



## Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants

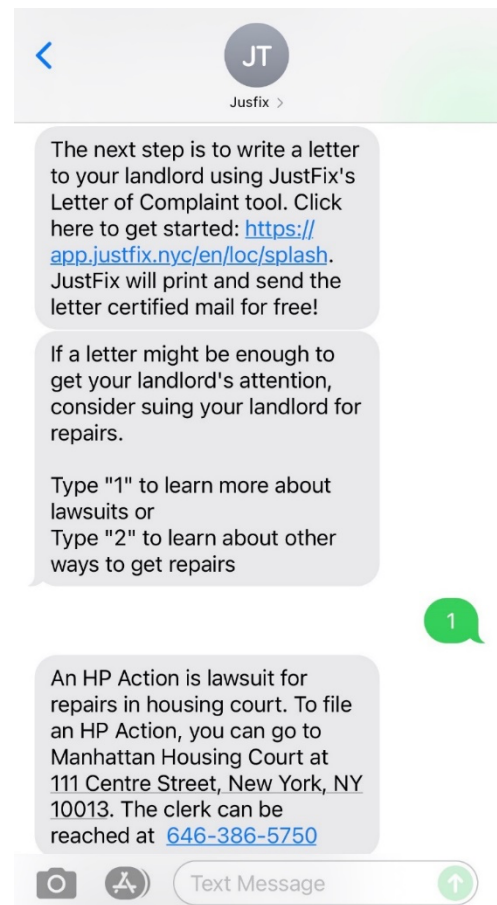
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### THE CITY OF NEW YORK AND JUSTFIX LAUNCH TENANT TEXT TOOL TO HELP TENANTS AND ADVOCATES ENFORCE TENANTS' RIGHTS AND PREVENT TENANT HARASSMENT

**NEW YORK** – The Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants (MOPT) and JustFix today announced the launch of Tenant Text, an SMS-based tool that will help New Yorkers in Inwood and Washington Heights access eviction prevention, anti-harassment, and tenant organizing resources in a time of critical need. JustFix developed the tool with a \$20,000 grant awarded through the NYCx Co-Labs Housing Rights Challenge, a joint initiative of the Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer (MOCTO), Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC), the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), and MOPT.

Tenant Text, an SMS (aka text-messaging) based tool, connects renters in Inwood and Washington Heights with up-to-date information and organizational resources to address their housing questions. Available in both English and Spanish, the service streamlines and simplifies tenants' access to referrals and information when they need them (at any time of day), and meets the needs of those who fall on the less technical side of the "digital divide." Accessible to the elderly and those without ready access to internet-connected devices, Tenant Text offers an innovative, action-oriented, and connected tool.



Over the past year, JustFix worked in close coordination with City agencies, tenants, and tenant organizers in Inwood and Washington Heights to identify action-oriented solutions for connecting tenants with their resources and providing information about their rights.

By texting the word “HOME” or “HOGAR” to (855) 610-2450, tenants can learn about the following topics: rent stabilization, rent control, repairs, succession rights, illegal eviction, roommates, subletting, and rent histories. Tenant Text offers at least 30 concrete actions tenants can take to vindicate their rights and provides connections to non-profit organizations, legal referrals, and government agencies. Tenant Text is set to pilot in Upper Manhattan with the potential for expansion as part of MOPT’s efforts to identify tenants’ needs and provide targeted solutions.

“MOPT works toward goals that include ensuring NYC tenants know their rights, how to enforce those rights, and how to access the City services that can keep them in their homes,” said **Greta Aiken, MOPT’s Enforcement and Engagement Initiatives Manager**. “Resources like Tenant Text move us closer to achieving those goals, as they make usually-complex information about addressing tenant issues accessible all. We thank our partners at JustFix for their vision in designing such an important resource, and we hope we can create more together in the months to come.”

“With easy to digest housing content in English and Spanish, Tenant Text finally answers the call from advocates to create a tool for renters without ready access to tablets, computers, and Internet-enabled devices.” said **Stephanie Rudolph, Deputy Director of JustFix**. “In partnership with the Mayor’s Office to Protect Tenants and partner agencies, JustFix is proud to offer a tool that reaches more New York renters, particularly those finding it harder to access services in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

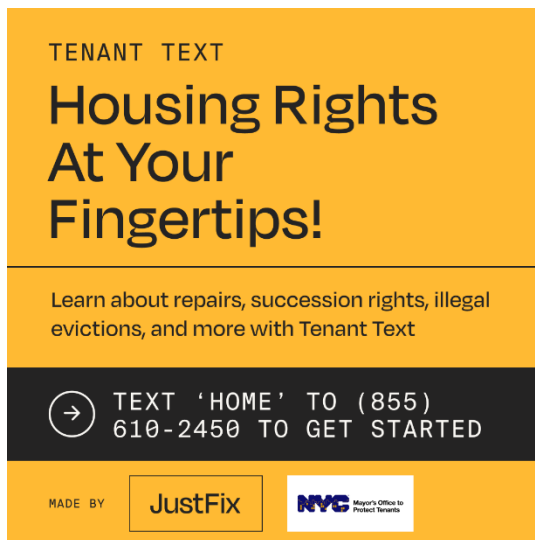
“Knowing your rights and how to claim them -- a daunting task especially for non-English speakers -- makes all the difference when it comes to facing landlord abuse,” said **Oscar J. Romero Jr, Director of Inclusive Innovation & International Cooperation at the NYC Mayor’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer**. “Tenant Text, which is available in English and Spanish, will provide actionable advice for tenants on what to do when facing various forms of harassment and discrimination, from unlawful evictions to unaddressed repairs. This is yet another example of how the deep engagement model of NYC[x] Co-Labs empowers our most vulnerable communities.”

"Built with a deep understanding of tenants' needs, Tenant Text is an example of technology specially designed for New Yorkers in Inwood and Washington Heights that has the potential to scale up to similar communities," said **Shanna Crumley, Senior Innovation Advisor at the NYC Mayor’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer**, "Through this kind of user-centered,

community-driven product development, JustFix is closing an equity gap and ensuring that residents can access the resources they need."

"Creative solutions like Tenant Text provide strategic, targeted, and tailored information to tenants about their housing rights," **said NYCEDC Smart and Sustainable Cities Project Manager Nicholas Kraus.** "We're proud to have worked with our fellow agencies and JustFix to deliver an impactful project that builds stronger communities and neighborhoods in New York City."

"The pandemic highlighted both the precarity of many tenants' housing, as well as the digital divide that left many New Yorkers isolated and unconnected" **said Elizabeth Johnson, Deputy Director for HPD's Neighborhood Stabilization Unit.** "Tenant Text bridges these two challenges by providing a widely accessible way for residents in Inwood and Washington Heights to learn more about their rights as tenants, to act on and claim those rights, and to connect with community organizers and legal services that can help them navigate their options. It will arm tenants with the knowledge and resources necessary to stabilize their housing and stay in their homes."





TENANT TEXT

## Housing Rights At Your Fingertips!

Learn about repairs, succession rights, illegal evictions, and more with Tenant Text

→ TEXT 'HOME' TO (855) 610-2450 TO GET STARTED

MADE BY  

In Fall 2019, MOCTO and NYCEDC launched the NYCx Co-Labs program in Inwood and Washington Heights to support the development of tech-innovative solutions to civic challenges identified by the community. MOCTO and NYCEDC engaged Inwood and Washington Heights residents, representatives of community-based organizations, entrepreneurs, and educators in a series of workshops on housing, education, health, arts & culture, small businesses, and immigrant affairs to surface priority issues.

Through this collaborative process, access to tenants' rights emerged as a high priority need for the community. MOCTO and NYCEDC then engaged HPD and MOPT to launch the NYCx Co-Labs Housing Rights Challenge to identify and develop tech-enabled solutions, calling on innovators from across the globe to respond to the question:

*How might we support the provision of more strategic, targeted, and tailored information to tenants about their housing rights, enabling them to take action?*

While this challenge statement was developed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, it proved even more urgent as tenants across the City faced widespread housing insecurity as a result of the

pandemic. In Fall 2020, the NYCx Co-Labs team selected JustFix's Tenant Text tool as one of two winning ideas for the Housing Rights Challenge.

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### **About the NYC Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants**

The NYC Mayor's Office to Protect Tenants is a core part of the City's strategy to advance safe, affordable housing. MOPT coordinates the City's range of tenant protection resources and leads interagency teams to streamline and enhance enforcement and strategic initiatives to support tenants. With fellow City agencies and external partners, MOPT makes existing anti-harassment and anti-displacement programs better and creates new strategies to root out abuse. To learn more about our office go to [nyc.gov/TenantProtection](https://nyc.gov/TenantProtection). To connect with us, you can complete our [Contact Us form](#).

### **About the NYC Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer**

The NYC Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer (MOCTO)'s mission is to ensure that technology is inclusive, accessible, human-centered, and works for all New Yorkers. MOCTO views technology as a critical tool for making New York City the fairest big city in America. Our work is organized around four pillars: Universal Broadband, ensuring high-quality, affordable internet for all New Yorkers; Inclusive Innovation, making New York City the place where new ideas are applied to improve lives; Digital Services, delivering government services online to make government work better for everyone; and Emerging Tech & Society, advancing laws, rules, and plans that promote the public good and protect New Yorkers' digital rights. Learn more at [nyc.gov/cto](https://nyc.gov/cto).

### **About New York City Economic Development Corporation**

New York City Economic Development Corporation is a mission-driven, nonprofit organization that creates shared prosperity across New York City by strengthening neighborhoods and creating good jobs. We work with and for communities to bring emerging industries to New York City; develop spaces and facilities for businesses; empower New Yorkers through training and skill-building; and invest in sustainable and innovative projects that make the city a great place to live and work. To learn more about what we do, visit us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).

**The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)** is the nation's largest municipal housing preservation and development agency. Its mission is to promote quality housing and diverse, thriving neighborhoods for New Yorkers through loan and development programs for new affordable housing, preservation of the affordability of the existing housing stock, enforcement of housing quality standards, and educational programs for tenants and building owners. HPD is tasked advancing the goals of the City's [housing plan](#) – a critical pillar of [Your Home NYC](#), Mayor de Blasio's comprehensive approach to helping New Yorkers get, afford, and keep housing in these challenging times. For full details

visit [www.nyc.gov/hpd](http://www.nyc.gov/hpd) and for regular updates on HPD news and services, connect with us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @NYCHousing.

### **About JustFix**

**JustFix** co-creates tools with tenants, organizers, and legal advocates to fight displacement and achieve stable, healthy housing for all. We use technology as a means to further housing justice and empower underrepresented tenants to organize, take action against landlord harassment, and fight wrongful evictions. JustFix believes housing is a human right and by leveraging technology with housing justice movements, we seek to shift power to historically disenfranchised communities.