

To the Editor:

We are excited to write in support of El Barrio's Operation Fightback and Artspace's collaborative effort to renovate PS109 into 64 units of affordable live/work space for our local artists and their families. Unfortunately, a recent op-ed in *Tiempo* erroneously reported that 50% of the units would be market rate. In fact, ALL 64 units will be affordable, meaning that those artists who qualify will be earning at or below 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI) – that's at or below \$38,400 a year.

The PS109 project is a visionary partnership between El Barrio's Operation Fightback, a group that has served our community for over 20 years by providing low-income housing and social services, and Artspace Projects, the nation's leading nonprofit developer for the arts. These two organizations have come together to transform an abandoned building into a new center for arts, culture, and education that will help anchor a new cultural corridor in El Barrio/East Harlem.

We understand the disappointment of those who had hoped to see PS109 returned to use as a public school--we share that disappointment. But, it would be prohibitively expensive to adapt this 19th century building to the educational needs of children in the 21st century. Understanding that the City of New York and the Department of Education have decided that renovation of the existing building is not a viable option we welcome El Barrio's Operation Fightback and Artspace's plan for PS109, which will save and refurbish this beautiful and historic building.

In the end, this project will create affordable housing, strengthen our cultural infrastructure, and provide much-needed community gathering and education space. Furthermore, there is a serious effort to incorporate green technology in this project--something we all welcome. We are delighted that El Barrio's Operation Fightback and Artspace Projects have taken on this challenge on behalf of our community, and we fully support this innovative project.

Respectfully,

Congressman Charles B. Rangel
15th Congressional District

Hon. Jose M. Serrano,
New York State Senator

Hon. Adam Clayton Powell, IV
New York State Assemblyman

Hon. Melissa Mark Viverito
Councilmember, New York City Council