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CITY OF NEW YORK
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

-----x

**VIRTUAL ZOOM
PUBLIC MEETING
OF
THE DIRECTORS**

-----x

June 10, 2020
4:00 p.m.

B e f o r e :

DAVID REISS,
THE CHAIR

1

2 A P P E A R A N C E S:

3 Board of Directors:

4 David Reiss, The Chair

5 Cecilia Joza

6 Alex Schwartz

7 Christian Gonzalez-Rivera

8 Christina DeRose

9 Patti Stone

10 Scott Walsh

11 Leah Goodridge

12

13

14 **S T A F F:**

15 Andrew McLaughlin

16 Executive Director

17 Brian Hoberman

18 Research Director

19 Danielle Burger

20 Deputy Research Director

21 Charmaine Superville

22 Office Manager

23

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2

P R O C E E D I N G S

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: So board

4

members, can you hear me?

5

VOICES: Yes, we can hear you.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So we

7

have simultaneous translation in Spanish today.

8

You're welcome to listen in

9

Spanish if you want when they testify. At the

10

bottom of the screen, you'll see interpretation

11

button on Zoom. If you want to receive that

12

interpretation in English, just have the English

13

channel going all the time so that when there's

14

someone who's testifying in Spanish, you will hear

15

it in English at the same time.

16

If you have it off and there's

17

nothing and you speak Spanish and you want to hear

18

it in Spanish, that's fine as well.

19

So it's up to you but I just want

20

to point that out.

21

Okay.

22

Andrew, do you -- we have a

23

quorum. What's our norm. Should we wait a little

24

or -- we have me;

25

Alex;

1

2

Christina;

3

Patti; and,

4

Cecilia.

5

Yet -- I know Sheila's not going

6

to be joining us. So it sounds like she won't be

7

able to attend. Right.

8

So we're waiting on Maria and

9

Christian.

10

I spoke to Christian recently. I

11

know he's -- I know he's, you know, planning on

12

being here.

13

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Well, let's

14

see. Well, what is your feeling, Dave, do you want

15

to give them a couple of more minutes?

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Are we being

17

heard by the public right now or --

18

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yes. The

19

attendees can hear us, yep.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So I'm

21

going to make the following suggestion to the

22

members who are in attendance. Unless I hear

23

otherwise from anyone, I think -- and we're also

24

missing Scott.

25

So I think I would just start

1

2 because we have a quorum and we have a lot of
3 people waiting to talk.

4

MS. STONE: Yeah, Scott -- Scott
5 may be a little late because I know he had a call.
6 So don't wait for Scott.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

8

And I haven't heard from Leah.

9

I'm pretty sure Christian is
10 planning on being here.

11

Unless I -- well, here's Leah.

12

Here's Leah.

13

So I'm going to recommend that we
14 proceed unless someone dissents from that
15 recommendation.

16

(No response.)

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So,

18

Andrew, I think we're going to proceed.

19

So we're going to open it up and
20 I'm just going to start with the announcements; is
21 that correct?

22

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yes.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

24

Brian, will you tell me when I can
25 start speaking?

1

2

MR. HOBERMAN: Please start.

3

We're on YouTube already. You can go ahead

4

whenever you're ready.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

6

Thanks, Brian.

7

I'd like to welcome you to this

8

first public hearing of the New York City Rent

9

Guidelines Board. And this is the first of two

10

public hearings to consider comments concerning

11

proposed rent adjustments for renewal leases, for

12

leases for apartments, lofts, hotels and other

13

housing units subject to the Rent Stabilization Law

14

of 1969 and the Emergency Tenant Protection Act of

15

1974.

16

These adjustments will affect

17

renewal -- will affect -- I'm sorry. These

18

adjustments will affect leases commencing between

19

October 1st, 2020 through September 30th, 2021.

20

I will now take roll call. Please

21

respond if present.

22

Christina DeRose.

23

MS. DE ROSE: Present.

24

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sheila Garcia.

25

(No response.)

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Not present.

3

Christian Gonzalez-Rivera.

4

(No response.)

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Not present.

6

MS. STONE: No, he's just joining.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, let's give

8

him a second.

9

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Hi.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hey, Christian.

11

Present, yes.

12

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Yes.

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Obviously, yes.

14

Leah Goodridge.

15

(No response.)

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Leah, we can't

17

hear you. I believe you're -- I saw you on. I

18

think she may have dropped off.

19

All right.

20

So currently, Leah is not present

21

but I know she was on. She must be having

22

technical issues so we'll come back to that.

23

Cecilia Joza.

24

(No response.)

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: I see -- Cecilia,

1

2 you're muted so we can't hear you.

3 (No response.)

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

5 Cecilia, let me see if -- can we
6 unmute her from our end? No. That's not possible,
7 Andrew.8 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Ask her to
9 unmute.10 MS. BURGER: Yeah, I asked her to
11 unmute.12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Let me
13 just keep going through and then we'll come back to
14 those who are having technical issues.

15 Alex Schwartz.

16 MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Patti Stone.

18 MS. STONE: Present.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Scott Walsh.

20 (No response.)

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Scott Walsh.

22 (No response.)

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: I also see
24 Scott's in attendance.

25 MR. WALSH: Present. Present.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

3

Thank you, Scott.

4

David Reiss, present.

5

Let me go back to Cecilia.

6

Can you hear us? We -- you look

7

still muted.

8

MS. JOZA: Present.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thanks, Cecilia.

10

And is Leah back on the -- on the

11

list. I don't see her.

12

So I'm going to assume that Leah

13

has technical issues and we'll acknowledge her when

14

she responds.

15

But in any case, let the record

16

show that we have a quorum.

17

The next meeting of this board

18

will be a public hearing on June 11th. This will

19

be our last public hearing to comment on the

20

proposed guidelines.

21

The hearing will take place on

22

Zoom from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. And the details

23

for attending the hearing can be found in the

24

meeting schedule on our website, nyc.gov/rgb or by

25

calling 212-669-7480 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00

1

2 p.m.

3

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25

We'll also be taking comments on the proposed guidelines outside of our public hearings. This testimony must be submitted no later than tomorrow, June 11th. You can find information on submitting testimony on our website, nyc.gov/rgb or you can leave audio testimony by calling 929-256-5472.

The final vote will take place on June 17th starting at 7:00 p.m. It will be held online through Zoom. The details for viewing the vote on YouTube can be found at the meeting schedule on our website, nyc.gov/rgb or by calling 212-669-7480 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

I'd like to thank you all for attending this public hearing. The board is looking forward to hearing from many of you regarding the proposed rent adjustment guidelines.

Let me just do my thanks, again, to the staff for coming up to speed on doing hearings on Zoom. This is new for the RGB. It's new for almost every government agency but it was handled incredibly well or maybe I should do these thanks after the meeting, after we see how smoothly

1

2 it goes. But I'm grateful for all the hard work
3 that was put in on such short notice.

4

Before we proceed with testimony,
5 I would like to go over the rules and procedures
6 for those who are testifying before the board.

7

We will begin with speakers who
8 registered in advance. We will alternate between
9 tenants, owners and public officials with a
10 speaking limit of two minutes per person. If there
11 is time at the end of the hearing, we will then
12 hear from unregistered speakers on a first come,
13 first serve basis. We will explain how to do that
14 after all registered speakers have spoken.

15

We will periodically display a
16 list of upcoming speakers and will announce them
17 verbally for those joining us by telephone. When
18 it is your turn to speak, a staff member will
19 promote you from an attendee to a panelist and you
20 will have the ability to speak and display your
21 video if you so choose.

22

If you are attending a Zoom
23 hearing with a name or phone number that differs
24 from the name or phone number you registered with,
25 we will not be able to identify you and you may

1

2 lose your place in the queue. If you're not an
3 attendee of the hearing at the time your name is
4 called, you will also lose your place in the queue,
5 although we will certainly make efforts to reach
6 everyone who has -- who has registered.

7 A two-minute timer will begin and
8 will be displayed periodically during your
9 testimony. At the conclusion of your testimony,
10 you will become an attendee again without speaking
11 privilege as we move on to our next speaker.

12 There is a Spanish interpreter
13 here today to listen to English testimony in
14 Spanish. Please use the interpretation button to
15 choose the Spanish channel. If you would like to
16 listen in English, you can choose the English
17 channel to hear Spanish speakers interpreted into
18 English.

19 If you do not choose an
20 interpretation channel, you will hear all testimony
21 in the native language of the speaker. If you are
22 using a Zoom app on a Smartphone, you may find the
23 interpretation button by pressing the more button.

24 If you would like to listen to a
25 hearing with simultaneous interpretations in

1

2 Spanish and do not have access to the Zoom app,
3 mobile device or computer, you may do so by calling
4 646-558-8656 and entering meeting ID 83528901027
5 and then press the hash tag and then hash tag
6 again.

7 If you are listening to Spanish
8 translation by telephone and plan to testify during
9 the hearings, you will have to switch over to the
10 main webinar to testify.

11 Interpreters in the main hearing
12 will translate your testimony for the board.
13 Before it is your turn to speak, call 646-558-8656
14 and then enter meeting ID 87476147429 and then
15 press hash tag and then hash tag again.

16 We expect many speakers and the
17 board wants to hear from as many speakers as
18 possible in the limited time we have for this
19 hearing. We understand that it may be difficult to
20 say everything you want us to hear in just two
21 minutes but please understand it is our
22 responsibility to make sure that everyone who has
23 taken the time to come here and testify, will have
24 a fair opportunity to be heard.

25 I will be pretty strict with that

1

2 two minute time limit so please accept my apologies
3 in advance and thank you for your cooperation.

4

All right.

5

6 I think we can now move on to
speakers. I understand that --

7

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Excuse me,

8

David. One second.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

10

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I think it's

11 important that we translate the option of listening

12

to Spanish on the telephone.

13

So, Liz, what I'll do is put up

14

the -- the information on this -- share it on the

15

screen, Liz. And if you can read it out in

16

Spanish, that would be great.

17

MR. HOBBERMAN: She's currently

18

the interpreter. She may not be able to hear you.

19

I'm not sure.

20

Liz.

21

(No response.)

22

MS. BURGER: Brian, I thought

23

Olvin was interpreting right now.

24

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: He's a panelist.

25

No, I thought Liz was the panelist

1

2 interpreter.

3

4 interpreter now.

5

6 interpreting?

7

MR. HOBERMAN: Not currently.

8

9 us?

10

OLVIN: Yes, I can.

11

12 wouldn't mind translating what's on the screen into
13 Spanish.

14

THE INTERPRETER: Sure.

15

(Interpreting into Spanish.)

16

17 announcement?

18

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yes.

19

20 attendees are raising their hands. We're going to
21 ask that public officials raise their hand and when
22 you hear your name called or see your name on the
23 list of upcoming speakers, that you then raise your
24 hand.

25

I also see that there are some

1
2 people who are only using their first name. That's
3 fine unless you're speaking. As it was explained
4 when you registered, we need to be able to find
5 you. So if there's some way that you can change
6 your name to your full name that you registered
7 with, maybe you need to come out and come back in.
8 But it's going to be very difficult for us to
9 identify that you're the person who registered if
10 it's only your first name.

11 And with that we do have some
12 public officials here. If you could raise your
13 hands.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: It's my
15 understanding -- and, Danielle, tell me if you need
16 me to do something else, but it's my understanding
17 that we have:

18 City Councilmember Helen

19 Rosenthal;

20 We have State Assemblywoman, Linda

21 Rosenthal; and,

22 We have City Councilmember Keith

23 Powers.

24 MS. BURGER: Correct.

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: And I think we're

1

2 expecting to hear from them in that order.

3

MS. BURGER: Yes.

4

Yes.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: So I think we
6 will start with City Councilmember Rosenthal.

7

MS. ROSENTHAL: Can you hear me?

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes,

9

Councilmember.

10

Thank you for joining us.

11

MS. ROSENTHAL: Thank you.

12

Just one minute. Every Zoom has

13

its own life.

14

My name is Helen Rosenthal. I

15

represent the Upper West Side, the Sixth District.

16

The RGB panel has reviewed the

17

reports and many testimonials about increases and

18

what makes sense in this very unusual situation

19

over the COVID-19 pandemic.

20

And under these circumstances, I

21

argue very strongly that a zero percent increase on

22

one leases and on two year is exactly what's

23

required to stop the potential mass onslaught of

24

evictions to come.

25

My district office has heard from

1

2 many constituents who have lost their income,
3 depleted their savings in order to pay rent and
4 only to be left unemployed shortly thereafter.

5

The toll of the pandemic has
6 attacked all aspects of daily life including all
7 the increases of insecurities, a terrible blow to
8 our community.

9

The City gives tax breaks to
10 owners. We're about to vote on some in the City
11 Council. If they pass -- if they pay off their
12 property taxes early and then, also, a year to pay
13 their taxes in full, while rent regulated tenants
14 are mostly seniors, health care workers, City
15 employees, essential workers who have bravely
16 helped New York City in our hour of need. We need
17 to give them a break as well.

18

And that is why under these trying
19 circumstances, we have to act with care to protect
20 tenants. And for that reason, I call for no rent
21 increase.

22

Thank you.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you

24

Councilmember.

25

That sets a great precedent for

1

2 people to stay within two minutes.

3

4 And our next speaker will be State
5 Assemblymember, Linda Rosenthal.

6

7 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ROSENTHAL: Hi.
8 Sorry about that.

9

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello.

11

12 ASSEMBLYMEMBER ROSENTHAL: Sorry
13 about that. Okay.

14

15 I'm Assemblymember Linda B.
16 Rosenthal. I represent the 67th Assembly District,
17 which includes the Upper West Side and parts of
18 Hells Kitchen in Manhattan.

19

20 I stand before the RGB in the
21 midst of the COVID-19 pandemic that has claimed the
22 lives of nearly 25,000 New Yorkers, rendered 1.9
23 million New Yorkers jobless and caused unemployment
24 levels to skyrocket to rates reminiscent of the
25 Great Depression.

26

27 I believe a rent rollback for the
28 millions of unemployed and desperate tenants
29 battling to stay physically safe and financially
30 afloat during this tumultuous and harrowing time is
31 the best way to go. It would be irresponsible for
32 the RGB to approve a one percent rent increase for

1

2 the second year of a two-year rent stabilized lease
3 without a clear understanding of how the COVID-19
4 pandemic will reshape the country's economy.

5 Just today the Federal Reserve
6 announced that unemployment rates could hover
7 anywhere from 9.3 percent to 5.5 percent over the
8 course of the next few years. Issuing a rent
9 increase, however small, will harm those who could
10 still be out of a job or clawing their way out of a
11 steep financial hole.

12 Since mid March of 2020, the City
13 has lost approximately 885,000 private sector jobs
14 and is currently grappling with a 14.2 percent
15 unemployment rate.

16 The federal government has
17 reported a 40 percent overall increase in SNAP
18 enrollment and the State has provided an additional
19 \$880 million in food assistance.

20 The RGB -- the members of the RGB
21 should listen to some of what my office hears on a
22 daily basis from constituents who we need help
23 navigating the unemployment system, ask how to sign
24 up -- okay.

25 I call for --

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

3

Assemblymember.

4

Do you want to just wrap it up?

5

ASSEMBLYMEMBER ROSENTHAL: Yes, I

6

will just wrap it up.

7

Approving a rent increase based on

8

incomplete and stale data during this pandemic is

9

nothing more than a victory for corporate landlords

10

with large diverse portfolios who have the means to

11

capitalize on even the smallest increase.

12

The RGB must draw a line in the

13

sand and stand up for the working class men and

14

women across this City who are a hair's breadth

15

away from homelessness by issuing a rent rollback.

16

Thank you very much.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

18

Assemblymember.

19

Our next speaker is City Council

20

Member Keith Powers.

21

COUNCILMEMBER POWERS: All right.

22

Hi, guys. Hope you can see me.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes,

24

Councilmember.

25

Thank you.

1

2

COUNCILMEMBER POWERS: Hi, there.

3

I'll just summarize because I know

4

two minutes is an important goal here.

5

My name is City Councilmember

6

Keith Powers. I represent the Fourth Council

7

District, which encompasses the east side of

8

Manhattan and midtown west, including Stuyvesant

9

Town and Peter Cooper, midtown, upper east side.

10

And I'm here to echo what my

11

colleagues have said already, which is that a zero

12

percent increase this year -- a zero percent

13

increase next year is tremendously important to the

14

constituents in my district right now.

15

As a rent regulated tenant myself

16

and representing many thousands in this City in my

17

district, I can tell you right now that with COVID

18

particularly, there is a distress signal out there

19

from many constituents about if they're going to be

20

able to pay the next month's rent.

21

And in various parts of my

22

district, we've seen landlords step in to help out,

23

to provide programs to help with assistance. But

24

this minor thing with the Rent Guidelines Board

25

will have a tremendous impact for people by giving

1

2 them certainty about what their next rent increase
3 will be and making sure their apartment is
4 affordable.

5

6 I will take every single day, I
7 read on my tenants association page and on Facebook
8 another tenant who says, why am I getting a rent
9 increase in the middle of a pandemic. I'm trying
10 to hang on.

11

12 There's countless stories and
13 examples of that right now. I really implore the
14 Rent Guidelines Board to do what's right for
15 tenants. This year stand up for the zero percent
16 increase that you recommended. I think all the
17 numbers you presented in your -- in your -- the
18 Rent Guidelines presented evidence of that. I can
19 tell you my constituents are feeling that pain.
20 This one measure amongst many that you can take
21 that would have a meaningful impact to the east
22 side of Manhattan and my constituents.

23

24 So I'll leave at that. I
25 submitted testimony in full.

26

27 I want to thank you all for your
28 service in navigating in a difficult time.

29

30 This would be a very meaningful

1

2 step for many constituents. I really ask that you
3 stay with your zero percent recommendation.

4

Thank you.

5

6 Councilmember.

7

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: David.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

9

10 Councilmember, maybe even the Assemblymember before
11 and the other Councilmember, if you have written
12 testimony you want to submit, you can certainly do
13 so by e-mail at ask@nyc.rgb.org.

14

So please submit that if you'd

15

like.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Shall I continue
17 with our list, Andrew?

18

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I think we're
19 ready to go. Yes.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So I'm
21 just going to -- it's on the screen but I know not
22 everyone is looking at this on the screen. So I'm
23 going to read out the names of our next five
24 speakers. This is taken in the order of
25 registration or the people that registered for

1

2 slots and we're taking them in that order.

3

4 are:

5

Anne Greenberg;

6

Jorge Jorge;

7

Angela Fernandez;

8

Ann Heaney-Korchak; and,

9

Kathleen Wakeham.

10

So we'll start with Anne

11

Greenberg.

12

And as a reminder, please limit

13

your testimony to two minutes and I will be pretty

14

firm about that so that everybody has a chance to

15

speak.

16

MS. BURGER: And if these five

17

people could raise their hands so we can find you

18

more quickly, we would appreciate that.

19

MS. GREENBERG: Can you hear me

20

now?

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

22

MS. GREENBERG: Okay. Great.

23

My name is Anne Greenberg. I'm a

24

rent stabilized senior citizen in Peter Cooper

25

Village in Manhattan and vice president of our

1

2 tenant's association. I'm a life-long resident and
3 I've lived in my current apartment for nearly 33
4 years.

5

Right now is as the Keith
6 mentioned, my community is hurting. We need the
7 rollback or a freeze. Neighbors are breaking their
8 leases with the landlords' blessing. They've lost
9 their jobs. They've lost their income.

10

Neighbors who can't afford the
11 current increases are moving out because even
12 one-and-a-half percent can be too big a dollar
13 amount.

14

Some neighbors used their rent
15 security to cover all or part of their rent but we
16 don't know what will happen going forward. And in
17 our roommate situations, the loss of even one of
18 three incomes may mean the apartment has to be
19 vacated. Younger neighbors are some of the
20 essential talent that drives our City. Not
21 everything can be done remotely.

22

But here's the bright spot for
23 landlords. Fourteen straight years of increased
24 NOI, so it's down a little bit this year. But does
25 that even remotely compare with what tenants are

1

2 suffering. Business entails risk. The fat years
3 have to protect against the lean ones.

4 MCI's, my rent is littered with
5 them and one is \$119 forever. Preferential rents
6 supplied a 6,200 apartments in Stuyvesant Town and
7 Peter Cooper Village and every time one of them is
8 vacated, Blackstone can jack the rent up all the
9 way to the legal rent. My landlord charges \$150 to
10 fish something out of the toilet. Laundry prices
11 go up every year. Paid storage went up 69 percent
12 in seven years and it's \$50 if you lock yourself
13 out of your apartment.

14 So times are tough. And tenants
15 are suffering and landlords have to take a haircut
16 too. The RGB has the power. Don't contribute to
17 our City's homelessness. Do the right thing so we
18 can stay in our homes.

19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
21 Greenberg.

22 I see that Public Advocate Jumaane
23 Williams is here but I think a member of the board
24 may have a question. Am I correct? I received a
25 message that a member of the board would like to

1

2 ask a question.

3

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: It was a
4 general question about whether we can ask
5 questions. I mean, I don't have a question right
6 at this moment.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

8

Thank you.

9

So we'll turn to Public Advocate
10 Williams.

11

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you so much.

12

Appreciate it.

13

As was mentioned, my name is
14 Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate for the City of
15 New York.

16

I'd like to thank the Chair and
17 all the board members.

18

I'd be remiss if I didn't share
19 with you that we did get some complaints from
20 tenants about the shortness of the hearings and the
21 inability of many tenants who registered to
22 testify. Some tenants attempted to sign up just
23 hours after the website opened for registration and
24 they already found it closed.

25

And so while the recent wait list

1

2 extension may help more tenants, sometimes it can
3 be more confusing and discouraging from an already
4 pretty discouraging system. So my recommendation
5 is that, can you please, if you have the ability,
6 to host some more hearings so that tenants who are
7 feeling isolated and alone and like no one's
8 hearing them, to have the opportunity to testify.

9

I have long joined tenants in
10 urging protections and relief and I have seen rents
11 continue to rise forcing New Yorkers out of their
12 home. The affordable housing crisis is now
13 compounded exponentially, of course, with COVID-19.
14 In the midst of a public health emergency, tenants
15 cannot appear and directly tell their stories but
16 it is because of that emergency and the economic
17 devastation that it has caused that now, more than
18 ever, the board must hear the voices and act for
19 them.

20

This board has the power to have a
21 significant difference in the lives of workers,
22 those of limited means, those who are barely
23 hanging on to middle class and most importantly,
24 those who cannot pay their rent. Almost a million
25 New Yorkers have filed with the State for

1

2 unemployment and a large number of other employees
3 and New Yorker are still waiting to be approved for
4 unemployment.

5 New York needs significant
6 economic relief and I urge you to vote -- if you
7 cannot roll back the rents, which would be best, at
8 least do a freeze and here is why. You have heard
9 these numbers and you know the numbers so I don't
10 want to repeat them but, you know, the board voted
11 for zero percent for one leases and zero to one
12 split two years. I understand that two-year leases
13 increases in 2008 were 8.5 percent, in 2009, 6
14 percent, 2011, 7.25 percent.

15 Basically, landlords have been
16 getting increases for a very long time. This was a
17 blatant attempt to continue driving up rents to the
18 point of deregulation. These high increases have
19 continued through 2015 when a new board was seated.

20 We're in the middle of a pandemic.
21 There's also racial (Zoom inaudible) to be felt by
22 New Yorkers, particularly low income and especially
23 black and brown residents for years to come.

24 A rent rollback is best. If you
25 can't, a rent freeze is definitely what should be

1

2 done. All of us have to do what we can with what
3 we have, where we are either here today at City
4 Council to try and help our owners but we can't
5 forget about the tenants as well for waiting with
6 bated breath for assistance.

7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
8 Public Advocate.

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: We are going to
11 return to our list of registered speakers.

12 Next we have Jorge Jorge;
13 To be followed by Angela
14 Fernandez.

15 MR. JORGE: Hello, everyone.
16 Good afternoon.

17 I am George George. I am
18 president of LISA Management, our real estate
19 management company based in Union Square.

20 My company manages over 2,200
21 apartments in New York City, 1,800 of those
22 apartments are rent stabilized. About 1,100 of
23 them are affordable units, which are subject to
24 rent stabilization increases.

25 I understand completely why the

1

2 Rent Guidelines Board is considering zero percent
3 increases for one-year leases and two. We're
4 living through a world health crisis and we're also
5 fighting civil injustices.

6 I'm urging you all to think
7 objectively. Look at the numbers and give a real
8 increase that will allow building owners to keep up
9 with the expenses of running their buildings for
10 the tenants who deserve the best quality of life in
11 those buildings. If you don't do it for those
12 tenants, do it for the concept of affordable
13 housing.

14 I have affordable housing
15 buildings that have had negative cash flows for the
16 last four years, or more actually some. And I've
17 given -- we haven't given the people who work at
18 those buildings the raises that they so badly
19 deserve. We are asking HPD for reserve money in
20 order to pay the mortgages. Tenants ask for simple
21 amenities like landscaping for their -- for their
22 kids' playground so they're not playing near mud or
23 barren dirt. And new washers and dryers in the
24 laundry room so it doesn't -- so it doesn't take
25 them an entire day to do laundry because the old

1

2 machines may break down or may be completely out of
3 order.

4

HPD makes us assume that the
5 expenses in these affordable buildings will rise by
6 three percent annually and that rents would
7 increase by two percent annually. In reality,
8 expenses have risen by more than three percent and
9 income has risen by less than one percent since
10 2014.

11

Affordable housing in New York
12 City cannot afford another year of zero percent
13 increases. I urge you to think objectively and
14 independently. Do it for good quality affordable
15 housing. While we're at it, let's urge our elected
16 officials to increase and expand the red vouchers
17 for low income New Yorkers.

18

Thank you.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.

20

George.

21

Our next speaker is Angela

22

Fernandez;

23

To be followed by Ann

24

Heaney-Korchak.

25

(No response.)

1

2

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I don't believe
Ms. Fernandez is here.

4

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So then
our next speaker will be Ann Heaney-Korchak;

6

7

To be followed by Kathleen
Wakeham.

8

9

10

11

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: My family
has been in the landlord business since the 1940s.
It has 20 families for three generations in two
small buildings.

12

13

14

15

16

Our parents and grandparents
weathered some tough times in New York City as
landlords. So we use them as inspiration as this
generation faces the unprecedented challenges that
2020 is presenting.

17

18

19

Tenants and property owners alike
are being impacted by COVID and we're all worried
and anxious about an uncertain future.

20

21

22

23

24

25

Our rent regulated tenants have an
average occupancy of nearly 50 years. Long-term
regulated tenants mean a significant portion of our
rent roll is well below market rate and has seen no
meaningful increase since 2014. And we need to
collect at least \$18,000 in annual rent per unit

1

2 just to cover our operating expenses. That breaks
3 down to \$1,500 per month. I have only two
4 regulated tenants that meet this threshold.

5 Your own PIOC report shows
6 increasing expenses for landlords yet there is
7 discussion of a zero rent increase. The ever
8 escalating tax burden, the high water and sewer
9 charges, the excessive New York City regulations
10 and ever increasing costs for every skilled worker
11 or vendor we use, makes it very difficult for the
12 small property owner to stay in business.

13 We are the landlords in New York
14 City that actually know their tenants and
15 oftentimes live in the building with them as
16 neighbors. Most of my regulated tenants live alone
17 and are seniors. I call and e-mail to check on
18 them. I've brought them supplies during the
19 pandemic lockdown and worried about their safety.
20 We are exactly the type of landlord that the RGB
21 should be supporting by giving us a reasonable rent
22 increase so that we can continue to provide decent
23 housing for our tenants. We've done this for
24 nearly 80 years and we'd like to continue to do so.

25

Thank you for your time.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so

3

much.

4

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: David, is

5

it okay if I ask a question of Ann?

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

7

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Yes.

8

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: All right.

9

I had a quick question.

10

First of all, thank you for your

11

testimony.

12

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Okay. Sure.

13

Yes.

14

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: So to what

15

extent, I mean as a guy, I definitely see -- it's

16

like from the reports and from your testimony that

17

there's been some increases, especially around

18

water and sewer, around taxes. To what extent do

19

you feel that you're able to perhaps, I mean, it's

20

applied to the government, I mean, it's like appeal

21

to the government, it's like for relief, around

22

those costs as opposed to having those costs

23

covered by -- by rent. I mean, like where to you

24

feel that balance lies as a small landlord?

25

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Well, I mean,

1

2 you know, the 80 years that we've been in the
3 business, you know, it is rent that has been
4 covering the expenses. You know, we've never been
5 in a situation like this, you know.

6 So, you know, there's a lot of
7 talk about there about rent vouchers to help
8 tenants, you know, meet their, you know, their rent
9 if they're unable to pay. You know, so that's
10 probably the best solution. I mean, I don't see
11 the government coming in and helping me pay my real
12 estate taxes. I'm paying my real estate taxes to
13 the government, right.

14 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: I mean, you
15 say you don't see the possibility --

16 MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: I'm sorry,
17 you were muted. I can't hear you.

18 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: You don't
19 see the possibility as kind of a tax break or
20 something that might come along that might be able
21 to help you have some kind of a reduction on your
22 tax bill?

23 MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Well, I
24 mean, of course, we'd love to see a reduction on
25 our tax bill. I mean, the rhetoric I'm hearing,

1
2 you know, I don't really see that happening. I
3 mean, the biggest thing that could help is, you
4 know, the -- the late fee on the real estate taxes
5 is 18 percent. I mean, for landlords that are not
6 collecting their rents, if they're unable to pay
7 their real estate taxes in July, they're facing an
8 18 percent penalty. You know, it's almost usury. I
9 mean, it's just -- an owner would never be able to
10 dig their way out of an 18 percent penalty on an
11 \$80,000 tax bill. I mean, that's what the taxes
12 are on our building, so I'm just throwing that
13 number out there.

14 You know, the ability to have a
15 different payment schedule for real estate taxes
16 given this pandemic that we're in would be helpful.
17 There are some landlords out there that are not
18 suffering. Maybe they can be incentivized to pay
19 their real estate taxes sooner, you know, and give
20 some breathing room to those tenants that are --
21 landlords, I'm sorry, that are unable to pay their
22 full tax bill, you know, given, you know, a
23 reduction in rent collections because of COVID.

24 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Okay.

25 Thank you.

1

2

I asked the question, I mean, to see, you know, what would be the balance there.

4

But thank you -- thank you for your response.

6

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Yes.

7

Thanks for the question.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

9

Heaney-Korchak.

10

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Yes.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our -- our next

12

speaker is Kathleen Wakeham.

13

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: David, I think I

14

see Angela.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, let's go

16

back to Angela.

17

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Let's just go

18

back to her quickly and see if -- I'm going to

19

promote her.

20

So I see you signed in as Lina.

21

Are you Angela Fernandez?

22

(No response.)

23

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: So, Lina, are

24

you Angela?

25

MS. MELENDEZ: No, Lina Melendez.

1

2

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Oh, I'm sorry.

3

4

I'm going to go put you back as an attendee. I thought maybe perhaps you were --

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MS. BURGER: Just as a reminder,

please do not raise your hand unless -- unless

you've seen your name or heard your name. And,

also, your name needs to be the same one that you

used to register or we're not going to be able to

find you. That was just an example of Angela

wasn't here and Lina kept raising her hand. So we

thought maybe Lina was Angela.

So if you could please only raise

your hand if you've seen your name or heard name.

And, David, if you could maybe

speak the next five speakers.

MS. GOODRIDGE: I have a quick

question.

This is Leah.

Is Ms. Ann still available? Is

she still with us?

CHAIRMAN REISS: Ms.

Heaney-Korchak, are you still an attendee?

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I demoted here

to -- oh, let me see. She is. Do you want me to

1

2 promote her back to panelist?

3

MS. GOODRIDGE: Yes. Yes.

4

Hi, Ann.

5

6 Sometimes we get questions -- oh,
7 you're muted. But I'll say my question. Sometimes
8 we get questions from folks who are watching.

8

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Okay.

9

10 MS. GOODRIDGE: And they'll
11 e-mail us or text us to ask. And so one of the
12 questions I just got from one of the viewers was,
13 have you applied for the hardship for landlords?

13

14 MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: No, no. We
15 have not. And I don't consider myself a hardship
16 case today. You know, we -- many of my tenants are
17 retirees whose income, you know, was not impacted,
18 you know, by the COVID. So my rent collections, I
19 mean, during the pandemic have been okay.

19

20 My testimony or statement, you
21 know, was a general statement to what I'm seeing
22 over the last couple of years. You know, the
23 escalating taxes and, you know, my rent roll not
24 increasing, you know, to match that. You know, and
25 other expenses too. So, no --

25

MS. GOODRIDGE: But not

1

2 specifically for you. Just like what you're seeing
3 in the field --

4

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Right.

5

MS. GOODRIDGE: -- but not --

6 okay.

7

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Like right

8 now I -- like I say, I certainly wouldn't consider
9 myself a hardship right now, today. But, you know,
10 the real estate business, you know, in New York is
11 in some pretty tough times. And my situation could
12 change in a moment.

13

I mean, I know, you know, of my

14 rent regulated tenants -- I'm sorry, my market rate
15 tenants, several of them are, you know, working in
16 the country, you know, they're European so they're
17 here working for, you know, one of their national
18 banks or other, you know, global companies. And
19 they typically have generous housing allowances,
20 you know, which allows them to pay.

21

But, you know, when they're called

22 back home -- so we have leases that will be
23 expiring say later in the summer and the fall. My
24 rent roll will drop significantly and it will be
25 much harder, you know, to lease those apartments,

1

2 you know, because they'll be -- you know, we
3 already see a vacancy rate, you know, growing in
4 apartments in New York City.

5

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Leah, any further

questions?

7

MS. GOODRIDGE: No.

8

Thank you.

9

MS. HEANEY-KORCHAK: Okay.

10

Thank you.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

12 Heaney-Korchak.

13

I understand that Assemblymember

14 Harvey Epstein is here.

15

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Ms. Wakeham,

16 you will be next.

17

MS. WAKEHAM: Thank you.

18

Should I begin talking?

19

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: No. We're

20 going to hear from Assemblymember Epstein first and

21 then you'll be after that.

22

MS. WAKEHAM: Okay.

23

Thank you.

24

MS. GOODRIDGE: Are we still

25 waiting? Can I ask a quick question while we're

1

2 waiting?

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sure.

4

5 there a limit for Zoom? Apparently some of the
6 tenant speakers can't enter. It's more of an admin
7 question but I've gotten a few text messages about
8 this. So I just figured I'd flag it.

9

MS. BURGER: We can have many more
10 attendees than are here. So they might be using
11 the wrong -- the public hearing for tomorrow
12 instead of today. Both meetings were published.

13

MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay. Okay.

14

All right.

15

Thank you.

16

I'm going on mute now.

17

MS. BURGER: Hi, Harvey.

18

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Harvey, you're
muted.

20

ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Okay.

21

Thanks, David.

22

23

I didn't want to jump in there in
the middle of what you're doing.

24

I hope everyone's well.

25

And thank you for taking the time

1

2 to let me testify and for doing these public
3 hearings virtually.

4

I -- I missed my days on the Rent
5 Guidelines and I do appreciate everyone's
6 leadership really during these difficult times in
7 our City and our State and our Country.

8

So I just wanted to, on behalf of
9 dozens of Assemblymembers, bring our testimony
10 before you. I think it was already submitted.

11

But as we've seen in the global
12 pandemic, the struggles of rent stabilized tenants
13 are non-stop. With four million New Yorkers who
14 are unemployed and the COVID pandemic really
15 affecting black and Latino communities much harder
16 than white communities, we see how our low income
17 communities are really being hit.

18

And so, I mean, many people know I
19 was a tenant representative on the board and it's
20 clear that the Income and Expense Study continues
21 to show that revenues exceed costs for owners. And
22 owners are getting a lot of support where tenants
23 are getting very little. The \$100 million that we
24 allocated, we're only at best case scenario, keep
25 rent burdened tenants at the same level of rent

1

2 burden. We're not making it any better. It's only
3 going to apply to a small number of tenants and
4 they'll be unfortunately tens of thousands of
5 tenants who are excluded from the benefit.

6

And we hope that we'll get
7 additional federal dollars but to this day the plan
8 to be able to get widespread support is unlikely.

9

So it's really beholden on the
10 Rent Guidelines Board to move forward with this
11 rent freeze. It is the way to ensure that we have
12 safe and affordable apartments all over New York.

13

And I (Zoom inaudible) for the
14 last speaker's concern about small landlords. And
15 there are provisions within the law that allow to
16 support small landlords. And we intentionally made
17 sure those provisions were available to ensure that
18 most small landlords can get any assistance.

19

In addition, we've heard a lot
20 from our City agency, HPD, around expanded
21 opportunities for POP or AVA loans or other small
22 landlord support.

23

I really encourage this board to
24 do the right thing and to have a rent freeze for
25 the over a million rent stabilized apartments. The

1

2 last thing we want to see is more people entering
3 the shelter system. It's estimated that, you know,
4 when the eviction order is lifted, whether people
5 think it's June 20th or August 20th, we'll see some
6 50,000 cases being brought to Housing Court.

7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Assemblymember.

8 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: What.

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: I think we hit
10 our two-minute mark.

11 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Okay.
12 The risk that we have is tremendous and I encourage
13 the board to move forward with the rent freeze and
14 I really appreciate the time you've provided me
15 today.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

17 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA:
18 Assemblymember Epstein.

19 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: I can
20 answer questions.

21 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Thank you
22 very much for your testimony.

23 So I've actually been sort of
24 repeatedly asking this question because I threw out
25 at all these hearings about, I mean, it's like what

1

2 kind of assistance is available to landlords at
3 this time? So can you elaborate a little bit on
4 perhaps a few of those programs that are available
5 to landlords?

6 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Yes, I'd
7 be happy to.

8 One is what's called a 8A loan,
9 it's a loan interest loan to fix a system-wide
10 problem.

11 Two, is called our Participatory
12 Loan Program loan. If there's multiple system
13 issues that are in effect, they can get one, a
14 re-rent restructuring and two, they will be able to
15 get free or low interest loans from the government.
16 So they'll get a rent restructuring to increase
17 their rent roll, as well as the (Zoom inaudible.)

18 The State -- the AHCR State office
19 has \$2.5 billion available for not only just small
20 property owners, or small landlord property owners,
21 if they need ongoing assistance and it doesn't
22 include the re-authorization of J51 if landlords
23 want to -- if they have tax issues, there's the J51
24 loan program is available.

25 And finally, I'll say that we're

1
2 trying to get legislation passed to provide
3 additional assistance for small landlords,
4 especially on the commercial and residential front.
5 But there are losses and the previous speaker
6 talked about the real estate taxes are really
7 killing them. So there's a way that we could,
8 through State legislation, do some forgiveness for
9 real estate taxes in exchange for forgiveness of
10 rent for commercial and residential, that's a real
11 bonus.

12 At the end of the day, I think
13 everyone's going to have to pay their bills and
14 that's reality. So that includes landlords and
15 tenants. And everyone's going to have to pay a
16 portion of this. We can't see that not happening
17 in this system and the way we're operating today.
18 We need everyone to tighten their belts and
19 thankless landlords having to take a piece of the
20 pie and cutting.

21 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Okay. And,
22 you know, so that legislation that you were talking
23 about, I mean, it's like possibly -- I mean, it's
24 like some forgiveness of real estate taxes. How
25 probable do you think it might be? I mean, I know

1

2 how probable do you think it might for that to --
3 Zoom inaudible) not to be a reality.

4

ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: I think
5 the real question is what the federal government
6 does. If the federal government comes through with
7 the house bill that we talked about was real money
8 for New York State for -- for money for renters.
9 If that's available and that's real money then we
10 can have a real robust program.

11

As we all probably know the Senate
12 did not support the House bill and so if we can a
13 strong Senate bill that's similar to the House
14 bill, I think we'll have a real robust program.

15

If we don't, we're going to have
16 to think about our other options and that includes
17 a compilation of some paid by tenants, some covered
18 costs by landlords and some covered costs by the
19 State government.

20

It's unclear and so I believe
21 something's going to happen. And whether it's a
22 direct subsidy like the \$100 million and in a much
23 bigger way in the tens of billions, in the multiple
24 billions of dollars, or it's going to be a smaller
25 program like we were going to be able to pass just

1

2 two weeks ago. It's really up to whatever the
3 federal government comes forward with funding.

4 A larger robust system will allow
5 for more, a smaller forgiveness -- some lower
6 amount of money will allow a much more tailored
7 approach to the problem.

8 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Thank you
9 very much, Assemblymember.

10 ASSEMBLYMEMBER EPSTEIN: Thank
11 you very much.

12 Thank you.

13 And thank you for your service.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: And thank you,
15 Assemblymember.

16 I believe Ms. Wakeham is next.

17 MS. WAKEHAM: Yes. Should I
18 begin?

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, please.

20 MS. WAKEHAM: Okay. My name is
21 Kathleen Wakeham and I am a rent stabilized tenant
22 on the Lower East Side.

23 My building is owned by Madison
24 Realty Capital, a private equity firm worth over \$5
25 billion.

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I know the pandemic has tragically affected our City, over 20,000 New Yorkers have died, over 200,000 have reported being positive. Economic and racial disparity are major factors.

The neighborhood with the highest death rate is East New York and others. These neighborhoods are homes of low income and middle income tenants, both the African-American and Latino.

Thirty-seven percent of tenants lost their jobs due to the pandemic. Forty-two percent of our tenants are low wage, essential workers, health care workers, delivery people, store employees and others. Should they be faced with the rent increase in a time of crisis? Should they continue to pay rent which they could barely afford before the pandemic? Or should they be able to feel secure by rolling back their rent in a time reminiscent to the 1930s when people were helped rather than hurt by government.

Meanwhile, landlords thrive. This year they gained 39 percent profit while tenants wages have remained stagnant for over a decade.

Landlords cry poverty but if they

1

2 are struggling financially why are they warehousing
3 apartments across the City? This is another
4 plague. Madison Realty Capital took over
5 Tolichano's (phonetic) portfolio of buildings on
6 the Lower East Side and are warehousing more than
7 half the units in each building.

8

The 2010 census found that
9 11-and-a-half percent of housing units remain
10 vacant. In our City over 62,000 people are without
11 homes. If landlords need more money, they should
12 rent their properties to people who need homes
13 rather than leave them vacant.

14

The role of the RGB is to assure
15 affordability not profitability. Landlords do not
16 need or deserve a rent increase, rather tenants
17 need and deserve a rent rollback.

18

Thank you.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

20

Wakeham.

21

Thank you for being precisely two

22

minutes.

23

MS. WAKEHAM: I cut out a lot.

24

(Laughter.)

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next

1

2 speakers are:

3

Vito Signorile;

4

Maicy Schwartz;

5

Joyce Holland;

6

Aleksandra Sasha Nesterchuk; and,

7

Adrian Gerstel.

8

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: If you could

9

please raise your hand if your name was called.

10

Thank you.

11

MR. SIGNORILE: Hi. Just testing

12

the audio here, making sure I can be heard.

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, we can hear

14

you.

15

MR. SIGNORILE: Great.

16

Good afternoon, everybody.

17

I just want to preface this by

18

saying RSAY (phonetic) has made their formal

19

recommendations with the submission that we have

20

provided to the board.

21

This board has set the lowest

22

one-year guidelines in history over a six-year

23

period, averaging a 0.87 percent increase. They

24

are now on the verge of enacting another historic

25

zero guideline. Yet the arguments for a third rent

1

2 freeze are now losing their momentum.

3

4 On Monday, the City took its first
5 steps into a long but promising road towards
6 economic recovery as we enter phase 1. Over
7 400,000 City residents have now returned back to
8 work in some capacity and within five days of the
9 final vote, the City will prepare to enter phase 2
10 and those workforce numbers will increase even
11 more.

11

12 Last Friday, the U.S. Department
13 of Labor shocked economists by releasing astounding
14 workforce numbers for the month of May. Our
15 economy added 2.5 million jobs and the unemployment
16 rate dropped 5.7 percentage in just one month.

16

17 Although the vast majority of
18 these outstanding employment numbers are not likely
19 to reflect the City since we have just begun our
20 reopening process, the significant rebound that we
21 have already made is a clear indication of the
22 economic progress we will continue to make after
23 the unprecedented lockdown.

23

24 And yet, bills for increased
25 property taxes have gone out to building owners,
NOI continues to shrink and the members of this

1
2 board continue to penalize owners rather than
3 follow a mandate that requires it balance the needs
4 of both owners and tenants. These mom and pop
5 property owners are the backbone of the City's
6 affordable neighborhoods. They do not have deep
7 pockets or reserves to finance capital improvements
8 and are hardpressed to maintain their buildings
9 while rents remain stagnant and operating costs
10 continue to rise.

11 Now, nearly one year after the
12 HSCPA (phonetic) was enacted, these small property
13 owners rely solely on RGB guideline increases to
14 pay operating expenses and perform necessary
15 maintenance to their buildings. This board is well
16 intentioned in its efforts to relieve the burdens
17 of tenants who are income burdened, those
18 financially affect by the pandemic. Even with
19 another rent freeze, these tenants will continue to
20 struggle and we will revisit the same conversation
21 next year.

22 This board should have urged the
23 State Legislature, who has the authority to tackle
24 affordability crisis --

25 (Bell ringing)

1

2

MR. SIGNORILE: -- for --

3

(Bell ringing)

4

MR. SIGNORILE: -- to reverse

5

courses (inaudible) and we ask (inaudible.)

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: You know, I'm

7

sorry. I'm not sure why that beeping happened.

8

That's not the norm. And, you know, we'll try to

9

just end it without that. But do you want to try

10

and take a few seconds to restate your conclusion.

11

I wasn't able to focus on it because of the

12

beeping.

13

MR. SIGNORILE: No, that's fine.

14

As I mentioned earlier, RSAY, we

15

made our formal recommendations in our submission,

16

which I believe Andrew forwarded to the board

17

earlier.

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, he did.

19

Thank you so much.

20

Our next speakers are:

21

Maicy Schwartz;

22

Joyce Holland;

23

Aleksandra Sasha Nesterchuk; and,

24

Adrian Gerstel.

25

And I'm failing to remind people

1

2 to please raise your hands so that it's easier for
3 the staff to identify you amongst the attendees and
4 promote you to a panelist.

5

Brian, is that -- can we turn off
6 that beeping for the end of two minutes?

7

MR. HOBERMAN: Yes, I'll take
8 care of that.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.

10

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: David, Maicy
11 Schwartz is not an attendee, as I can see.

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

13

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: So I think
14 we're going to be promoting Joyce Holland.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great.

16

MS. HOLLAND: Can you hear me?

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

18

Ms. Holland.

19

MS. HOLLAND: Yes, good

20

afternoon.

21

I'll make my points brief.

22

Small property owners comprise a
23 multitude of ethnicities; black, Latino, Asian and,
24 yes, white. What you should notice is we look like
25 the tenants we serve. We are the backbone of the

1

2 City and given -- we provide quality -- quality
3 affordable housing. For black people, this is one
4 of the only ways to gain prosperity and a family
5 legacy.

6 After a great many years of
7 minimal increases for rent stabilized apartments,
8 we were allowed vacancy increases, MCIs, IAIs,
9 which gave us the opportunity to properly maintain
10 our properties that are in many cases over 100
11 years old.

12 We were then slapped with the 2019
13 HSTPA. That cut our hands off to properly maintain
14 those same properties.

15 Always in the middle of the game,
16 minority property owners are impeded by State and
17 City laws, which we are then expected to do the
18 most with limited resources. It simply is not
19 fair. It is not right.

20 This year's increases suggested by
21 the RGB in the 2020 report are as follows:

22 3.5 percent for one year leases;
23 and,

24 6.75 for two-year leases.

25 I know the minimum should be based

1

2 on expenses, 5 percent for one year and 8 percent
3 for two-year leases. That should be the minimum.

4

5 If we continue to suppress
6 minority owners of this City and State, it will be
7 the legacy of the City and the State legislators
8 that minority small property owners will succumb to
9 the wealthy developers and the tenants of those
10 properties alike.

10

Thank you.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

12

Holland.

13

MS. GOODRIDGE: I have a

14

question.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

16

MS. GOODRIDGE: Ms. Joyce, can

17

you hear me?

18

MS. HOLLAND: I can.

19

MS. GOODRIDGE: Did you apply

20

for the landlord hardship?

21

MS. HOLLAND: I'm uncertain why

22

you're asking me that.

23

MS. GOODRIDGE: All I'm asking is

24

that a yes or a no?

25

MS. HOLLAND: Well, okay.

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2

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25

MS. GOODRIDGE: Your testimony is about landlord hardship and you're suffering -- so.

MS. HOLLAND: No, not completely. It's giving historical facts of where we were, where we are now and where we are now. And how -- and I want to also let you know that this -- this will impact us, that is the COVID situation will impact us even more.

So that's my testimony. But to answer your question, no, I have not had an opportunity to do that because it was -- right at this moment, it is unnecessary. However, as -- as we are waiting for governmental monies to come down the pike, that is tenants -- we're relying on tenants to get those monies in order for us to go ahead and make -- and continue to maintain our properties.

To answer your question, right now, we're relying on the governmental monies to be supplemented to the tenants.

MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay. My second question is, I'd like some clarity on what the presence or existence of landlords who are people of color have to do with tenants not being able to

1

2 pay the rent during the pandemic?

3

MS. HOLLAND: Could you repeat that? I couldn't -- you bleeped out for a second.

5

MS. GOODRIDGE: I'd like some clarity on what landlords who identify as people of color have to do with tenants who are not able to pay rent increases during the pandemic?

9

MS. HOLLAND: Okay. Good question.

11

So the impression that's made is that owners are either large corporations, white and that is simply not the case. As I mentioned, the rug is often pulled out from under minority owners, often black owners who often lose their properties in this City, which that's an unknown -- an unknown fact. Okay. Because we cannot maintain monetarily the properties as is designed by the City and State.

20

MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay. I'm not sure -- I don't want to take up too much time but I know that I've never made that comment. I don't know if I need to Zoom inaudible). I think the --

24

MS. HOLLAND: Yeah, I was --

25

MS. GOODRIDGE: -- the purpose of

1
2 what we have advocated for are statistics and the
3 very real fact that there are a lot of folks who
4 are economically suffering and those folks also are
5 disproportionately people of color. But in terms
6 of, you know, I mean we've had a black president
7 and we've also had during that time lots of black
8 people dying and being killed in racism. So I just
9 want to point out the presence of people of color
10 who are landlords does not equate to there being no
11 systemic racism.

12 Thank you for your testimony.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
14 Holland.

15 I understand that City Council
16 Member Kalish is here.

17 MS. HOLLAND: Hello.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, Ms.
19 Holland.

20 MS. HOLLAND: Yeah, I'm just
21 curious. Is there a time to ask questions for me?

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: No, we are
23 taking testimony and board members if they would
24 like to, they will ask questions. But it's not an
25 opportunity for community members to ask questions

1

2 of the board.

3

MS. HOLLAND: Okay.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for

5

your testimony.

6

COUNCILMEMBER KALISH: Thank you,

7

may I begin.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, go ahead.

9

COUNCILMEMBER KALISH: I'm

10

Councilmember Ben Kalish, representing the Upper

11

East Side, Midtown East, Roosevelt Island and East

12

Harlem.

13

I want to thank the Rent

14

Guidelines Board Chair, David Reiss, public

15

members, Joseph (sic) Schwartz, Gonzalez-Rivera and

16

DeRose. Owner members, Stone and Walsh and tenant

17

members, Garcia and Goodridge.

18

I'm also here in my capacity as

19

co-chair of the Progressive Caucus.

20

To New Yorkers following on line

21

today, especially the tenants, thank you for

22

participating in this hearing. I'm proud to stand

23

with you today.

24

This year, I'm calling on the Rent

25

Guidelines Board to vote for a rent rollback of

1

2 negative two percent for one-year leases and
3 negative one percent for one-year (sic) leases.

4

The board does not support a rent
5 rollback. I urge you at least to vote for a rent
6 freeze.

7

I understand that at the
8 preliminary vote, you voted for a rent freeze for
9 one-year leases. I urge you to consider voting for
10 a rent rollback given the extended pain caused to
11 tenants by COVID-19 pandemic.

12

If there's one thing we can learn
13 from this crisis is that we're all in this
14 together. We cannot continue the mentality that
15 every person must fend for themselves.

16

Unemployment in New York City has
17 reached 14.2 percent, higher than any time since
18 the Great Depression and many New Yorkers simply
19 cannot make rent. While evictions have been
20 delayed, rent has not been cancelled but jobs have
21 and we must adjust rents to reflect that.

22

And just to be clear here, even if
23 we raise rents and somehow evict all the tenants, I
24 don't believe that there's anyone to actually take
25 these units back so I don't think it's in anyone's

1

2 interest to see the rents go up and to evict any of
3 these tenants because, again, we are all in this
4 together.

5 And while the pandemic has how so
6 affected landlords, certain factors have made
7 things easier as well. The 2019-2020 winter was
8 the seventh warmest on record. The economic
9 fallout from the pandemic, the price of crude oil
10 dipped below zero dollars and has remained below
11 \$40 per barrel throughout the crisis.

12 Further, many landlords have also
13 received mortgage relief during the crisis. The
14 board's Income and Expense Report shows net
15 operating income for landlords remains near an
16 all-time high.

17 As a City we face great challenges
18 that we must address together and I ask for your
19 support.

20 The rest of my testimony is
21 submitted in writing.

22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
24 Councilmember.

25 We are going to go back to our

1

2 list. And we're going to post the whole list so if
3 you are waiting to testify, take a moment to look
4 at the list and you can kind of get a sense of
5 where you are, whether you're going to be up soon
6 and be prepared to be on the lookout for raising
7 your hand or if you're in the middle or the end.

8 MS. BURGER: And if I can just
9 remind everyone, there are attendees who are
10 raising their hands. It's not going to help you to
11 raise your hand early. We are going in order. You
12 can see the order here. We're going to ask just
13 the people who are the next few speakers to raise
14 their hands. That makes it easier for us to find
15 you and makes everything go faster.

16 So if you have not registered to
17 speak, or if you are registered to speak but you're
18 not one of the next five speakers, please do not
19 raise your hand. And if we have time at the end of
20 the hearing, after all of the registered speakers
21 have been heard, we will then ask you to raise your
22 hand and we will call on you. But right now, it's
23 not going to help. So if you could please do that
24 for us.

25 And we will put up the list of the

1

2 next five speakers, also, which is:

3 Aleksandra Sasha Nesterchuk;

4 Adrian Gerstel;

5 Alvaro Morro;

6 Joanne Wong; and,

7 Michael McKee.

8 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I believe

9 Aleksandra was there on the list and I do not see
10 her as an attendee. Maybe she's trying to dial
11 back in. She was just there.

12 Should we move --

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, there she
14 is.

15 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Oh, she's back.
16 I got her. There she is.

17 MS. NESTERCHUK: Hello, council.
18 How are you?

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Is that
20 Aleksandra Nesterchuk?

21 MS. NESTERCHUK: This is she.
22 Hello, council.

23 My name is Aleksandra Nesterchuk.
24 I live in Manhattan on the Upper West side.

25 I'm a hair stylist who due to the

1

2 pandemic became a volunteer for MET Council on
3 Housing. And I get -- I wanted to make it also
4 really quick.

5 I get phone calls every Monday,
6 desperate phone calls from people that lost their
7 loved ones due to COVID-19, that lost their
8 everything, belongings. They lost their partners.
9 They lost their jobs indefinite. It means that
10 they will not be rehired after pandemic is -- after
11 coming back to workforce. Right.

12 So they are unable to afford
13 living at all. They all be living in the same
14 apartment for 21 years, have been working for a
15 judge for 21 years and just got fired and the
16 people are 59 years old and they can't get another
17 job. And nobody knows when.

18 So they need this rollback rent as
19 a life saving plan. So I'm really asking you to
20 rollback entire rent. Ask Senate to give us a bill
21 where it's going to compensate landlords and give
22 us a break. We need it.

23 Thank you so much.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
25 Nesterchuk.

1

2

Our next speaker is Adrian

3

Gerstel;

4

To be followed by Alvaro Morro.

5

And as a reminder, please raise

6

your hand when you hear your name called.

7

MS. GERSTEL: -- break for

8

landlords and --

9

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Adrian?

10

MS. GERSTEL: Yes.

11

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, you were

12

muted when you started talking. So if you can

13

please start again.

14

MS. GERSTEL: Oh, I'm so sorry.

15

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I unmuted you,

16

yes. I'm sorry.

17

So please start again.

18

Thanks.

19

MS. GERSTEL: Oh, I'm unmuted

20

now. Okay.

21

Thank you.

22

Thank you for letting me know.

23

Okay. Thank you very much for my

24

opportunity to speak to you.

25

I am a small property owner, a mom

1

2 and pop owner. We bought our building in 1980.

3 It's a 140 years old. It was a six-unit, rent
4 stabilized.

5 So our tenants, we took over two
6 units and our tenants are still stabilized. And
7 some of them have lived in the building for over 30
8 years. They're all artists in one way or another.

9 I would say our amount that we're
10 getting is about one-quarter of the market value.
11 So I am definitely putting skin in the game. And
12 I'm also taking a very big slice of the pie.

13 I don't know why this paradigm
14 that we're in about why we're being locked with
15 Blackstone has continued since 1974. I think it
16 would be a very good time to reassess when you get
17 huge building managers and mom and pop who just
18 have a couple of rent stabilized units, why they're
19 all being -- we're all being put together. Because
20 actually we -- we pay out the operating costs from
21 our -- our savings, Social Security, pensions to
22 cover the cost of the building. And that is not
23 Blackstone.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
25 your testimony.

1

2

MS. GERSTEL: Thank you.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker

4

is Alvaro Morro;

5

To be followed by Joanne Wong.

6

MR. MORRO: Can you hear me?

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

8

MR. MORRO: Okay. I've been

9 living in the same building for 26 years. I lost
10 all my income because I'm a yellow taxi driver and
11 I been living out of my savings.

12

If you guys, they getting money

13 from the government, why can't they stop, you know,
14 the rent because I've been living out of my
15 savings. And my savings are running out.

16

So last month they tell me in

17 March, they tell me to send \$800 but now this --
18 the following bill they add up to -- to the months
19 rent, which is \$2,400. I'm asking to see if they
20 get any money from the government, they should give
21 us that break because we the ones that deserve that
22 break.

23

I mean, I lost all my income. I

24

don't know what else to do. You know, I got a

25

family, two kids, my home. So I don't know where

1

2 to turn to.

3

4 That is my question, why don't
5 they stop, you know, give us a break, at least
6 three months on the rent. Because I'm paying
7 \$1,500 a month just to rent. That doesn't count
8 groceries, utility bills, you name it.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
your testimony.

10

MR. MORRO: Thank you.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
12 is Joanne Wong;

13

To be followed by Michael McKee.

14

MS. WONG: Can you hear me?

15

Yeah.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

17

MS. WONG: My family had been
18 providing affordable housing for 40 plus years.
19 Coming to this country not knowing the language,
20 nor having a dime, my parents were still able to
21 make it through the '70s, 9/11, blackouts,
22 Hurricane Sandy but the last few years, especially
23 the last few months, have been a really trying time
24 for our small business.

25

Over the last six years, RGB's

1

2 one-year renewals have averaged 0.88 percent, while
3 over the same period, our property taxes have
4 increased on average per year, 18 percent. Last
5 year was 12 percent. Last year's utilities, which
6 include water, sewer, gas, electric, have increased
7 ten percent. Last year's insurance premiums, which
8 by the way didn't cover any losses for COVID,
9 increased 23 percent.

10

Insurance companies have stopped
11 renewing policies on older buildings like ours,
12 which house most of the rent stabilized housing
13 stock. That means less options, higher premiums.
14 I'm told to be happy that if I can get a ten
15 percent increase. This is the world we operate in
16 where we are lucky if we can get a ten percent
17 increase in our expenses.

18

I know some tenants are facing
19 hardships and we're trying to work with them. I
20 agree that those in need should get help. But
21 disproportionately putting the responsibility on
22 small property owners, number one, is not the RGB's
23 role and, number two, it's not fair nor
24 sustainable, especially given that the City
25 continues to this very day to charge property taxes

1

2 based off of pre-COVID figures.

3

4 There's no more cost cutting
5 options. We already do most of the work in house.
6 We reduced our insurance coverage. We installed
7 water efficiency fixtures. There's only so much we
8 can do on our end to make this work.

8

9 A zero percent rent freeze without
10 any offsetting relief for property owners is not a
11 holistic solution and I hope the RGB -- Zoom
12 inaudible.

12

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry, is
14 that the end of your testimony?

14

15 MS. WONG: Yes, sir.

15

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

16

17 Thank you.

17

18 It just went out for a second.

18

19 Okay.

19

20 Thank you very much.

20

21 Our next speaker is Michael McKee;

21

22 To be followed by Lincoln Eccles.

22

23 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: David.

23

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

24

25 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Before we start

25

with Michael, and I'm sure he won't mind, is that

1

2 if we can remind people that we have Spanish
3 interpretation. So I'm just going to read out
4 our -- read about the information and then if
5 our -- if Olvin could then translate in Spanish for
6 me and put it up on the screen.

7 There is -- actually, I may put it
8 up on the screen now. So there we go. So people
9 can see it. So there is a Spanish interpreter here
10 today. To listen to English testimony in Spanish,
11 please use the interpretation button to choose the
12 Spanish channel. If you'd like to listen in
13 English then you can choose the English channel to
14 hear the Spanish speakers interpret it into
15 English.

16 If you do not choose an
17 interpretation channel, you will hear all testimony
18 in the native language of the speaker. If you are
19 using a Zoom app on a Smartphone, you may find the
20 interpretation button by pressing the more button.

21 If you would like to listen to the
22 hearing with simultaneous interpretation in Spanish
23 and do not have access to the Zoom app, mobile
24 device or computer, you may also do so by calling,
25 646-558-8656, then enter meeting ID 83528901027,

1

2 press number and then the number again.

3

4 If you are listening to the
5 Spanish translation by telephone and plan to
6 testify during the hearings, you will have to
7 switch over to the main webinar to testify.

8

9 Interpreters in the main hearing
10 will translate your testimony for the board.

11

12 Before it is your turn to speak,
13 again, call that number, 646-558-8656 and then
14 enter a different meeting ID, which is 87476147429,
15 press pound and pound again and essentially you're
16 re-joining this webinar when you're ready to speak.

17

18 So Olvin, if you could just say
19 that in Spanish.

20

21 Thanks.

22

23 MR. HOBERMAN: It's currently Liz
24 interpreting.

25

26 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Oh. So, Liz.
27 Which interpreter is a panelist.

28

29 MR. HOBERMAN: I'm sorry. Liz is
30 interpreting in Spanish. Olvin, you want to
31 interpret in English right now. English and
32 Spanish over the English channel.

33

34 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: No, I just

1

2 wanted him to read this in Spanish.

3 THE INTERPRETER: I can read this
4 in Spanish. I'm here right now.

5 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Okay.
6 Thanks, Olvin.

7 THE INTERPRETER: Translated
8 above interpretation information for
9 English/Spanish.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.
11 So, Andrew, should we return to
12 our speakers.

13 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah. Can
14 someone promote Michael? Oh, here he is. I see
15 Michael. Hold on.

16 Okay. Michael is now a panelist.

17 MR. MC KEE: Good afternoon,
18 members of the board and my old friends on the
19 staff.

20 My name is Michael McKee. I'm the
21 Treasurer of Tenants Political Action Committee.

22 Obviously I'm not going to have
23 time to read my written statement, which I
24 submitted yesterday, in two minutes. But I would
25 urge you to read it, especially the new members of

1

2 the board. I've been watching you for the last
3 couple of months. This has actually been very
4 convenient for me because I'm usually stuck in
5 Albany when you're meeting.

6 But I've seen how the new members
7 have worked to get your minds around a very
8 complicated subject. And my testimony deals a lot
9 with the history of the rent stabilization system
10 and the Rent Guidelines Board process, as well as
11 our recommendations for how we're going to plan to
12 restructure the whole system, including get rid of
13 lease renewals, getting rid of the two-year rent
14 adjustment, which would take the guess work out of
15 your job. Getting rid of the unfair, one-sided
16 Price Index methodology, as well as other changes
17 to the New York City and suburban Rent Guidelines
18 Boards.

19 I want to commend you for putting
20 out an actual number with the preliminary rent
21 adjustment instead of the range device that you
22 have used for most of the last two decades. I
23 think you should have the courage to put a number
24 out there and deal with the reaction. And I think
25 it's time you retired this range device, which was

1

2 designed to put tenants at a disadvantage and to
3 throw people off balance.

4

5 I want to also emphasize that we
6 need a rent rollback. It's not enough just to
7 freeze rents. We have years and years of unfair,
8 unjust rent increases baked into rent stabilized
9 rents and that's a large reason why rents across
10 the City are so unaffordable.

11

12 And finally I want to urge you to
13 pay attention to my recommendation for two motions
14 that you could pass; one would be to ask the
15 Mayor's office to instruct the Department of
16 Finance to give you current income and expense data
17 instead of data from the previous years.

18

19 Some years ago, Andrew can verify
20 the year, I think it might have been 2009, the then
21 Department of Finance Commission, testified at the
22 Rent Guidelines Board that if they were instructed
23 to do so by the Mayor's office, they could give you
24 current data in time for your vote. The other one
25 has to do with recommending to the City Council
about the change to the local law 63 of 1986, which
would require owners of income producing properties
of six or more units to provide data to the DOF.

1

2

Thank you very much.

3

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so much.

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6

MS. GOODRIDGE: I actually have a quick question.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

8

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MS. GOODRIDGE: Thank you so much, Michael.

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16

So we -- I know you've done some work on this and I figured I'd ask you. We had testimony earlier referencing real property taxes and how they've gone up and on account of that, that the money needs to come from somewhere which would then be shifted to tenants and increasing rents.

17

18

19

And I know that you've done some work on this and I was wondering what your thoughts were.

20

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MR. MC KEE: Yeah, I was actually very interested in the testimony of -- I forget her name, the landlord who testified about the taxes. And the basic problem with this real property tax system is that apartment buildings are over assessed. I mean, everyone knows this. And

1

2 there's a political reason for it. And the
3 political reason is, it's not the landlord who pays
4 the property taxes, it's the tenant.

5

The landlord's basically a middle
6 man. But tenants don't realize when they write
7 their monthly rent check that, you know, 25
8 percent, 30 percent, 35 percent of your rent every
9 month is going to pay the City real property taxes.

10

There have been years and years of
11 people calling for reform of the real property tax
12 system. This is something that can only be done in
13 Albany. It's (Zoom inaudible) because homeowners
14 as well as co-op owners and remember co-ops get a
15 special break on the real property tax. But
16 apartment buildings, residential rental apartments
17 do not. They are over assessed.

18

And -- and this is a very serious
19 problem. I mean, apart from the fact that real
20 property tax is a regressive tax. It's not
21 progressive like the income tax, as an income tax
22 should be. And it doesn't take into consideration
23 the situation of the -- of the owner who's paying
24 it. But I think it's a bit Zoom inaudible) relying
25 on the real property tax for a substantial portion

1
2 of its budget.

3 If we had a real genuine
4 progressive income tax system with rich people
5 paying their share, we might be able to (Zoom
6 inaudible) from property taxes (Zoom inaudible.)

7 MS. GOODRIDGE: You're cutting
8 out. But I -- but I did hear what you said but you
9 cut out a bit.

10 But thank you so much.

11 MR. MC KEE: I'm sorry.

12 MS. GOODRIDGE: I greatly
13 appreciate all of your comments.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. MC KEE: I didn't mean to cut
16 out. I didn't mean to be so long winded but it's a
17 subject I get exercised about.

18 MS. GOODRIDGE: No worries. I
19 appreciate your comments and I love you sign in the
20 background.

21 MR. MC KEE: I do too.

22 MR. GONZALES-RIVERA: I also have
23 a question.

24 Thank you very much for your --
25 for your testimony.

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And I read your full testimony that was sent to us.

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So in your estimation, I mean, it's like you said that there are many properties that are over assessed. If the assessments were correct, by how much do you think, estimate, could property taxes go down for different kinds of -- different kinds of landlords? And it could either be a number or a range, keeping in the spirit of what you were saying.

MR. MC KEE: It's a really complicated subject. I'm not the expert on real property taxation. I know people who are. But I can tell you that the basic problem is, as I described it, if -- if we -- if you could reduce real property taxes, that would have a direct impact on rents. And the -- there's just no question about it.

But I do think that calling for, every chance we get, calling for reform of this system is essential because it's a very unfair system and it's tenants who pay the price of it because the landlords are just essentially collecting the money for the City.

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I mean, let's remember there are other advantages to owning real property other than what you get out of the rent roll. I mean, apart from anything else, you (Zoom inaudible) valuable. So landlords who complain about not being able to get rent increases are really sort of missing the boat.

I don't know if I was able to answer your question, Mr. Gonzalez, but --

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Okay. It's just basically a followup to the previous question. I mean, it's like where -- it's like a direct reduction in property taxes is one avenue but you're sort of opening up another possibility. I mean, it's like there also exists the possibility of a reform that might systematically -- might systematically lower those taxes. I mean, I'm just like sort of focusing --

MR. MC KEE: Outside the City, the reliance on school taxes is to fund public education. It's a huge problem for homeowners as well as renter. But why Albany can't get it's mind around this issue and do something meaningful about reforming the system is -- is a question. The

1

2 politics are very difficult.

3

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Well, okay.

4

Thank you very much, Michael.

5

MR. MC KEE: Thank you.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: I understand

7

that Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer is

8

here. I think we're going to hear from her next.

9

BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER: I am

10

here.

11

Thank you very much.

12

It's hard to follow Michael McKee

13

and -- and I will try.

14

Anyway, I appreciate that you're

15

doing this and just like everybody else, I think

16

that your consideration that you have brought to

17

our attention is reflected in your proposal of a

18

rent freeze for SROs, which you've done for many,

19

many years. Much appreciated.

20

And for apartments and lofts, the

21

rent freeze for a one-year renewal and a one

22

percent only for the second year of the two-year

23

lease.

24

I do want to say that there are

25

others, as you can imagine, asking for a freezing

1

2 for all lease renewals and even going further for a
3 three percent rent rollback. I would say that
4 would be even better.

5

6 So from the board's proposal, we
7 all know that every tenant has the safety of a rent
8 freeze for one year and only those who believe they
9 can afford a one-percent increase in the second
10 year should apply for that second-year lease.

11

12 We know how unprecedented time
13 we're in. We know the housing consideration alone
14 is no longer sufficient for a conversation around
15 rent increases. We've got food. We've got
16 employment. The list is endless.

17

18 So by comparing New Yorkers who
19 managed to flatten the curve through staying at
20 home, the clusters of outbreaks in congregate
21 settings, such as shelters, it's very clear that
22 housing stability is a key factor in individual
23 public health.

24

25 And so there are so many experts,
26 like Dr. Fauci, who's his own kind of a folk hero,
27 estimating that a vaccine won't be available to
28 2021, so we know that housing stability for two
29 years for all is the only sensible way to ensure

1

2 the continued safety of our City's tenants and I
3 hope there's a rent freeze on both.

4 So in terms of the concerns of
5 property owners, since New York went on pause, I've
6 heard from building owners who told me they had no
7 idea how they would keep their buildings afloat
8 financially. And I know their fears and I know
9 their frustrations. But it is also clear that
10 the -- between the plights of owners and tenants,
11 the owners do have more options than tenants.

12 And I just want to mention, in
13 terms of the property tax, you know, and Michael
14 McKee knows this, and others, that there is
15 supposed to be a definite taskforce looking at the
16 issues in the City of New York to make suggestions
17 to the folks in Albany.

18 So I think rent levels are not why
19 owners may be in trouble right now. It's the
20 pandemic. You probably see the commercial rent
21 issues. They too have the same problem as mom and
22 pops. And so I've been in support of legislation
23 that I know is being worked on in Albany.

24 And I never wanted to say anything
25 but thank you to former RGB Executive Director, Tim

1

2 Collins, because he has analyzed the operating
3 income and expenses every single year of buildings
4 and owners since 1990, or maybe before. He shows
5 that owners have been historically over compensated
6 in so many categories and I want to make sure that
7 that is not forgotten.

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

9 BOROUGH PRESIDENT BREWER: This
10 board, however, has made a great effort to
11 recommend the recommendations that it did.

12 And thank you very, very much.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
14 Borough President.

15 Our next speakers are:

16 Lincoln Eccles;

17 Rita Marmor;

18 Irving Lee;

19 Daneiry Gonzalez; and,

20 Gregory Bronner.

21 MS. BURGER: If you could please
22 raise your hands if you're on the telephone. You
23 can do that by doing star 9.

24 MR. ECCLES: Hello.

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello, Mr.

1

2 Eccles.

3

MR. ECCLES: Yes.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

5

MR. ECCLES: All right.

6

7 I'm a small property owner, legacy
8 owner. My family has had this property since the
9 late '60s that I'm dealing with right now.

9

10 And going forward with what the
11 previous speaker just said, saying that property
12 taxes are around 35 percent. My property tax
13 currently is over 50 percent. When we add on
14 water, we're approaching 60 percent of my gross
15 revenue.

15

16 I'm drowning in debt right now
17 because our income is simply too low. You're the
18 only path towards any kind of income -- increase.
19 We're in a situation where with COVID I -- I'm
20 basically stuck. I have apartments that are -- one
21 or two apartments that are empty right now. And we
22 don't have a pathway forward.

22

23 We've -- we will go under and we
24 will be one of those minority entities that poof is
25 gone and it will be the large developers that take
over. And the reason why it matters for black

1

2 owners is because we do more, care more. We --
3 like I've had at least four tenants while I've been
4 in control of the property that have been able to
5 acquire their own private home. They've been able
6 to save up and move forward.

7 So we cater and take care of our
8 tenants. That's the real difference. We have a
9 communal relationship with our tenants. I'm in the
10 property. So it's not like there's strangers and
11 if there's a concern, it's not cared about or
12 addressed or it's only about numbers.

13 So please follow your mandate and
14 provide an appropriate increase.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
16 Eccles.

17 Sorry. My spreadsheet is not
18 behaving properly. So Danielle, can you say who
19 the next speaker is?

20 MS. BURGER: Sure. I think Rita
21 Marmor is not here.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

23 MS. BURGER: And we can confirm
24 that.

25 And then we have Irving Lee on the

1

2 phone.

3

4 So I'm going to let Irving speak
5 and then if Andrew wants to look for Rita. But I
6 don't think she's here. And then after Irving is
7 Daneiry Gonzales, who I also don't think is here.
8 But if you are, please raise your hand.

9

10 MR. LEE: It's Irving Lee. Can
11 you hear me?

12

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

14

15 MR. LEE: Okay. Very good.

16

17 My name is Irving Lee. I'm a
18 Chinese American, second generation Chinatown
19 property owner, who owns a single tenement building
20 on Eldridge Street.

21

22 As with many families who own
23 Chinatown property owners and businesses, we are
24 the backbone of the Chinatown community.

25

26 I am part of the revitalization of
27 Chinatown and New York at a time of
28 suburbanization.

29

30 Our residential tenants are rent
31 stabilized, who I understand I have a business and
32 I have responsibility to upkeep my building.

33

34 Besides the daily maintenance that must be done, my

1

2 building requires major renovations, which are
3 still going on today.

4

I have done this over -- over the
5 last several years. My building was built in 1910.
6 It's 110 years old.

7

I provide affordable commercial
8 rent to our businesses to service the working class
9 community in Chinatown. My rents are approximately
10 \$5 a square foot on average, which is much lower
11 than the average real estate market.

12

Even with the hometown discount,
13 many property owners, like myself, rely on
14 commercial tenants to subsidize our residential
15 tenants. However, we are feeling the effects of
16 shoppers' changing habits. Amazon has knocked out
17 a number of our commercial businesses.

18

Now we face -- we are facing COVID
19 pandemic that has crippled our commercial rentals
20 and I've already lost a tenant. It will be
21 struggle to survive and keep afloat under these
22 circumstances. We will be hardpressed to pay for
23 operating expenses, including real estate taxes and
24 utilities.

25

We provide an essential service

1

2 for our community; affordable housing. Unlike a
3 Leonard aristocracy, landlords have expenses and
4 tax to be carried out like any other business
5 operation.

6 As you know, based on your
7 studies, the cost of maintaining a building has
8 exceeded revenue. And as property owners of rent
9 regulated buildings, we don't get a discount from
10 contractors just because we own a rent regulated
11 building.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
13 Lee.

14 MR. LEE: Oh, I'm not finished.
15 Can I continue?

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Can you just
17 wrap up. You've exceeded your two minutes.

18 MR. LEE: Okay. And, of course,
19 a new dynamic is taking place and that is the home
20 office. Given the pandemic, a lot of operations
21 are staying inside, creating additional expenses.

22 If we don't keep the family
23 operation together, we will end up having large
24 operations like Blackstone taking over our
25 businesses and, of course, creating more

1

2 gentrification.

3

Thank you.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.

5

Lee.

6

MR. LEE: Questions, answers?

7

(No response.)

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker

9

is Daneiry Gonzalez;

10

To be followed by Gregory Bronner.

11

MS. GONZALEZ: Yes.

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello.

13

MS. GONZALEZ: My testimony's

14

going to be in Spanish. (Spanish Translation)

15

"My name is Daneiry Gonzalez. And

16

I live at 25-58 Grand Concourse in the Bronx. I am

17

a member of the tenants' association and leaders of

18

the Northwest Bronx and Clergy Coalition. This is

19

my testimony:

20

When I look at the standards that

21

the City uses to determine New Yorkers' poverty

22

levels and what their basic services would be,

23

especially when they are reduced to simply paying

24

for rent, I ask myself the following. What about

25

utility payments, transportation, [...], phone

1
2 payments, car insurance, among hundreds of other
3 monthly payments, which the head of household is
4 responsible for making? Are we not entitled to a
5 better quality of life with a safe roof over our
6 heads that is in keeping with our income? It's very
7 common to see a parent barely getting by with a
8 maximum monthly salary of \$2,500 and allocating a
9 minimum of \$1,500 in order to provide a roof over
10 their children's heads. That parent will also live
11 with the uncertainty that the landlord will raise
12 the rent the following year when the new lease is
13 signed, even though he/she will be making the
14 same salary.

15 In my experience, my ex partner
16 and I both chipped in 50% to cover the monthly
17 rent. When he left, I had to take on live-in cases
18 as a home health aide, which is what I do for a
19 living, in order to cover 100% of the rent expense.
20 All the late nights have actually worsened my
21 respiratory disease. I am here to ask all of the
22 RGB representatives and members, Mayor Bill
23 DeBlasio, and all of the government entities that
24 you help us to safeguard our citizens' homes by not
25 allowing any more rent increases. We are the

1

2 driving force behind New York's economy and, as
3 such, we should be protected. Thank you and good
4 night! No more increases!"

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
6 much.

7

8

MS. GONZALEZ: Thank you.

Have a good night.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
10 is Gregory Bronner;

11

12

To be followed by Melissa Bosley;

and,

13

Then Andrew Hoffman; and,

14

Then Eugenia Dubnau; and,

15

Aaron Weber.

16

17

18

MR. WALSH: Are statements not

going to be translated for the -- I mean, I do

speak some Spanish but not --

19

20

21

22

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, Scott. I'm

sorry. This was announced at the very beginning

but at the bottom of the screen, there's an

interpretation button and if you click it, you can

translate to --

24

25

MR. WALSH: I can translate. I

got it.

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: -- Spanish or
3 English, depending on which way you want to go.

4 MR. WALSH: Muy bien.

5 CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.

6 And then -- this is new to me too
7 but it looks like you want to turn it off after
8 you've -- after you've completed the translation.

9 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: No, you can
10 keep it on English the whole time.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, okay.

12 And then, Andrew, just to be
13 clear, if somebody wanted to hear the translated
14 testimony, later on they can go to YouTube and
15 rewatch that, is that a way to go back or no?

16 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Well, there
17 would be a closed caption option for -- which would
18 be for Spanish --

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

20 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: -- if they
21 wanted to do that. Yeah. They could watch the
22 whole hearing.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.

24 So if you missed it in the
25 language you didn't prefer, you could -- you could

1

2 go back to the youtube.

3

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: And, Scott, I'm
4 sorry. You know, when we flash that -- a little
5 after five, that whole thing, I was including how
6 you listen in English, you know, in Spanish. I'm
7 sorry, I should have pointed it out again before
8 this speaker.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Should we
10 move on to our next speaker, who is Gregory
11 Bronner.

12

To be followed by Melissa Bosley;
13 and,

14

Then Andrew Hoffman.

15

MR. BRONNER: My name is -- hello,
16 my name is Gregory Bronner. I own one rent
17 stabilized apartment and three free market units.

18

My rent stabilized rent is \$1,424
19 a month. The expenses on it are \$1,600 and change.
20 I have owned it for 12 years.

21

Two of my three free market units,
22 the tenants left due to COVID-19 and the third one
23 has refused to renew his lease and I can't do
24 anything about it. So he's basically month to
25 month.

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So obviously not all of us are doing well. My tenant has been in occupancy for 45 years and I've never gotten a vacancy increase. And it shows that some tenants have done extremely well and some have not. That is your responsibility is to give all landlords a fair rent increase so that all of us can maintain our buildings and our apartments.

Now I ask of you, if you have a low rent increase this year, make the second -- the two-year adjustment extremely high. None of us know what is going to happen next year and there is a risk of huge inflation that will bifurcate the market. People who got a two-year, one percent increase, about 40 percent of them will take that. And then everybody else next year if there's a lot of inflation, you'll have to have like a ten percent rent increase and some people will miss that.

Some landlords -- so you'll have a situation where some tenants are doing extremely well and some are doing extremely badly.

Finally, you can't -- you have to give landlords enough money to maintain their

1
2 buildings and unfortunately the lack of vacancy
3 increases and the lack of adjustments that you can
4 make makes this whole process very unfair. It has
5 to be changed in Albany. But you guys have to
6 maintain a minimum standard so that everyone -- all
7 the apartments don't disappear or deteriorate
8 because I'm not making any money on my apartments
9 and I'm sure a lot of other people with long
10 standing tenants have the same issue.

11 Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
13 Bronner.

14 Our next speaker is Melissa
15 Bosley;

16 To be followed by --

17 MS. GOODRIDGE: All right.

18 I have a quick question.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, I'm sorry,
20 Leah.

21 MS. GOODRIDGE: I'll make it very
22 quick.

23 Mr. Bronner, are you still there?

24 (No response.)

25 MS. GOODRIDGE: No.

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: Andrew, can we
3 promote him back?

4 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, let me see
5 if I can find him.

6 MS. BURGER: I did it already.
7 He's needs to update himself.

8 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Thank you,
9 Danielle.

10 MS. GOODRIDGE: Oh, I see him on
11 the screen.

12 Can you hear me, Mr. Bronner?

13 (No response.)

14 MS. GOODRIDGE: No, I think he
15 has it on mute.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Maybe ask your
17 question, Leah, and he could unmute while you're
18 speaking.

19 MR. BRONNER: No, no, I'm here.
20 I'm here.

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

22 MS. GOODRIDGE: Hi.

23 You said you have -- you have four
24 tenants.

25 MR. BRONNER: I did until

1

2 recently, yes.

3

MS. GOODRIDGE: Is your building
4 rent stabilized then?

5

MR. BRONNER: I own rent
6 stabilized co-operative units, as well as a
7 three-family building.

8

MS. GOODRIDGE: Oh, okay. So
9 the -- so the co-op is likely like a Mitchel Lama
10 and then there's the private one?

11

MR. BRONNER: Well, it was
12 conversion in the 1980s. And so I own the last --
13 I owned the last two rent stabilized units and I've
14 owned them for 12 years.

15

MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay. So I just
16 wanted to clarify because I was wondering when you
17 said four, I was wondering whether you were a rent
18 stabilized owner. So that was my question I had.

19

Because, as you know, we're making
20 determinations for rent stabilized apartments.

21

MR. BRONNER: Yes. And I still
22 have one.

23

MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay. One out of
24 the four.

25

MR. BRONNER: Out of the four.

1

2 No, there are four units. I don't -- I am not a
3 very big landlord. I have four units total.

4 MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. We next
7 have Melissa Bosley;

8 To be followed by Andrew Hoffman.

9 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Melissa is not
10 in attendance that I can see. So we're going to go
11 to Andrew Hoffman.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: To be followed
13 by Eugenia Dubnau;

14 Aaron Weber; and,
15 Matthew Verdery.

16 MR. HOFFMAN: And can you hear me
17 now?

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

19 MR. HOFFMAN: My name is Andrew
20 Hoffman. I'm the vice chairman of the Community
21 House Improvement Program and a board member of the
22 Rent Stabilization Association and a third
23 generation owner/operator of rent stabilized
24 housing in New York.

25 In this hostile City ravaged by

1

2 the COVID-19 pandemic where the everyday life of
3 doing business has become extremely difficult, the
4 Rent Guidelines Board must transcend politics and
5 set guidelines to reflect the increased cost of
6 operating rental housing in New York.

7 You guys know what your mandate
8 is. Under Section 26-510 of the RFL, you're
9 supposed to review the economic conditions of a
10 residential industry, including real estate taxes,
11 insurance, all the costs associated with running a
12 property. All our increases are up and we're not
13 even looking -- you guys aren't even considering
14 the expenses that we have relating to the COVID-19
15 pandemic yet.

16 And we all know that the Housing
17 Stability Protection Act of 2019 dramatically
18 changed the way that we conduct our business. And,
19 yes, it's a business. Our profit margins have
20 dwindled due to higher expenses and the new rent
21 laws. And your profits -- our profits have
22 actually reduced so much since the first time the
23 Rent Guidelines Board published their yearly Income
24 and Expense Report, it showed a negative, a decline
25 of .6. This is the first decline since 2002.

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Certainly this decline is historic. It's -- we didn't even have a decline during the nation's worst recession in 2008.

This year, the Mayor made it irresponsible promise again by publicly announcing, even before you started your process, that he would get a zero at this year's Rent Guidelines Board. The board is supposed to be fair and impartial and, more importantly, you're supposed to have a legal mandate that under the RSL, you're supposed to preserve the housing stock.

And there's no dispute that our costs have risen and we need yearly increases to maintain our housing stock. We all want affordable New York and we listen to the Mayor and the Governor speak about the dire need to create affordable housing but a rent freeze for stabilized tenants is not the way. We need subsidies, incentives not a path of disinvestment and the -- and this disinvestment of zero rent increases is not the way to go.

Go back and figure out how to freeze all of our operating costs and then we can have a conversation about a zero rent increase.

1

2

Thank you.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.

4

Hoffman.

5

Our next speaker is Eugenia

6

Dubnau;

7

To be followed by Aaron Weber;

8

and,

9

Then Matthew Verdery.

10

Ms. Dubnau.

11

MS. DUBNAU: Yes. Shall I start?

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Please.

13

MS. DUBNAU: Yeah. My name is

14

Genie Dubnau and I'm with RENA, Riverside Edge

15

Neighborhood Association, which is a community

16

organization in Washington Heights.

17

So I say the only humane decision

18

is a three percent abatement, rent decrease. Why

19

am I saying that? Have we seen landlords anywhere

20

on line on food pantries? Oh, so none of them are

21

on food pantry lines but our tenants are. Our

22

tenants in Washington Heights are standing on food

23

pantry lines because they cannot afford their

24

rents.

25

Now let me ask all these small

1
2 landlords, the small landlords are crying, they're
3 crying and yet when they're asked, well, have you
4 applied for a hardship increase. No, I didn't need
5 it this year. Oh. So you didn't need it this
6 year. So you're still making plenty of money.

7 Now there are two little facts.
8 This is all we need to know. It's not rocket
9 science. This is not rocket science. Landlords'
10 profits were 39.5 percent last year, profit. I'm
11 not talking about cost. I'm talking profit. And
12 for the landlords, the small landlords who are
13 talking about racism, the black and Afro-American
14 landlords are suffering so much, are you paying 50
15 percent of your income for you housing the way 34
16 percent of Latino and probably the same of African
17 Americans are paying over 50 percent of their
18 income on housing.

19 So these two facts make it quite
20 simple to know that right now we can't pretend that
21 we need to make profit for landlords. If they
22 really -- when is there a guarantee of a profit for
23 landlord? Five percent they're guaranteed but they
24 don't want to apply.

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

1

2 Dubnau.

3 MS. DUBNAU: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker

5 is Aaron Weber;

6 To be followed by Matthew Verdery;

7 and,

8 Then David Chemtob;

9 Ignacio Dominguez; and,

10 Gina Baldwin-Rivera.

11 MR. WEBER: Hi everybody.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello.

13 MR. WEBER: My name is Aaron

14 Weber. I manage rent regulated and market rate
15 apartments, around 1,000 in total. Stabilized rent
16 is about 45 percent less than market rate rents on
17 average. Market rate apartments are supporting
18 regulated apartments to fill the gap in building
19 costs. That's why market rate apartments are so
20 expensive in New York.

21 Therefore, the affordable housing
22 crisis in New York is self inflicted. But now
23 market rents are down 15 to 20 percent. The spread
24 between market and stabilized apartments are
25 unsustainable. Operating expenses are increasing,

1

2 water and sewer, cleaning supplies and labor,
3 garbage removal because people are home all day
4 throwing out garbage and taxes are up eight to ten
5 percent.

6 Negative cash flow will reduce the
7 quality of living for all our tenants. Property
8 owners can't afford to meet shifting demands and
9 provide a safe environment for our tenants during
10 COVID. A rollback or a rent freeze will result in
11 a worse outcome to the people that you are actually
12 trying to protect.

13 The vast amount of regulated
14 tenants can afford an increase. No max income
15 requirements for regulated tenants anymore. For
16 those who can afford the increase, property owners
17 will work with them on a payment plan on a
18 case-by-case basis. Property owners, we're
19 responsible, we care about our communities and we
20 won't evict a tenant without trying to work with
21 them first.

22 Most property owners live in their
23 buildings and have relationships with their
24 tenants. The government does so much to help
25 tenants; unemployment checks, the CARES act, the

1

2 Payment Protection Program and favoring tenants in
3 Housing Court, but nothing to help landlords.

4

I did apply for the landlord
5 severe financial hardship loan and I only received
6 5K. But interest on these loans are predatory and
7 it's not solid relief. It's not proportional to
8 what tenants are receiving.

9

Please look at the data and
10 understand that a rent freeze would reduce the
11 quality of living in New York. Small property
12 owners will lose their buildings to hedge funds and
13 private equity firms.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
15 Weber.

16

Our next speaker is Matthew
17 Verdery;

18

To be followed by David Chemtob;

19

Ignacio Dominguez;

20

Gina Baldwin Rivera; and,

21

Sarah Wass.

22

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Okay. I'm
23 going to promote our panelist. It's -- it's fire
24 tablet is the name but it -- can you please tell us
25 who -- what your name is, please.

1

2 MS. PALEY: Yeah, how are you?

3 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, can you
4 tell us your name, please.

5 MS. PALEY: Myself.

6 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I'm sorry.
7 What's your name, please.

8 MS. PALEY: My name is Bonnie.

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: Bonnie, what's
10 your last name?

11 MS. PALEY: Oh, hi. Good
12 evening.

13 My name is Bonnie Paley,
14 P-a-l-e-y.

15 (Overlapping conversation.)

16 MS. BURGER: You haven't
17 registered.

18 MS. PALEY: I have. I did. I
19 sent in an e-mail and I was supposed to talk last
20 night but I had to have some foot surgery and by
21 the time I came home, I couldn't do it. So I'm
22 just trying to find out from you all how can I do
23 it if you have room that I can talk.

24 MS. GOODRIDGE: Maybe as a
25 reasonable accommodation we can allow that briefly

1

2 now.

3

MS. PALEY: All right.

4

I appreciate that.

5

6 just asking Andrew.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: I mean my
8 preference would be to stick to the registered
9 speakers and Ms. Paley could then speak when the
10 registered speakers have had their opportunity.

11

Leah, is that fine?

12

MS. GOODRIDGE: Yeah. No. I was
13 just, you know, just as a reasonable accommodation.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah, just
15 thinking about it, just to try to --

16

MS. GOODRIDGE: No, I know.
17 Okay. That sounds good.

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Ms.
19 Paley, please stay on the line and then when the
20 registered speakers have spoken then you certainly
21 should have an opportunity to speak as well.

22

Andrew do we --

23

MS. BURGER: Sorry. If I could
24 just say one thing. If I could just remind people
25 you're -- if you have registered to speak, your

1

2 name needs to be the one that you registered with.
3 We -- we thought because there was a couple of
4 people missing that that person might have been one
5 of the registered speakers. But from now on, I
6 think we'll just stick to the actual names.

7

8 So your name has to be the same.
9 If you're calling in by phone, the phone number has
10 to be the same you used to register. And if you
11 know that your name is coming up, if you could
12 please raise your hand. If you're on the phone,
13 you can do by that pressing star 9.

13

Thank you.

14

15 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: So from what I
16 can tell here, that Matthew Verdery is not in
17 attendance at the moment and neither is David
18 Chemtob.

18

19 So we're going to go to Ignacio
20 Dominguez, who is actually not -- they're not in
21 attendance either; are they?

21

22 Oh, there is an Ignacio here.
23 Dominguez. Let's try to go to Ignacio here.

23

24 MR. HOBERMAN: There's a David
25 raising his hand as well. I thought he was on the
list.

1

2 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Sorry. What's
3 the name?

4 MR. HOBERMAN: David.

5 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yes, I see
6 David now. Okay. I'm sorry. I didn't see David
7 before.

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Which David is
9 that? We haven't called a David yet?

10 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Well, Matthew
11 isn't present so David -- Chemtob.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh David Chemtob
13 following. I'm sorry.

14 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yes. It sounds
15 like this could be David.

16 MR. CHEMTOB: Hello.

17 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yes. Is this
18 David Chemtob. And I may be pronouncing the last
19 name wrong. I'm sorry if I am.

20 MR. CHEMTOB: Yes, you pronounced
21 it good -- can you hear me? Can you see me?

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can hear you
23 but we can't see you.

24 MR. CHEMTOB: Oh, wait. I was
25 able to see you all along. How do I get you to see

1

2 me?

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: There should be
4 a button on the bottom left that starts the video
5 if you're on Zoom.

6

7

MR. CHEMTOB: Okay. I just press

it?

8

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: And we'll see if

you pop up.

10

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: There you are.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: There you are.

12

MR. CHEMTOB: Oh, great. Okay.

13

I'm just trying to -- good

14

afternoon.

15

My name's David Chemtob. I'm a

16

housing provider in Brooklyn of a 35-unit building.

17

There's a very large misconception

18

in New York that property owners are making an

19

enormous profits and this misconception needs to be

20

cleared up.

21

I'm going to illustrate to the

22

board what a typical rent stabilized apartment with

23

a \$1,200 a month rent and analyze where that \$1,200

24

gets allocated to. Again, this is a real building

25

in Brooklyn.

1

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25

The total cost on this apartment are \$1,404. Real estate taxes, \$313. Water, \$87. Fuel \$80. I can go on but the total is \$1,404 per month. On this apartment I'm only collecting \$1,200 so I'm subsidizing \$204 per month for this tenant's housing.

Where is the equity in this? There's been a big political platform over the last few years, railing and demonizing property owners that we're over charging and pricing tenants out of the market. When, in fact, we're subsidizing a tremendous amount of New York city residents. We should be thanked instead of villanized. We should be appreciated instead of unappreciated.

I'm holding in my hand the RGB lease renewals for the last six years. Let me read you the lease increases that were passed over the last six years since 2014.

One percent in 2014-'15;

Zero in '16;

Zero in '17;

One-and-a-quarter in '18;

One-and-a-half in 2020.

If we took the total compounded

1

2 rent increases from 2014 until the present, it
3 would total 5.13 percent. During those same six
4 years, my real estate taxes ballooned from \$100,000
5 to \$143,000. That's a 43 percent increase in
6 taxes. And yet, RGB gave us only a 5.3 percent
7 increase in rent.

8 In 2014, my insurance was \$18,000.
9 Today it's \$22,000. That's an increase of 23.7
10 percent. And yet, RGB only allowed a 5.3 percent
11 increase.

12 Please keep in mind after all the
13 looting that went on in the last weeks, insurance
14 costs are poised to skyrocket even more. I just
15 found out yesterday the number of insurance
16 carriers won't even write in New York. They just
17 don't want to be in this market.

18 Respected members of the board,
19 the path we're on is clearly unsustainable. If
20 landlords aren't allowed to keep up with inflation,
21 we're going to go back to the 1970s when burned out
22 buildings were common sites all over the City.

23 I feel for the people of the
24 City --

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Mr. Chemtob,

1

2 thank you.

3

Your time is up.

4

MR. CHEMTOB: Could I just

5

finish.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

7

MR. CHEMTOB: I feel for the

8

people of the City that lost their jobs and it's

9

not fair for government to expect one sector of the

10

population or one industry to make up the lost

11

income that tenants are suffering from.

12

I yield back and I'm open to

13

questions.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

15

MS. GOODRIDGE: Isn't -- aren't

16

what you asking for, this is a question. Aren't

17

you actually asking, right, for the tenants to then

18

make up for your loss; right? It's the same thing.

19

The question could be -- the point your making, it

20

could also be turned around and say, well, why

21

can't property -- and this is more of a policy

22

question so I'm going to let you -- that you

23

pointed out so you can have the opportunity to

24

speak.

25

But the question is, why -- why

1

2 can't then landlords then ask the government for a
3 subsidy? Why do tenants have to shoulder the
4 burden? Because what you're saying is, you know,
5 tenants should shoulder the burden, landlords
6 shouldn't. But then it could also be the converse.
7 And I'd really love to hear, you know, a response
8 because this question has been circulating as a
9 larger looming policy one for awhile.

10 MR. CHEMTOB: Yes. Can I respond.

11 MS. GOODRIDGE: Yes.

12 MR. CHEMTOB: I was on a phone
13 call and I did exactly what you were suggesting
14 three weeks ago. I was on a phone conference with
15 an Assemblyman, Steve Timberwicz and imploring him
16 to try to get, and he is trying to get something
17 passed in Albany to give vouchers to -- to tenants.
18 A lot of that is dependent if they get the grant
19 they're supposed -- they're hoping to get from
20 Washington, D.C. It might come. It might not
21 come.

22 But yet we're making decisions
23 today that are going to impact landlords and we
24 can't keep up with inflation because we can't keep
25 up with it and it looks like the board wants to

1

2 pass a one percent or a two percent. We can't even
3 keep up. I showed you my real estate taxes
4 skyrocketed 43 percent. Why is government shifting
5 all of the burden onto landlords?

6 I feel bad that tenants are losing
7 their jobs but it's government's place to provide
8 them with what they're losing but to shift it all
9 on the landlords and that's what's been going on.
10 They're putting all of the onus on landlords.
11 Let's make a rent strike. Who's going to pay for
12 the real estate tax? Who's going to pay for my
13 sanitation? I still have to pay a porter. I still
14 have to pay my super. Or should I fire them? Am I
15 not buying fuel? Am I not paying for water and
16 sewer? Am I not putting a roof over their head?
17 Are they not taking a hot shower every night? Are
18 they not sleeping under my roof?

19 What is a rent strike mean?
20 Should they just live for free? Why don't we just
21 tell grocery stores let anyone walk in, take some
22 fruit and vegetables and walk out and don't pay.
23 Why is it only the landlords that are asked to give
24 free rent and to give free services. I don't
25 understand.

1

2

MS. GOODRIDGE: But we're not --

3

I don't -- I don't want to belabor it and sort

4

of -- but no rent increase and paying the same rent

5

as last year is not the same as paying no rent at

6

all. And I think my question is more about

7

shouldering the burden.

8

I do want to give other people the

9

opportunity to speak. I think the points that

10

you've made, I -- you know, we thank you and we

11

certainly heard before.

12

But thank you.

13

MR. CHEMTOB: But I'm not saying

14

that the -- that I don't want to shoulder it but I

15

just think too much of the burden is being shifted

16

to landlords and not enough of it is being picked

17

up by tenants. Like we said, 35 percent of the

18

money that's collected goes to the City. And

19

that's going for lights in the streets and parks

20

and for the Police Department and the Fire

21

Department and tenants are getting those direct

22

services. That's not something that landlords are

23

getting. That's something that's going to the

24

tenant services.

25

So why aren't they expected to pay

1

2 the increase in taxes if they're the ones that are
3 directly getting the benefit of those taxes.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
5 Chemtob.

6

MR. CHEMTOB: Thank you.

7

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: David, I
8 have a question as well.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, I'm sorry.

10

Mr. Chemtob, please stay on the
11 line.

12

MR. CHEMTOB: Sure.

13

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Yeah, I can
14 see that he's there.

15

So I'm asking this question
16 because you seem to keep careful numbers on your
17 finances. So you mentioned, you know, the one
18 percent increases, even the two-percent increases
19 is not enough to -- to keep up with your expenses.

20

How much of an increase do you
21 think that you would need to -- to keep up with
22 your expenses based on the numbers that you have?

23

MR. CHEMTOB: Honestly, I don't
24 even think in this political arena, I just see the
25 politics that are going on. I can't really answer

1

2 that honestly because if I really answered it
3 honestly you'd think I was, you know, I was crazy.

4 But I'll let the numbers speak for
5 themselves. I have a 43 percent increase in taxes.
6 How about just giving -- let me just catch up to my
7 taxes. I only got 5.3 percent for the last six
8 years. But yet I'm expected to pay 43 percent more
9 in taxes. That's a 37 percent increase. So how
10 about giving me five percent for the next five
11 years. I still won't even catch up.

12 So how do I answer your question?
13 You're talking about a zero to one percent. I'm
14 telling you five percent won't even let me break
15 even on my taxes. So how do I answer your
16 question?

17 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: I believe
18 you have. I believe you have. I mean, it's good
19 to have that framework. You know, just what we're
20 hearing is that even a five percent increase over
21 the next five years would not even be enough.

22 So --

23 MR. CHEMTOB: Which would pull a
24 25 percent. Exactly. Five percent would only be
25 25 percent over -- and -- and that's assuming that

1

2 my 43 percent increase that I just went through for
3 the last six years is going to stay flat but we
4 know that's not happening because the City needs to
5 get the money that they're losing and where's that
6 going to come from if not from property taxes.

7

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Okay.

8 Yeah, again, I mean, it's like I just wanted to get
9 an idea of what you thought. I mean, it's like
10 around these lines. I mean, when we're considering
11 what --

12

MR. CHEMTOB: I don't think

13 everybody in the City wants to see us go back to
14 the 1970s. And that is exactly where we're headed.
15 Burn down buildings.

16

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: I bring this

17 up because, you know, rent increases are one way to
18 help you meet your costs but there might be other
19 policy solutions as well.

20

MR. CHEMTOB: And we were able to

21 take in June of 2019, they took away that we were
22 able to get, you know, increases in rent if we got
23 a vacancy allowance. But they took that away from
24 us in Albany. Now I don't know who they're
25 protecting. They're protecting someone that's not

1

2 even there. They're protecting a tenant that's not
3 even in the apartment yet, someone that might come
4 in another five months from now from out of town,
5 so we want to keep that rent low for that
6 theoretical tenant that might come back, that might
7 come to us. They're not here now.

8 Why are we keeping that? Why
9 don't we take away vacancy increases?

10 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
12 Chemtob.

13 We're going to go to Ignacio
14 Dominguez;

15 To be followed by Gina
16 Baldwin-Rivera;

17 Sara Wass;

18 Isabel Pedros; and,

19 Jaime Anderson.

20 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: David.

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

22 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: We have two
23 Ignacios here. I'm allowing them to talk.

24 Maybe Liz, they're supposed to
25 testify in Spanish. Liz, could you ask them if

1

2 they're --

3

(No response.)

4

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: We didn't hear
5 you very loudly, Liz. Can you speak up.

6

(No response.)

7

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Okay. I think
8 we got him there.

9

Board members, he's planning on
10 testifying in Spanish. So if you don't have the
11 English on in the Zoom, now is the time to -- to do
12 that.

13

Liz, could you ask him to unmute.

14

(No response.)

15

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Okay. I guess
16 we should go to the next speaker.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: And we can come
18 back to Mr. Dominguez if we can connect
19 technologically.

20

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yes. I'm not
21 sure why he's not unmuting.

22

But our next speaker will be Gina
23 Baldwin-Rivera.

24

MS. BALDWIN-RIVERA: Good
25 afternoon.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good afternoon.

3

4

MS. BALDWIN-RIVERA: Can you hear me?

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

6

MS. BALDWIN-RIVERA: My name is Gina Baldwin-Rivera. I am a passionate community development specialist that cares deeply about maintaining strong communities that are racially and economically diverse.

11

12

13

I fully understand the role of housing as a major cornerstone to achieve that diversity.

14

15

16

17

Today I am here as a property owner of an owner-occupied, seven-unit building that includes five rent stabilized residences and two market rate.

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

The Rent Guidelines for our seven units are categorized and, therefore, adjusted and the pay scale is to properties that have hundreds, or even thousands of units. The operation and maintenance costs, cost of repairs and system upgrades of our 122-year old property is generally more expensive than large properties that often negotiate based on scale.

1

2

3

4

5

Between 2017 and 2020, we have seen property taxes increase by 17.29 percent and insurance by 18.72 percent, compared to rents that increased only 12.35 percent.

6

7

8

9

10

Property repairs are unpredictable, as illustrated in 2017 when we had a small leak in a 70-inch water pipe, that resulted in a new cutoff valve at the street, costing \$15,800.

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

Despite the fact that we had one tenant move out in the first 14 years, we were able to endure. We maintain and upgraded as necessary without charging any MCI increases. Over the last five years, our two lowest paying tenants, \$198 a month and \$499 a month, expired. So we took the opportunity to renovate those units and bring them up to market.

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

These timely increases are the reason that we are able to pay the rising expenses without comparable rent increases. The 2019 rent protection compromises our ability forcing the long-term possibilities of upgrading and maintaining without an adjustment in the current system to accommodate small property owners.

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
3 Baldwin-Rivera.

4 MS. BURGER: David, I think we're
5 going to put up the list of all the speakers for a
6 minute.

7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Great.

8 MS. BURGER: And you can use this
9 to see where you are on the list. And as a
10 reminder, only if you're one of the next few
11 speakers you should raise your hand. Don't
12 everybody on this list raise their hand, only if
13 you're one of the next few speakers, which are:

14 Sara Wass;

15 Isabel Pedras;

16 Jamie Anderson;

17 David Eshaghoff; and,

18 Carl Klapper.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: So just to state
20 the obvious, that spreadsheet goes horizontally
21 across, in case people are trying to find where
22 they are on the list.

23 MS. BURGER: Yes, I've numbered it
24 to make it clear what direction we're going in.
25 But it's going across.

1

2

I think we can move on to the next speakers, Sars Wass.

4

MS. WASS: Hi. Can you hear me?

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

6

MS. WASS: Great. Hi.

7

I've been a renter in New York City for the past nine years. I've paid my rent on time every month for the rent stabilized apartment I've lived in for the last four years and now things are different.

12

Our City, our State and clearly our country have betrayed all working Americans by not acting quickly enough in a time of crisis. Unemployment is at an epic high and someone needs to pay for it. So who should bear the brunt of this unfortunate mess is it the working people.

18

My job as a freelance event photographer is now obsolete with no reopening in sight. It took me a month to receive unemployment and despite PUA it isn't enough.

22

This is a common case of freelance workers. According to a survey, 2,700 plus freelancers by the freelancers' union, two-thirds of those responders lost more than \$5,000 in income

25

1

2 by May and 84 percent of those freelancers who had
3 applied for government relief, have not yet
4 received any money.

5

I still have absolutely zero cash
6 flow and I'd rather not dig into my limited savings
7 as a 27-year old woman when we have to start paying
8 rent again after the eviction moratorium.

9

Renters are suffering. There are
10 way more renters than landlords of property that
11 they allege need to be serviced and maintained. A
12 volume of mom and pop landlords is a mess. I still
13 need to eat.

14

When PUA ends, I will be
15 completely SOL if the job market is not back open.
16 So I'm asking, can the board do even better than
17 zero percent increases in rent for new leases by
18 the fall? Can we roll back five percent or even
19 ten? Working people should not have to bear the
20 brunt of our City's lack of action related to the
21 pandemic.

22

How is it that this City can
23 afford to pay police overtime to brutalize peaceful
24 protestors during an unlawful curfew but not cancel
25 rent while subsidizing a few landlords who actually

1

2 need it. If a zero percent increase is not good
3 enough for me, a privileged white woman with a dual
4 major college degree and an impressive resume who's
5 not able to find work, I can hardly imagine what
6 others are going through. People with families
7 with even less means and huge -- more expenses than
8 I have.

9 Properties are not the backbone of
10 this City like landlords keep saying on this call.
11 People are.

12 So I ask again, which will the RGB
13 choose to value more.

14 Thank you for your time.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
16 Wass.

17 Our next speaker is Isabel Pedras;
18 To be followed by Jamie Anderson;
19 David Eshaghoff;
20 Carl Klapper;
21 Jeffrey Gerstel.

22 MS. PEDRAS: All right.

23 Can you hear me now?

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

25 MS. PEDRAS: Oh, okay. Perfect.

1

2

Sorry about that. Just one

3

moment.

4

Good evening and thank you for

5

this opportunity to speak with you today.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good evening.

7

MS. PEDRAS: I've never done this

8

before and neither have my parents. As immigrants

9

they always believed they should keep their head

10

down, work hard and not make any waves.

11

They began their mom and pop

12

business managing property in New York over 40

13

years ago. I am a not a myth. My parents are not

14

a myth. They're elderly now and they still work

15

every day with preexisting conditions and even

16

during the pandemic.

17

We are ourselves essential

18

workers. In the past 48 years, we have lived

19

through the best and the worst of New York, whether

20

that was the crack epidemic, 9/11 or recessions.

21

But no matter what, we have always put the business

22

first.

23

Yet despite putting everything

24

back into the business, we are faced with a new

25

threat of mounting costs and the inability to raise

1

2 the revenue we need to cover those costs due to
3 rent freezes and the new 2019 rent laws. In fact,
4 we already had to put on hold the installation of a
5 new boiler and a new roof as a result. That
6 doesn't benefit our tenants.

7 The average renewal increases over
8 the last six years has been less than one percent
9 yet our costs for real estate taxes, water and
10 sewer, insurance, construction have all increased.
11 In fact, water and sewer is not spiked because
12 everybody is home due to the pandemic.

13 We understand that some tenants
14 will have difficulty paying any increase and they
15 need help. But we can no longer make up for the
16 shortfall of programs such as SCRIE and DRIE must
17 be expanded in order to help as many New Yorkers as
18 possible.

19 We too call New York home. And
20 New York now, more than ever, needs the revenue we
21 provide. Any small increase that the board allows
22 is immediately given back to the City in the
23 payment of real estate taxes or spent at our local
24 community hardware stores.

25 I understand the public sentiment

1

2 of wanting to punish the big corporations,
3 especially when people are hurting. But the rent
4 freeze will only reward the big corporations when
5 they come scavenging for our properties.

6 And I just want to say that the
7 woman who opened up tonight, talked about fees for
8 being locked out, fees for unclogging a toilet, we
9 don't charge those fees. And the big corporations,
10 those big landlords, are already knocking on our
11 door. And that's what you're going to have more
12 of.

13 So please help us and help New
14 York.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
16 Pedras.

17 Our next speaker is Jamie
18 Anderson;

19 And then David Eshaghoff;
20 Carl Klapper;
21 Jeffery Gerstel; and,
22 Brittany Ann Porter.

23 (No response)

24 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I do not see
25 Jamie Anderson in attendance.

1

2

So we're going to go to David

3

Eshaghoff.

4

I'm going to promote him right

5

now.

6

MR. ESHAGHOFF: Hi. Good

7

afternoon.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good afternoon.

9

MR. ESHAGHOFF: I want to thank

10

you all for giving me the opportunity to speak to

11

you on the board.

12

My family immigrated to the U.S.

13

from a war torn country over 40 years ago. Over

14

the years, we've invested in a couple of rent

15

stabilized buildings in northern Manhattan, which

16

are all over 100 years old.

17

We take pride in maintaining our

18

properties and take personal care in our tenants

19

and their needs.

20

Everyone is using the recent

21

COVID-19 pandemic to freeze or stop rent payments.

22

While it's been disruptive to the tenants' lives,

23

it also affected landlords. We have had to incur

24

additional expenses to keep the buildings clean and

25

safe while keeping our employees safe to provide

1

2 services to our tenants.

3

4 We have many of our out-of-state
5 tenants who are moving back to their parents' homes
6 and states, leaving another vacancy.

6

7 Prior to the pandemic, the HSTPA
8 of 2019, turned our industry upside down. Prior to
9 the HSTPA, we were able to keep up with the rising
10 expenses by raising rents on fair market leases,
11 preferential leases and gut renovating vacant
12 apartments, allowing us to increase the rents to
13 market rate levels.

13

14 Over the past five years, our
15 gross incomes have increased 1.8 to 7.8 percent,
16 while our expenses, such as real estate taxes alone
17 have increased 9.2 to 15. percent.

17

18 Increased insurance rates,
19 increased 8 to 25 percent year over year and Con
20 Edison has announced that they will increase their
21 rates by 25 percent over the next three years
22 starting this year.

22

23 The cost of supplies, labor and
24 all other operating costs are increasing while
25 rents are staying flat or declining. On average,
rent stabilized tenants paid less than \$15 per

1

2 square foot without their SCRiE and DRiE benefits
3 calculated while the operating expenses exceed \$20
4 per square foot without taking into account any
5 financing expenses.

6 While I empathize with the plight
7 of New York City residents during these trying
8 times, why are landlords always the first to be
9 dehumanized and looked at to further subsidize the
10 tenants' rents.

11 Please apply the rules as per the
12 RGB mandate.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
15 Eshaghoff.

16 Our next speaker is Carl Klapper;
17 To be followed by Jeffery Gerstel;
18 Brittany Ann Porter;
19 David Sochet; and,
20 Claudia Thompson.

21 MR. KLAPPER: Okay. Start video.
22 There's the video. Okay. Here I
23 am.

24 Greetings to all.

25 Can you hear me?

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

3 MR. KLAPPER: Yes. Okay. I'm
4 Carl Peter Klapper. I'm the fifth cousin, three
5 times removed of FDR on the Delano's side.

6 And I am a cousin on the Sherman
7 side of Roger Sherman, who signed all four founding
8 documents of this country.

9 I come at this not only as a
10 tenant but, also, as a -- someone who's deeply
11 invested in the establishment of the United States,
12 that's a union, not a republic. It's a union. And
13 I am deeply desirous to have housing be based on a
14 republican view. That is that it is our residence,
15 which is our citizenship.

16 And so from my standpoint, there
17 should be no rental housing. There should be
18 communist households, better than building blocks
19 of republics and so forth.

20 Nonetheless, viewing this as an
21 economist, which I have been for my youth as a
22 ten-year old, I have several observations to make.
23 You can take a look at the article in the Economic
24 Sun on housing that I have on -- let me see. Get
25 the title in there. On medium. I can refer you of

1

2 that particular aspect of things, I am saying that
3 we need to abolish the mortgage. That's what
4 underpins all of this nonsense, both from the
5 tenants' standpoint in terms of the ridiculously
6 high, not free market pricing that occurs because
7 mortgages are subsidizing all of the bits for
8 housing, for real estate in general.

9 And that is what's driving all of
10 this. We need to eliminate the mortgage and the
11 federal government needs to provide a subsistent
12 stipend sufficient to -- to -- \$1,500 weekly
13 citizen stipend and that's how we allow everybody
14 to allow with the economic circumstances right now,
15 which are extremely dire and are heading us towards
16 a revolution.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
18 Klapper.

19 MR. KLAPPER: You're welcome.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
21 is Jeffrey Gerstel;
22 To be followed by Brittany Ann
23 Porter;
24 David Sochet;
25 Claudia Thompson; and,

1

2 Leslie Leong.

3

4 MS. GOODRIDGE: While we are
5 waiting for them to get on, I just got a note that
6 Ignacio is on and we'd like to try again if
7 possible after --

8

9 MR. GERSTEL: Can you hear me?

10

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, Mr.

12

13 Gerstel. Can you just hold for one second.

14

15 Leah, what name is he registered
16 on and what name is he on on the -- as an attendee?

17

18 MS. GOODRIDGE: Um --

19

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Could you find
21 that out and --

22

23 MS. GOODRIDGE: Ignacio
24 Dominquez, I guess.

25

26 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Just as
27 Ignacio. We'll try to promote him after.

28

29 MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay. Sorry.

30

31 I just wanted to make sure because
32 I just got that information.

33

34 Thank you.

35

36 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Okay. We'll
37 try again.

38

39 MS. GOODRIDGE: Thank you.

1

2 I appreciate it. I'm muting
3 myself now.

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Mr. Gerstel,
5 sorry for the back and forth.

6 I'm sorry, Andrew. Should we
7 continue with Mr. Gerstel.

8 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, yeah.
9 We'll -- after Mr. Gerstel, we'll go to Ignacio.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

11 Mr. Gerstel, thank you for your
12 patience.

13 MR. GERSTEL: Can you see me
14 okay?

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can't see you.
16 We can hear you fine. Is your -- is your camera
17 on? Did you start video in your bottom left-hand
18 corner?

19 MR. GERSTEL: I hope so.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: It's not showing.

21 MR. GERSTEL: Bottom left hand.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: It should say,
23 start video. There's a button.

24 MR. GERSTEL: Um.

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: We certainly can

1

2 hear you loud and clear.

3 Oh, there you are. There you are.

4 MR. GERSTEL: Oh, okay. I see a
5 clock that says two minutes.

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah, we can see
7 your face although we only see the top of
8 two-thirds. Oh, we see -- now we see pretty much
9 see your face.

10 MR. GERSTEL: Okay.

11 Thank you.

12 Good afternoon. My name is Jeff
13 Gerstel. And I am the owner, with my wife, of a
14 six-family walk-up in Brooklyn. We live in the
15 building, which is a building that was built after
16 the Civil War and as seniors going forward, we have
17 some concerns by the fact that our costs, while we
18 live on a fixed income, have gone up, especially in
19 terms of maintaining and upgrading the building and
20 meeting due requirements set by the Building
21 Department.

22 These costs outpace the rent that
23 we have been able to get over the last several
24 years. A one percent increase will cost our
25 tenants probably about \$9 a month, which I don't

1

2 believe is that much to ask. They both are able to
3 pay their rent now.

4 When I said that we're worried
5 about this going forward, as senior citizens, we
6 would like to maintain the building. We would like
7 to live in it. We would like our tenants to live
8 in it. But if costs keep on going up and we're not
9 fairly compensated for the rise in our costs, it
10 would probably be impossible for us, and probably
11 for our tenants, to remain in the building.

12 Buildings like ours when they're
13 sold do not go to other people who want to keep
14 rent stabilized apartments. They usually go to a
15 developer who strips the building, refinances,
16 which we can't do and then starts charging market
17 rents.

18 So we would like to keep our
19 building. We would like to keep getting at least a
20 sufficient amount to qualify to keep our building
21 and keep our tenants here.

22 Thank you very much.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
24 your testimony.

25 Our next speaker is Brittany Ann

1

2 Porter;

3

To be followed by David Sochet;

4

Claudia Thompson;

5

Leslie Leong; and,

6

Lisa Macauley.

7

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: And, David,

8

like we said before, we're going to try to Ignacio.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, I'm sorry.

10

That's right.

11

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah. And

12

Olvin, you may be able -- I'm going to tell him to

13

ask him to put on his video or he's on mute rather.

14

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking

15

Spanish.

16

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Speaking Spanish.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello. We can

18

hear you.

19

MR. DOMINGUEZ: You hear me?

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

21

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Okay. I'm ready

22

to start.

23

My name is Ignacio Dominguez. My

24

building, I live in the building, 2558 Grand

25

Concourse in the Bronx.

1

2

3

4

5

6

Right now we cannot afford the rent increase. COVID-19 pandemic has affected U.S. greatly. We have lost a friend, a member of our family to COVID-19. We are suffering from depression due to the pandemic.

7

8

9

10

An increase in rent will place us in a possible homeless situation. We live in a marginalized community and the impending economic great depression will affect us -- us the most.

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

To make matter worse, our building has not had gas since November 2019. We cannot cook in our home. A vast portion of our refinements go to our food that we must buy illegally -- I'm sorry, already cooked and microwave, which has costs increased in our utility bill.

18

19

20

21

We cannot afford to be placed in a situation where we have to choose between feeding ourselves or taking care of our mental health or paying rent.

22

23

24

Please hear us. We are the voices of the impoverished and forgotten people suffering in the Bronx.

25

Have a good night.

1

2

Thank you.

3

And no more increase.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.

5

Dominguez.

6

MR. DOMINGUEZ: Thank you.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speakers

8

are:

9

Brittany Ann Porter;

10

David Sochet;

11

Claudia Thompson;

12

Leslie Leone; and,

13

Lisa Macauley.

14

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I did not see

15

Brittany Ann Porter in attendance.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

17

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: David -- same

18

thing with David. I do not see him.

19

So I think we'll go Claudia

20

Thompson. I do not see her in attendance either.

21

Although she did say that she

22

would testify in Spanish.

23

So, Olvin, maybe you could ask if

24

Ms. Thompson's here or Claudia?

25

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking

1

2 Spanish.

3

(No response.)

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Then I

5

guess we're going to -- we're going to come back to

6

people if they pop back into the --

7

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, we'll go

8

through the list again. But then we're going to go

9

to Ms. Leong.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Has she been

11

promoted up to panelist?

12

MR. LEONG: Okay. Can you see

13

me?

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, yes.

15

Welcome.

16

MR. LEONG: Hi. I'm a small mom

17

and pop. My Aunt Air, the owner is providing

18

affordable housing to 14 families in Manhattan for

19

over 60 years.

20

Seventy-five percent of my units

21

are regulated. My family has had a history in this

22

immigrant neighborhood for close to 100 years.

23

As a small property owner in New

24

York, we live hand to mouth. Rent collected is

25

directly re-circulated into the local neighborhood

1

2 economy and to New York City taxes.

3

4 We have a shared relationship with
5 our tenants. With their rent, we provide safe,
6 affordable housing. Without adequate rent, we
7 can't provide what they need and expect. It's a
8 simple equation. Rent equals housing.

8

9 Small property owners like myself
10 provide a substantial part of the affordable
11 housing stock in New York City. I ask that you
12 follow the mandate of the law that created the RGB
13 and use your own data to set the new guidelines.

13

14 One year leases, 3.5 percent;

14

15 Two years, 6.75 percent.

15

16 These are your calculations based
17 on the PIOC analysis for commensurate rent
18 adjustments, which you know is the minimum needed
19 to maintain net operating income, not to increase
20 it.

20

21 Commensurate rent adjustments is
22 the minimum break even number. Small property
23 owners need your help to survive and to continue to
24 supply affordable housing in New York -- to New
25 York City residents.

25

Over the last several years, the

1

2 RGB has chosen to ignore their own data. Your own
3 PIOC analysis shows the total costs increased 8.7
4 percent, insurance 16.5, real estate taxes, 5.9,
5 labor 3.2 and water and sewer, 2.3.

6 Many owners are quite worried
7 about how they're going to pay the real estate
8 taxes that are due in July. Taxes average over 30
9 percent of expenses for most buildings and I pay
10 over \$450 a month in real estate taxes per
11 apartment. Make your decision based on your data
12 and analysis.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
15 Leong.

16 My next speaker is:

17 Lisa Macauley; and,

18 Then our next speaker is a company
19 name, Leong Yu Realty Corp. I'm not sure who the
20 individual is;

21 To be followed by Donna
22 Yuszkiewicz;

23 Edward Klein; and,

24 Carol Noe.

25 MS. MACAULEY: Hello.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, Ms.

3

Macauley.

4

MS. MACAULEY: Sorry. I got

5

kicked out of the meeting because I was over time.

6

I apologize.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, okay.

8

MS. MACAULEY: I got back in on

9

time.

10

Thank you.

11

Well, good evening.

12

My name is Lisa Macauley. I'm a

13

New York City public school teacher and a tenant in

14

a rent stabilized apartment building that's managed

15

by a multi-million dollar corporate landlord in

16

Harlem.

17

I'm currently participating in a

18

rent strike to support my neighbors who can't pay

19

their rent at this time.

20

With the outbreak of the COVID-19

21

pandemic and the beginnings of the destabilization

22

of the racist institutions of this country, we are

23

living in unprecedented times.

24

We're here today to discuss rent

25

increases. Why are we talking about raising rents

1

2 at all? We're experiencing a crisis. Things are
3 not business as usual. The economic impact of this
4 pandemic is crippling. While I feel for the small
5 landlords, they have resources. They own their
6 buildings. They have assets. They have options
7 for relief that tenants do not.

8 The number of people who are being
9 financially crushed is staggering and low income
10 households are suffering. For people with means,
11 one percent seems like very little. When you're
12 rent burdened like nearly half -- 30 percent of New
13 Yorkers, and paying more than 30 percent of your
14 gross income, one percent is a lot.

15 When you're living from paycheck
16 to paycheck and that paycheck has been reduced or
17 you're no longer receiving it because of the
18 pandemic, one percent is a lot.

19 Then half the unemployment benefit
20 ends July 31st. And people who are unemployed
21 might not have a job to return to once the City
22 opens back up.

23 The housing courts are going to be
24 flooded with people. We'll see black and brown
25 people facing eviction because they cannot pay

1

2 their rent when the moratorium is lifted in August.

3

4 We should not be debating about
5 whether to raise rents. We should be figuring out
6 how to bring New Yorkers back to their feet after
7 this crisis has brought us to our knees.

8

9 Rent hikes at the very least
10 should be frozen at this time. Better yet, rents
11 should be rolled back or cancelled outright.

12 Unprecedented times call for unprecedented
13 measures.

14

15 Thank you for your time.

16

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

18

19 Macauley.

20

21 Our next speaker -- Andrew, it
22 says corporate entity, Leong Yu Realty Corp. I
23 don't know if it's affiliated to -- to Leslie Leong
24 or if it's a separate entity.

25

MS. TING: Hello.

26

27 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. We can
28 hear you but we can't see you. Is your camera on?

29

30 MS. TING: I don't have a camera
31 on this computer.

32

33 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So we can
34 hear you loud and clear. Can you give us your

1

2 name?

3

MS. TING: Hi. My name is Lilian

4

Ting.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi. How are

6

you.

7

MS. TING: How are you?

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good, thank you.

9

MS. TING: My family provides

10 affordable housing for nine families and one

11 commercial unit. Our building was built in 1920.

12

My operating expense over the five

13 years have increased by 20 percent with the 2020

14 Price Index operating costs report issued by the

15

RGB.

16

RGB is considering a zero increase

17 in this session which it -- it doesn't help us as

18 small landlords. Because of COVID-19, our tenants

19 have been confined to their apartment and as a

20 result, water and sewage usage, maintenance and

21

cleaning for the building has increased.

22

The property taxes have increased

23 by 36 percent since 2015. I am now facing a bill

24 of \$99,000, which is almost \$10,000 per unit per

25

year. My combined rent barely covers my taxes and

1

2 all the other expenses necessary to operate.

3

4 In the 2020 PIOC report, the
5 commensurate rent adjustment in various categories
6 has a low range of 2.5 for a one-year lease and a
7 3.3 for a two-year lease and at the highest range,
8 3.5 percent for a one-year lease and 6.75 for a
9 two-year lease.

9

10 Taking all this into
11 consideration, it would be surprising to me that
12 the Rent Guidelines Board would not set an increase
13 in this current session.

13

14 My recommendation to RGB is
15 setting a new increase for one year and two-year
16 leases, 3 percent and 5 percent respectively.

16

17 Thank you for your time.

17

18 Have a good evening.

18

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

20

21 We next have Donna Yuszkiewicz;

21

22 Edward Klein; and,

22

23 Carol Noe;

23

24 Leon Goldenberg; and,

24

25 Dale Brooks.

25

MS. BURGER: If you heard your

1

2 name on that list or just saw it, if you could
3 raise your hands so we can find you more easily.
4 If you're on the phone, you can do that by pressing
5 star 9.

6 Thank you.

7 MALE VOICE: You have to unmute.

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can hear you.
9 Andrew, is that Mr. Klein, who's
10 speaking next?

11 MR. KLEIN: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome, Mr.
13 Klein.

14 MR. KLEIN: How are you today?

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Good.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. KLEIN: Tell me when I can
18 start.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Please, start.

20 MR. KLEIN: Thank you so much.

21 My name is Edward Klein.

22 I have owned my own law firm for
23 the last 31 years and I'm also a landlord in this
24 great, wonderful City of ours.

25 I'm here to give in a message that

1

2 the rental of living quarters in New York City
3 needs to rest on mutually equitable foundations.
4 To expect the landlord as a class to accept RGB
5 freezes or close to virtual freezes year after
6 year, is something that is just not tenable.

7 To be subject to a virtual freeze
8 of any ability to secure a return on the investment
9 in their properties with their family members, with
10 their investors, is not sustainable.

11 To suffer the elimination of any
12 vacancy increases when a tenant has been in
13 possession of 10, 20 or even 40 years, is not
14 sustainable as well. The present system has
15 resulted in very little additional housing being
16 built for New Yorkers over the past several years.

17 Indeed, the real estate community
18 has been fleeing New York for the past two years in
19 anticipation of, and an expectation of what
20 happened on June 15, 2019, with the series of
21 anti-ownership statutes.

22 So why should the RGB agree to a 3
23 percent increase next year and a 5 percent increase
24 for over two years and the rental rates for the
25 coming two years? There are many reasons. And

1

2 I'll just tick them off.

3

4 1. The increase will increase in
5 better housing for tenants. Landlords will be able
6 to invest in their properties and provide a better
7 product for all tenants.

8

9 2. The increase will enable
10 landlords to continue operating their properties to
11 a normal standard, a standard that tenants have
12 been used to over the past decades.

13

14 3. The increase will compensate
15 for the significant increases in operating expenses
16 that the RGB's analysis have brought to bear and
17 have said, those landlords have suffered over the
18 past year.

19

20 You members of the board know that
21 our annual increased costs have not been covered
22 over the last several years.

23

24 And, finally, many owners are at
25 risk of losing their properties to foreclosure.
26 This increase will be a lifeline.

27

28 I lost ten seconds at the
29 beginning. If I could just say one --

30

CHAIRMAN REISS: Of course.

31

MR. KLEIN: -- ten seconds in

1

2 conclusion.

3

Thank you.

4

5

So if you want a better product
for the millions of New Yorkers who rent, please
vote for the 3 percent increase this coming year.

7

8

9

10

If you want to see a decline in New York City real
estate, as has been experienced over the last year
or two, then you'll vote for the Mayor's reduction
to zero.

11

Please vote correctly.

12

13

14

Thank you for listening and thank
you for making this hearing available to the
public.

15

Any questions?

16

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
Klein.

18

Our next speaker is Carol Noe;

19

Leon Goldenberg;

20

Dale Brooks;

21

Eugenia Presta;

22

Paloma Lara.

23

24

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Okay. I don't
see Carol in attendance.

25

So our next speaker will be Leon

1

2 Goldenberg.

3 MR. GOLDENBERG: Can you hear me?

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, Mr.

5 Goldenberg. And we can see you now as well.

6 MR. GOLDENBERG: I don't know why
7 but it just disappeared8 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can see you
9 and hear you.10 MR. GOLDENBERG: Okay. Tell me
11 when you want me to start.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Please.

13 MR. GOLDENBERG: My name is Leon
14 Goldenberg. I'm an owner for close to 40 years.
15 In total, we manage 3,000 units for ourselves and
16 other owners, from an eight-family up to 144 units
17 in four of the boroughs.18 About 400 of our units are
19 specifically low income. I believe this gives me a
20 good overview of rent stabilized multi-family in
21 New York.22 I consider myself a good landlord.
23 I maintain my buildings and have few violations. I
24 am environmentally conscious. Over the years, I've
25 converted almost all my buildings to gas, installed

1

2 computers on my boilers and on every single hot and
3 cold water line and on all units.

4

Three years ago I started
5 installing solar panels. None were mandated. I
6 have done my share to improve the quality of life
7 for my tenants and, yes, to save money.

8

Although the years 2018 numbers on
9 July 1st, my real estate taxes will be increasing
10 1.2 percent and not over last year's tax, but 1.2
11 percent of my rent roll. Two years ago it actually
12 went up almost 2 percent.

13

The increases in minimum wages
14 increased my payrolls for my supers and some of my
15 vendors. Insurance has skyrocketed over the last
16 number of years.

17

The RGB is considering no increase
18 and will probably pass it. RGB's mandate is to
19 help landlords cover their increased costs and it
20 is the City and the State's responsibility to see
21 the tenants can afford to pay rent. I have spoken
22 to many officials over the years about expanding
23 the SCRIE program to tenants who are making under
24 \$50,000.

25

Simply put, with no increase, I'll

1
2 be forced to cut costs wherever I can. One of the
3 cuts that I was forced to make was no longer
4 landscaping my buildings. Clearly, I think it
5 impacts how the tenants feel about the building and
6 it also impacts the neighbors. Sadly, the changes
7 that I'm forced to make to maintain my properties
8 in order to pay all my bills, including mortgages,
9 are necessary and will impact the quality of life
10 for my tenants.

11 Thank you for listening.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
13 your testimony.

14 MR. GOLDENBERG: Any questions,
15 I'm available.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.
17 Our next speaker is Dale Brooks;
18 Then Eugenia Presta;
19 Paloma Lara;
20 Nadine Konderat; and,
21 Jami Jurich.

22 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, Dale
23 Brooks is joining us by phone.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

25 MS. BROOKS: Can you hear me?

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

3

MS. BROOKS: Hello.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, we can hear

5

you.

6

MS. BROOKS: Oh, okay.

7

My name is Dale Brooks. I live in

8

a rent stabilized apartment. I'm part of the

9

Northwell Community and Clergy Coalition.

10

I live in a hot spot of the

11

COVID-19 pandemic in the Bronx. I have lived in my

12

apartment for over 43 years. I pay over 30 percent

13

of my income for rent and most of my neighbors in

14

these buildings pay over 50 percent of their income

15

and are having a very hard time with it due to

16

unemployment.

17

Landlords also get money by --

18

with air conditioners, washing machine fees and

19

MCIs. This last March 1st, we received an MCI that

20

we have to pay for. And we have two pending.

21

We cannot afford an increase.

22

Please, RGB, do not increase the rent for the next

23

two years.

24

Thank you.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

1

2 Brooks.

3

Our next speakers are:

4

Eugenia Presta;

5

Paloma Lara;

6

Nadine Konderat;

7

Jamie Jurich; and,

8

Lewis Barbanal.

9

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I do not see

10 Eugenia Presta in attendance.

11

Paloma Lara, I do not see as well

12

but they signed up to speak in Spanish. So Liz,

13

could you --

14

MS. GOODRIDGE: Let me -- let me

15

check on that. I'll do so now.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: All right, Leah.

17

Maybe we'll move forward but then

18

if they can come on, we'll take them next. Is that

19

okay?

20

MS. GOODRIDGE: Okay. Okay.

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: I do not see

22

Nadine. Oh, here she is.

23

So we're going to go to Nadine

24

Konderat next.

25

MS. KONDERAT: Hello.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello.

3

4

MS. KONDERAT: Thank you for
allowing me to share part of our story.

5

6

7

8

9

10

During the Great Depression, our
immigrant grandparents were able to buy a
foreclosed brownstone. It was a single-family home
and they turned it into a boarding house for
immigrants and eventually into a ten-apartment
building.

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

We may be the longest serving
legacy family owners on the block. Our regulated
tenants are 40 percent of our building. And most
have been tenants for about 50 years. Usually they
are part-time tenants. Their rent does not cover
the apartment's portion of the basic operating
expenses. There's the property taxes, water, heat,
hot water.

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

In the last ten years, property
taxes went up 60 percent. In 2010, they were
\$50,000. Now they're \$80,000. The total operating
costs for the last ten years are up 51 percent. So
the market rate apartments make up for their share.
We break even. We don't have a mortgage and we
just break even.

1

2

3

4

5

6

We are -- a few years ago we spent \$300,000 to re-point our 100-year old brick. The next time we have a major capital improvement, time will tell if we can do the maintenance or we have to sell the building.

7

8

9

10

11

12

We have wealthy investors that almost call monthly to see if we have reached our breaking point and need to sell. And that ten-unit building will be reconverted to a single-family home and the neighborhood loses ten apartments, just like most of the block has done.

13

14

15

16

Please consider, we are not Blackstone. We are small, legacy owners. And by the way, our rent regulated tenants, they have their homes in the Hamptons, Cape Cod and Florida.

17

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

19

20

MS. KONDERAT: Let's not assume all regulated tenants need help.

21

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

23

24

MS. KONDERAT: Questions?

(No response.)

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Ms.

1

2 Konderat, we're going to move on to our next
3 speakers.

4

MS. KONDERAT: Okay.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Leah, did we get
6 the missing person --

7

MS. GOODRIDGE: Yeah, I think
8 there was a little bit of confusion and I think Ms.
9 Paloma Lara thought that she was on for tomorrow.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

11

MS. GOODRIDGE: So I wonder if we
12 can fit her in for tomorrow. Since she's not --
13 since those would be two minutes less today, if we
14 can fit her in for tomorrow's meeting. That's all
15 I know.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Let's --
17 let's adjust that after. We don't need to resolve
18 that right this second.

19

MS. GOODRIDGE: Yeah. Sure.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

21

All right.

22

So is it Jami Jurich, is that
23 next, Andrew?

24

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yes.

25

MS. JURICH: Hi there. Can you

1

2 hear me?

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

4

Welcome.

5

MS. JURICH: I'm a rent

6 stabilized tenant on the Upper West Side of

7 Manhattan. And I am here today to talk about a

8 rent rollback for rent stabilized housing.

9

Tenants who are already struggling

10 to keep a roof over their head due to stagnant

11 wages and affordable housing in New York City, now

12 have the added burden of historic unemployment

13 rates in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

14

This has caused economic and

15 physical hardship for many New Yorkers. And I've

16 spoken to many neighbors who have lost all or part

17 of their income, taken pay cuts or depleted their

18 savings to pay their bills.

19

If the cost of housing continues

20 to rise without a reciprocal increase in wages,

21 rent raises always create challenges for tenants

22 but this year in the wake of COVID, a rent increase

23 wouldn't only be challenging, it would be

24 devastating to tenants and, frankly, irresponsible.

25

If rent were to be increased, it

1

2 would lead to a drastic rise in eviction cases and
3 could create long term economic devastation for
4 families.

5

The board has the power to do its
6 part to prevent this and positively impact New
7 Yorkers by approving a rent rollback.

8

We are all being asked to cut back
9 at the moment because of the pandemic and our
10 landlords should not be an exception to the rule.

11

Certainly the landlords are also
12 being affected by losses due to COVID and I want to
13 acknowledge and empathize with those challenges.
14 But the fact of the matter is, they have access to
15 more government provided relief options than
16 tenants do. Tenants are expected to find a way to
17 pay our usual rent and other bills even as we
18 experience income loss and we are all making cuts
19 in other areas to pay our rent on time.

20

In these unprecedented times, we
21 have an obligation to protect New York tenants and
22 to live up to the board's mandate to keep our homes
23 affordable by giving us a rent rollback or at the
24 very least, a rent freeze for the next year.

25

Thank you.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for

3

your testimony.

4

We next have --

5

MS. GOODRIDGE: I know -- I'm so

6

sorry. But apparently Paloma has joined now. So I

7

just wanted to let you know. Sorry.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Leah.

9

Andrew, can we go to Paloma. Is

10

that okay?

11

MS. BURGER: I don't see her on

12

the attendee list. Did she come in under a

13

different name?

14

MS. GOODRIDGE: Oh, she might be

15

in the process of joining. But I guess maybe she

16

can go after this person.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Let's go

18

to the next person and then when she's ready, we'll

19

put her on the list.

20

Thank you.

21

MS. BURGER: David, she just got

22

here.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Say it again.

24

MS. BURGER: She just got here.

25

I'm going to promote.

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Can we
3 see if she can be promoted to a panelist.

4 MS. BURGER: She is.

5 CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, great.

6 I see she's muted.

7 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: She is planning
8 to speak in Spanish so members of the board, if
9 they want to make sure their English is turned on.

10 MS. BURGER: Andrew, do you see
11 her?

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: She was there.
13 I saw her for awhile. She's gone.

14 MS. BURGER: I don't see her
15 anymore.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Could we move on
17 to the next person and then when it all settles
18 down, we'll go back to Paloma Lara.

19 MS. BURGER: I think we have to
20 because she's not here anymore.

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

22 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, when she
23 comes and comes back on, we can come back to her.

24 I do not see Lewis Barbanal in
25 attendance right now.

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: And then we have
3 Susan Steinberg after that.

4 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, I'm going
5 to promote her now.

6 Oh, I did not promote her.

7 I think I promoted someone else.

8 MS. STEINBERG: Hi. Am I on?

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

10 And your name is?

11 Oh, Susan, Ms. Steinberg.

12 Ms. Steinberg, welcome.

13 MS. STEINBERG: Yeah. I'm Susan
14 Steinberg, president of the Stuyvesant Town Peter
15 Cooper Village Tenants Association. And I want to
16 talk about my 11,240 unit community during the
17 pandemic.

18 Acknowledging widespread income
19 loss, our management company offered a hardship
20 rental assistance program for the COVID eligible
21 who did not pay rent. Sounds good? It's not.

22 Their rental assistance program
23 has three elements. The use of security as one
24 month's rent, the ability to break a lease without
25 penalty and rent deferral.

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25

Security deposits were good for April but it's now June. So what are people supposed to do who have no income?

With respect to breaking a lease, the exodus has begun. So many tenants chose to break their leases that management recently stopped listing the number of apartments available on their website, which they used to do.

The deferral option is onerous. For example, a tenant who has a monthly rent of \$3,400 goes back to work in three months. The deferred rent is \$10,200, spread over the months remaining in the lease. For six months remaining, the deferral is \$1,700 per month additional. Over nine months, it's \$1,133 per months additional. Over 12 months, it's \$850 a month additional.

You can see that even a one percent hike is one percent tenants can't pay when faced with something like this.

The owners is getting considerable stimulus money. Our \$1,200 stimulus check doesn't cover the rent. Moreover, it's apartments with preferential rents that are vacated, our owner can charge the legal rent. So they can profit off of

1

2 that situation.

3

Existing tenants can't get a break but new tenants, as they average highs, can get one month's free month.

6

For 14 years in a row, property owners have made a profit on the backs of tenants. It's time to balance the scale. I'm asking for a rent rollback for our 30,000 residents.

10

Thank you.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.

12

Steinberg.

13

MS. STEINBERG: You're welcome.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Am I right in saying that we're going to go to Linda Colarusso or is that right, Andrew?

17

MS. BURGER: Paloma is here. I

18

can promote her.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Let's

20

hear from Paloma Lara then.

21

MS. LARA: Hi.

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello.

23

MS. LARA: So I think I was

24

supposed to go on tomorrow. But I can also feel

25

free to say a few words.

1

2

My name is Paloma Lara and I am an organizer for Northern Manhattan is Not For Sale.

3

4

5

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24

25

And right now the current situation in the uptown community is that a lot of people have lost their jobs, have lost lives because we also have the highest rate of COVID-19 in all of Manhattan, just like every other minority community in New York City. So we are suffering a lot and we shouldn't have to be thinking about when the next time is that we need to pay rent.

And definitely not thinking about increases in our rent because our people need opportunity to be healing and to be dealing with the situation that is currently happening right now and whether they're going to lose what's essential to their well being, which is their home.

We are asking that the -- that the board please give the community a rent rollback for two years because for too long our rents have gone up too high. During the Bloomberg era, rents were going up insanely and now during Mayor DiBlasio, even though there was a two-year rent freeze, uptown we have a ton of tenants that have preferential rent that did not get to benefit at

1

2 all from the rent freeze and it's time that we
3 actually do right by tenants and that the board
4 takes responsibility and understanding that they
5 have a responsibility to tenants and not to the
6 profits of landlords.

7 This is a time when you can
8 finally have a heart when you -- when you can
9 finally give tenants a moment to breathe, to
10 understand the situation and to stay at their
11 homes. Like, we're going to be seeing a mass
12 displacement and -- in our communities and you have
13 the power right now as a board to say, like, we are
14 going to alleviate people from being displaced from
15 their homes.

16 So we ask you to please give a
17 rent rollback.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
19 Lara.

20 MS. BURGER: David, Andrew has
21 asked me to share the main list.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

23 MS. BURGER: This is a list of
24 everyone remaining to speak. We will go back at
25 the end for anyone who we passed over that wasn't

1

2 here and we'll give it another shot to see if
3 you're here.

4

If the next few tenants could
5 raise their hand. We're looking for:

6

Linda Colarusso;

7

Angela Pham;

8

Floriberto Galindo;

9

Dru Carey; and,

10

B. Taylor.

11

If you're here, could you please
12 use the raise hand function so that we can find
13 you.

14

Thank you.

15

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I just promoted
16 Angela Pham as our next speaker.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Ms. Pham,

18

welcome.

19

MS. PHAM: Hi. I'm Angela Pham.
20 And I've lived in Chinatown for over six years.

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Ms. Pham, I'm

22

sorry.

23

Yeah, okay. We see you now. We
24 didn't see you for a second.

25

Welcome.

1

2

MS. PHAM: Thank you.

3

4

5

6

I'm Angela Pham and I've lived in Chinatown for over six years. But I'm not speaking on behalf of myself but on behalf of tenants as a member of the Metropolitan Council on Housing.

7

8

9

10

Every morning I wake up in Chinatown and see lines of immigrants, elders and other tenants from my community waiting outside of churches, public schools and the Bowery Mission.

11

12

13

I see these lines last for hours. People standing on the sidewalk or sitting on the curb waiting for one single free meal.

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

According to the Food Bank for New York City this year, 91 percent of food pantries and soup kitchens reported an increase in first-time visitors. These free meal lines now consist of people who've lost their jobs because of COVID-19. Like the people of Chinatown who statistically live at poverty, more than any other demographic in New York City.

22

23

These are my neighbors and they cannot afford a rent increase.

24

25

Frankly, it is unconscionable that we're not unanimously enacting a rent rollback for

1

2 tenants. We keep calling these unprecedented times
3 so why aren't we taking unprecedented action on
4 rent.

5

6 But to address the landlord reps
7 and the public members on the board, I get it.
8 Many of us on this call have friends and colleagues
9 who are building owners who don't want to lose out
10 on their investments, who don't want to fall behind
11 on payments, who don't want to incur unexpected
12 debts, who don't want to compromise their own
13 financial situations. That sucks. And I get it.

14

15 But show me the building owners
16 who are lining up for hours every day for one free
17 meal. Show me their sacrifices, their life or
18 death tradeoffs. Show me their fear of
19 homelessness, their desperation, their fear of
20 losing their entire community if they can't afford
21 their own home.

22

23 You can't because those landlords
24 might just have to line up at a bank for a new loan
25 or fill out new paperwork to apply from a lender or
26 government assistance, which by the way I'm
27 confident they can and will get.

28

29 Simply put, anything but a rent

1
2 rollback is catering to the wealthy and the upper
3 middle class. And if that's what you want for New
4 York City, then resign from the Rent Guidelines
5 Board because you don't represent our City. You
6 don't represent the general public. You don't even
7 represent the owners. You're representing
8 buildings, property, banks and unadulterated,
9 federal capitalism during a pandemic crisis and
10 during a time in which human rights and social
11 justice for the people should actually be your
12 number one priority.

13 If you don't vote for a rent
14 rollback then you're essentially co-signing the
15 eviction notices for thousands of tenants this
16 year. If you don't vote for a rent rollback or
17 freeze, then I wish you the best of luck sleeping
18 because it an unjust and inhumane rent increase
19 would go down in New York City housing history as a
20 tragic, regrettable and costly mistake.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
23 Pham.

24 I see Floriberto Galindo;

25 Dru Carey;

1

2 B. Taylor.

3 Yes.

4 MS. BURGER: Can we ask who the
5 person with their hand raised named Fabian, what
6 their name is?

7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Has Fabian been
8 promoted to a panelist or how does that happen?

9 MS. BURGER: No, they've been
10 given permission to talk if they unmute themselves.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

12 Fabian, can you identify yourself?

13 MS. BURGER: He's still muted. So
14 we're going to go to the next person, I think.

15 Fabian, we're calling people based
16 on the name they registered with. That was in the
17 instructions. If you did register to speak, if you
18 could change your name to the name you registered
19 with. You may need to leave and come back in to do
20 that.

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: So are we going
22 to go to Floriberto Galindo now? At least
23 temporarily?

24 MS. BURGER: Yeah. I don't think
25 we have Floriberto.

1

2

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking

3

Spanish.

4

MS. BURGER: I don't think we have

5

Dru.

6

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking

7

Spanish.

8

MS. BURGER: I don't see B.

9

Taylor.

10

THE INTERPRETER: No. B. Taylor.

11

MS. BURGER: I will promote Raquel

12

Armice.

13

MS. ARMICE: I'm sorry. Can you

14

hear me?

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, you have

16

two speakers on. So we're getting some feedback,

17

Ms. Armice.

18

MS. ARMICE: Okay.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: I think you muted

20

the one that you're talking with. You might want

21

to mute the one you're watching and leave unmuted

22

the one you're talking on.

23

We can't hear you if you're

24

speaking.

25

MR. HOBERMAN: Unmuting is

1

2 actually turning off the speaker of the other
3 device.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry, Brian.
5 Can you give her instructions what you think she
6 should be doing.

7

Now she's unmuted.

8

Ms. Armice, can you hear us? We
9 can't hear you yet.

10

MS. ARMICE: Can you hear me now?

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: We can. And we
12 don't see you but --

13

MS. ARMICE: I'm sorry. I'm still
14 trying to get used to this virtual thing.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sure. No
16 worries.

17

MS. ARMICE: Being a tenant of
18 Peter Cooper Village, we all know all too well the
19 consequences of this pandemic. However, what we
20 don't know are the consequences of this pandemic
21 come this fall and winter and upcoming year.

22

As so many have openly
23 acknowledged, to date there have been an astounding
24 number of unemployed individuals that don't have
25 the income to support the increases that are being

1

2 considered or desired. And those fortunate to
3 still have a job, have had to take considerable pay
4 cuts and once again don't align with the increases.

5 The other aspect of this issue
6 that has yet to be mentioned are the life spans of
7 employers, many of which are hanging on a thread
8 and will likely close shop. If we endure a second
9 or third wave of COVID, which will only lead to
10 significantly more unemployment and only further
11 support why we should have a rollback for the first
12 two years.

13 Recovery is forecasted to take
14 three to five years by which some may be only able
15 to acquire a one to three percent increase. But
16 when you factor inflation causing financial --
17 meaning, no substantive increase. Once again,
18 something that I think the board needs to consider
19 as we continue to have ongoing conversations
20 related to rent increases.

21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
23 Armice.

24 Next, I believe, we have Larry
25 Wood;

1

2

Charlie Anderson;

3

Pilar DeJesus;

4

Deborah Metz; and,

5

Mona Beirutti.

6

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, Larry,

7

you're next.

8

MR. WOOD: Okay. Thank you.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi, Larry.

10

MR. WOOD: Hi.

11

This is quite extraordinary this

12

process here. I must say, I miss the booing, the

13

chanting and the carrying on as part of the theater

14

of the annual process.

15

You might not miss it but it is

16

part of the -- of the usual process.

17

Basically, that's my message to

18

you, the board this year, is really I want to thank

19

you for the preliminary vote you took on behalf of

20

tenants living in the remaining SRO housing.

21

You voted again for a zero

22

guideline. And I wanted to thank you for that.

23

As our office said in the

24

submitted testimony and the materials we supplied

25

to you, SRO owners are doing quite well. They make

1

2 extraordinary income from the non-stabilized
3 rentals.

4 If you recall, you know, the
5 permanent rent stabilized tenants and then owners
6 are legally allowed to rent them out on a transient
7 purposes. So between the college rentals, the
8 tourists, the special needs populations placed by
9 the City, the vast majority of SRO operators are
10 doing quite well and there's no reason to increase
11 the rent on those remaining rent stabilized
12 tenants.

13 When I did my testimony, one of
14 the things I didn't get to tell you is of the 17
15 SRO tenants who were able to testify last year, I
16 reached out to them, only three or four of them
17 even have a computer. None of them were able to
18 sign up in time to be part of these panels. At
19 best they were going to be on waiting lists and
20 they were going to be listening on a telephone and
21 it wasn't a very empowering process for them to sit
22 through this year.

23 But they did want me, I told me I
24 would get on and they did want to say once again,
25 thank you for considering their plight and doing

1

2 the right thing on their behalf.

3

4 So on behalf of AC and Cunningham,
5 this is the first hearing she's missed in all these
6 30 years and she's heart broken but I have AC,
7 Johnny Barnes, Lino Alvarez, really the hundreds of
8 remaining SRO tenants in the 25,000 units that
9 might be left out there.

9

10 I just want to thank you for doing
11 the right thing on behalf of the SRO community.

11

12 And -- and just keep up the good
13 work. This is very difficult for everybody
14 involved but a very necessary process.

14

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
16 Wood.

16

17 We next have Charlie Anderson;
18 Pilar DeJesus;
19 Deborah Metz;
20 Mona Beirut; i
21 Ayanna Richberg.

21

22 MR. ANDERSON: I think that's me.

22

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: And you -- I'm
24 sorry. You are --

24

25 MR. ANDERSON: My name is Charlie
Anderson.

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello, Mr.
3 Anderson.

4 MR. ANDERSON: Hi. I'm
5 testifying on behalf of Assemblymember Deborah
6 Glick.

7 The Assemblymember represents the
8 66th District in Manhattan, which is Tribeca, Soho,
9 Greenwich Village and parts of the East Village.

10 New York City faces an
11 unprecedented and previously unimaginable crisis.
12 The shutdown of almost all schools and businesses
13 due to COVID-19 has created an economic disaster
14 for the City and its residents while tens of
15 thousands of New Yorkers had faced illness and
16 deaths of loved ones. The full breadth of the
17 economic crisis being experienced in New York is
18 still unknown.

19 However, we have estimates.
20 According to New York City's independent budget
21 office, the City's economy will lose roughly
22 475,000 jobs by the end of the first quarter of
23 2021, many of which may not return.

24 A study by the New York
25 University's Furman Center found that nearly a

1

2 third of New York City families financially rely on
3 someone likely to lose their jobs due to the
4 pandemic. And the workers being impacted are often
5 those in restaurant, retail, tourism industries,
6 workers who are vital to New York City's economy
7 but whose low wages leave them especially
8 vulnerable to economic peril should they lose their
9 jobs.

10

The Assemblymember believes that
11 the Rent Guidelines Board understands the crisis
12 that's being faced and is thankful that you have
13 recommended a zero percent increase for one-year
14 leases renewals. However, given that we -- given
15 what we know, that the pandemic will continue to
16 impact New Yorkers next year and beyond it is
17 unconscionable to include an increase of even one
18 percent for two-year renewals.

19

Taking any action at this time
20 that makes evictions more likely is a poor decision
21 for tenants and a poor decision for the City, which
22 is already facing unparalleled challenges to the
23 safety net.

24

She understands that landlords are
25 also facing economic difficulties but their

1

2 eligibility for additional federal aid and the
3 likelihood that more funds will be made available
4 to them means that they have access to supports
5 that are simply unavailable to tenants.

6

And the Assemblymember strongly
7 urges you to take compassionate, responsive and
8 moral action and freeze rents for both one and
9 two-year lease renewals.

10

Thank you for your time.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.

12

Anderson.

13

MR. ANDERSON: But may I ask if

14

you wanted to send testimony, what's that e-mail

15

address again?

16

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: You can send it

17

to ask, a-s-k@nycrgb.org.

18

MR. ANDERSON: Thank you very

19

much.

20

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Sure.

21

MR. HOBBERMAN: We also have a

22

quick link on our home page.

23

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, okay.

24

Thanks.

25

MR. HOBBERMAN: There's an address

1

2 to submit testimony to the RGB.

3 MR. ANDERSON: Got it.

4 Thank you.

5 That probably was a different
6 e-mail.

7 Thanks.

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
9 is:

10 Pilar DeJesus;

11 Deborah Metz;

12 Mona Beirutii;

13 Ayanna Richberg;

14 Demi Donaldson.

15 MS. DE JESUS: Hi. Good evening.

16 Can you guys hear me good?

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, good
18 evening.

19 MS. DE JESUS: All right.

20 Good evening.

21 My name is Pilar DeJesus. I'm
22 born and raised in East Harlem. I'm an activist.
23 I'm a board member of East Harlem Preservation but
24 I'm also a tenant advocacy coordinator with Take
25 Route Justice and I've been doing a lot of housing

1

2 work for the last six years and so I've seen a lot
3 of illegal evictions, you know, repairs not being
4 made by many, many, many landlords that -- I
5 haven't seen them come here to testify.

6 But I'm here to pretty much, you
7 know, I'm a very passionate advocate. You know,
8 not only am I a person of color who's been directly
9 impacted when it comes to the over policing in our
10 City. I'm directly affected when it comes to our
11 communities are being rezoned and many of our
12 people are being pushed out and targeted by
13 landlords. You know, I've heard a lot of things
14 but I can tell you there are a lot of illegal, in
15 my opinion, and real criminal things that landlords
16 have been doing to tenants for decades.

17 And we've been compensating them.
18 You've been compensating them with increases over
19 the years and it's really interesting to hear so
20 many of these landlords talk about, oh, the money
21 they're not going to make the money. They're not
22 going to make -- have they ever been homeless? I
23 welcome many of these landlords to go spend some
24 time, maybe take a week to live on the streets and
25 see what it's like to be homeless. Maybe living in

1

2 the shelters. Because they -- they don't
3 understand what's going on and it seems like for
4 them all it is, is profit, profit, profit.

5 And, you know, I asked the board
6 and I know I only have two minutes so I'm going to
7 try to wrap this up. But I'm going to ask the
8 board really, you are really in a unique position
9 this year. And the data has shown for a long time
10 that a rollback is necessary. And I'm not sure why
11 it's never happened before. I have my own opinions
12 on to why but it needs -- tenants need a rollback.
13 Not only because of what's going on but it's been a
14 problem for tenants for a long, long time. These
15 are human beings.

16 Housing is a human right. It's
17 not meant to be a commodity and I will end with
18 this, please stop treating human beings as if
19 they're dollar signs. And let's look at us as
20 humans. We're human beings. Like going to Housing
21 Court, being harassed by -- by many landlords who
22 use the -- their powers to go against us, the money
23 that they have. They have a lot of money and they
24 use it to go against the tenants.

25 A lot of these -- I would also --

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
3 DeJesus.

4 MS. DE JESUS: -- a lot of these
5 landlords who are testifying, if any more are
6 coming to testify, to please provide your address
7 because I personally would love to look up your
8 building and see how many violations exist on your
9 property. Because like I mentioned --

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Ms. DeJesus,
11 thank you. Your time is up.

12 MS. DE JESUS: -- and there's a
13 lot of things that landlords haven't been doing for
14 their buildings. And so, I would, you know, when
15 they talk about their being broke, what have they
16 been doing with --

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
18 your testimony.

19 MS. DE JESUS: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

21 MS. DE JESUS: Rent rollback.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: We next have
23 Deborah Metz;

24 Mona Beiruti;

25 Ayanna Richberg;

1

2

Demi Donaldson; and,

3

Jim Forat.

4

5

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I do see -- I do see Clara is here. So I'm going to promote her for the next speaker.

6

7

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry. This is Clara -- what's the last name, Andrew?

9

10

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: It's the last, Clara Perez Joseph.

11

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, I'm sorry.

Thank you.

13

14

MS. PEREZ-JOSEPH: Can you hear me?

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Yes.

16

MS. PEREZ-JOSEPH: Okay.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Ms. Perez-Joseph.

18

MS. PEREZ-JOSEPH: Yes.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

20

21

MS. PEREZ-JOSEPH: Tell me when to start.

22

Thank you.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Please start.

24

25

MS. PEREZ-JOSEPH: Okay. I'm a tenant leader with the Fifth Avenue Committee. I'm

1

2 a member of Tenant Pack.

3

I'm here to ask for a rent
4 rollback, three percent rollback.

5

In the past years, the tenants
6 have had exorbitant rent increases, even during a
7 recession. Everyone talks about the pandemic but
8 the tenants were heavily burdened even before the
9 pandemic.

10

Now it's worse. You know,
11 everybody has talked about it. We've lost lives,
12 jobs, spouses. And, you know, the tenant, the
13 landlords keep saying that the tenant has to come
14 up with the necessary extra funds from the
15 government. But the landlord can also ask and they
16 do have recourse. But they don't want to do it.
17 They don't want to do it because they want
18 something more tangible. And they want the cash
19 instead of the rebates.

20

And, also, the landlords to follow
21 what Ms. DeJesus was saying, you know, real estate
22 is a different business than the retail business.
23 A retail business you sell -- you sell products.
24 The real estate business, landlords have to
25 understand is a business where they provide shelter

1

2 to human beings for a fee. They are not renting a
3 kennel to dogs where if the owner doesn't pick up
4 the pet and doesn't pay the fee, ASPCA comes picks
5 up the pet unfortunately and most likely euthanizes
6 it.

7 However, when you evict tenants
8 and you put them through that kind of stress and
9 you make them homeless, you are also euthanizing a
10 family and you have to take that into account.

11 I heard someone on the board at
12 the preliminary vote saying that they're not social
13 workers, that landlords are not social workers.
14 But every business should have a code of ethics.
15 And that code of ethics right now during a
16 pandemic, landlords have to understand that they
17 are providing shelter to human beings and not
18 renting out a kennel.

19 We need a rent rollback.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ms.
21 Perez-Joseph.

22 MS. BURGER: David --

23 MS. GOODRIDGE: Very quickly --
24 oh, I don't know if you were going to say the same
25 thing I was about to say, Danielle.

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MS. BURGER: I was going to say we're at the end of the registered speakers so we're going to call the names again of people who missed their spot. And if you're here, you can raise your hand so we can find you.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Does it make sense, also, Danielle, to post the full list or that's not so helpful.

MS. BURGER: I can do that.

MS. GOODRIDGE: Yeah. Floriberto Galindo is here and ready to testify. That's what I was going to say.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Should we -- should we promote Floriberto Galindo and then maybe post a list of everyone afterwards, Danielle, does that make sense?

MS. BURGER: I don't see Floriberto's name here.

MS. GOODRIDGE: It might be Floriberto.

MS. BURGER: Okay.

MS. GOODRIDGE: Floriberto Galindo.

1

2 MS. BURGER: There is a Roberto
3 without a last name.

4 MS. GOODRIDGE: That -- I -- I
5 mean --

6 MS. BURGER: All right.
7 He's been promoted.

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: He's muted
9 though.

10 MR. GALINDO: Speaking Spanish.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello. Yes.

12 We don't see you. Is your video
13 supposed to be on or no?

14 MR. GALINDO: Speaking Spanish.

15 MS. BURGER: He's muted again.
16 Can somebody tell him to unmute himself.

17 THE INTERPRETER: Speaking
18 Spanish. (Spanish translation)

19 MR. GALINDO: "Good evening! My
20 name is Floriberto Galindo. I live at 34-25 Gates
21 Place. I am a member of the Northwest Bronx and
22 Clergy Coalition. I do not agree that there should
23 be a rent increase. This pandemic has been the
24 cause of so many of our problems. Truthfully, we
25 just don't have the money to pay for a rent

1
2 increase. At the moment, we are fighting over an
3 MCI that our landlord is charging us for.
4 Truthfully, it is an exorbitant amount and we just
5 can't handle another increase. Unfortunately, this
6 crisis has left many of us with no financial
7 resources or employment. I'd ask the governor to
8 lower the rents since there are so many people with
9 limited means and, as a result, we wouldn't be able
10 to pay any more towards rent. This pandemic has
11 affected so many people. Personally, I've had to
12 take on a second job to be able to cover the cost
13 of normal rent payments, so I don't agree with a
14 rent increase. Please don't raise rent payments!
15 Instead, you should give us a rent rollback. I
16 think that would be fair given that there are
17 merchants and working people that [...] However,
18 just like the working people who don't own
19 businesses and receive low wages [...]. It's very
20 difficult living in this [...]. Of course there are
21 lots of benefits. But just like there are lots of
22 benefits, the poor [...]. Why? Because many
23 landlords are abusing the system. And all of this
24 contributes to us not being able to make rent
25 payments because of the number of increases. OK.

1

2 Thank you!"

3

4 translation?

5

MR. SCHWARTZ: Is there a

6

MS. BURGER: He's muted again.

7

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: It will be on

the English channel, Alex.

8

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking

9

Spanish.

10

MS. BURGER: He's on mute.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: The English

12

channel is at the bottom on the screen.

13

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking

14

Spanish.

15

MR. GALINDO: Speaking Spanish.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.

17

Galindo.

18

MR. GALINDO: Okay. Gracias.

19

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking

20

Spanish.

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good night.

22

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking

23

Spanish.

24

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: We have Ayanna

25

Richberg now. I'm going to promote her to speaker.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: She's muted it

3

seems.

4

Ms. Richberg.

5

(No response.)

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: She's still a

7

panelist.

8

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I don't see her.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Her hand just

10

went up in the attendees.

11

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Oh, she must

12

have --

13

MS. BURGER: No, that's -- could

14

you please lower your hands until we're ready. I

15

don't know what happened to Ayanna. She can just

16

come back in. But in the meantime, I'm going to

17

show the list of people who missed their slots.

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

19

MS. BURGER: I'm going to speak

20

them out loud. If you are one of these people, and

21

only if you are one of these people, you need to

22

raise your hand. The names on this list are

23

crossed out already spoke. If you see your name in

24

black that's yours, those are the people that we're

25

looking for. Give me one second and then we'll say

1

2 the names.

3

We are looking for:

4

Angela Fernandez;

5

Maicy Schwartz;

6

Rita Marmor;

7

Melissa Bosley;

8

Matthew Verdery;

9

Jaime Anderson;

10

Brittany Ann Porter;

11

David Sochet;

12

Claudia Thompson;

13

Donna Yuszkiewicz;

14

Carol Noe;

15

Eugenia Peska;

16

Lewis Barbanal;

17

Linda Colarusso;

18

Dru Carey;

19

B. Taylor;

20

Deborah Metz;

21

Mona Beirutii;

22

Demi Donaldson; and,

23

Jim Forat.

24

If you are any of those people,

25

could you please raise your hand now.

1

2 And we're also looking for Ayanna
3 again.

4 Okay. So it doesn't seem like we
5 have any of these people.

6 We're going to keep our eye out
7 for Ayanna again.

8 Now if you have not already spoken
9 and --

10 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Hold on a
11 second.

12 David, just to let you know, these
13 are the registered speakers. As we had said in,
14 you know, the meeting that you would listen to
15 folks who hadn't had a chance.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

17 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: It's just --
18 just to let you know, that we are past the time.
19 So I just want to make the board aware of that. I
20 believe that the consensus is to stay but I just
21 want to point that out.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, my
23 understanding is that the -- the board has
24 certainly agreed to stay until at least 8:00. Do
25 you think that will hit the number of people that

1

2 we have or we could even shorten the time for each
3 speaker. But should we start with two minutes and
4 see how that looks.

5

Should we ask everyone who wants
6 to speak who hasn't spoken to raise their hands so
7 we have a sense of the number.

8

MS. GOODRIDGE: Yeah, I think we
9 should try to allow as many people to speak as
10 possible given that, you know, we had a shortened
11 list this year and we are normally here until at
12 least 9:30. So I don't think that staying for 25
13 more minutes or even another hour would hurt.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah, I think --
15 Leah, I think that that's right. I think if people
16 have family obligations they may have to step away
17 but I think certainly a number of people would
18 stay.

19

Is it worth taking a poll just to
20 give people a sense of how many of the attendees
21 plan on speaking, just so people could raise their
22 hands and we will be able to kind of --

23

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Well, we'll let
24 Danielle explain the process and then we'll see how
25 many people would like to speak.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

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MS. BURGER: So if you're calling

in on the telephone and you have not spoken and you

want to speak, please press star 9 to raise your

hand.

If you're coming in on video,

there should be a button that says raise hand. And

we just want to get a sense right now of how many

more people want to speak. So if you can raise

your hand now so we can see how many people want to

speak.

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking

Spanish.

MS. BURGER: Okay. So it looks

like we have three people that want to speak and

we're still going to keep an eye out for Ayanna so

that would be four people.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So that

seems very -- very, you know, I think we could --

we should just move forward because that's a very

small number of people.

MS. BURGER: Okay. So, Andrew,

do you want to promote people to attendees one by

one.

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MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah. I'll promote them. But please, since we don't know your name in full, please just state your name when you're promoted.

CHAIRMAN REISS: And if you have an affiliation, please state that as well.

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yeah, an affiliation if you want to. You can certainly indicate whether your a tenant or an owner.

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking Spanish.

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I just promoted a fire tablet. So you're up. I believe you were with us before. Have you been on mute?

CHAIRMAN REISS: Fire tablet is still muted.

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Fire tablet could you unmute.

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.

Should we move to another person and just -- fire tablet, you're going to need to unmute for us to hear you.

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Okay.

1

2 I was told that Ayanna is here but
3 I don't see her.

4 Danielle, do you?

5 MS. BURGER: No, I do not see
6 her.

7 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Oh, I thought
8 you said you did. Okay.

9 So we're going to be promoting
10 Samantha as a panelist.

11 If you could unmute.

12 MS. BRODLOW: Hi.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello.

14 MS. BRODLOW: My name is Samantha
15 Brodlow. I'm 15 and I'm an attendant.

16 Basically what I just wanted to
17 say is right now we're in a pandemic and this
18 pandemic has limited the amount of money that
19 people can earn to live. And have increased like
20 the mental tension.

21 So you all have the responsibility
22 as New Yorkers to help -- to help your fellow New
23 Yorkers, especially at this moment.

24 I have been speaking at this
25 hearing for five years and I've been disappointed

1

2 and frustrated after my first year. It's like
3 increase after increase and it's not -- it's not
4 right.

5 I believe you do not understand
6 the struggles we face, especially in immigrant
7 community. I think you should support us, I think
8 because it shows that you put people before money.
9 And for those who continue to ignore us, who are
10 suffering, who are suffering economically and
11 mentally, I just want you to put yourselves in my
12 shoes.

13 My mother is not working. She's
14 only working jobs -- no, she only working one jobs,
15 two days a week. And it's hard because we don't
16 have enough money and I don't think I understand
17 that and I'm kind of mad about it.

18 So if you can please just
19 understand my struggle and other people's
20 struggles, that would be amazing.

21 Please decrease the rent or at
22 least freeze it because that's what we need,
23 especially right now. You need to help me and my
24 family. You need to help other families. Please.

25 Thank you.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

3

Samantha.

4

MS. BRODLOW: Yes.

5

MS. BURGER: If we're going to go

6

to call somebody with their caller ID blocked.

7

Okay. Phone caller with their ID

8

blocked --

9

MR. ROBERTS: Yes.

10

Yeah, hi. Good evening.

11

My name is Mark Roberts. I'm a

12

property manager. I manage about 100 of the units

13

primarily in the Bronx.

14

On the side, I'm a volunteer with

15

EMS as an EMT. I've treated and transported

16

hundreds of COVID patients throughout his pandemic.

17

So I know COVID quite well.

18

As a small operator, I'm

19

personally on good terms with most of my tenants.

20

And I can tell you if things continue this way in

21

New York City, then my tenants' future and the

22

futures of all New York City tenants are very

23

bleak.

24

I know there's no sense (Zoom

25

inaudible) landlords. In fact, some people in New

1

2 York City would like to see the landlords lose
3 their buildings. But City officials need to think
4 about the morning after. The day after the
5 landlords lose their buildings will the buildings
6 be run by whom? Will the City run their buildings
7 like their NYCHA buildings? Or will it be taken
8 over by tenants like HDC, which was a failed
9 program over the year.

10

I do understand the political
11 climate in New York is not good for landlords.
12 They are being used as a tool. But we have to
13 review what are our real costs and we're in this
14 together because why would we want to destroy the
15 shelters of our very own citizens.

16

First, insurance costs in New York
17 City, I'm not sure if you're familiar but New York
18 City insurance costs have gone up dramatically.
19 And most insurers don't anymore want to insure New
20 York properties.

21

My insurance in the Bronx tripled
22 over the last three years.

23

Employment. The cost of
24 employment in New York has gone up drastically.

25

The minimum wage, in addition to frivolous

1

2 lawsuits, have been going on for the last few
3 years. It's become impossible.

4 Legal fees. Firstly, Legal Aid is
5 paying their employees and paralegals a lot more
6 than the firms representing landlords. Not every
7 time in court when a landlord's in court, does it
8 mean that the landlord is bad. There's sometimes
9 tenants that don't pay. And we have to go fight
10 for every dollar. But that cost for fighting for
11 every dollar has gone up dramatically.

12 Then we have capital improvements
13 to the building. Up until now, we had MCIs that
14 helped us cover for costs if we needed a new
15 boiler, if we needed to fix bricks, if we needed a
16 new roof -- fix a roof. We have no way to pay for
17 it. Where's that money going to come from? How
18 are we going to pay for it?

19 Not every building owner is
20 Blackstone Group, who has money on end. We're
21 small. There's a lot of small players and the big
22 people are waiting on the sidelines to wait for us
23 to collapse. I could promise you very few owners
24 do what I do to my tenants in the building that I
25 care for. I love my building. I take care of it.

1

2 I care for each and every tenant. I took care of
3 the two COVID. I care for them.

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

5 MR. ROBERTS: You want to
6 preserve the small landlord.

7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
8 your testimony.

9 Thank you.

10 MS. PALEY: You unmuted me.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can hear you
12 now.

13 MS. PALEY: Can you hear me?

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah, what's your
15 name.

16 MS. PALEY: Bonnie. B-o-n-n-i-e,
17 P-a-l-e-y. Bonnie Paley.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi, Ms. Paley.

19 You have your two minutes. So
20 we'd like to hear your testimony.

21 MS. PALEY: Okay.

22 Thank you so much for letting me
23 talk.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Just so you know,
25 we can't see you.

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MS. PALEY: When you had it at St. Francis. I'm a resident of a rent stabilized building in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn.

And I -- I did send in an e-mail and I'm just saying that I hope each one of you, okay, understand the predicament that's going on right now. Okay.

I thank God I'm alive. I got slightly sick with radiation. It's what I call it, COVID-19. I thank God for my doctor who give me the antibiotics and I take a lot of natural herbs.

What I'm saying is right now, I do have rent -- I don't have Section 8. Okay. I was one of the lucky ones in 2004. But I do say there's a lot of people right now and I also have a rent reduction, which I'm fighting because Lemnier Wolf says, oh, my rent reduction is not -- is voided, which it's not. Okay.

I'm now still catching up to pay -- to pay my -- my rent that I pay -- my share that I pay. But this management company is -- there's two. One is Impact Brooklyn that don't manage buildings but they own it. Then Lemnier Wolf. They're not keeping the building up to par

1
2 on the standard code. So they have a lot of fines.
3 I do call DHCR. I have sent in paperwork. I do
4 call HPD and they -- they, you know, other people
5 do but the point what I'm saying is, I'm hoping
6 that when you all -- when you all finalize your
7 hearing on June 17th, that you take into
8 consideration everybody, okay, everybody that is
9 struggling, that doesn't have Section 8. That
10 doesn't -- some sort of housing voucher that is
11 having a hard time of paying rent because they even
12 have to worry about putting food on the table,
13 paying for medication, keeping a roof over their
14 head, taking care of one or two children or a
15 grandchild, like myself.

16 So all I'm asking from you all,
17 maybe you can come up with a plan to freeze the
18 rent until next year of 2021 and then in 2021, take
19 another look and see whether or not it's feasible
20 to give a little increase. But right now, it's a
21 hard time.

22 And I wish that you all well and
23 I'm glad that you're all alive. Because thousands
24 of people have died and people are struggling.

25 Thank you.

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
3 much for your testimony.

4 MS. PALEY: Thank you so much.

5 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: So I'm going to
6 promote Froza Rosas to a panelist.

7 MS. ROSAS: Oh, hi.

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello.

9 MS. ROSAS: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can't see you.
11 We can only hear you. Is that what you intend?

12 MS. ROSAS: No, no, no. Can you
13 see me now?

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, we see you.
15 Great.

16 MS. ROSAS: Okay.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Ms. Rosas,
18 welcome.

19 MS. ROSAS: Yes. Oh, hi.

20 (Speaking Spanish.) (Spanish
21 translation)

22 MS. ROSAS: "Hello, my name is Rosa
23 Rosas and I live at 34-25 Gates Place. We're very
24 worried because of the pandemic. My husband and I
25 lost our jobs. We haven't been working since the

1
2 beginning of the pandemic. We've been listening to
3 those who've spoken at this meeting and we'd like
4 to ask those in charge of making the decisions that
5 you take into account all of us who are unemployed,
6 who have families, and pay very high rents. It's
7 not fair. If we don't have a salary, how are we
8 going to make rent payments? We need your help! To
9 the decision makers, we beg of you! Help us! To
10 landlords, please be mindful of this. We mean no
11 harm, but please, be mindful of these times and
12 what all of us are going through. It's not just
13 Latinos or people of color. All of us are included
14 in this! There are lots of people involved. Thank
15 God for those who were able to continue working
16 during the pandemic! They are very lucky.
17 Unfortunately, many of us didn't fare as well. We
18 ask you to please help us. We would really
19 appreciate it! Thank you so much!"

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

21 MS. ROSAS: All right.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Andrew, for some
23 reason Christian has been booted off of Zoom. Is
24 it a technical problem?

25 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: No, I put him

1

2 back on.

3

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: I'm back

4

now.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

6

All right.

7

Do we have any more speakers.

8

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: We have another

9

one here, Andrew Hum.

10

I'm going to promote to panelist.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Mr. Hum, you're

12

muted. Oh, there you go.

13

MR. HUM: Hi.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi. How do you

15

do?

16

MR. HUM: How do you do?

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Very well, thank

18

you.

19

MR. HUM: How are you feeling

20

about all this?

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm learning a

22

lot.

23

MR. HUM: Well, here's the thing.

24

I testified at the people's hearing. And you've

25

heard about what an extraordinary time it is. But

1

2 -- and even the Mayor who appointed you changed his
3 mind on all the police issues within a week because
4 it's an extraordinary time. Right. He resisted.
5 He resisted. He resisted and he changed.

6

I know he wants you to do a rent
7 freeze and he appointed you all. But you are the
8 ones who have the power to make this decision.

9

Now understand, renters are
10 getting no bail outs from the federal government,
11 no bail outs from City Hall, no bail outs from
12 State legislature. Corporations are. Wall Street,
13 trillions of dollars, zero. You are the only ones
14 with a lever of power, a lever of power that could
15 do something extraordinary.

16

You've done a couple of rent
17 freezes before. Right. That was historic. But
18 you've never done a rollback and if you don't do it
19 now, when would you? I mean, you can save the City
20 from a lot of hopelessness and despair if you do
21 the right thing. Don't worry about -- don't take
22 orders from above. You've listened. Make this
23 decision on your own and help save this City.

24

Thank you.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.

1

2 Hum.

3

MS. BURGER: I hear from one of our board members that someone named Marisol wants to speak. They may be on the phone.

6

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Oh, I see -- I believe I see Marisol here.

8

MS. BURGER: There's a Marisol that's on video. I'm hearing they're on the phone. So if you are on the phone, you need to press star 9 to raise your hand so we know who you are. If you're on video, there's no last name there so if you can raise your hand if you're on video.

14

If somebody could say that in Spanish, maybe.

16

MS. GOODRIDGE: Yeah. Because Marisol, I think -- yes. Spanish, please.

18

MS. BURGER: If somebody could repeat that in Spanish, please.

20

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking Spanish.

22

I'm sorry. I didn't hear the last part about the video. If they're coming -- putting it on the phone it should be the star 9 and the video is?

25

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MS. BURGER: There's a button that says raise hand.

THE INTERPRETER: Raise hand. Got it.

Speaking Spanish.

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: I think at this point, we'll just promote her and see whether or not I can ask her to unmute.

Let's see if it's her.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Marisol's still muted.

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Because we can't hear you very well.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Liz, Marisol is still unmuted. Can you ask her to unmute.

THE INTERPRETER: Speaking Spanish.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, here we go. Here we go.

Marisol.

MS. ROBLES: Speaking Spanish.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, please testify.

MS. ROBLES: Speaking Spanish.

1

2

(Spanish Translation)

3

MS. ROBLES: "Hello, my name is

4

Marisol Robles and I live at 34-25 Gates Place,

5

Bronx, New York. I'm a member of my tenants'

6

association and a leader with the Northwest Bronx

7

and Clergy Coalition. I believe that...my opinion

8

is that raising rents would be unfair. Due to the

9

pandemic, there are many people who are unemployed.

10

As a result, many of these people depend on limited

11

means because they're currently unemployed. They

12

have no salary at the moment. A rent increase would

13

affect all of our Latino communities, including

14

mine. Please, let us not forget that not everyone

15

is receiving federal aid from the government.

16

For this reason, our community is

17

asking and demanding that both Bill De Blasio and

18

the RGB that there not be a rent increase for at

19

least two years until we have financially

20

recovered. I ask that you listen and see the

21

community's struggle of the community through its

22

own eyes. Please try and put yourselves in their

23

shoes. They are families who've lost loved ones and

24

some of them are still fighting for their very

25

lives. Those who've lost their jobs and businesses

1
2 and depend on a minimum wage salary. Single moms
3 and dads...And countless situations. For this
4 reason, we ask you to say no to a rent increase.
5 And this is how we'll avoid, or better yet, you'll
6 avoid seeing families evicted from their
7 apartments. That apartment is their home. If that's
8 not a good enough reason to support the community,
9 I ask that at the very least you support us by not
10 charging us double or triple the rent. Just like my
11 family, many do not qualify. Please, take your time
12 to think about this so that you make a fair
13 decision. Do the right thing. Thank you for your
14 time and attention! May God bless us all!"

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
16 Marisol.

17 MR. MC LAUGHLIN: So at this
18 point, we don't have any raised hands.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So I'll
20 say going once, going twice, going three times.

21 Oh, there's a hand.

22 MS. BURGER: He already spoke.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, okay.

24 So we only hear from each person
25 one time so we don't hear -- we don't hear two

1

2 times a testimony.

3

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: He's welcome to
4 come back tomorrow at the end of the hearing, if
5 he'd like to speak again.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So I
7 believe that we have heard from everyone who
8 registered and showed up and from those who were
9 not registered but testified afterwards.

10

Thank you again to the staff.

11

I thought this was run
12 extraordinarily well given that we've all done this
13 for the first time and thank you to the translators
14 for helping us to understand those who were
15 speaking in Spanish.

16

Thank you to the board for being
17 here past the scheduled time.

18

And we will reconvene tomorrow for
19 our second hearing.

20

Andrew, I need to -- do you want
21 to say anything. And, also, do we need to have a
22 motion to --

23

MR. MC LAUGHLIN: Yes, we do.

24

But just a reminder that it's a
25 6:00 p.m. start tomorrow.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Six p.m. start.

3

Thank you.

4

Okay. So do I hear a motion to

5

adjourn?

6

MS. JOZA: I second.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. And is

8

there somebody making the motion?

9

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: I so move.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Cecilia jumped

11

the gun a little bit.

12

Oh, I made a motion.

13

Cecilia seconded it so.

14

So we are adjourned.

15

And I shall see all the board

16

members and the staff tomorrow.

17

Have a good night and get

18

something to eat.

19

MS. BURGER: Good night.

20

(Whereupon, the proceedings were

21

concluded.)

22

23

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STATE OF NEW YORK)

SS.

COUNTY OF NEW YORK)

I, MARC RUSSO, a Shorthand
(Stenotype) Reporter and Notary Public within and
for the State of New York, do hereby certify that
the foregoing pages 1 through 225, taken at the
time and place aforesaid, is a true and correct
transcription of the Videconference.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have
hereunto set my name this 10th day of June, 2020.

Marc Russo

MARC RUSSO

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