

1

2 THE CITY OF NEW YORK

3 RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

4 -----x

5 VIRTUAL ZOOM

6 PUBLIC MEETING

7 OF

8 THE DIRECTORS

9

10 -----x

11 June 15, 2021

12 4:00 p.m.

13

14 B e f o r e :

15

16 DAVID REISS,

17 THE CHAIR

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

3 Board of Directors:

4 David Reiss

5 Cecilia Joza

6 Alex Schwartz

7 Christian Gonzalez-Rivera

8 Christina DeRose

9 Scott Walsh

10 Shelia Garcia

11 Leah Goodridge

12 Robert Ehrlich

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

24

25

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2

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Robert Jackson, NYS Senate.....16

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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CHAIRMAN REISS: I'd like to

welcome you to this public hearing of the New York
City Rent Guidelines Board.

This is the first of two public
hearings to consider comments concerning proposed
rent adjustments for renewal leases for apartments,
lofts, hotels, and other housing units subject to
the Rent Stabilization Law of 1969 and the
Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974.

These adjustments will affect
renewal leases commencing between October 1, 2021
through September 30, 2022.

I will now take roll call.
Please respond if present.

Christina DeRose?

MS. DEROSE: Present.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Robert Ehrlich?

MR. EHRLICH: Present.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sheila Garcia?

MS. GARCIA: Present.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Christian

1

2 Gonzalez Rivera?

3

MR. RIVERA: Present.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Leah Goodridge?

5

She's running late.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Cecilia Joza?

7

Running late.

8

Alex Schwartz?

9

MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Scott Walsh?

11

MR. WALSH: Present.

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: And David Reiss,

13

present.

14

Let the record show that we have

15

a quorum.

16

The next meeting of this Board

17

will be a public hearing this Thursday, June 17.

18

This will be our last public hearing to comment on

19

the proposed guidelines. The hearing will take

20

place on Zoom from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and the

21

details for attending the hearing can be found in

22

the meeting schedule on our website - nyc.gov/rgb

23

-- or by calling (212) 669-7480 between 9:00 a.m.

24

and 5:00 p.m..

25

We will also be taking comments

1

2 on the proposed guidelines outside of our public
3 hearings. This testimony must be submitted no later
4 than this Thursday, June 17. You can find
5 information on submitting testimony on our website
6 nyc.gov/rgb -- or you can leave audio testimony by
7 calling (929) 256-5472.

8

9 The final vote will take place
10 virtually on Wednesday, June 23, starting at 7:00
11 p.m.. The public may watch the vote by streaming
12 it on the RGB's YouTube channel, or by listening to
13 it over the phone. To find out how, visit the RGB
14 website -- nyc.gov/rgb -- or call the RGB at (212)
15 669-7480 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m..

16

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

21

22 Before we proceed with testimony,
23 I would like to go over the rules and procedures
24 for those who are testifying before the Board
25 today.

26

27 We'll begin with speakers who
28 registered in advance. We will alternate between
29 tenants, owners, and public officials with a

1

2 speaking limit of two minutes per person.

3

4 If there is time at the end of the
5 hearing, we will then hear from unregistered
6 speakers on a first-come-first-served basis. We
7 will explain how to do that after all registered
8 speakers have spoken.

8

9 When it is your turn to speak, a
10 staff member will promote you from an attendee to a
11 panelist and you will have the ability to speak and
12 display your video if you so choose. Please wait
13 for your name to be announced before you commence
14 your testimony.

14

15 If you are attending the Zoom
16 hearing with a name or phone number that differs
17 from the name or phone number you registered with,
18 we will not be able to identify you and you may
19 lose your place in the queue.

19

20 If you're not an attendee of the
21 hearing at the time your name is called, you will
22 also lose your place in the queue. A two-minute
23 timer will begin and will be displayed periodically
24 during your testimony. At the conclusion of your
25 testimony, you will become an attendee again
without speaking privileges as we move on to our

1

2 next speaker.

3

4 There's a Spanish interpreter
5 here today. To listen to the testimony in Spanish,
6 please use the interpretation button in Zoom to
7 choose the appropriate channel.

7

8 For English speakers, select the
9 English channel to hear English speakers, as well
10 as Spanish speakers interpreted into English. If
11 you do not choose an interpretation channel, you
12 will hear all testimony in the native language of
13 the speaker.

13

14 If you're using the Zoom app on a
15 smartphone, you may find the interpretation button
16 by pressing the "more" button. If you would like to
17 listen to a hearing with simultaneous
18 interpretation in Spanish and do not have access to
19 the Zoom app on either a mobile device or a
20 computer, you may do so by calling (646) 558-8656.
21 That's (646) 558-8656, then entering meeting ID
22 86931307819. Again, that's meeting ID 86931307819,
23 then, when prompted for participant ID, pressing
24 the pound sign. Then, when prompted enter pass
25 code 705009. Again, passcode 705009.

25

 If you are listening to the

1

2 Spanish translation by telephone and plan to
3 testify during the hearings, you will have to
4 switch over to the main webinar to testify.

5 Interpreters in the main hearing will translate
6 your testimony for the Board. Before it is your
7 turn to speak, call (646) 558-8656 -- (646)
8 558-8656, then enter meeting ID 83877223517.

9 That's meeting ID 83877223517. When prompted for
10 participant ID, pressing pound, then when prompted
11 enter pass code 403700 -- passcode 403700.

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

21 We thank you for your cooperation.

22 THE INTERPRETER: (Interpretation
23 in Spanish.)

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

25 MS. BURGER: David, may I make

1

2 one quick announcement?

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

4

5 MS. BURGER: You had made the
6 announcement and people who've registered got an
7 e-mail that your name and Zoom has to match the
8 name that you registered with, otherwise we can't
9 locate you. I just want to reiterate that.
10 There's a couple of people in attendance today that
11 I think are pre-registered, but their names are
12 incomplete, and you need to leave and come back in
13 with the name that you registered with.

13

 I'm specifically talking to an
14 owner with the initials JW and an owner with the
15 initials JC. You can just leave and come back in
16 with the name that you used register, which is your
17 full name. And we're just trying to prevent Zoom
18 bombing with that and making sure that we have the
19 right person.

20

Thank you.

21

 CHAIRMAN REISS: Great. So I
22 think we're going to begin with testimony now, and
23 I'm just seeing who's been promoted to be a
24 panelist.

25

And I see that we have

1

2 Assemblymember Rosenthal who is here to testify.

3

Welcome, Assembly Member.

4

MS. ROSENTHAL: Hi. Thank you.

5

I just have to open my testimony, okay?

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sure. No

7

worries.

8

MS. ROSENTHAL: Don't start

9

because I know you cut people off exactly at two

10

minutes.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: We'll wait for

12

you to start talking.

13

MS. ROSENTHAL: Thank you. Okay.

14

One more second. Okay. Can you see me? No one

15

else can see me, so it --

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: I can see you,

17

assembly member.

18

MS. ROSENTHAL: Okay. Okay. I

19

guess I'll start now.

20

Hello, everyone. I'm Assembly

21

Member Linda B. Rosenthal. I represent the Upper

22

West Side and parts of Hell's Kitchen and Manhattan

23

District 67. The COVID-19 pandemic sent shock

24

waves throughout the City. In a matter of weeks,

25

thousands of businesses were ordered to close as

1

2 the number of COVID-19 cases exploded

3 exponentially.

4

Hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers suddenly became unemployed and the city was thrust into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Residents were forced to file for unemployment insurance benefits, enroll in free food programs, food banks, and seek out rental and mortgage relief to save off eviction. Though New York is beginning a slow return to normalcy, with bars, restaurants, Broadway, and others re-opening, many New Yorkers, including those who live in rent-regulated apartments, are still grappling with the financial fall out of the pandemic.

16

New Yorkers owe more than a billion dollars in rental arrears. According to a recent survey conducted by the Furman Center, more than 2,000 households have accumulated an average of more than \$10,000 in rent arrears since the start of the pandemic. With New York State's eviction moratorium set to expire in August -- the end of August, 2021 -- thousands of families who were once protected from eviction could lose their home this fall.

25

1
2 A rent increase, especially one
3 that goes into effect mere months after the
4 moratorium expires, is a recipe for generating
5 another public health crisis, a mass eviction, and
6 subsequent homelessness crisis. Now is not the
7 time to raise rents on rent-regulated tenants, many
8 of whom are struggling like never before to make
9 ends meet and pay their rent. To be sure, some
10 landlords, particularly small ones, are similarly
11 struggling but the ERAP program recently began
12 accepting applicants --

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
14 assembly member.

15 MS. ROSENTHAL: -- [zoom
16 inaudible] eliminate rental arrears for some of the
17 small landlords.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

20 I'm just going to make a comment.
21 I failed to mention this earlier, but for those of
22 you who would like to have captions, you can turn
23 those on in Zoom, and that may be -- make following
24 a testimony a little bit easier. And I'm now
25 looking for who's been promoted next to see who

1

2 will be our new speaker. Just bear with me. Okay.

3 I see Senator Jackson has joined us.

4

Senator, welcome.

5

SEN. JACKSON: Well, thank you

6 for having me.

7

And good afternoon, members of

8 the Rent Guidelines Board. My name is State Senator

9 Robert Jackson and I represent 13 miles of

10 Manhattan, stretching from Marble Hill down to

11 Chelsea. My district has the most rent-regulated

12 apartments in the entire state of New York, and I

13 am myself a rent-regulated tenant.

14

The Rent Guidelines Board has

15 reviewed reports and testimonials about what to do

16 with rents during our second year in COVID-19

17 pandemic. But based on what I'm seeing and hearing

18 in the community, rent rollback is appropriate.

19 Understanding what the discussions are now, I

20 strongly argue that a rent freeze -- a zero percent

21 increase on one year and two year leases -- is the

22 least the Rent Guidelines Board can do stop a

23 massive wave of evictions.

24

Before COVID-19, New York was

25 already in a housing crisis with over 50,000

1

2 non-payment petitions filed between July and
3 November 2019 in New York City and over 92,000
4 homeless New Yorkers statewide. My office has
5 received hundreds of calls and constituents who
6 lost their jobs in March of 2020 and depleted any
7 savings they had to try to keep up with the rent,
8 but still they fell short.

9

The landlords are scrambling --
10 and I can't blame them -- to get all the rent back
11 from the \$2.4 billion emergency rental assistance
12 program that we approved in the state legislature,
13 so they're going to be made whole. But our
14 tenants' finances will still be in ruins. Even for
15 those who can finally receive some sort of
16 compensation from the excluded workers fund that we
17 passed, a rent increase will result in eviction.

18

Every eviction is a policy
19 failure, because housing is a human right. To
20 consider increases up to three percent when New
21 Yorkers are still rebuilding their lives instead of
22 a rent freeze would be inhumane.

23

I urge the Rent Guidelines Board
24 -- a rent freeze is the least that you can do.
25 Thank you for your time.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

3

Senator.

4

I believe our next testimony is

5

from Anne G.

6

MS. GREENBERG: Thank you. You

7

can hear me now, right?

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, Anne.

9

MS. GREENBERG: Okay. Good

10 afternoon. My name is Anne Greenberg. I'm a

11 senior citizen living in Peter Cooper Village and

12 I'm on the Board of the Stuyvesant Town-Peter

13 Cooper Village Tenants Association. This is my

14 seventh year testifying and today, I honor a

15 neighbor who did so regularly.

16

Marietta Hawks was a SCRIE tenant

17 with mobility issues, but she trekked every year to

18 testify, not just for herself, but for those who

19 couldn't. Sadly, Marietta was found dead in her

20 apartment not long ago and we feel the loss.

21

My rent-stabilized community has

22 5,000 affordable lottery apartments. The other 6,

23 200 or so have high preferential rents. We have an

24 estimated 2,000 to 3,000 vacancies. During COVID,

25 families fled, young professional roommates who

1

2 lost an income or two had to move, students stayed
3 away.

4

Our owner, Blackstone, was happy
5 to warehouse apartments rather than make meaningful
6 adjustments for struggling tenants. Now, Blackstone
7 is pleading poverty and deferring necessary
8 maintenance.

9

What does your own research tell
10 you? NOI increased 2.9 percent -- 14th time in 15
11 years. Impressive. So was 10.8 percent in 2014
12 and 9.6 percent in 2011. But some of my neighbors
13 are just about holding on. For preferential
14 renters, even a small percentage can be a
15 meaningful dollar increase. There's a world of
16 pain in this city and it's not just at the lowest
17 income levels.

18

We were historically a
19 middle-class community, but we've seen tenants lose
20 their small business and leave the state. We've
21 seen neighbors who wanted to stay be denied a more
22 affordable apartment despite the vacancies.

23

Owners can use the fat years to
24 see them through the lean years. Tenants don't
25 have that option. Rent increases are part of the

1

2 rent forever. The city isn't back yet. Freeze the
3 rent and keep us in our homes so we can contribute
4 to the recovery.

5

Thank you.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Anne,
7 and our condolences for Marietta.

8

MS. GREENBERG: I'm sorry?

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. And
10 our condolences about your neighbor and our
11 testifier.

12

MS. GREENBERG: She was a
13 wonderful person. Thank you.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

15

And Joseph Condon is our next
16 speaker.

17

Welcome.

18

MR. CONDON: Good afternoon. I
19 am Joseph Condon, in-house Counsel for Community
20 Housing Improvement Program, better known as CHIP.
21 We represent long-term community-based owners and
22 managers of rent-stabilized properties throughout
23 New York City.

24

We are here tonight to ask you to
25 follow the data. You are going to hear anecdotal

1

2 stories from both owners and tenants that highlight
3 significant hardships and injustices, but it is
4 worthwhile to remember that those are usually
5 unique situations. They do not represent the
6 majority of the millions of tenants or the tens of
7 thousands of owners in the rent-stabilized
8 universe.

9 This Board is not really equipped
10 to craft a housing solution specific to each
11 building or to each tenant and must really follow
12 the universal data. If this Board wanted to be
13 creative, it could carve out different classes of
14 housing that would be each subject to different
15 increases but it is an unfortunate reality that
16 rents -- especially very low rents -- have to be
17 increased in order to balance the housing
18 ecosystem.

19 The RGB data and reports called
20 for an increase last year and they call for an
21 increase again this year, even after considering
22 the economic impact on renters from COVID-19. It
23 is also noteworthy to look at what has been
24 happening in other regulated industries, such as
25 water and utility providers.

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The New York City Water Board is increasing water rates by almost three percent. The main driver of that increase is operation and maintenance costs associated with the physical infrastructure of the system and physical improvements there too, because it costs more and more money to maintain physical structures as they get older. This holds true for the housing stock as well. And right now, rent increases for capital improvements, whether building wide or apartment specific, are as good as gone.

It is up to this Board to keep the housing stock in good condition, but that requires increasing operating revenue so that housing providers can invest back into the building. It behooves this Board to take a measured approach to these needs, gradually allowing rents to increase over time, rather than keeping them static and requiring several major increases in a row to address years of insufficient ones.

Accordingly, based on the proposed range, we would support a two percent increase for one year and a three percent increase for a two

1

2 year.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

4

MR. CONDON: Thank you for the

5

time.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

7

And our next speaker is Susan

8

Steinberg.

9

Welcome.

10

MS. STEINBERG: Can you hear me

11

now?

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, Susan. We

13

can.

14

MS. STEINBERG: Okay. I'm not

15

sure why my video isn't showing, but anyway, I'll

16

proceed. I'm Susan Steinberg, President of the

17

Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village Tenants

18

Association. Today, rather than focus on income

19

and PIOC figures, I thought I would focus on the

20

Rent Stabilization Association's longstanding

21

warping of those figures and the misinformation

22

campaign.

23

For years, and most recently, in

24

their comments on the preliminary rent guidelines

25

for order 53, the RSA has claimed that owners have

1

2 been historically under-compensated as they
3 manipulate data and facts and present a very
4 misleading portrait of rent history. They claim
5 that without a decent RGB increase, they'll be
6 unable to maintain their buildings. They wipe
7 their tears with the PIOC, ignoring the RGBs own IE
8 report showing study income growth year after year.

9 Each of the following points is
10 amply supported in detail in my written submission.
11 The RSA claims that last year, the Board froze rent
12 levels once again, despite staff data supporting a
13 moderate rent increase. In fact, RGB staff
14 repeatedly found steady growth in owner net
15 operating income after adjusting for inflation.

16 Two: The RSA claim that average
17 one year guidelines between 2002 and 2013 was
18 approximately 3.3 percent, while the average PIOC
19 was 5.8 percent. In fact, the more reliable income
20 and expense data shows costs rose by 5.1, not 5.8
21 percent per year, and the rent rolls rose in
22 average of 4.7 percent per year during this period
23 using the RGB rent index.

24 Finally, the RSA charge this tier
25 commensurate adjustments call for, at a minimum, a

1

2 two percent increase on one year leases. Perhaps
3 the RSA can explain why [ZOOM inaudible] another
4 rent increase in the face of clear evidence that
5 their operating income increased 52 percent since
6 1990.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

8

MS. GREENBERG: I refer you to
9 the balance of my written submission. Thank you.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
11 much, Susan.

12

Our next speaker is Nathan
13 Fishman.

14

Welcome.

15

MR. FISHMAN: Can you hear me?

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, Nathan.
17 Yes, we can. You're sideways, in case you care.
18 You might want to turn around your camera.

19

MR. FISHMAN: Okay. Hold on one
20 second. Sorry about that.

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Now you're right
22 set up.

23

MR. FISHMAN: Okay. Ready?
24 Okay. Landlords are asking for a rent increase in
25 order to simply keep the status quo. Whatever rent

1

2 increase that you grant will not go into landlords'
3 pockets. Rather, it will be used to pay the
4 expenses to maintain a quality home for the
5 tenants. It will simply allow us to tread water.

6

 My name is Nathan Fishman. I
7 manage rent-stabilized apartment houses in Uptown
8 Manhattan and the Bronx. My tenants are
9 hardworking, good people and my relationship with
10 my tenants is excellent. My tenants want to live
11 in nice buildings where their heat is on, the hot
12 water is plentiful, repairs are made, and they are
13 proud of their home. They deserve that and I'm
14 sure that the members of this Board would expect
15 that from all landlords.

16

 That expectation is exactly why a
17 rent increase is required, for without it,
18 landlords will be unable to pay the bill to make
19 all of this possible. My costs are skyrocketing.
20 My insurance went up last year by about ten
21 percent. My gas and electric and fuel costs have
22 increased by as New York City approved [ZOOM
23 inaudible] increase of seven percent over a
24 three-year period -- yes, 21 percent.

25

 My New York City property taxes

1
2 -- my largest expense -- have increased even as
3 property values and rents have plummeted. The
4 Water Board has proposed a rate increase of
5 approximately three percent. The cost of buying
6 raw materials has increased dramatically with
7 soaring inflation. And my employees deserve a pay
8 raise -- maybe two to three percent. Isn't that
9 reasonable and expected? Then we have many, many
10 unfunded government mandates that are not even
11 reflected in the Board's PIOC.

12 With the passage of the 2019
13 state rent laws, your job has become much more
14 important. You will make the decision of whether
15 my tenants deserve a quality place to live. Yes,
16 you. You are the only place; the only mechanism
17 that rent-stabilized landlords can get a reasonable
18 rent increase -- not on vacancies, and not for
19 apartment improvements. I'm stuck. I can only
20 rely on you to help me make this work.

21 If my expenses continue to go up
22 and my rents do not keep in line, then I'll have no
23 choice but to provide more neglected housing. That
24 is the choice that you will leave me with and I
25 think that my tenants do not deserve. Over time,

1

2 private housing will begin to resemble public
3 housing -- underfunded and falling apart, lack of
4 heat, hot water and proper service.

5 So I'm asking you today to do the
6 right thing for this city. The buildings that I
7 manage are very old and need TLC. My tenants want
8 their buildings to stay well kept and understand
9 that small, reasonable rent increases are necessary
10 to do that. Please vote for a reasonable rent
11 increase for myself and to benefit my tenants.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
13 Nathan.

14 MR. FISHMAN: You're welcome.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
16 is Larry Wood.

17 Welcome. Hi, Larry.

18 MR. WOOD: Hi, David. You need
19 some books on your bookshelf.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Long story.

21 MR. WOOD: Okay. Well, thank
22 you.

23 My name is Larry Wood. I work as
24 the director of organizing at Goddard Riverside
25 Community Center, based on the Upper West Side.

1

2 I'm here to testify on behalf of single room
3 occupancy -- SRO -- tenants who live in the
4 remaining hotels and moving houses here in York
5 City.

6 I just want to start by thanking
7 the Board for the preliminary vote. There's a
8 proposed guideline of zero percent, and I think
9 that is justified based on the economic conditions
10 in the SROs and the lucrative sources of income
11 outside of the rent-stabilized tenants still left
12 in these buildings, and I think it's very
13 justified. So again, I want to thank the members.

14 I have been doing outreach and
15 many SRO tenants would like to thank you just the
16 same. But many of them are on the other side of
17 the digital divide. They don't have access to the
18 internet. They have -- a lot of them have limited
19 minutes on the plans they have for their phones.

20 So they're looking forward to the
21 live proceedings where they could thank you
22 in-person because it's just difficult at best for
23 them to be able to participate in these proceedings
24 in a remote fashion. But they are quite aware of
25 the proceedings and they are hoping that the zero

1

2 guidelines -- zero proposal will stick because that
3 makes a big difference in their very, very limited
4 income and their abilities to survive.

5

Some of you guys actually have
6 asked -- in the invited panel, I had presented at
7 pictorial history of SROs in the United States. A
8 couple of you guys have asked for copies of that.
9 So I want to follow-up and send you the link to
10 that because I thought was a great explanation of,
11 again, about SROs and its history in the United
12 States. I know my colleague, Brian Sullivan from
13 MFJ said he was surprised. He wrote a book on SROs
14 but every year I could still come up with something
15 that he hasn't seen before and I was [ZOOM
16 inaudible].

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

18

MR. WOOD: There is a new memo and
19 I wanted to explain it a little bit if there was
20 any interest in the new memo that was just released
21 -- that I just got a copy of yesterday.

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Maybe it'd be
23 better to circulate that to the members. Circulate
24 it to Andrew and then he could circulate it to the
25 members.

1

2

MR. WOOD: I just got it from

3

Andrew yesterday.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh.

5

MR. WOOD: I just need a minute

6

more. If there was interest, I could explain what

7

it --

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Larry, I'm going

9

to ask that you send -- that you send some written

10

testimony on that if that's okay, just because

11

we're trying to be fair and give everyone their two

12

minutes and make sure everyone gets their chance.

13

MR. WOOD: Okay. That's fair.

14

I'll just say that the memo does underscore all the

15

reasons we've given over time why a zero guideline

16

is justified.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

18

Thank you, Larry.

19

MR. WOOD: Thank you.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: I believe our

21

next speaker is Ann Korchak.

22

MS. KORCHAK: Yes.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome, Ann.

24

MS. KORCHAK: Thank you.

25

Recently, I received a letter

1

2 from our attorney explaining that his hourly rate
3 was going up because of his rising expenses. In
4 January, my long-time super told me he was raising
5 his monthly fee by 20 percent. In both cases, I
6 evaluated the service they've been giving me and
7 the value of the relationship that I've built with
8 them over the years.

9

I thought that their requests
10 were reasonable and I valued the trust that we had
11 built over the years, so I didn't go looking for a
12 new super or a new attorney. In a healthy,
13 unregulated housing market, tenants would be making
14 similar evaluations and decisions. Other expenses
15 like utilities, taxes, and insurance are largely
16 beyond my control.

17

When I questioned the insurance
18 broker as to why my rates increased a staggering 40
19 percent, she told me, "You own a building in New
20 York city, which means you're in the construction
21 business." When I challenged my tax assessment,
22 which raised my taxes over six percent, I was
23 rejected. My water usage went up drastically as
24 tenants spent more time at home during the
25 pandemic.

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25

Coming here each year to share with you what my small family business is facing as a housing provider is humbling and aggravating at the same time. Humbling, because I feel like a child having to beg a parent for permission to do something. And aggravating because I'm pretty sure you won't listen to me.

Every year, I say your analysis is flawed because you don't evaluate buildings like mine with less than 11 units. Every year, I hear you talk about the Bloomberg years, when owners got exorbitant increases. But looking back at that data for those 12 years, I see only one year where the awarded increase actually exceeded the PIOC.

Like it or not, private owners are providing a huge portion of the affordable housing stock in New York city. City and state policies are making it harder and harder for us to provide good quality, affordable housing. Your decision this month impacts our ability to do just that.

So I ask you to vote for the guidelines you've issued and approve a two percent increase on one year leases and a three percent

1

2 increase on two year leases.

3

Thanks for your attention.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

5

6 Danielle is -- from the RGB Staff
is going to just make a reminder announcement.

7

8 MS. BURGER: I'm just going to
remind everyone again about your names needing to
9 match what you registered with on Zoom. With the
exception of one person, everybody registered with
10 their full name. If you're in here with just your
11 first name or just your first name and an initial,
12 I don't know who you are, and we're not going to be
13 able to promote you.
14

15

16 You can leave the meeting and
come back in. You can name yourself whatever you
17 want. So if you want to do that and then we can
make sure that we find you. And we do want to hear
18 from everyone, but we just -- we can't promote
19 people when -- you know, there could be 100 people
20 named Joe or 100 people named Mike.
21

22

23 So if you could please do that,
we'd really appreciate it. I also just want to say
24 for those of you who have your registration
25 numbers, we are on approximately number four for

1

2 both tenants and owners.

3

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
5 Danielle.

6

7 And welcome, Leah.

8

9 Let the record reflect that Leah
10 Goodridge, public -- tenant member is present.

11

12 MS. GOODRIDGE: Thank you, David.

13

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: And I think
15 Steve Buckley is our next speaker.

16

17 MR. BUCKLEY: Hi. Yes, I'm here.

18

19 My name is Steve Buckley and I
20 live at 361 Ocean Avenue. It's a small -- smaller
21 rent-stabilized building in Flatbush. Mention that
22 because my building -- my landlord owns 38 of them.
23 So he's not what we would call small, although he
24 may think so.

25

26 I'm here to testify and in
27 solidarity with the thousands of New Yorkers who,
28 like myself, have been left out of the unemployment
29 system and are still struggling to get by. I lost
30 my job earlier this year. The Department of Labor
31 is claiming that I -- my application is still
32 pending.

33

34 My rent payments are not pending,

1
2 and I pay my rent on time every day -- every month
3 and I -- you know, I do so because that's -- that's
4 the contract we agreed to, but I am struggling
5 financially. And so I want to, you know -- there
6 are -- as much as there has been talk of lavish
7 stimulus and people getting bailed out, that is not
8 the case for thousands of people still living in
9 our city, specifically people living in
10 rent-stabilized buildings.

11 Meanwhile, my landlord, last
12 year, in the midst of a pandemic and probably will
13 testify this week crying poverty, took out a \$2
14 million loan, not against the building, but against
15 the rents paid last year, to buy a 38th building to
16 add to his portfolio. That's his right. We live
17 in a capitalist system. Sure, that's great. But
18 he does not need a bailout.

19 He has doubled the legal rent in
20 this building using MCIs and individual apartment
21 improvements over the past decade, and I have the
22 documentation to prove that he did it. He has done
23 well for himself and that's okay. We're all
24 understanding that landlords have a right to make
25 money.

1

2

But this just proves that

3

landlords don't need an added revenue stream and

4

the Rent Guidelines Board choosing to do anything

5

else than a rent rollback would be artificially

6

subsidizing these rent-stabilized landlords.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

8

Steve.

9

And I believe our next speaker is

10

Joyce Holland.

11

Welcome. Joyce, you're muted,

12

just so you know. And your camera's not on either,

13

if you want to have it on.

14

MS. HOLLAND: Yeah. I'm sorry.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: I got you.

16

MS. HOLLAND: I was knocked out.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: I hear you and I

18

see you.

19

MS. HOLLAND: Okay. Wonderful.

20

Good evening. Thank you for

21

allowing me to submit my testimony. My name is

22

Joyce Holland. I manage property in northern

23

Manhattan and Brooklyn -- small properties. I want

24

to open with three separate tweets that have been

25

posted in the last few days by not-for-profit

1

2 tenant groups.

3

4 The first from the first group,
5 it reads, "We won't let New York -- the New York
6 City Mayor off the hook for letting the Rent
7 Guidelines Board raise rents this year. New
8 Yorkers are still recovering from the pandemic. We
9 demand a rent freeze."

9

10 The next: "Hey, New York City
11 Mayor, why are you letting the Rent Guidelines
12 Board consider raising rents during a pandemic?
13 New Yorkers still are rebuilding their lives. We
14 demand a rent freeze."

14

15 And the last: "The Rent Guidelines
16 Board and the New York -- and New York City Mayor
17 wants to raise rent while New Yorkers are still
18 recovering from the pandemic's twin health and
19 economic crisis. We demand a rent freeze."

19

20 People seem to mistakenly believe
21 that the RGB is a political arm of the Mayor --
22 Mayor de Blasio. They think that the RGB are
23 controlled by the Mayor. That is why they are
24 making the case directly to the Mayor to force you
25 to do a rent freeze. They want you to tear down
26 this institution -- which is supposed to be an

1

2 independent body -- and have the Mayor -- and have
3 -- thus have the Mayor act like a dictator, forcing
4 you to do his bidding.

5

I sincerely hope that this Rent
6 Guidelines Board is not what these tenant groups
7 say you are. That you are instead an independent
8 body that rejects anti-democratic rhetoric and does
9 your job based on facts and data.

10

Thank you for your time.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

12

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So David, we're
13 -- our next guest -- I'm trying to promote and
14 hopefully he'll be with us shortly.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Thank
16 you.

17

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: He got a --
18 bumped out, but he's getting back on, I believe.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. I guess
20 we can --

21

MS. BURGER: If we can get
22 somebody to say in Spanish that he may need to
23 accept being a panelist.

24

CHAIRMAN REISS: Does it make
25 sense to have him second and have someone else

1

2 first, Andrew? Would that make sense?

3

4 the next --

5

6 just have him come on immediately thereafter.

7

8 MS. GARCIA: Sorry. Can we just
9 have Olvin make the announcement because I -- if
10 they're a Spanish speaker, they might not know what
11 we're saying right now.

12

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. I don't
14 know if it's Olvin or Liz. Yeah.

15

16 THE INTERPRETER: I'm here. I'm
17 here.

18

19 (Interpretation in Spanish.)

20

21 MS. BURGER: Well, maybe we
22 should just move on and come back to that person.

23

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Andrew, if
25 that's okay with you, I would try to -- I think
that makes sense.

26

27 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay.

28

29 CHAIRMAN REISS: And I -- our
30 next speaker is Belem Sanchez.

31

32 Welcome.

33

34 MS. SANCHEZ: (Following

1

2 Testimony was translated via written document from
3 Spanish to English.)

4

Good afternoon! My name is Belem
5 Sánchez and I'm a member of Movement for Justice in
6 El Barrio and we don't want you to vote on behalf
7 of the rent increase. We encountered certain
8 problems as a result of the pandemic. We became
9 unemployed and, as a result, had no money for
10 groceries. At present, we don't have the means to
11 make our rent payment. Our children are at home and
12 we can't afford any groceries...milk, diapers. The
13 pandemic affected us so much that we were left with
14 no income. Our unpaid rent payments have simply
15 piled up and many of us have limited means.

16

Therefore, if you decide to vote
17 on behalf of the increase, this will only lead to
18 more unpaid rent payments. We trust that you'll
19 make the best decision to support the hardest-hit
20 community."

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

22

And I believe our next speak --
23 speaker is Jo W. I believe that's Joanna Wong, if
24 I'm correct.

25

I can't hear you Joanna. You're

1

2 muted.

3

4 I think she may have taken
5 herself off. Should we go to the next speaker and
6 when Joanna gets back on with Sam, then we'll go to
7 her and -- Andrew does that make sense?

7

MR. MCCLAUGHIN: Sure.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: I have Jodie
9 Gould as our next speaker.

10

Welcome. Jodie, you're muted.
11 And just so you know, your camera is not on, if you
12 were intending to be.

13

MS. GOULD: No. I'm sorry about
14 that. Here I am.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Right. You're
16 -- we here you and we see you.

17

MS. GOULD: Excellent.

18

Hi, everyone. My name is Jodie
19 Gould and I'm here with Tenants & Neighbors. I
20 live at 202 Riverside Drive and my landlord is
21 Haberman Hibbard (phonetic). I've lived here since
22 1986. I'm a freelance writer who does not have a
23 salary or benefits. My husband is a medical editor
24 and we, together, are a middle class couple.

25

We have a daughter in college who

1

2 has lived at home for the last year due to the
3 pandemic. And I'm testifying here today on behalf
4 of freelancers and creators living in the city. I
5 hope that you all agree that the arts attract many
6 people who live here.

7

Were it not for rent
8 stabilization, we and the 1.3 million freelance New
9 Yorkers could not afford to live here. We pay more
10 than -- my husband and I pay more than 30 percent
11 of our income on rent and the rent increases place
12 a heavy financial burden on us. We live in fear of
13 the day that we will be priced out of our -- the
14 apartment that we've called home for decades and
15 where our daughter was raised.

16

And despite having a majority of
17 market rent tenants, our landlords continue to
18 provide sub-par services. We've had only one
19 functioning elevator in a 90-unit building for
20 years. And the few communal washers and dryers
21 that we have in the building are constantly broken
22 down. Our guard, who has cancer, was recently
23 fired to taking two days off for doctors
24 appointments.

25

I asked you to vote, please, for

1

2 a rent freeze or rollback so that people of all
3 incomes and professions can afford to live in this
4 great city.

5

Thank you very much.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

7

And I believe Joanna Wong is on.

8

9 And I think -- we see you and I
think we're going to be able to hear you.

10

MS. WONG: Okay. Hi. Can you
11 hear me?

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

13

MS. WONG: All right. Thank you.

14

15 Thank you, RGB members for taking
the time today to listen to my testimony. The
16 stability of tenants and the stability of housing
17 providers are interconnected. Both are important
18 to a healthy and sustainable housing ecosystem.
19 I'm here today with that common goal in mind.

20

21 For the last several years, there
seems to be little focus on ensuring housing
22 providers can operate responsibly, as demonstrated
23 by the low or lack of any increases. By
24 compromising a housing provider's ability to
25 operate in a responsible and sustainable manner,

1

2 this not only hurts the housing provider, but also
3 hurts all the residents that the provider serves.

4

 Over the last seven years, one
5 year increases have averaged less than one percent.

6

Over the same seven year period, the PIOC has
7 increased on average by 3.5 percent per year. For
8 those who are unaware, the PIOC is supposed to
9 reflect the costs of operations and maintenance for
10 buildings that contain rent-stabilized units.

11

 Using the same seven year period,
12 property taxes in the building that I take care of
13 has increased, on average, 16 percent per year. To
14 understand what stresses we are under, the city
15 also charges a 18 percent late fee, even during
16 COVID. I don't mean this in a condescending way at
17 all, but any reasonable person can see that this is
18 not sustainable over, you know, a long duration.

19

 I ask the RGB when voting for
20 this year's increases, to consider the prolonged
21 duration of the low to no increases, especially in
22 comparison to a prolonged duration of the high
23 expenses. I ask you to at least keep up with this
24 year's PIOC of three percent.

25

 I'm happy to answer any questions.

1

2 Thank you.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

4

Our next speaker is Kathleen

5

Wakeham.

6

Hello.

7

MS. WAKEHAM: Okay. Oh, here I

8

am. Do you see me and hear me?

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, we do.

10

Welcome.

11

MS. WAKEHAM: My name is Kathleen

12

Wakeham and I am in a rent-stabilized tenant on the

13

Lower East Side of Manhattan. My building is owned

14

by Madison Realty Capital, a private equity firm

15

worth over \$5 billion.

16

As we know, the pandemic has

17

tragically affected our city. Over 35,000 New

18

Yorkers have died. The unemployment rate is 11.2

19

percent. More than half of rent-stabilized tenants

20

fear eviction because they cannot pay the rent.

21

The Furman Center states that 42 percent of tenants

22

have a decreasing income and 34 percent of tenants

23

who have lost their jobs.

24

Meanwhile, landlords are demanding

25

rent increases because they claim loss of income,

1

2 yet they have felt apartments vacant for years.

3 For example, my landlord as well has half of the

4 apartments in my 37 unit building for four years.

5 According to the Coalition to End Warehousing, over

6 70,000 apartments have been warehoused across the

7 city, while over 79,000 people are in temporary

8 shelters.

9

If landlords are in need of

10 money, rent the apartments. If they are losing

11 money, open the books and apply for a hardship rent

12 increase. Also, this is the 15th consecutive year

13 that landlords had a 2.9 percent growth in profit.

14 This is -- averages to approximately 45 percent

15 profit.

16

During the past 15 years, no

17 landlord has applied for a hardship increase.

18 During these years, tenants faced rent increases of

19 9 percent, poor taxes, few pass alongs, MCIs and

20 IAIs. IOC will give landlords \$2.4 billion. The

21 role of the RGB is to assure the affordability and

22 stability, not profitability. Tenants deserve a

23 rent increase --

24

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

25

MS. WAKEHAM: -- we deserve a

1

2 rent roll back. Thank you.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

4

Hey, Cecilia. Hey.

5

MS. JOZA: Hi. Good afternoon.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good afternoon.

7

Let the record reflect that Cecilia Joza has joined

8

us.

9

And our next speaker is

10

Christopher Athineos.

11

Welcome.

12

MR. ATHINEOS: Thank you.

13

My family and I provide housing

14

for about a 150 families in Brooklyn, doing most of

15

the work ourselves. We know all of our tenants on

16

a first-name basis and have strived for the last 50

17

years to be the best property owners out there. We

18

try to fix things before they break; before they

19

become a crisis to make everyone feel safe and

20

secure in their homes.

21

Our expenses these past few years

22

have risen exponentially and the Boards before you

23

have ignored all of the expense data and the PIOC

24

and have looked solely at tenant affordability.

25

What about owner affordability? Our water and

1

2 sewer bills have increased 30 percent in the last
3 year because of COVID. I get constant high water
4 usage alerts from the DEP every week.

5

6 There's nothing I can do to
7 control water usage. Tenants are working from home
8 and learning from home. But this past year we had
9 a tree in our backyard that is taller than the
10 buildings. It hangs over an adjacent property
11 causing a danger. I couldn't wait for it to fall
12 or injure someone. That was a cost of \$4,000 -- a
13 cost that is not in the PIOC at all. And it's
14 something that we couldn't do ourselves.

15

16 We also had to answer a retaining
17 wall violation for a new mandate the city has
18 passed, which is not in the PIOC. Actually, we had
19 to spend \$10,000 for this engineer to prove to the
20 city that we weren't even required to file this
21 report. This Board need -- and that's \$10,000 that
22 could have gone to improve our building for our
23 tenants.

24

25 This Board needs to understand
that it costs the same to erect a sidewalk shed on
a 50 foot wide property with 16 apartments in
Brooklyn as it does on a 50 foot wide property in

1

2 Manhattan with 100 apartments, yet we don't have
3 that same income as the Manhattan building. You're
4 talking \$15- to \$20,000.

5

When will the Board act
6 reasonably and provide us the ability to maintain
7 and improve our buildings because -- before it
8 becomes too late? Our tenants deserve better.
9 This Board can do better. Let's end the politics
10 and resist the pressure from the higher-ups and
11 pass an increase that covers our costs.

12

Please consider a two percent
13 increase for one year lease and a three percent
14 increase for a two year lease.

15

Thank you.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

17

And our next speaker is Heliadora
18 Guzman.

19

MS. GUZMAN: **(Testimony in**
20 **Spanish was inserted.)**

21

"My name is Heliadora Guzmán and I
22 represent Movement for Justice in El Barrio. We
23 don't want a rent increase because of the situation
24 we're currently living in. When Covid-19 began,
25 everything closed down. I became unemployed. My

1

2 greatest worries were making the rent payment,
3 paying for utilities like electricity and gas, and
4 purchasing groceries for the kids.

5

6 Thanks to the support from
7 Movement for Justice in El Barrio, I was able to
8 get a hold of groceries, masks, and hand sanitizer.
9 It was a huge relief for me since I am unemployed,
10 I am behind on my rent and I am not able to make
11 any payments. For this reason, we ask that you not
12 increase the rent because. We simply can't pay any
13 more for rent. The pandemic has left us with
14 nothing, no jobs...We can't pay the rent. Thank
15 you!"

16

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Gracias. Thank
18 you.

19

20 Our next speaker is Andrew
21 Hoffman.

22

23 Welcome.

24

25 MR. HOFFMAN: Thank you.

26 My name is Andrew Hoffman. I'm the owner/operator
27 of rent-stabilized and rent-control apartments in
28 New York City. This year is really got to be
29 different. Doing business in this city is
30 impossible in the best of circumstances, but it's

1

2 been a terrible year for all of us.

3

4 And the Rent Guidelines Board
5 must transcend politics and set guidelines that
6 reflect the cost of living and operating our
7 properties, especially in the year we just lived
8 through. You know, I lived through the recession
9 in the 70s, the tech bubble in the 80s, and the
10 market meltdown in 2008. Nothing -- nothing
11 compared to what owners faced in the past year.

12

13 You know, it wasn't even about
14 the rent. In the past, it was about lowering the
15 rent and getting people in our buildings. This
16 past year, we couldn't even get tenants to rent our
17 apartments. Tenants are only now starting to come
18 back. Tenants who can't pay their rent due to
19 COVID issues can apply for subsidies, but owners
20 cannot.

21

22 It's very simple: The federal
23 government gave a bail out to renters, not to
24 owners and the Rent Guidelines Board must provide
25 fair and reasonable guideline increases to keep up
26 with our growing expenses. It's your job during
27 these hard times to make it possible for us to stay
28 in business in this adverse economic environment.

1
2 Your own reports have shown that
3 operating costs are up significantly due to tenants
4 using more electricity and water, increased
5 cleaning and maintenance, and sky rocket insurance
6 costs. The PIOC was three percent in 2020. It
7 demands a commensurate increase of 2.5 percent.
8 Our property taxes, utility rates -- everything
9 went up and we all know that there are a lot of
10 expenses that were not captured in the PIOC.

11 A survey of rent-stabilized
12 property owners show that operating costs are up by
13 more than 10 percent, and the same survey showed
14 operating income declined by 22 percent. The
15 Board's mandate is to review economic conditions
16 and deal with all of the factors that tenants and
17 owners are facing.

18 Please give us a fair share and
19 don't let the nonsense of tenants who claim they
20 can't pay their rent due to COVID affect your
21 mandate.

22 Thank you for listening to me.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

24 And our next speaker is a Faceli
25 Alvarez. Faceli, we -- you're muted.

1

2

MS. ALVAREZ: (Testimony in

3

Spanish was inserted.)

4

"Yes. Good afternoon! My name is

5

Faceli Álvarez and I'm with Make the Road NY. I

6

live in Bushwick and my landlord is Bushwick

7

Ridgewood Portfolio LLC, which is associated with

8

31 buildings in NYC. I've been living there since

9

2006. I like my apartment because it's near the

10

hospital, the post office, public transportation,

11

and near my children's school.

12

Almost 50% of my family's earnings

13

go towards making rent payments. I was very

14

fortunate to not have been severely affected by

15

COVID-19; however, that's not the case for my

16

parents and siblings who also live in Bushwick. By

17

paying almost 50% of my earnings in rent, puts me

18

in the category of those who are rent-burdened

19

because we have to pay more than 30% of our

20

earnings.

21

A rent increase would throw my

22

lifestyle off balance as well as the payments we

23

are used to making based on our family income,

24

which is modest because only my husband is

25

employed. A rent increase affects our well being.

1

2 And, truthfully, we are at the brink of no longer
3 being able to pay such exorbitant rent payments.
4 We've been current with our rent and have been able
5 to weather this crisis. I know of many tenants who
6 have left the neighborhood after landlords
7 purchased their buildings, began renovating
8 apartments, and increased the rent. That has become
9 commonplace in Bushwick.

10 There are tenants who have been
11 taken advantage of, their rent has been increased,
12 or they've been evicted. Some of them have been
13 forced to move in with relatives to share costs. As
14 a result, they've had to live in overcrowded
15 apartments. This has had and continues to have a
16 devastating effect since COVID-19 began. However,
17 for many this has been the only option in order to
18 remain in Bushwick.

19 My hope is that rent remains
20 affordable and that there is no increase since the
21 pandemic has wreaked havoc on many people including
22 my family members. Thank you!"

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

24 Thank you.

25 MR. MCCLAUGHLIN: Hey, David.

1

2 We've been in for about an hour now. I just wanted
3 to make another few announcements for those folks
4 who may have not been here at the beginning of the
5 hearing.

6 There is Spanish interpretation
7 here today. To listen to testimony in Spanish,
8 please use the interpretation button in Zoom to
9 choose the appropriate channel. For English
10 speakers, select the English channel to hear
11 English speakers, as well as Spanish speakers
12 interpreted into English.

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

19 If you would like to listen to a
20 hearing with simultaneous interpretation in Spanish
21 and do not have access to the Zoom app on either a
22 mobile device or a computer, you may also do so by
23 calling (646) 558-8656 and entering meeting ID
24 86931307819 -- meeting ID 86931307819. When
25 prompted for a participant ID, press the pound

1

2 sign, then when prompted enter in pass code 705009.

3 That's pass code 705009.

4

5 And if you are listening to the
6 Spanish translation by telephone and you plan to be
7 testifying during the hearings, you will have to
8 switch over to the main webinar to testify.

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

11 Before it is your turn to speak,
12 call (646) 558-8656, and enter meeting ID
13 83877223517 -- meeting ID 83877223517. When
14 prompted for participant ID, press the pound, and
15 then when prompted enter pass code 403700 --
16 403700.

17 And if we could just read that
18 out in Spanish for people who may be joining, who
19 don't realize that they can get simultaneous
20 Spanish translation via the phone.

21 MS. BURGER: Can I make one quick
22 announcement?

23 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. I think I
24 know what you're going to say.

25 MS. BURGER: Okay. Well, we
either have passed a couple of people that we can't

1

2 locate or we're about to pass some people. I
3 cannot say your names because of the potential for
4 Zoom bombing. I am going to read out your
5 registration number and your initials. If I --

6

MS. GOODRIDGE: I'm sorry,
7 Danielle. Can you quickly tell me which number
8 we're at? Because someone just texted me that
9 they're -- I'm not sure if this person -- where
10 they're at.

11

MS. BURGER: The next tenant will
12 be number 10.

13

MS. GOODRIDGE: All right. Well,
14 this person is number 51, so --

15

MS. BURGER: Oh, yes. It's going
16 to be quite a while before we get to 51.

17

I'm going to read out of your
18 registration number, whether you're tenant or an
19 owner, and your initials. If you recognize
20 yourself and I'm saying that we have passed you or
21 are about to pass you, you need to leave the Zoom
22 and come back in with your full name. If you're
23 calling on the telephone, you're not calling from
24 the telephone number that you gave us, okay?

25

So we have owner number 1 and

1

2 initials SB; owner number 9, initials DE; owner
3 number 10, AW; tenant number 11, JG; owner number
4 1,1 HC; tenant number 12, GG; and owner number 12,
5 AF; and tenant number 14, RR. I will go through
6 this again later when we have some more people.

7

Thank you.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: And just to
9 explain for newcomers, last year some people kind
10 of impersonated people who had registered to
11 testify, and we're trying to avoid that. So that's
12 why we're doing it this way.

13

MS. GOODRIDGE: And we will be
14 shouting "Black Lives Matter" if the Zoom bombers
15 do come back shouting racist statements, just so
16 that's clear.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Leah, you were
18 going to say somebody earlier as well. Did you
19 have something? I -- okay. All right. All right.

20

And I see that we have -- sorry,
21 I'm just trying to get the full name. It's George
22 -- I see the beginning of the last name Sarant- but
23 I don't see the full -- I can't see the full name.

24

Danielle, who -- is that Nick
25 Sarantopoulos?

1

2

MS. BURGER: I believe it's

3

someone who registered as Nick Sarantopoulos.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

5

MS. BURGER: We're assuming, but

6

your name does not match.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Nick --

8

MS. BURGER: We think it's you.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Nick --

10

MR. SARANTOPOULOS: Hello?

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. We can

12

hear you. We can't see you if you had intended to

13

be, but -- we can see you now.

14

MR. SARANTOPOULOS: Hello. How

15

are you doing?

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good. Thanks.

17

Are you Nick?

18

MR. SARANTOPOULOS: My name is

19

George Nicholas Sarantopoulos.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Great.

21

Welcome.

22

MR. SARANTOPOULOS: I couldn't

23

have said all that, you know. Can I start

24

testifying?

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

1

2

MR. SARANTOPOULOS: Okay.

3

4

5

6

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25

Hello. Thank you to the New York City Rent Guidelines Board. I appreciate you taking our testimony today. My name is George Nicholas Sarantopoulos. I'm a principal of Vista Realty. I own this building here with my family. It's a legal SRO; it's based here in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

I understand it's been a tough year for everybody, but it's also been a tough year for landlords as well. I understand the emotional, anecdotal information we're getting, but let me present some of the facts and you'll see that it's been a tough year.

Besides the cleaning supplies and the need to clean more of the building, as an SRO we don't get increases every year. The last time we got an increase was in 2011. So we don't get a lot of these PIOC increases or anything like that. We're asking for an increase because it's been about ten years. At same time, our real estate taxes have gone up 55 percent. Our insurance has gone up about 35 percent, and our utilities have gone up 12 percent.

1

2

Now, just so you understand --

3

you know, people on the Board might not understand

4

this or know this off fact. We provide the

5

utilities for the tenants in the rooms. So this is

6

not just for the common areas; this is for their

7

room and bathroom area and kitchen area. There's

8

also been a five percent inflation rate the last

9

year -- the last couple of months -- six months.

10

We've spent about \$40,000

11

improving the sidewalk. We got a sidewalk

12

violation, which any kind of increase doesn't

13

capture. Getting back to the real estate tax

14

increase, our real estate taxes went from

15

approximately about \$50,000 to about \$80,000 from

16

2011 -- \$82,000, to be exact. So we're asking for

17

an increase just to be in line with increased costs

18

to maintain the quality of standards in this

19

building.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

21

Thank you, Nick.

22

And I believe our next speaker is

23

Brynn Thomas.

24

Brynn, you're muted and we don't

25

see you, if you intended to be on camera. Brynn,

1

2 you're still muted.

3

MS. THOMAS: Sorry about that.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: No worries. We

5

see you and we hear you.

6

MS. THOMAS: Thank you.

7

My name is Brynn and I'm an

8

active member in CASA and the Rent Justice

9

Coalition. My husband and I live in the Bronx in

10

an area steeped in history. Unfortunately, this

11

history does not include landlords keeping up their

12

rentals. Earlier this year, our landlord had to

13

fix nearly every single apartment's windows because

14

they didn't open properly. Some of my neighbors

15

hadn't even been able to open their fire escape

16

window in years.

17

In 2008, America suffered the

18

worst economic depression since the 1930s. As

19

COVID-19 ravages the global economy, the 1980 -- or

20

the 2008 struggles are eclipsed and we are seeing

21

economic troubles comparable to the 1930s. At the

22

start of COVID, 70 percent of New Yorkers had less

23

than a \$1,000 in savings. My husband and I had

24

none.

25

And even before the pandemic, we

1

2 struggled. My husband made 15.25 an hour. In
3 March 2020, we lost all income, but none of our
4 expenses. My husband's diabetes does not care that
5 we lost our income. It is a year later and my
6 husband works two days a week for \$16 an hour.
7 This same year looks very different for landlords.

8 As of May 16, 2021, the average
9 New York City landlord is making about \$36 an hour.
10 This landlord whose hourly wage is over twice my
11 husband's is telling us they can't afford their
12 bills. If my landlord can't pay their bills with
13 \$36 an hour, how can they expect us to pay ours on
14 \$16 an hour, two days a week? We can't afford a
15 rent increase.

16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

18 And our next speaker is Ann

19 Fried.

20 Ann, you're muted and we can't
21 see you. Ann, you're still muted.

22 MS. FRIED: Do you see me? I
23 can't --

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: I can hear you
25 now. Do -- your camera's not on, if you care.

1

2

MS. FRIED: It was on before.

3

Oh, lord. Well, in any event, I can speak.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great.

5

MS. FRIED: You don't have to

6

see.

7

I am -- we have owned our

8

building since 1955. The building is 106 years

9

old. In the 66 years that we have owned this

10

building, we have never had any kind of violations

11

with regard to lead paint, yet we received a whole

12

bunch of violations for lead paint that isn't

13

visible. And to remediate that for the entire

14

building is going to cost us close to a million

15

dollars.

16

This is something that we will

17

not be able to receive any kind of compensation for

18

it. We have -- our arrears are \$170,000. A

19

building that is 106 years old has an

20

infrastructure that requires tremendous

21

maintenance. It gets more and more expensive each

22

year and we are never, ever going to be able to

23

recoup that kind of money from rent increases.

24

It seems -- it really -- our

25

insurance costs are going up. Our repairs are

1

2 going up. Our plumbing is 106 years old. We can't
3 replace the plumbing in the building at the same
4 time without having the tenants moved out. So we
5 have to do it as things come up and it is very,
6 very expensive to do that. Between the state
7 legislation and local laws, we are getting
8 clobbered with expenses that are ever mounting
9 every single month, it appears.

10 We run a building. We have a
11 staff of five. There are 101 apartments in our
12 building. We are on really good terms with our
13 tenants. We have a wonderful staff -- their union.
14 And we know that the average income for a union
15 member is close to \$70,000 or \$80,000 a year.
16 That's a very, very high expense. Our real estate
17 taxes are really very -- are punitive.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Ann.

19 Thank you.

20 Our next speaker is Dale Goodson.

21 MR. GOODSON: Okay. Am I on?

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: You are, Dale.

23 Welcome.

24 MR. GOODSON: Thank you.

25 My name is Dale Goodson and I

1

2 live at 441 East 12th Street in East Village in a
3 rent-stabilized apartment and I'm asking for a rent
4 freeze. I moved to New York from Seattle in 1991
5 as an actor and freelance writer drawn to the mix
6 -- rich mix of culture and arts of the city,
7 especially in the East Village.

8 Through friends in 1991, I found
9 my current apartment in this building as the
10 landlord was having trouble renting his apartments
11 due to the crime and drugs in the neighborhood. He
12 got a tenant and I got a rent-stabilized apartment.
13 And many of my longtime neighbors in the building
14 have a similar story. But without affordable rent
15 stabilization, this would not have been possible.

16 By the end of the 90s, as the
17 scene changed in the city and it became harder to
18 make ends meet, I found a position as a homeless
19 outreach worker in the Port Authority Bus Terminal.
20 It was steady income and I really enjoyed the work
21 and the people I worked with, but again, this would
22 have not been possible without affordable rent.

23 Unfortunately, the program was
24 eliminated with the crash in 2008 and I went back
25 to freelance writing which got me by until I became

1

2 eligible for SCRIE rental assistance for seniors.
3 This, combined with my rent-stabilized apartment,
4 is the only way I can afford to remain in the city
5 where I have now become a community activist for
6 quality of life issues with our Block Association,
7 of which I am president.

8 The pandemic has been devastating
9 for low wage earners such as myself, as well as
10 small landlords. I believe it is also vital for
11 the city to help them separately so that they can
12 keep their buildings and we can keep our housing.
13 My margin of affordable living is razor thin and I
14 can't absorb a rent increase. We need a rent
15 freeze now more than ever. And I ask the city quit
16 pitting renters against landlords. Do something
17 different. Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

19 And our next speaker is Lincoln
20 Eccles.

21 Lincoln, you're muted. Oh, there
22 --

23 MR. ECCLES: There we go.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hey, Lincoln.

25 MR. ECCLES: Hey. I'd like to

1

2 say thank you to the RGB for hearing us today and
3 God bless the last speaker, because we do need to
4 stop pitting tenants against property owners.
5 Speaking of which, my boiler failed at the very end
6 of the season and the temperature was 20 degrees
7 outside. And I have not had a call from HPD --
8 it's because my tenants know and trust that I will
9 solve the problem.

10 The thing is the boiler
11 replacement -- it cannot be fixed. The boiler
12 replacement is upwards of \$7,000. I'm in a
13 situation where it's extremely difficult to get a
14 loan because I'm rent-stabilized and their loans
15 are based on my cash-flow. And in this environment
16 where the laws are being changed on us at any given
17 the moment, it's not possible to do an equity loan
18 on the property.

19 And just this last rainstorm, I
20 now have a roof leak. That said, I am in a
21 situation where in the last seven years my property
22 tax has gone up pretty much [zoom inaudible]
23 percent. Property tax and water is about 60
24 percent of my gross revenue as of 2019. So you
25 guys are the only option for us small owners right

1

2 now.

3

4 I had a tenant die. His
5 apartment -- the maximum that I could bring in for
6 that apartment is \$430. I can't do anything with
7 that because it's a money loser, day one. That
8 family -- my parents put them in before rent
9 stabilization fully came into effect. My parents
10 put them there. It's a money loser. I can't do
11 anything with that apartment right now. I need a
12 increase that's sensible long-term, year over year.
13 I do not want to crush my tenants, but we need
14 sensible payments.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
16 Lincoln. Thank you.

17 Leslie Leong, can you just hold
18 one second? I think there's a tenant who I'm
19 supposed to call and I'm just trying to figure it
20 out.

21 Danielle, you said tenant 14
22 should be promoted? Or should I go to Mr. Leong?

23 MS. BURGER: We can go to tenant
24 14. His last name is not there, is the issue. So
25 I was suggesting maybe we allow him to speak and
then -- actually I'm not even seeing him now.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Well,

3

let's go to Leslie Leong and then we'll try to work

4

in tenant 14.

5

MS. BURGER: Hold -- can you hold

6

on just one second?

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. I'm

8

sorry.

9

Mr. Leong, please just hold one

10

second. We're just trying -- we're trying to vary

11

between tenants and owner, tenant and owner, so

12

we're just trying to do that.

13

MS. BURGER: Hi. Can you please

14

tell us your last name?

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Roberto, could

16

you tell us your last name?

17

MS. BURGER: Roberto, can you

18

tell us your last name?

19

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Rodriguez.

20

That's Roberto Rodriguez.

21

MS. BURGER: Okay.

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

23

So Mr. Leong, just hang tight and

24

we'll hear from Mr. Roberto Rodriguez and then come

25

to you, okay?

1

2

MR. LEONG: Fine.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

4

5

Roberto, do you want to turn on
your camera? It's not on in case you are not
aware.

6

7

8

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Give me
one second. There you go. Hold on.

9

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Got you. Got
you.

11

12

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Just give
me one second. Okay. I'm ready. And now I can
see it. Good.

13

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: It's all -- the
floor is yours.

15

16

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Thank you.

17

18

Hello again. My name is Roberto
Rodriguez. I am here with St. Nicks Alliance UNO
and [zoom inaudible) I am a rent-stabilized tenant
who can be homeless with even a 1 percent rent
increase. I lived here in North Williamsburg all
my life. I like where I live because it is my
community.

23

24

25

Currently more than 50 percent of
my income goes to rent. This means that I am rent

1

2 burdened, according to HUD. Thirty percent of --
3 the average monthly unaudited NOI in residential
4 only city of New York that is not operating income
5 of 499 percent. So as you can see, even a 1
6 percent increase will only put me, my family, and
7 my community in a more precarious situation since
8 we are already paying more than 30 percent of our
9 income for rent.

10

 My son lost most of his school
11 friends because their families were not able to
12 continue paying the high rent being charged for
13 their apartments. My parents had to go back to
14 Puerto Rico and leave the community they lived in
15 for over 50 years when they retired because rents
16 were too damn high.

17

 COVID-19 already has placed my
18 community in a precarious situation financially
19 because many are not able to pay the rent. Many
20 have lost income due to unemployment. Some have
21 even borrowed money from friends, family, or paid
22 rent using a credit card. It is shameful when
23 landlords say rent should be increased because of
24 the pandemic.

25

 They neglect to say that 20

1
2 percent of the landlords who were offered back rent
3 from the homes and community renewal rent relief
4 program didn't take the money. Guess they didn't
5 need the money then or now. The new emergency
6 rental assistant program will spur \$2.4 billion
7 into the landlords' pockets. Landlords are going
8 to get their money while New York city has almost
9 unheard of 11.2 percent unemployment rate in March
10 2021. This is why I say zero rent increase. Thank
11 you RGB for your time and it's time for a rent roll
12 back.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Leslie, welcome
16 and thank you for your patience.

17 MR. LEONG: You're welcome.
18 Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak.

19 One of the things that we've been
20 hearing a lot about in the past year with the
21 pandemic is a call to follow the science. I echo
22 that call with -- by saying follow the data. The
23 Rent Guidelines Board was established back when
24 rent stabilization was established. And that was
25 the contract between owners and the city -- that

1

2 the city would administer this program that would
3 make sure that decisions on rent to keep them
4 affordable, yet followed economic information --
5 that follow the data.

6 Certainly, in like, the last ten
7 years, it seems that we've gone away from that and
8 the Rent Guidelines Board seems to have been the
9 puppet of the Mayor and has become a political arm
10 of the Mayor. I think it's important for the Rent
11 Guidelines Board to go back to its mandate and
12 administer the rent stabilization laws.

13 And as one of these early
14 speakers asked, I think one of the worst things we
15 can do is to pit landlords and tenants against each
16 other. We have a shared interest and when we pit
17 each other against each other, no one wins. And
18 one thing that I ask the Rent Guidelines Board to
19 consider is that its job is to administer the rent
20 stabilization law -- to make economic decisions and
21 not to conflate that with the terrible time that
22 renters have had, particularly in this past year
23 with COVID. Renters have suffered enormously and
24 we all, you know, feel badly about that and it's
25 very painful for everyone.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

3

Leslie.

4

Our next speaker is Patricia

5

Parenti.

6

Patricia, you're muted. And --

7

well, you were unmuted for a second by you're muted

8

again, and we don't see you on camera, if you

9

intend to be on camera.

10

MS. PARENTI: I didn't mean to be

11

muted.

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. I can

13

hear you now.

14

MS. PARENTI: I am --

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: But I don't see

16

you.

17

MS. PARENTI: If you can't see me

18

it's okay, because I'm kind of famous, but anyway

19

--

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Go ahead.

21

MS. PARENTI: -- start the video.

22

Okay, sorry. Just this -- now you can see me.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah, we can see

24

you. Yes, welcome.

25

MS. PARENTI: Sorry. My name is

1

2 Patricia Parenti. I don't think that rent should
3 be raised because many people are unemployed. It's
4 very hard to find a job if you're freelance or in
5 general. There's been COVID for a year and people
6 are not able to pay the rent as it is.

7

Do you want more homelessness? I
8 donate clothes, like, every month to Urban Pathways
9 on 30th between 7th and 8th. The ladies that work
10 there tell me many people had homes but due to rent
11 increases, they lost them. If landlords need more
12 money, maybe they'd like to stop warehousing
13 apartments and maybe they'd like to rent out
14 storefronts because I live in Manhattan and I see
15 that that's a major problem.

16

Also are the vacant new buildings
17 with [zoom inaudible] renting, and nobody lives
18 there. Why don't we tax them and give money to to
19 these poor landlords who are struggling instead of
20 raising poor to middle class people's lives and
21 then they're going to go on the street and then
22 they're going to be homeless and we don't need any
23 more homeless because that's New York's number one
24 problem.

25

So that's why I don't think that

1

2 we should raise the rent, because it's going to
3 lead to homelessness. Because nobody's working --
4 I mean, some people are, obviously -- the kid that
5 delivers Amazon packages -- but the rest of us
6 struggle and I know I struggle to find work because
7 I freelance in fashion and there has been no work
8 since the beginning of COVID. So that's my story.

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
10 much for testifying.

11 MS. PARENTI: You're welcome.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: And I believe
13 our next speaker is Eli Namhias.

14 MR. NAMHIAS: Hello?

15 Hello. We can hear you. We
16 can't see you. If you're -- now we can see you
17 too.

18 MR. NAHMIAS: Hi. How are
19 you? Can you hear me?

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome. Yes,
21 we can hear you and see you. Welcome.

22 MR. NAHMIAS: Great. Thank you.

23 So thank you for having me to
24 speak on today. I understand everybody's throwing
25 data around and numbers. I'm not a numbers guy.
I'm actually a high school dropout trying to make

1

2 it in New York City. And I have great tenants. I
3 don't have one bad tenant. And they've all come to
4 me and asked me for help. I've reduced their rent
5 by 20 percent each.

6 I -- building supplies have gone
7 up by 60 percent. A piece of plywood used to be
8 \$27. Now, at Home Depot, it is \$90. I have a
9 tenant that's been with me for 14 years and needs a
10 new ceiling because it's peeling and cracking and
11 falling. I have to fix it. Who's going to pay for
12 that? I do. That's going to be \$2,500 to give her
13 a new ceiling, new lights, new this, and I can't
14 get a rent increase.

15 Not that I would rent -- I would
16 increase it to them, but I need to have my legal
17 rent increased for when when they move out, I'm
18 able to increase it. I've had empty apartments for
19 four months, five months, and I tried to raise the
20 -- I've tried to lower the rent, but still no help.
21 So I've lowered my rent by 20 percent. So my
22 rent-stabilized -- I have people paying 8-, \$900.
23 I'm at a loss with that apartment. Not a win -- a
24 loss.

25 Even if you raised the rent, I'd

1

2 still be at a loss, but I took that building
3 knowing that I'd be at a loss with that apartment.
4 That is a business move I did, but I also knew that
5 my increase would happen every year,
6 year-over-year, to compensate for that, and that
7 has not happened. And I'm just -- I don't know
8 what to do. I have empathy for my tenants and I'm
9 going -- I'm diving in for whatever they need.

10 I'm not going to -- if I can't
11 afford it, I can't afford it, but regardless, I'm
12 going to do what I have to do to keep them in a
13 safe and sound environment, and they appreciate
14 that. But in no way they're going to tell me,
15 "Okay, Eli. So you take -- '".

16 Please increase the rent or else
17 we're going to lose our buildings to big
18 corporations that are going to make it worse for
19 the tenants, not better.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Eli.

21 All right. And our next -- we're
22 still waiting for our next speaker to be promoted.

23 MS. BURGER: Sharon, if you're
24 there, you need to accept being a panelist before
25 you can speak.

1

2

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25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Danielle, do you think it makes sense to promote someone else at the same time and whoever comes on first and then the other person can jump on next?

MS. BURGER: Yeah, sure.

CHAIRMAN REISS: I see that we have Andrew Latsko. Andrew, you're muted. Andrew, your camera's not on. If you -- oh, now you're all set.

MR. LATSKO: Yes.

Hi, everybody. Good afternoon. My name is Andrew Latsko. I am a third generation property owner and manager in Brooklyn. And I apologize, I had some very concise remarks prepared with some numbers, et cetera, but I had a little bit of a gas issue with a tenant. Had to run -- got my hands dirty, and that's what I do. I serve my tenants. I run when I'm needed.

Like I said, I'm a third generation property owner and, you know, I don't think that there's going to be a fourth generation in my family. And I think what is happening in combination from the state, our governor, and what's been happening with this guidelines board

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2 over the last seven, eight years is really driving
3 a stake through the heart of the small landlord
4 like myself.

5

I'm yet to hear the person who
6 says, I love my monolith corporation, mega
7 management company, or my public housing -- people
8 who run it -- whatever the term would be. But I
9 know that my tenants do appreciate me and I
10 appreciate them, and I do serve them very well.
11 But given what continues to happen with this Board,
12 again, it's just driving the person like me who --
13 you know, they have my cellphone, they call me on a
14 Sunday evening if they need me, and I jump.

15

And I think everybody who is a
16 member of this Board outside of their role as -- in
17 their official capacity, knows that prices of
18 everything go up. You're all adults. You're
19 established with your own lives. You have
20 expenses, and you know things continually get more
21 expensive. If you haven't had a conversation with
22 anybody who's in any sort of a trade, perhaps
23 you've heard about the cost of lumber, the scarcity
24 of lumber, the price of copper, which we use for
25 piping, various plumbing metals, things like that.

1

2 These things are all sky- --

3 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

4 MR. LATSKO: I had my two minutes
5 perfectly timed out but, you know, duty calls. So
6 I apologize for rambling on there and not really
7 getting to my point. Thank you for the
8 opportunity.

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
10 Andrew.

11 I believe our next speaker is
12 Virginia Crawford, if I'm not mistaken.

13 Virginia, you're muted and your
14 camera's not on. All right. You're on mute --
15 you're still muted, Virginia. Virginia, we can't
16 hear you.

17 MS. CRAWFORD: Hi there.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hey. We hear
19 you and see you.

20 MS. CRAWFORD: Great. How are
21 you? Thank you so much for doing this.

22 My name is Virginia Crawford. I
23 live in a rent-stabilized apartment in the West
24 Village at 40 Horatio Street, and I've lived here
25 for 17 years in a 20-unit building, and there are

1

2 another 20 units next door at 42 Horatio Street.

3 Both buildings were purchased in 2013 for \$13

4 million by a real estate investor and owner of 45

5 buildings in New York.

6 Since the purchase, 25 of 40

7 apartments have been totally gutted while tenants

8 lived here. We've endured seven years of

9 construction harassment, exposure to lead dust,

10 floor refinishing fumes, and several long-term

11 incidents of exposure to friable asbestos.

12 Twenty-three building permit applications claimed

13 no one lived in the building while the building was

14 full of tenants.

15 There are 260 HPD complaints

16 since 2014 when the building was purchased. We've

17 been charged \$350,000 in major capital

18 improvements, which have personally cost me over

19 \$8,000. On top of the Rent Guidelines Boards, I've

20 paid over \$14,000 out of my pocket since this owner

21 purchased the building. When this building is

22 sold, as is their business plan, I will not recoup

23 a single penny of this money, but my landlord will.

24 I lost my job at the start of

25 COVID. My rent is now 55 percent of my income.

1
2 Every single Mayoral candidate is talking about
3 preserving and creating affordable housing. We
4 have been in hand-to-hand combat here on the ground
5 trying to save our stabilized apartments and save
6 money so we, too, can own a home. Please do not
7 increase our rent. Doing so will give my predatory
8 landlord the ammunition he needs to push us out of
9 this building, as has been his business plan all
10 along. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

12 Our next speaker is Gregory
13 Bronner.

14 Gregory, you're muted. There you
15 go. Hey, Gregory.

16 MR. BRONNER: Hi. My name is
17 Gregory Bronner. I own one rent-stabilized
18 apartment in Brooklyn Heights. I have owned it
19 since 2008. The tenant has lived in this apartment
20 since 1971. We recently thank him for 50 years of
21 happy residency. He pays 1424 for a large area --
22 750 square-foot -- unit in a 110 year-old apartment
23 building.

24 At this point, the direct hard
25 costs of running this apartment are about 20

1

2 percent above the rent that I collect, and this
3 does not include the costs of repairs on the unit,
4 nor does it give me any payment for any of my time.
5 Your board is failing to account for huge new costs
6 not measured in the PIOC such as local law 10, new
7 lead-safe rules, bedbug reporting rules, as well as
8 the additional time and effort required for
9 compliance.

10 My building had to replace all of
11 the gas risers, which was 800,000 bucks, due to
12 getting red tagged by Con Ed. This can't be
13 recouped. Likewise, even small things like the
14 cost of filing with HPD has gone from 11 to \$33 and
15 the form has gone from one-page to five.

16 At this point, I've ceased any
17 investment in this unit. My tenant asked for a new
18 stove and I said no, because it would take me 17
19 years to get my money back. Likewise, the ceiling
20 fell. I got a \$2500 quote to patch 30 square feet
21 of plaster ceiling. I mean, I went in and did it.
22 It doesn't look great, but the entire apartment is
23 going to fall apart if you guys don't give us
24 reasonable amounts -- reasonable rent increases to
25 pay for these things.

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I'm not making any money. I'm not asking for a profit, but I'm asking not to lose money. And my sister's kid is in -- just had her kidney taken out yesterday -- cancer -- and I'd rather spend money on that then subsidizing my tenants. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Gregory.

Danielle, do you need anything on my end? Or I'm --

MS. BURGER: I'm not sure. Andrew was mostly in charge of promoting people.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, I'm sorry. Oh, I see Jennifer --

MS. BURGER: I think we should try Sharon again, maybe.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sure. I see a Jennifer Mallicote and so I'm going to call on -- Jennifer, you're muted.

MS. MALLICOTE: Hang on. Hang on.

CHAIRMAN REISS: I got -- I hear you, but if you want your video on, you should turn that on. I see you. Hear you and I see you.

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MS. MALLICOTE: Okay. Sorry.

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CHAIRMAN REISS: No problem.

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MS. MALLICOTE: I was just writing you because I was waiting for so long and needed to jump off the call, but I --

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Hi, my name is Jennifer. I went to thank you for listening to my testimony. I've lived in Chelsea since 1993. I was fortunate enough to move here from a small town in Arizona because I got a rent-stabilized apartment and job in four days, which was amazing. I live in Chelsea.

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My building's a pretty well building with 34 apartments. We're currently at about 10 percent occupancy because my landlord is warehousing apartments and is not maintaining the building or advertising apartments for rent. Just today, I experienced a three-hour water outage as there are issues with the bones of the building due to the lack of residency or use.

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The last occupant that moved into our building was February 2020. That couple had moved from Atlanta to start a business -- they moved out in February 2021. We've not had a single

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2 new tenant move in the building since February
3 2020. I'm trying to understand why my landlord is
4 keeping vacancies in my building when I am the only
5 rent-stabilized apartment and there are no rent
6 controlled apartments.

7 I think it's -- there's little
8 maintenance to my building in a primary in Chelsea.
9 Even if my landlord put apartments back on the
10 market, he has historically charged \$3,500 to
11 \$3,700 for a 650 square foot apartment. Let's
12 break that down to a mortgage -- if you're buying
13 the apartment, a \$4.5 to 5 million apartment. I
14 was excited when a friend told me recently they had
15 bought a studio for \$550,000 in the West Village,
16 which is ridiculous.

17 A relative just brought a
18 beautiful home in a not-so-cheap market in Phoenix,
19 Arizona for \$650,000, which is 3500 square feet.
20 You are going to drive everyone out of New York by
21 raising the rent, why should we be here if we don't
22 have jobs? We don't have jobs, we don't have
23 supported service. It's going to be a ghost town
24 except where the rich Dubai-like buildings are
25 being built. And who's to say -- and who's going to

1

2 be here to serve those rich people? Nobody's going
3 to be able to [zoom inaudible] .

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
5 Jennifer.

6

Our next speaker is Robert Lee.

7

MR. LEE: Can you hear me?

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, Robert. We
9 can.

10

MR. LEE: I don't have video.

11

Okay. Good afternoon and thank you very much for

12

allowing me to speak. I have properties in

13

Brooklyn. I am not Blackstone, et cetera. The

14

rent increases over the past six years have been

15

approximately one percent each -- one percent each

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year, whereas our property taxes and insurance have

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gone up tremendously -- almost in double digits

18

each year.

19

We're also dealing with increases

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in utilities and the cost of maintenance. I'm not

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unsympathetic towards tenants, but this isn't

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working year after year. We have to get proper

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increases to keep up in the building. If the

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government so much doesn't want to give us the

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increases, why don't you -- why don't they -- the

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2 government regulate the property tax or regulate
3 the insurance industry, or step in and give tenants
4 more help.

5 Because the way it is now, we're
6 just not sustaining. We also had to respond to a
7 lot of people's talk about the warehousing. We've
8 had our IAI's, which is individual apartment
9 improvements -- we had them crushed, as well as
10 vacancy allowance taken away. So a lot of owners
11 do not have the money to renovate vacancies,
12 especially from tenants that have been there
13 long-term. So please, I ask again if you can give
14 us a proper increase so it could keep up with
15 expenses.

16 And as far as what assembly
17 member Rosenthal and Senator Jackson said about the
18 ERAP -- we're not all getting reimbursed in whole.
19 I have a tenant working 15 months who hasn't paid
20 anything because he said he called his senator and
21 someone in the office said, "Don't pay rent." So
22 the guy's not paying anything. He has worked
23 throughout. He will not qualify and he has not
24 applied. So we're not all getting reimbursed.
25 Thank you again for the opportunity to talk.

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CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

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Let me just make a couple of

notes while we wait for the next person to be

promoted up. It seems like the staff is trying --

is inviting people to be panelists and some people

are not accepting the invitation to be panelists,

and that's why there's a delay between speakers.

So if you receive an invitation to be promoted to a

panelist, please accept that.

And just so people who have

registered have a sense -- we're in the late teens

and early twenties for both tenants and owners who

registered in order, just so you can have a sense

of where you're at in the order of speakers. And

then I think, other than that, we're ready to

promote our next panelists.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So David, with

that said, I am going to allow Sharon to talk if

they're not accepting the invite.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Sounds

good.

So Sharon --

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay, I had to

promote her again.

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So Sharon, if you do get the
promote, can you please accept as a panelist?

And I'm also going to allow Kim
to speak as well.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great. Is it
okay if we have Kim go first? Because she's up and
--

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Sure. Sure.

CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.

So Kim, you're on now. You're
muted and your camera is off. Just FYI.

MS. WATKINS: Let's see. Can you
hear me?

CHAIRMAN REISS: We can hear you
now. Your camera is off.

MS. WATKINS: I don't know if I
can figure out how to put my camera on --

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

MS. WATKINS: -- on a webinar. I
don't know if that's okay -- maybe just not doing
it, because I'm also in a playground.

CHAIRMAN REISS: That's totally
fine.

MS. WATKINS: [zoom inaudible]

1

2 can do it.

3

4 But thank you so much for
5 allowing me to speak. My name is Kim Watkins. I'm
6 a community activist and public school parent in
7 Harlem. And I am speaking today as an advocate for
8 tenants to urge members to vote no on the proposed
9 increases to rent-stabilized apartment leases.

10 I want to thank the members who,
11 in hearing the preliminary vote from the April 15
12 meeting -- the individuals who did vote no
13 initially. I think that is commendable in
14 demonstrating that -- to the people of New York
15 that are still suffering from the effects of the
16 pandemic. And I also just want to mention -- I
17 think that small landlords who have spoken
18 eloquently tonight -- today, is there are continued
19 access to programs that help them, too.

20 However, tenants should not be
21 responsible for supporting the housing economic
22 ecosphere. Tenants are suffering. And the fact
23 that no 2020 income data were available during that
24 meeting that I was listening to on April 15, I
25 think should have been kind of, like, the bulls eye
that this was a moot point.

1
2 So I believe, as a person who
3 lives in a building with multiple tenants on fixed
4 incomes and who have lost their jobs, many of whom
5 had COVID and have dealt with the lasting effects
6 of COVID, that this is not the time to raise rent
7 on those tenants, while affluent New Yorkers have
8 made gains over the last 18 months. They are not
9 renters that are in these predicament; they're not
10 renters in rent-stabilized apartments.

11 The vast majority of New Yorkers
12 are still struggling and they're going to continue
13 to suffer the consequences of COVID-19 and its
14 domino affects for years. Holding rent flat now or
15 rolling them back is the only reasonable option at
16 this time. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

18 And Andrew, Sharon -- has she
19 accepted the -- should we go to Brian?

20 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah, go to
21 Brian.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Brian, welcome.
23 Brian Liff. Welcome.

24 MR. LIFF: HI. Thank you. My
25 wife and I bought an eight studio building in March

1

2 of 2019 to combined four of the units as our family
3 home. Three months later, the HSTPA was passed and
4 all of our dreams and hard work were shattered. In
5 one fell swoop, the state decided that tenants had
6 more rights to occupy our personal property than we
7 did.

8 So now, having been forced to be
9 a full-time landlord, let me tell you why even the
10 maximum proposed increases are not enough. It
11 comes down to three simple factors: Increased
12 costs, risks, and the elimination of all other
13 avenues to equalize building costs and income.
14 Let's start with increased costs between 2019 and
15 now.

16 Our insurance costs have
17 increased 76 percent. Maintenance, both repairs
18 and cleaning have gone up 50 percent, as well as
19 utilities. And given the state's -- the city's
20 dire financial situation, the rate of inspections,
21 fines, and fees have all exploded.

22 Now, increased risk: Even before
23 COVID the courts heavily favored tenants. No one
24 can deny that. So the process of taking a tenant
25 to court was usually folly for owners which

1

2 generated huge expenses, thus they were always the
3 last resort. With the HSTPA providing free legal
4 representation to even professional tenants, the
5 courts closing due to COVID, it became impossible
6 to recover costs.

7 Finally, let's talk about other
8 avenues to increase our operational income. It'll
9 be really short, because none exist. Thus, it
10 boils down to this: These lease increases are the
11 last avenue property owners have to maintain and
12 reinvest in their properties. Without them,
13 projects get pushed out and housing quality
14 deteriorates and the tenants suffer.

15 Forget about profitability. The
16 maximum proposed increases would be a bare minimum
17 in order for most of us to stay afloat. If we have
18 had -- if not, we have little alternative but to
19 shutter our available apartments, giving less money
20 and have much less risk by keeping them vacant.
21 This is not a threat. It's already happening.
22 It's common knowledge and by punished property
23 owners --

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Brian.

25 MR. LIFF: -- with insufficient

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2 rent increases, you're greatly accelerating the
3 rate of warehousing.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
5 Brian.

6

Our next --

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MR. LIFF: Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

9

Our next speaker, I believe, is
10 Mike Boomer.

11

Mike, you're muted and your
12 camera is not on, FYI.

13

MR. BOOMER: Hey, guys. How are
14 you?

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good, thank you.
16 How are you?

17

MR. BOOMER: I'm well. Thank
18 you.

19

Thank you guys for allowing me to
20 testify in this particular area. My name is Mike
21 Boomer. I'm a senior citizen. I live in Fort
22 Greene neighborhood in Brooklyn for the last seven
23 years. And I have been at 67 Hanson Place all
24 these years. I am on fixed income. At present,
25 I'm paying 75 percent of my income for rent.

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I'm -- with the cost of living rising in New York City, especially housing, in the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19, my financial stability has minimized through financial hardship. I can barely afford my rent. Now, any increase will hurt me as well as other citizens.

I've had to work with tenant organizations from IMPACCT Brooklyn because my landlord botched building-wide rehabilitations that covered a plumbing system which no one complained about to one that requires three to five flushes to eliminate feces or urine.

The landlord also refused to replace the 90 old, dysfunctional windows. My landlord is BEC Management, who owns at least 81 buildings, primarily in BedStuy and Crown Heights. In 2018 alone, the -- this landlord evicted seven of the 102 rent-stabilized lease holders in my building.

According to the New York State Court electronic filing live case search, this landlord has opened 80 non-payment cases since March 1, 2020. That means there are 80 people who now have to defend their housing stability due to

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2 financial hardship. Raise the rate as per the
3 usual protocol is the wrong thing to do.

4

The entire road has been shaken
5 away from the usual protocol and should the RGB by
6 providing a five percent rollback. I don't believe
7 my landlord deserves the increase due to the
8 reasons I've mentioned above, and more importantly,
9 I cannot afford the increase in rent. I'm asking
10 the RGB for a five percent rent roll back.

11

Thank you very much for hearing me
12 today.

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mike.

14

Our next speaker is Irving Lee.

15

MR. LEE: Hi. Can you hear me?

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

17

MR. LEE: Very good.

18

I'm a Chinese American second
19 generation Chinatown property owner who owns a
20 single tenement building. Besides the daily
21 maintenance that must be done, my building requires
22 major renovations, which are still going on today.

23

My building was built in 1910.

24

Like many small property owners in Chinatown across
25 New York City, we provide the bulk of affordable

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2 housing in New York City. We need substantial
3 increases from the rent-stabilized tenants to
4 maintain our property while providing safe and
5 affordable housing for the community.

6 In some cases, the rents provided
7 by the tenants do not meet the expenses of the
8 property. My business relies on commercial rents
9 to supplement and put us in the black. This has
10 become especially more difficult with the pandemic
11 causing losses of businesses in the commercial
12 sector.

13 Like any other successful
14 business operation, there needs to be
15 accountability on my part, not only making sure
16 everything is run right economically, but
17 physically satisfying the needs of my tenants. We
18 provide the substantial income to New York City
19 coffers by paying our real estate taxes.
20 Losing us -- I'm sorry. Losing us will have
21 negative consequences and impact as well as the
22 well-being of the city economy. We're responsible
23 stewards of the city survival, but only if we get
24 the necessary income to do our jobs and make it
25 viable. Rent freezes will be physically

1

2 irresponsible.

3

4 I was in Cuba in February of
5 2020. The elimination of the landlord in 1960s has
6 had negative consequences to the housing stock in
7 Havana. Issues in determining responsibility for
8 the upkeep of the building along with the lack of
9 income has caused deterioration of the housing
10 stock. The Cuban government recognizing the crisis
11 has allowed for the reestablishment of private
12 property, businesses, and rents, even allowing
13 families to own two homes.

14

15 It is the Chinatown property
16 owner like myself that make Chinatown feasible. We
17 don't charge exorbitant rents in order to help
18 businesses thrive. If we lose our property due to
19 a lack of income, like rent freezes, Chinatown may
20 not survive. Larger real estate interests will buy
21 up our properties and concentrate the wealth in
22 fewer hands and accelerate gentrification.

23

Thank you.

24

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
Irving. Thank you.

26

27 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: David, can I
28 just jump in?

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2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah.

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4

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: We have a tenant
speaker next, but Isabelle, you will be the next
owner.

6

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: All right. And
so I think Regina Karp, Andrew -- right? That's
who's next?

9

10

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Correct. Regina
is next and then Isabelle, you'll be following.

11

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great.

13

Regina, you're muted and we don't
see you, if you wanted to be on camera.

14

MS. KARP: Okay. I will.

15

MS. GOODRIDGE: -- Spanish phone.

16

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: That's for --
Leah, that's for the translation, so that --

18

19

MS. KARP: Can you see me? Can
you hear me?

20

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Regina, I can.
Just give me one sec. But, yes, I can see you and
hear you, although I only see the top part of your
face. If you -- I don't know if could --

24

MS. KARP: Okay. All right.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Perfect.

1

2 MS. KARP: Okay. I'm Regina --

3 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hold on, Regina.
4 Just give me one second.

5 Leah, that's so we can translate
6 in all the various ways that we have to translate.
7 You know, the English, whatever it's -- I don't
8 even exactly know, but it's --

9 MS. GOODRIDGE: I was just making
10 sure it wasn't -- you know, like his own phone.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. It's an
12 RGB staff phone.

13 Regina, sorry for that.

14 MS. KARP: Yeah.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome. And the
16 floor is yours.

17 MS. KARP: Okay. I'm Regina
18 Karp. I'm a 81 year-old, widowed, rent controlled
19 -- I haven't heard any rent control people speak --
20 tenant. I've lived in New York City my whole life.
21 I've been in my apartment for 52 years. But every
22 night before these hearings every year, I lose
23 sleep because I do not want to have to leave the
24 city, but I can't afford to live here if my rent
25 goes up.

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Right now my rent is my entire teacher's pension, which is more than 50 percent of my income. Not 30 -- 50 percent of my income. I don't qualify for SCRIE, so I'm in sort of a bind. What is really ironic to me is that I have -- do you hear me?

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, we do, Regina.

MS. KARP: Hello?

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, we can hear you.

MS. KARP: Hello? Can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

MS. KARP: Oh, okay. What is really -- what is incredibly ironic about what is -- terribly ironic to me is that I have done so much pro bono work for this city, and for my landlord, as it turns out. I was very active in parents' association, making my neighborhood desirable for good schools. I worked for block associations to beautify the block. I have worked in my building to beautify, collecting money from tenants to redo the lobby, to do re -- the hallways

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2 at our expense.

3

4 So all of the pro bono work that
5 I have done -- forget my public school teaching
6 where I earned originally under \$5,000 a year for
7 years -- besides that, all of the work I have done
8 has now -- I'm in the position of not being able to
9 afford in the neighborhood that I improved -- my
10 landlord and for the city. And it is so
11 distressing listening to these hearings, which
12 every year I attend, and they just seemed proforma.
13 Thank you very much.

14

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
16 Regina.

17

18 And then Andrew, I think you gave
19 me a name for our next speaker.

20

21 I believe it's Isabelle Delalex
22 -- Isabelle, you're muted and your camera is not
23 on.

24

25 MS. DELALEX: Can you hear me and
see me now?

26

27 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, now I can.
28 Welcome.

29

30 MS. DELALEX: Okay. Thank you
31 very much.

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I would like to thank the Board for this opportunity to testify. My name is Isabelle Delalex. I'm a small property owner, not a private equity firm. I'm living in renting apartments in Harlem, although I work full-time as an educator. And as many New Yorkers, due to COVID, the number of classes I teach decreased and I lost income.

I spend tens of thousands of dollars renovating two apartments to update the apartments with modern appliances, kitchens, and bathrooms. I've offered a zero percent increase in the rent of my apartments for the last two years to help my tenants and mitigate the impact of COVID crisis. Meanwhile, my expenses and taxes, electricity, water, insurance have increased all over ten percent.

Federal Reserve estimate inflation to increase above six percent in New York by the end of this year. Rising operating costs to offer affordable housing is encouraging small property owners to consider selling to larger property owners. There's not a week when I don't receive an offer to buy this property. And those

1

2 property -- large property owners can afford for to
3 warehouses, apartment and litigate non-paying
4 tenants.

5

I wanted to continue offer
6 affordable quality housing, but I cannot keep up
7 with rising costs. If the Board is approving a
8 zero rent increase for one year and two year lease,
9 I could only continue affordable housing with lower
10 property taxes, insurance, and utility cost. And
11 those would need to be frozen as well, and we know
12 this is not going to happen. So thank you for your
13 consideration to increase the rent.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

15

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So David, we
16 have one more owner that's currently here that's --
17 that was pre-registered.

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

19

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Our plan is to
20 have her speak. And then we are going to be
21 followed by, I believe, four speakers that -- that
22 will be Chinese-speaking. So I'm going to allow
23 Leslie to go first so that those Chinese speakers
24 can all -- there's four and a row that they can all
25 speak, so --

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great.

3

4

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: -- I'm going to
promote Leslie now to speak.

5

6

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: And Leslie's
last -- do we have a last name or should I just
introduce as Leslie? Or --

8

9

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: I believe it's
Jones. Leslie Jones.

10

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome, Leslie
Jones. I -- you're muted.

12

13

MS. BURGER: Leslie, you are --
press star six to unmute yourself on the telephone.

14

MS. JONES: Thank you.

15

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi, Leslie. We
can hear you.

17

MS. JONES: Okay. Hi.

18

19

20

21

22

My name is Leslie Jones. I am a
black woman, senior citizen and I am still working
to supplement my small property owned. I have six
apartments in Brooklyn. I am not collecting any
rent since last year. Can you hear me now?

23

24

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, we can hear
-- we've heard you.

25

MS. JONES: Okay. Should I start

1

2 over again?

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: No, we heard you
4 from the beginning.

5

MS. JONES: Okay. Now, I took
6 out a loan to fix up my property five years ago. I
7 took over \$130,000 for new renovations, electrical
8 upgrades, plumbing, granite counter tops, which I
9 don't have. My credit cards are at the max, my
10 water bill is rising, my property tax is rising.

11

I tried to get a reduction in my
12 property taxes, which they did not assist me. I
13 contacted the Governor, the Mayor, and my Congress
14 people for assistance. Which no one helped. Even
15 DCHR did not help me. My credit cards are over the
16 limit. I had to borrow money from my children and
17 friends to pay my taxes.

18

Right now, my taxes are in
19 arrears for April and July. I owe \$2,542 for all
20 bills. I'm at the point that I am so frustrated
21 that I can't receive any assistance, but yet
22 tenants are afforded an opportunity. And I don't
23 understand why I am not given consideration to even
24 take away the interest on my property taxes.

25

Mortgage companies, insurance

1

2 companies -- they all say they give you a breather,
3 but they don't give you a breather. They turn
4 around and they tell you you have to still pay
5 interest. That's not fair. I do not get any type
6 of relief. Yet, but tenants get relief and they
7 don't want to pay anything.

8 I pay for that all and everything
9 else, but nobody assists me. I just would
10 appreciate if the tenants -- the Guidelines Board
11 does the right thing and give the increase for the
12 small property owners. It's not fair for us to
13 bear the cost.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
15 Leslie.

16 MS. JONES: I'm at the point
17 where I'm about to sell my property, and then there
18 will be further reduction in affordable housing.
19 Our rents are 1000 to \$1300. That's not fair.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Leslie, your
21 time is up.

22 MS. JONES: Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
24 much.

25 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So David, just

1

2 to let you know, we're promoting Emily. She will
3 be -- they're all at their offices. So they'll all
4 come on under Emily's name, so they're going to
5 have to let you know their names.

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Great. Thank
7 you.

8 Welcome, Emily.

9 MS. MOCK: Hi. We're here. Can
10 you hear us?

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can. We can
12 hear you and see you. And if you just could
13 introduce each speaker by their name as they as
14 they testify, that would be great.

15 MS. MOCK: Okay. I think he --
16 Mr. Chen will introduce himself in his testimony.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Great. Thank
18 you.

19 MS. MOCK: Thank you.

20 Okay. Is the interpreter ready?

21 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yes.

22 MS. MOCK: Okay.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome, Mr.
24 Chen.

25 MR. CHEN: (Following TESTIMONY

1

2 **was inserted and translated into CHINESE.)**

3

Hi everyone, my name is Chen Ren

4

Ping. I have lived in Chinatown for 19 years

5

already. I am a member of the Chinatown Tenants

6

Union. I live in Chinatown because of language

7

accessibility, because my family and friends live

8

in Chinatown as well and I've gotten used to living

9

in the community.

10

It has already been a little over

11

a year since the pandemic started. We used to work

12

in construction and commute to work by transit. But

13

now we are afraid to take the subway because hate

14

incidents are happening every day. All the money we

15

have saved through previous work in construction,

16

we did not want to spend it on food or clothes.

17

We've now used it all to pay rent. We also do not

18

dare to not pay rent because if we don't pay rent

19

to the landlord, the landlord will harass and evict

20

us from our homes, taking us to housing court. The

21

landlord and I have already gone through housing

22

court twice, he wants to evict us. I have already

23

exhausted all my savings that are left.

24

I don't qualify for the rent

25

relief program under the government and I have been

1

2 in Chinatown, I forgot. Lower-income and working
3 class tenants in Chinatown have called us every
4 month. They have not owed rent because they are
5 afraid of the consequences that come with not
6 paying rent. A lot of tenants borrowed loans to pay
7 rent. This year, we demand a rent freeze.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.

9

Chen.

10

MS. MOCK: Okay. This is Mr.

11

Xue.

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

13

Welcome, Mr. Xue.

14

MR. SHIE: Yeah. Hi. Hello.

15

(Following TESTIMONY was

16

translate INTO CHINESE.)

17

I am Xue Liang Ming. I live on

18

Monroe Street, I have lived here for 20 years. I

19

live in Chinatown because I'm Chinese and living

20

here is convenient language-wise and

21

accessibility-wise. My pension is only about \$300

22

per month and my rent is around \$2000. My children

23

help me pay a portion of my rent, and I cannot

24

afford the rent on my own.

25

Due to the pandemic, the

1

2 restaurant where my son worked had also closed
3 down. Our livelihoods are difficult right now, it
4 is difficult to afford rent. Before 2019, the
5 landlord has tried to harass and evict us. We are
6 afraid of being evicted, so we borrowed money to
7 pay rent. We do not qualify for the government's
8 rent relief program. Do you think this is right? We
9 need your help in reducing the rent, thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.
11 Xue.

12 MS. MOCK: Okay. This is Mr.
13 Yeung.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome, Mr.
15 Yeung.

16 MR. YEUNG: **(following TESTIMONY**
17 **was translated INTO CHINESE.)**

18 Hello, my name is Yeung Hong Mou.
19 I live in an apartment on East Broadway in
20 Chinatown, I've lived here for 20 years. I am a
21 member of CTU. Before the pandemic, the new
22 landlord of my building wanted to make profit and
23 kick out the old tenants. He wanted to increase the
24 rent by three times. In 2017 and 2019, the landlord
25 took me to court twice and wanted to evict me.

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25

I am already retired and my pension is about \$300, living has been difficult for me. This is why I asked my son to pay a portion of my rent. But due to the pandemic, my son's life has also been affected. If I can't afford the rent, I will be evicted by my landlord and become homeless.

I hope the Rent Guidelines Board will not raise the rent, but rather reduce the rent so that lower class tenants like us can have a safe home to live in, thank you. I would like this proposal, thank you.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

MS. MOCK: This is Ms. Chen.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome, Ms. Chen.

MS. CHEN: **(following TESTIMONY was translated INTO CHINESE.)**

My name is Chen Yun, I live at 53 Monroe Street. I've lived in Chinatown for 25 years. I've gotten used to life here with my friends and family, I work as a dishwasher at a restaurant. Due to the pandemic, I have not been able to work for the past year. I hope the Rent

1

2 Guidelines Board will reduce rent. My rent takes up
3 40% of my income. If the rent goes up, we don't
4 have enough to survive and our lives will become
5 more difficult. Aside from rent, there's phone
6 bills, gas bills.

7 During the pandemic, I used money
8 that I saved from previous work to pay rent. I have
9 almost used up all my savings. Because I do not owe
10 rent, I do not qualify for the rent relief program.
11 If my rent gets raised, it will become more
12 impossible for me to afford to live. Lastly, the
13 rent must be rolled back, thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

15 MS. MOCK: That's everyone for
16 us.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
18 much. Thanks, Emily.

19 And our next speaker is Martha
20 Seymour.

21 Martha, you're muted and your
22 camera's not on.

23 MS. SEYMOUR: Okay. I --

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: I can hear you
25 now.

1

2

MS. SEYMOUR: Good. I will try

3

to the camera.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

5

MS. SEYMOUR: I am a SCRIE

6

tenant, and have lived over 50 years in my

7

apartment. And it's been very important to me to

8

be stable and to have these New York State laws as

9

good as they can be. And I've seen other tenants

10

who need that, too. I am 40 years sober and I am a

11

mental patient in remission. The -- being able to

12

be steady in my own little place has helped me do

13

that.

14

And after COVID, it's good to go

15

out, but it's good to be steady right here and know

16

that other older people and people have these laws

17

to back them up. And I thank you for your

18

government service. And Tenants & Neighbors has

19

backed me up and others.

20

Thank you very much.

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

22

Martha, for your testimony.

23

I believe our next testimony

24

comes from -- I think it's pronounced Meki or Meki?

25

You're -- hi.

1

2

MS. TATE: Hi.

3

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Did I pronounce
your name properly?

5

MS. TATE: It's Meki. Meki Tate.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome, Meki.

7

MS. TATE: So as it's already
been stated, I'm Meki Tate, and I'm a member of Met
Council on Housing. I live in Harlem on 141st
street and my landlord Guardian Property
Management, LLC. I've lived here since 2008. My
landlord owns 43 buildings in New York City. I run
my own dog walking business, and I pay 65 of my
income in rent.

15

On Christmas Day 2019 before
COVID, the ceiling in my bathroom collapsed on me.
This was not the first time it collapsed -- it was
actually the fourth time it collapsed -- but the
first time It actually hit me. I did sustain
injuries to my ankle, my foot, and to my spine. I
also had to find and pay for accommodations during
the holiday season, which is not easy. So most of
that had to be put on credit cards.

24

The mold was never remediating
prior to COVID. So I had to also contend with

25

1

2 asthma and mold allergies. When the pandemic hit,
3 I wasn't able to get treatment for my injuries. My
4 business dropped down to three clients. And then I
5 had none for more than a month. I used my credit
6 cards again to pay for my necessities until I was
7 able to get unemployment.

8

 I missed a few payments and my
9 credit card payments ballooned. All the while, I
10 was paying rent until July to a company that didn't
11 even call to see that I was okay after their
12 ceiling collapsed on me and caused me to lose both
13 income and work. Then I just couldn't manage it
14 anymore.

15

 So I got COVID in December of
16 2020 and I couldn't work for a month. I went back
17 to work in late January and I had to leave again in
18 April to have surgery to repair the damage [zoom
19 inaudible) that was done when the ceiling collapsed
20 on my head before COVID. So once again, I'm out of
21 work. They took the elevator out of service in my
22 building two days before surgery, and yeah.

23

 I literally had to crawl around
24 my apartment and couldn't leave my apartment. So a
25 rent increase would be an additional, unnecessary

1

2 burden on me. They say you can't get blood out of
3 a stone. But the person that said that has never
4 met [zoom inaudible] or Ehlert Patrick (phonetic),
5 because --

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
7 your testimony.

8 MS. TATE: -- [zoom inaudible]
9 rock on a ceiling and dropping on a tenant's head,
10 it'll look like it's bleeding.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.
12 Thank you for your testimony.

13 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Dave -- yeah.
14 Before we go to the next speaker, which I promoted,
15 just to give everyone a heads up where we're at.
16 We're now on tenant number 35. We've currently
17 heard for all the owners who have pre-registered
18 that have -- are in attendance.

19 So if you are a tenant and your
20 number is 35 or greater, we will start getting --
21 there's a total of 52 tenants that pre-registered.
22 And then after we have gone through the
23 pre-registration list, we'll be opening it up to
24 people who are in attendance who have not
25 registered and we'll explain how to do that when we

1

2 get closer. So that's where we stand.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great. You
4 know, Coreena disappeared, Andrew -- excuse me.
5 She was on, but now she is off.

6

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Coreena
7 disappeared. Okay. I'm promoting Dave. If Coreena
8 comes back, I'll certainly promote her again.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.
10 Dave Tavalin, you're on. You're
11 muted and your camera's not on, FYI.

12

MR. TAVALIN: Hi. I do the
13 tenant hot line and live in Harlem -- 126th Street
14 -- and I do tenant hot line for my council and some
15 stuff I've heard would just radicalize a landlord
16 -- well, not a landlord, but -- I've heard shocking
17 things. Like, people like saying, 'I don't know
18 what I'm going to do anymore.'

19

I've heard old ladies -- elderly
20 ladies crying because they don't think they could
21 pay a two percent increase. And it's tough. I
22 mean, if you're talking about data, go look at the
23 DAP portal for any of these landlords who've been
24 testifying and see how many HPD violations, how
25 many complaints they have. It's quite a bit. I

1

2 have 160 in my -- 200 in my little 19-unit
3 building.

4 And we're also talking about --
5 that there's been a base -- like make the road in
6 2011 estimate about like 40 percent of the
7 buildings in my, like, gentrified neighborhoods in
8 Brooklyn and Queens were overcharges. So we're not
9 talking about the legal rents that they have and
10 all of my buildings that I've lived in have been
11 overcharged.

12 So I think we need a rent
13 rollback. Jobs are not coming back. I'm looking
14 for jobs and they're just starting to, and they're
15 not permanent jobs -- they're temp jobs. So yeah,
16 and just like, listen to what people are saying on
17 this hot line, and I mean, some of the stuff
18 landlords do is just criminal. And DHCR doesn't
19 enforcing it and neither does HPD. So thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

21 I see that Coreena is back on. I
22 don't know if your last -- is your last name, Maray
23 (phonetic)? Coreena Maray?

24 MS. POPOWITCH: No, it's Coreena
25 Popowitch. I'm sorry.

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CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, okay. Well, Coreena, welcome. And your cam- -- I hear you, but your camera's off, if you wanted it turned on.

MS. POPOWITCH: No, I didn't want that. I -- just a little bit of technical difficulties. I don't know how to turn the camera on. I prefer to have it on.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: If you're on --

MS. POPOWITCH: I have it on. I have it on.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay.

MS. POPOWITCH: I have it.

CHAIRMAN REISS: I can see you.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: There you go.

MS. POPOWITCH: Hello.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

MS. POPOWITCH: Yes. Sorry about the delay. Hello. My name is Coreena Popowitch. I live at 155 West 162nd Street, 10452. And my landlord is NBM Management. I've lived here for 18 years, about. I love my apartment. It's beautiful. I love the way it is -- the view, the windows, et cetera, et cetera. The space, the location -- I enjoy living here. My friends are

1

2 close to me. I feel appreciated in my
3 neighborhood.

4 If you raise the rent, a lot of
5 wonderful people will have to pack up and leave --
6 leave this wonderful neighborhood behind. A place
7 they've enjoy living for such a long time, like me.
8 I pay 30 percent to 39 percent -- percentage in
9 rent. Over a half of stabilized tenants pay more
10 than 30 percent of their income in rent. This
11 means that they are rent-burdened, according to the
12 Office of Housing and Urban Development -- HUD.

13 From 2018 to 2019, landlords net
14 operating income revenue remaining after operating
15 expenses are paid grew to 2.9 percent -- the 14th
16 increase in the last 15 years. The average monthly
17 unaudited NOI in residential-only property
18 city-wide was 499 per unit in 2019. This is
19 directly from the Rent Guidelines Board -- wait,
20 sorry. Per unit, per month.

21 I would have to sacrifice food for
22 two people. It would be harder for transportation
23 for work; very little freedom to live. I lost my
24 job; I had no income. For three months, I had to
25 go to the pantry to get my food. Landlords are

1

2 saying rents should be increased because of the
3 pandemic. They neglect the say that 20 percent of
4 landlords who are -- were -- offered back rent from
5 the homes and community rent relief program didn't
6 take the money. Guess they didn't need the money.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Coreena, your
8 time is up. Thank you for your testimony.

9

MS. POPOWITCH: Thank you.

10

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you.

11

So our next guest would like to
12 testify in Spanish. It's Teresita Aguilar. If
13 someone can notify him to unmute, he's -- he or she
14 is on the phone.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome,
16 Teresita.

17

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Olvin or Liz,
18 can you tell them that they need to unmute? It's
19 star six. Olvin or Liz?

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, we've lost
21 the caller. Do you want to promote someone else
22 and then we'll figure out the technical stuff?

23

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah.

24

CHAIRMAN REISS: I see Lauren
25 Coleman.

1

2

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yep.

3

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Lauren, you're muted and your camera is not on, FYI.

5

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7

8

MS. COLEMAN: Hello. I was just waiting until it was time to get started. So hold on. I'll take the -- I'd rather put my video on on my virtual screen. Hey. Okay --

9

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: We can hear you and see you.

11

12

MS. COLEMAN: You can hear me hopefully, right?

13

14

15

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. yes.

MS. COLEMAN: I'll be brief. I'm sure everybody's very tired at this point. Thank you so much.

17

18

19

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21

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23

24

So again, my name is Lauren Coleman. I am Executive Director and Founder of a non-profit here in New York City called Game Change. We support a number of a female entrepreneurs of color in a number of different ways. So just two things I'm hoping that the Board can take away this evening from, you know, my small participation here.

25

But according to all the

1

2 statistics from American Express Small Business
3 Report -- the most recent one on women's businesses
4 -- women of color absolutely out-index in terms of
5 entrepreneurship in the United States today. And
6 for many of us, we were working from home before it
7 was mandatory and/or cool.

8 And so, you know, just listening
9 to that other woman talk about, you know, having a
10 dog walking business and so much more -- that's
11 just one of many, many. And so home means so much
12 more to women of color in the city, not just
13 residents, but also residents and business -- your
14 complete livelihood.

15 But the other side of that -- the
16 number two -- is that according to the ACLU, women
17 of color, particularly African-American women,
18 out-index by all demographics for threat of
19 eviction by two times the amount of any other
20 demographic in this country. And so raising rent
21 makes that only more challenging and puts, you
22 know, people who are already very vulnerable at the
23 very front, you know, of that list yet again.

24 So I'm hoping that -- even though
25 I hear all the owners, and they're entrepreneurs,

1

2 and I have been an entrepreneur for most of my life
3 and support them -- you know, it really is about
4 being able to have something which is affordable
5 and the understanding of that, especially when your
6 home is where you're working from. Thank you so
7 much for listening.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

9

Lauren --

10

MS. COLEMAN: You're welcome.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: -- for your

12

testimony.

13

I see our next speakers is

14

DanaLynn White.

15

DanaLynn, you're muted and you're

16

camera is off.

17

MS. WHITE: Okay. I'm here.

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: I hear you. If

19

you want to put your camera on, you're welcome to.

20

MS. WHITE: Oh, I think they only

21

have me in -- on phone.

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. That's

23

fine.

24

MS. WHITE: I'm a retired real

25

estate agent and I am disabled woman as well. And

1
2 I speak for the disabled and mentally ill people.
3 Now, we are on a set income. We cannot afford an
4 increase in rent. And for the simple fact that I
5 heard someone speak in regards to the landlord's
6 owners needing the increase so they could repair
7 and maintain the properties for us tenants when we
8 have the majority owners who don't reside in the
9 state that they live in. And they are raising the
10 rents and they're not putting the money back into
11 the properties.

12 We have ton of slumlords, and we
13 have so many of us who are on set incomes -- even
14 those who are working minimum wage with children,
15 single parents and we can't even make ends meet,
16 let alone the COVID hitting us. My money is more
17 than 75 percent of my income that goes towards my
18 rent. And to have -- having to go to the doctor
19 three times a week, I got to pay for medical, I got
20 to pay for the bills, I got to pay for
21 transportation, and then I had to pay for the extra
22 things that we needed because of the COVID.

23 The mask I had to -- the PPE I
24 had to purchase myself. And a lot of us, we had --
25 they sent us one or two, but that doesn't equate

1

2 for the whole year, let alone we are still in the
3 COVID. This is a lot for a lot of us tenant and
4 the owners -- I'm just behooved -- understand that
5 they got to keep the properties up and stuff like
6 that. But a lot of them are not even putting the
7 money back into their properties. And I just can't
8 -- I just thank you for the time to be able to
9 explain some of it.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
11 DanaLynn.

12 Our next speaker is Nikita
13 Salehi; is that right?

14 MS. SALEHI: Yes. That's right.
15 Thank you. Thank you for having me. Hi, everyone.
16 My name's Nikita Salehi. I'm a Staff Attorney at
17 DC 37 Municipal Employer's Legal Services -- I work
18 in the housing unit. And DC 37 MELS supports a
19 zero percent increase with regard to rent for one
20 year and two year leases in rent-stabilized
21 apartments.

22 DC 37 is the largest union in the
23 city of New York, representing 150,000 employees
24 and 50,000 retirees. Our members safely guide your
25 children across the street. They assist you at

1

2 your library's reference desk. They are the
3 gardeners in our parks. The public sees them at
4 the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The members of DC
5 37 make NYC function on a daily basis even during
6 this pandemic.

7 Thus, as you can already imagine,
8 because they're on the front lines and make the
9 city what it is, they've also been the ones to be
10 the most severely impacted as a result of the
11 pandemic. To provide some background on my
12 experience DC 37 MELS is a legal services benefit
13 of the union. And like I said, I work as a staff
14 attorney. More than half of my clients reside in
15 rent-stabilized apartments. Their average rent
16 burden takes 30 -- 50 percent or more of their
17 monthly take home pay.

18 Just to list a few examples of
19 our clients' finances: One of my clients worked as
20 a school aide for the Department of Education and
21 her take home pay is \$800 bi-weekly. Furthermore,
22 she has no other income coming into the home as her
23 husband contracted COVID-19 and was forced to take
24 unpaid leave from his job, leaving her to pay
25 \$1,200 a month in rent by herself.

1
2 Another one of my clients is a
3 single mother and takes home a 1,048 bi-weekly and
4 has to cover the costs of childcare since her
5 11-year-old son switched to remote learning during
6 the pandemic, all while trying to meet \$1,050 a
7 month in rent. The pandemic has transformed their
8 lives of daily struggle into a hopeless nightmare.
9 Furthermore, the current state of the law appears
10 to already [zoom inaudible] registered rental
11 amounts as long as the lease also includes a legal
12 rent, and that's why we support a zero increase.
13 Thank you for listening.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
15 Nikita.

16 MS. GOODRIDGE: Thank you for
17 testifying. We always love having Legal Services.

18 MS. SALEHI: Thank you for having
19 me.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: And I think this
21 is Teresita; is that correct?

22 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Teresita is
23 back. Yes.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

25 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: And to unmute,

1

2 yes. It's star six.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome. Hello.

4

We welcome your testimony.

5

MS. AGUILAR: **(following**

6

Testimony was translated into Spanish.)

7

"Thank you! Greetings! Good

8

afternoon to the RGB and to all present! My name is

9

Teresita Aguilar and I join you today on behalf of

10

the United Neighbors Organization (UNO) consisting

11

of members with limited resources in Northern

12

Brooklyn. We are advocating for all of our

13

communities, for those who've been displaced, as

14

well as for tenants who have endured other

15

conditions. I am here to ask the honorable members

16

of the RGB to not pass a rent increase. A rent

17

increase after this horrific pandemic would only

18

perpetuate an already horrific injustice - an

19

eviction epidemic and endless suffering for

20

families.

21

Thank you for your attention!"

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

23

MS. BURGER: David, if I could

24

just say something real quick?

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sure.

1
2 MS. BURGER: We have just a few
3 more speakers left. We have more speakers who
4 pre-registered, but I'm not finding them on the
5 list. So just in case you have signed in or called
6 in from a number or name that's different than what
7 you've registered, I just want to quickly go
8 through the people that we cannot locate. And if
9 you hear yourself on this list, you need to leave
10 Zoom, come back in with your full name so that we
11 can find you, or call back on the phone with the
12 phone number that you've registered with. So I'm
13 just going to go through that really quickly.

14 I'm going to go through the
15 people on the telephone first. We have owner number
16 1 with the initials SB; owner number 11 with the
17 initials HC; tenant number 15 with the initials JR;
18 tenant number 19 with the initials LC; owner number
19 22 with the initials CG; owner number 27 with the
20 initials MA; tenant number 46 with the initials MS;
21 tenant number 50 with the initials KL; and tenant
22 number 52 with the initials DM.

23 Those people all registered to
24 speak on the telephone. People who registered to
25 speak on video who we have not been able to locate

1
2 include: Owner 9 with the initials DE; owner 10
3 with the initials AW; tenant 11 with the initials
4 JG; tenant 12 with the initials GG; owner 23 --
5 three initials, MDS; owner 24 with the initials JL;
6 tenant 36 with the initials GG; tenant 37 with the
7 initials -- three initials, NRR; tenant 41 with the
8 initials JH; tenant 45 with the initials DG; tenant
9 47 with the initials CA; and tenant 51 with the
10 initials MW.

11 That will be our last
12 announcement because we are almost out of speakers.
13 You also will have the option, as we'll explain, to
14 speak as an unregistered speaker technically, and
15 we'll explain that when we're done with the
16 registered speakers.

17 Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: I believe our --
19 thank you, Danielle. I believe our next speaker is
20 Noah Weston.

21 Welcome, Noah.

22 MR. WESTON: Hi. Thank you very
23 much.

24 So I'm here in support of
25 Neighbors Helping Neighbors; I'm also a member of

1

2 South Brooklyn DSA. Now, one thing that I think is
3 universally agreeable is that without secure
4 housing, community is not possible. And, you know,
5 we all want community and that trust and support
6 that it's founded on, it can't really be made if
7 people are getting kicked out of their homes or
8 priced out.

9 I know my neighbors. I've seen
10 their kids grow up. And let's, you know, compare
11 that to what landlords are allegedly facing if they
12 don't get a rent increase. They're hitting us all
13 with these percentages and figures in a vacuum, and
14 honestly, until they're willing to all show us
15 their financials and make their entire portfolio
16 publicly and easily available online, the case
17 they're making is not credible. They are operating
18 an estate of opacity and that should be dismissed.

19 And they also can't invoke past
20 repairs because all these things they're talking
21 about, these costs, a lot of them are not new
22 problems. They let them deteriorate in the first
23 place. They can't use their past neglect to hold
24 New York hostage for their present costs. It's
25 just absolutely immoral. And they can absorb these

1

2 costs. They're wielding the language of economic
3 hardship, but that doesn't mean that they
4 experience it the same way the tenants do.

5 Learn how to budget like the rest
6 of us. Sell things, sell buildings -- you own
7 buildings. Chris Athineos, who spoke earlier, owns
8 nine of them. Andrew Latsko has several buildings
9 he inherited. I wish I inherited any buildings.
10 You know, or get a different job. No one forced
11 you into this wretched business.

12 Those of you who are small
13 landlords, people like Leslie who spoke earlier,
14 you should get targeted relief -- bail outs, not
15 loans. You know, and -- but, you know, blanket
16 rent increase hurts way many more people than you
17 and it hurts them more than the pain you're
18 experiencing right now. So that's just not fair.

19 Now, Gregory Bronner, another
20 owner, said something very telling earlier. He
21 said that he'd rather help his ailing family than
22 subsidize tenants, as if the tenants themselves
23 don't have similar or worse struggles. As if the
24 material burdens he bears are not only comparable,
25 but a greater priority than that of his tenants.

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You're all not plumbers; you're not lumber mills -- you're landlords. And if you won't sustain a rent freeze, especially under these conditions people are in right now, you should not be the stewards of this universal necessity. Sorry.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Noah. And then I believe our next speaker is Siya Hegde; is that correct?

MS. HEGDE: It is. Thank you so much.

Yes. Good evening. My name is Siya Hegde and I testify today in my role as Housing Policy Counsel with the Bronx Defender's Civil Action Practice. The Bronx Defender's holistically defends Bronx residents from the enmeshed civil, immigration, family, and criminal penalties of multi-legal system contact.

As civil public defenders, we also serve as right to counsel providers, and as such, advocate for low-income renters who face imminent risk of eviction in Bronx Housing Court. Many of our clients in the South Bronx live in rent burdened households on a fixed income and public

1

2 assistance. They mostly identify as Black, Brown,
3 and Latinx and have continued to experience
4 insurmountable financial challenges during the
5 COVID-19 pandemic.

6 Chief among these challenges have
7 been their lost wages from jobs terminations and
8 occupational license suspensions, reductions in
9 cash assistance and food stamps, loss of financial
10 support from their loved ones in the community, and
11 mounting medical expenses. We have also witnessed
12 frequent fear mongering and harassment by our
13 client's landlords who have threatened them with
14 eviction actions, failed to make repairs, and
15 illegally displaced them from their homes.

16 The consequences of these
17 circumstances have compromised our clients' safety
18 net, hampered their ability to pay rent and
19 infringed on their human right to housing. As rent
20 regulated housing in New York City arose from the
21 critical need to combat its longstanding
22 homelessness and affordability crisis, the Rent
23 Guidelines Board must ensure that the most
24 vulnerable among us have equitable access to
25 housing.

1
2 We demand that the Board mandates
3 a rent freeze, such that rent burdened,
4 rent-stabilized households, who must pay over 30
5 percent of their income toward rent in the absence
6 of local or federally funded housing subsidies can
7 support their other basic needs. In enhancing and
8 in extending the eviction moratorium, our state
9 legislature has expressly signaled its intent to
10 avoid as many evictions as possible, but this
11 moratorium will not be enough if there's a rent
12 increase upon its expiration.

13 While landlords will have profited
14 from the current rental assistance program, our
15 clients and the tens of thousands like them in the
16 city must not re-suffer the homelessness crisis
17 while recuperating from the devastating economic
18 turmoil that this pandemic has cost.

19 Thank you for this opportunity to
20 testify.

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.
22 Thank you for your testimony.

23 MS. HEGDE: You're welcome.

24 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So I believe --
25 I'll check with Danielle, but I believe we're at

1

2 the end of our list of people who had
3 pre-registered.

4

MS. BURGER: I just sent you a
5 chat, if you could check the chat.

6

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Oh, okay. Let
7 me check the chat. Checking the chat. Oh, okay.
8 There's one that we are trying to identify, so we
9 will be able to -- if that's who we think it is,
10 we'll put her up.

11

The -- just a few announcements
12 before we go on how we're going to do that. I just
13 want to say that registration for our next public
14 hearing, which is June 17 -- that's Thursday --
15 registration will close at noon tomorrow for that
16 hearing. We are planning on taking unregistered
17 speakers at the end of the hearing as well, as time
18 permits.

19

So I just wanted to make that
20 announcement. And I guess -- I think it's worth
21 one more time for those who are in -- that may be
22 on this call who are Spanish speaking, that they
23 can dial into our meeting for those who want to
24 listen to simultaneous Spanish translations. So
25 I'm not sure -- Liz, are you still --

1

2 THE INTERPRETER: I'm here. I
3 can actually let them in. Sure.

4 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Oh, Olvin.
5 Okay. So maybe instead of me reading in English,
6 why don't you just go ahead and read it in Spanish
7 because the announcement is basically geared to
8 those who are may be on this call, who do not
9 understand English or their native language is
10 Spanish, so go ahead.

11 THE INTERPRETER: Sure. Sure.

12 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Did we lose
13 Olvin?

14 THE INTERPRETER: No, I'm here.
15 I'm sorry. I was just trying to find the number
16 where they would need to call in order to register
17 for the next public hearing. That was actually in
18 the original --

19 MS. BURGER: It's not in the main
20 announcements. It was on the periodic
21 announcements.

22 THE INTERPRETER: Correct. Okay.
23 I see. I'm looking for that number here.

24 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: If they want to
25 register for the next hearing? Is that what you're

1

2 saying?

3

THE INTERPRETER: Yes. Correct.

4

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Oh, I'm sorry.

5

Yeah. So you need to call (212) 669-7480.

6

THE INTERPRETER: Okay -- 2480.

7

MS. GARCIA: Just to confirm --

8

Andrew, you said that folks can register until

9

tomorrow at noon, right? Not until 5:00? I think

10

the announcement --

11

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Right. It's

12

been noon all along. Yeah.

13

MS. GARCIA: Yeah. The

14

announcement that Olvin read said 9:00 to 5:00.

15

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: It should be

16

noon. Sorry. Thank you.

17

Thank you. So we believed that

18

this person is the one that we identified, so we're

19

going to promote Meg as a panelist.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Meg, welcome.

21

You're muted. There you go. Now we see you too.

22

MS. WHYTE: Hi. I'm so sorry

23

about that. I thought I had properly changed my

24

display name.

25

First of all, thank you to

1

2 everyone on the Board for sticking through this
3 meeting and for all of the work you do and to all
4 of the tenants that have spoken. My name is Meaghan
5 Whyte. I'm a staff attorney at an organization
6 called Mobilization for Justice.

7 I'm also a member of the Legal
8 Services Staff Association 2320, which is a
9 wall-to-wall union that's made up of attorneys,
10 paralegals, and other advocates. And the majority
11 of the work that we do is in housing. You know,
12 I've sat through most of this meeting today and,
13 you know, I understand the concerns of the
14 landlords that spoke, but I want to speak to some
15 things that they haven't discussed.

16 First, that ERAP is available to
17 landlords. They can apply on their tenant's behalf
18 and seek all of the back rent for the last 12
19 months and three months prospective rent. So
20 that's just a falsehood that's been, sort of,
21 perpetrated throughout this hearing. I also want
22 to talk about the expense of evicting someone. You
23 know, my colleagues that are here, I can see a few
24 -- I see a few familiar faces.

25 With an increase in rent -- folks

1
2 can't afford rent right now. A rent increase would
3 just further burden tenants and would ultimately
4 lead to more eviction proceedings which would cost
5 landlords in the long run. You know, I heard a lot
6 of landlords talk about their inability to rent out
7 units; how no one is coming back to the city. A
8 rent increase would simply make more units vacant,
9 would force more people onto the street, and would
10 ultimately cost landlords more money than I think
11 that they understand that they would receive if
12 there was an increase.

13 So, you know, for those reasons,
14 I'm urging the Board to vote for a rent freeze, and
15 again, I thank you all for the work that you do and
16 I hope that you freeze the rent.

17 Thank you so much.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
19 ma'am.

20 Andrew, that was our last
21 registered speaker, correct?

22 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Let me just
23 double-check the list -- yes. The last registered
24 that's an attendance, that we know. Okay. So
25 before we explain how we're going to do this --

1

2 it's very simple -- but we are going to hear from
3 people who have not spoken at this hearing.

4

We have attendees who have been
5 listening and sticking with us and we appreciate
6 that. But if you already spoken, you've had this
7 chance at this hearing. So we're going to be
8 selecting. So if we recognize your name, we're
9 going to skip over and go to the next person that
10 has yet not spoken.

11

So I think consecutively we'll do
12 this, Olvin, as I read it.

13

So for those who didn't have a
14 chance to register in advance, we have some time
15 remaining for additional testimony.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Andrew --

17

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: If you would
18 like to testify, please raise your hand to signal
19 your wish to speak. If you're on a desktop
20 computer, click "Raise Hand" in the webinar
21 controls, or press Alt plus Y on Windows, or Option
22 Y on a Mac. If you're on a smartphone, tap "Raise
23 Hand" in the webinar controls, and for those
24 joining by telephone, press star nine and then --

25

THE INTERPRETER: I'm sorry.

1
2 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: -- press star
3 nine to raise your hand and to lower your hand,
4 it's again star nine. And so when you are
5 promoted, if you can please remember to limit your
6 testimony to two minutes and if you could please
7 state your name. Okay. Great. So we have one
8 taker so far. Feel free to raise your hands. I am
9 going to allow this -- this is someone on the
10 telephone. I'm going to allow them to talk. And
11 they will need to -- it's star six to unmute.

12 You may have to say that in
13 Spanish, Olvin. I don't know if they --

14 THE INTERPRETER: Sure. Sure.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

16 You're unmuted, so we should be
17 able to hear you. If your phone number ends 305,
18 it's your chance to testify. So we can't hear you
19 -- if you're speaking, we can't hear you. You're
20 unmuted, but we can't hear you speaking.

21 Andrew, any suggestions?

22 Just so you know we still can't
23 hear, you if you're speaking.

24 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Right. I
25 suggest we go to our next speaker and then we'll

1

2 come back.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay, So if your
4 phone number ends in 305, we're going to come back
5 to you. We just can't hear you, so we're going to
6 try somebody else.

7

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So we just
8 promoted Maritza.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: I don't see
10 Maritza. Andrew, I don't see Maritza.

11

MS. BURGER: Maritza, you can
12 accept being a panelist.

13

Andrew, maybe we should just
14 allow her to talk.

15

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. Allow her
16 to talk. Oh, there she is.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: We see you --
18 are promoted but you're muted and we don't see your
19 video, if you want to turn that on. Maritza,
20 you're still muted.

21

Does the person start with 305 --
22 can they speak? I thought I saw you speak for a
23 second. No, we still can't hear you, 305.

24

Maritza, if you can unmute then
25 we would hear from you.

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MS. GARCIA: Just again, it's
star six to unmute yourself and mute yourself.

CHAIRMAN REISS: From the
telephone.

MS. BURGER: Well, the person on
the telephone just muted themselves again --

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah.

MS. BURGER: -- and Maritza is on
video. There should be a control -- I don't know
if she's on a phone or on a computer, but she needs
to unmute herself. And then the person on
telephone number 305, they muted themselves again.

CHAIRMAN REISS: So the person on
the telephone needs to hit star six again; is that
correct?

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Correct.

MS. BURGER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Andrew, do you
want to promote somebody else as people try to
figure out the technology?

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Currently, we
don't have anybody else --

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: -- anybody else

1

2 with their hand raised.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: So --

4

5 MS. GARCIA: Just so that I can
6 confirm -- what we're asking people who are online
7 who would like to testify is just to raise their
8 hand and you guys will promote them so that they
9 can give testimony?

9

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Correctamundo.

10

11 MS. GARCIA: Okay. I'll just
12 e-mail the coalition so they can let folks know.

12

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Maritza -- I'm
14 sorry. Go ahead.

14

THE INTERPRETER: No worries.

15

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Maritza, I'm not
17 sure what technology you're using, but on my Zoom,
18 if -- there's a mute button in the bottom left, and
19 you want to click it if it has, like, a red line
20 through it so that you can speak. And the person
21 whose phone number ends 305 -- you're now unmuted,
22 so we should be able to hear you if you speak into
23 the phone, is my understanding.

23

24 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: If she's on a
25 smartphone, it should be -- is it -- you click more
to unmute?

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MS. BURGER: No, I think it's on
the main screen.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: It is on the
main screen? Okay.

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm not sure
what else we should do.

Sheila, any thoughts?

CHAIRMAN REISS: Did you hear
back at all, Sheila?

MS. GARCIA: I know for sure
Basilio who has been waiting who wants to testify,
but I don't know how to communicate to individual
folks that they should be raising their hands
because that seems like a upgrade that people have
not interacted with on Zoom. We did send an e-mail
out to the coalition to like let folks know that
what they can do if they are trying to testify
today.

MS. BURGER: If you know that
Basilio definitely wants to talk, we can just
promote him.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Is he an
attendee, Sheila?

MS. BURGER: He is.

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MS. GARCIA: Yes. He's been on
since the beginning.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: I'm going to
promote, and then we'll, I guess --

THE INTERPRETER: I'm sorry, is
it star six or star nine?

MS. BURGER: Basilio is on video,
so --

CHAIRMAN REISS: I think it's
star six for the telephone though.

THE INTERPRETER: Okay. So it's
star six. Okay.

CHAIRMAN REISS: I see Basilio
and he's muted, so Basilio, if you want to unmute
--

MR. GARCIA: All right. Can you
hear me now?

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Basilio
hold on a second. Person with phone number ending
305, can you tell us your name?

MR. GARCIA: My name -- Basilio
Garcia is my name.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Basilio, wait.
Basilio, hold on one second.

1

2

MR. GARCIA: All right. I will.

3

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Who's on phone
number ending 305? Who is that? All right. I
heard some noise. Maybe let's just go to Basilio.
I'm not sure about 305 yet.

7

MR. GARCIA: No, I don't --

8

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Basilio, your
turn to testify now.

10

11

(following testimony was
translated into Spanish.)

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"My testimony is as follows: We
all understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has led
to a crisis and to many deaths. Aside from the many
deaths, many people have also lost their jobs and
their homes because they have simply not been able
to pay their rent. I ask a favor of the RGB -
please do something on behalf of these poor people!
They are already fearful of losing their homes and
being put out on the street.

21

22

23

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25

As a result, we will have more
homeless people on the streets! It shouldn't be
allowed for human beings to have to endure
something like this. Please, look inside your
hearts and stop this from happening! Please, don't

1
2 just simply pass the buck! The mayor passes the
3 buck to you and then you do the same! And the mayor
4 has to understand that since he will soon be out of
5 office, he doesn't care what happens to tenants of
6 the great City of New York. I ask the RGB to do
7 something! Please, look inside your hearts and do
8 something to stop this from happening. If possible,
9 there should be a rent freeze. Rents should be
10 frozen! Thank you!"

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
12 your testimony.

13 So the person whose phone number
14 ends 305, your sound keeps coming on, but we don't
15 hear your voice at all. Can you try speaking into
16 your phone?

17 Okay. And Maritza -- Maritza,
18 you're still muted so we wouldn't be able to hear
19 you if you're speaking. Can you unmute? Hello.
20 Yes. Yes, we do.

21 MS. FUENTES: (**following**
22 **Testimony was translated into Spanish.**)

23 "My name is Marta Fuentes. I live
24 at 94-25 57th Avenue in Elmhurst, N.Y. Two years
25 ago, the former landlord sold the building to the

1

2 Sara Realty Consortium. It has not done right by
3 tenants who've fallen behind on their rent
4 payments. Unfortunately, many of us have suffered
5 the effects of the pandemic.

6 Both my husband and I had COVID-19
7 last year. We've since been vaccinated, but since
8 he was a freelancer he wasn't entitled to
9 unemployment benefits or anything other benefit. I
10 work as a teacher with special needs children.
11 However, due to the pandemic, many of the job sites
12 I worked at closed down. We haven't been able to
13 work in over a year and we've only been entitled to
14 a part of the stimulus package issued by
15 Washington, by President Biden.

16 However, we don't have the money
17 to make rent payments. I think this is not just
18 about asking for help. Ever since we came to this
19 country, we've paid our taxes, very high taxes I
20 might add because we've always worked. Yet, after
21 getting sick during the pandemic, it's been
22 virtually impossible. I work alongside my
23 building's tenant association to help those with no
24 means, who need help, and, most importantly, to
25 help those who cannot afford a rent increase. Thank

1

2 you for listening!"

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

4

Thank you for your testimony.

5

THE INTERPRETER: Thank you.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Maritza, you're

7

still muted.

8

Andrew, is Maritza really our

9

last person? You're muted Andrew.

10

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yes, that is all

11

-- that is -- other than Maritza, that is it.

12

So once again, if folks do want

13

to testify on our next public hearing, June 17,

14

that they could register June 16 -- tomorrow, by

15

noon. But you're welcome to come back and to the

16

next hearing and, time permitting, we can hear

17

unregistered speakers as well.

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

19

And Maritza, let me just say

20

this, because there's apparently some technological

21

difficulties. We're also taking comments on the

22

proposed guidelines outside of these public

23

hearings. You can submit testimony to the RGB no

24

later than this Thursday, June 17. And you can

25

find information on submitting testimony on our

1

2 website, which is nyc.gov/rgb or you can leave
3 audio testimony by calling (929) 256-5472. That's
4 (929) 256-5472.

5

I'm sorry that we couldn't
6 overcome that technological problem, but you still
7 have the opportunity to testify that way.

8

MS. GARCIA: Can I make a
9 suggestion? On the YouTube page -- Andrew, I don't
10 know if this is possible -- but if we could
11 actually add the Zoom meeting so that folks who are
12 watching on YouTube can click on it and find their
13 away back to the Zoom.

14

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: That's a
15 question for my esteemed colleague, Brian Hoberman
16 but I think we can. I don't know the details, but
17 that's a great idea. If we can do that, we
18 certainly will.

19

MR. HOBERMAN: Yes. I am adding
20 it now.

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great.

22

MR. HOBERMAN: We'll have it for
23 Thursday.

24

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: I can hear the
25 clicking.

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CHAIRMAN REISS: That is all of
our testimony.

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I wanted -- like to say thank you
to everyone who testified. It helps us to make our
decision. It adds a lot of qualitative
understanding of what tenants and owners are facing
to compliment the quantitative analysis that the
staff provides to the Board members.

10

11

12

So on behalf of all the Board
members, I say thank you to those who have
testified.

13

14

15

I don't believe we have any other
business, so I will welcome a motion to adjourn and
a second.

16

MS. DEROSE: Second.

17

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: I got a second
from Christina, but did I hear a motion to adjourn?

19

MS. DEROSE: Sorry.

20

MS. JOZA: Motion.

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CHAIRMAN REISS: I hear Cecilia
gives us a motion and Christina has second the
motion.

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MS. DEROSE: I will second
Cecilia's motion.

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CHAIRMAN REISS: So thanks to everyone who spent the afternoon and the evening with us and I look forward to continuing hearing testimony on Thursday. Thank you all. And particularly thank you to Andrew and Brian and Danielle and Charmaine for making this quite a seamless virtual hearing. Thank you so much.

(Whereupon, the proceedings were concluded.)

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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 161, taken at the
time and place aforesaid, is a true and correct
transcription of my shorthand notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have
hereunto set my name this 12th day of August, 2021.



MARC RUSSO

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