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MORE THAN \$16M IN EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING ISSUED IN WESTCHESTER

*Vital financial aid to cover back rent and utilities
for eligible Westchester County residents and landlords*

New York State also launches separate \$125M program to assist landlords

WESTCHESTER COUNTY, NY (Oct. 14, 2021) – Emergency financial relief is flowing to county residents who applied for the [New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program](#) (ERAP), which covers rent and utility arrears to Westchester households at risk of eviction due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More than \$16 million has been issued directly to landlords and utility companies on behalf of 1,140 tenant households in Westchester County.

New York State also has launched a separate \$125 million program for landlords who were unable to apply for ERAP due to a federal requirement that allowed only tenants to apply. The new [Landlord Rental Assistance Program](#) (LRAP) is providing up to 12 months of past-due rent to eligible landlords whose tenants either applied for ERAP and were denied, declined to complete an ERAP application or vacated the residence with arrears. The program is being administered by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. For information, visit otda.ny.gov/lrap.

One county resident who has gotten assistance is Rohey Mbenga, of Elmsford, who applied for ERAP assistance in June and was recently notified that more than \$33,000 will be issued to her landlord. The assistance was welcome news to the single mother of three, who lost her job at Lord & Taylor in Eastchester when the retailer shut its doors earlier this year. “I was so worried. I couldn’t sleep,” said Mbenga, noting the struggles of finding employment during the pandemic. “I didn’t know what to do. You don’t want to end up in the street, especially if you have kids.”

When Mbenga learned about the program she contacted Mount Vernon United Tenants, one of 13 local nonprofits partnering with Westchester County to assist individuals seeking to apply for ERAP. “The staff was very helpful. They assisted with the application and helped me file online,” Mbenga said, adding she recently landed a new job, at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry.

“We’re so encouraged to see our local residents getting the critical financial assistance they need to cover their rents and utilities so families can stay together in their homes,” said Dennis Hanratty, Executive Director of Mount Vernon United Tenants, a community-based organization that advocates for tenant rights.

“Our staff has been counseling residents and assisting them with applications, so we’re seeing first-hand the value of this program to tenants and to landlords. Knowing there is help for families impacted by the pandemic will be of great reassurance to Westchester renters,” Hanratty added.

The ERAP program has received more than 4,100 applications from Westchester County residents. Applications from eligible residents are still being processed, on a first-come, first-served basis, and residents are urged to apply quickly while funding is still available. In addition, New York State has expanded the household-income eligibility for rental assistance from 80 percent to 120 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI), which, for a household of four in the county, is \$153,000. The funding comes as New York State’s eviction moratorium has been extended to Jan. 15, 2022.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer said: “The response we are seeing clearly shows the need for this federal funding for our most vulnerable residents who have suffered financial hardship because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We encourage all eligible households at risk of housing instability to reach out to our nonprofit partners and get the help you need.”

HELP IS AVAILABLE FOR ASSISTANCE WITH APPLICATIONS

Applicants can call United Way of Westchester and Putnam’s 2-1-1 hotline with questions and to find a nonprofit partner in their community. Rental counseling is available, in English and Spanish, with guidance for gathering documents and access to computers to complete the application online. If you’ve applied and want a status update on your application, call the New York State Office for Temporary and Disability Assistance help line at 844-NY1RENT (844-691-7368).

[Click here to Apply for the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.](#)

ERAP is providing financial assistance for up to 12 months of past-due rent, 3 months of future rent and 12 months of utility arrears payments to eligible tenants, regardless of immigration status. Payments are being made directly to the eligible tenant’s landlord or property owner, and utility company. Westchester is assisting applicants throughout the county, except in Yonkers, where tenants and landlords are working directly with the municipality and its nonprofit partners.

Commissioner of the Department of Planning Norma Drummond said: “We are so pleased to see this funding getting to our tenants and landlords who have been struggling to manage through these difficult times. If you are at risk of housing instability and think you are eligible for this funding, we encourage you to apply right away.”

New York State residents are eligible for ERAP if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Household gross income is at or below 120 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). These income limits differ by county and household size. A household may qualify based on current income or calendar year 2020 income that is at or below 120 percent AMI.
- On or after March 13, 2020, a member of the household received unemployment benefits or experienced a reduction in income, incurred significant costs or experienced financial hardship, directly or indirectly, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The applicant is obligated to pay rent at their primary residence and has rental arrears (rent overdue) at their current residence for rent owed on or after March 13, 2020.
- The household must be at risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability, which can be demonstrated by having rental arrears owed on or after March 13, 2020.

The New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program is being funded by \$2.6 billion in federal aid. For information and to find a nonprofit partner to help you apply, visit Westchester County's [Housing Help page](#). Yonkers residents may visit yonkersny.gov to learn about their unique application process.

The Westchester County Department of Planning conducts a comprehensive work program and shapes and influences growth and development in Westchester County in order to improve quality of life and protect the environment, resulting in more livable and sustainable communities. For information, visit <https://planning.westchestergov.com/>.

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