tenants at risk of eviction or other housing related issues.”

“Housing resources are some of the most valuable our City can offer,” said **New York City Council Member Erik Bottcher**. “That’s why I am thrilled for the rollout of the new Tenant Helpline through the Mayor’s Public Engagement Unit. The new Helpline allows for live answering capabilities which can connect those in a housing emergency quicker with resources and help. I look forward to continuing to work with this administration to provide more resources that can assist New Yorkers with their housing needs.”

About the NYC Public Engagement Unit (PEU)

The NYC Public Engagement Unit (PEU) was created to develop a new model for government outreach, using community organizing principles to re-envision how the City provides services to its most vulnerable communities. Rather than expecting constituents to navigate a complex City bureaucracy to get the help they need, PEU adopts grassroots tactics to meet residents where they are – at their doors and on their phones, in their social media feeds and in their communities. PEU combines this proactive outreach with comprehensive case management, and in doing so, combats disillusionment and builds long-term relationships between New Yorkers and their government.