

#Sandy Evacuees Living In Hotels Get Court Hearing

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Hundreds of displaced Superstorm Sandy victims are safe from eviction from dozens of hotels paid for by the city — at least until tomorrow afternoon.

A New York Supreme Court judge will hear arguments tomorrow from the city and attorneys representing five evacuees [who face eviction from the city's hotel program](#) , which was supposed to terminate at the end of April .

While the city said on Monday night that the [restraining order wasn't properly processed](#) , the evacuees housed in any of the more the 50 hotels citywide can count on at least one more night.

Arguing on behalf of the five evacuees, the Legal Aid Society says that the city needs to secure an extension for those New Yorkers with no other housing options, which includes at least 125 households.

During a City Council hearing last Friday, Department of Homeless Services Commissioner Seth Diamond told Council members that another 71 households rejected the options given to them by DHS and its hired caseworkers.

One of the many Sandy evacuees at Friday's hearing told Gotham Gazette today that she got a letter from DHS on Saturday telling her that she and her family could stay until May 31. Cherell Manuel said that she didn't know how many of her fellow evacuees at the Park Central hotel recieved a similar notice.

Manuel, a mother of four children with the youngest aged 7, said she was relieved that she didn't have to leave the hotel tonight. Even so, she's ready to move on.

"I'm praying that I can find something because I'm really tired of living in a hotel," Manuel said.

While she isn't one of the five evacuees named in the lawsuit against the city, more than 300 other New Yorkers might be saved from dropping out of the hotel program if the court decides in their favor.

Legal Aid Society attorney Judith Goldiner said that the goal is to secure the same temporary housing that the evacuees have counted on until they can transition back into their own stable housing.

"Nothing is standing in the city's way from making appropriate, long-term opportunities available for Sandy evacuees," Goldiner said.

In a statement, DHS spokeswoman Barbara Brancaccio called the city's hotel program "generous, intensive and unprecedented," having served more than 1,500 households over the last six months.

She added that the department was also willing to provide financial support by way of brokers fees, security deposits, first month's rent and furniture funding. Those evacuees that would have been evicted tonight, Brancaccio said, will either rely on their families or on the city's social services programs.

"Although vast, this was a finite program and was never intended to be open-ended," Brancaccio wrote.

Tomorrow's hearing is scheduled for 2 p.m. in Manhattan Supreme Court.

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