

# Speaking Up about My Housing

Martha Salas

**BEFORE YOU READ:** Have you ever had a problem with your housing? If so, what did you do about it?

## Rats, Mice, and Trash

I moved to this apartment building in 2012. Over these years, I have seen many things happen in our building. They are not pleasant, and that is NOT acceptable. There were rats and mice, trash on the floor for many days, extremely dirty carpets, and walls that needed painting.

In our building, when we need something repaired, we call the landlord. However, he usually does not answer the phone. If we leave a message, he does not usually call back. If the landlord decides to fix something for us, he usually takes three to six months. Many tenants fix things by themselves.

## I Reached Out for Help

One day, I got tired because these things happened very often to us. I decided to ask for help. I went to the Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC). The LEDC helps the neighborhood in many ways. In my case, they helped me bring inspectors from the DC government to see our building. I also contacted my representative at the Advisory Neighborhood Commission. These authorities took action in our building. They made sure that the landlord made big changes at our building.

The landlord had never listened to us until now. Even though I am very busy at school, I will continue to speak up about my building because there are other issues to resolve.

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## What Can You Do?

**What was the problem** Martha faced, and what did she do about it?

**Do some research** online and see if you can find 1) a community organization that might be able to help with local housing problems, and 2) a local government official (for example, a city councilor or someone in the mayor's office) who could support you.

**If you have a problem with your housing,** talk to your neighbors to find out if others are having the same experience. Write an email to the community organization and/or the government official. You could also call or visit them. Report back to the class about what happens.