

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 17, 2021

12 4:00 p.m.

13

14 B e f o r e :

15

16 DAVID REISS,

17 THE CHAIR

18

19

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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

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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 and apologize for our
late start.

This is the second 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.

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN REISS: Christina? Not
currently present.

Robert Ehrlich.

MR. ERHLICH: Here.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sheila Garcia.

MS. GARCIA: Present.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Christian

1

2 Gonzalez-Rivera.

3

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Present.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Leah Goodridge.

5

MS. GOODRIDGE: Present.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Cecilia Joza.

7

MS. JOZA: Present.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Alex Schwartz.

9

MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Scott Walsh.

11

MR. WALSH: Present.

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: David Reiss,

13 present.

14

Let the record show that we have a

15

quorum.

16

The final vote will take place

17

virtually on Wednesday, June 23rd, starting at 7:00

18

p.m. The public may watch the vote by streaming it

19

on the RGB's YouTube channel, or by listening to it

20

over the phone. To view -- to find out how, visit

21

the RGB website, NYC.gov/RGB or call the RGB at

22

(212) 669-7480 between 9:00 a.m. 5:00 p.m.

23

I'd like to thank you for all

24

attending this public hearing. The board is looking

25

forward to hearing from many of you regarding the

1

2 proposed rent adjustment guidelines.

3

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

7

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

16

17 When it is your turn to speak, a
18 staff member will promote you from an attendee to a
19 panelist, and you'll have the ability to speak and
20 to display your video if you so choose. Please,
21 wait for your name to be announced before you
22 commence your testimony. If you're attending the
23 Zoom hearing with a name or phone number that
24 differs from the name or phone number you
25 registered with, we will not be able to identify
you and you may lose your place in the queue. If
you are not an attendee of the hearing at the time
your name is called, you will also lose your place

1

2 in the queue.

3

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

9 There is a Spanish interpreter here today to listen
10 to testimony in Spanish, please use the
11 interpretation button in Zoom to choose the
12 appropriate channel.

13 For English speakers, select the
14 English channel to hear English speakers as well as
15 Spanish speakers interpreted into English.

16 If you do not choose an interpretation channel, you
17 will hear all testimony in the native language of
18 the speaker. If you're using the Zoom app on a
19 smartphone, you may find the interpretation button
20 by pressing the more button. If you'd like to
21 listen to a hearing with simultaneous
22 interpretation and Spanish, and do not have access
23 to the Zoom app or either a mobile device or a
24 computer, you may do so by calling (646) 558-8656,
25 then entering meeting ID 87288903885. Then when
prompted for participant ID pressing pound, then

1

2 when prompted enter passcode 139724.

3

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

7

8 Interpreters in the main hearing will translate
9 your testimony for the board. Before it is your
10 turn to speak call (646) 558-8656, then enter
11 meeting ID 84907708770 when prompted for
12 participant ID pressing pound then when prompted
13 enter passcode 848480.

13

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

22

23 Please note that we are also
24 taking comments on the proposed guidelines outside
25 of this hearing. Testimony must be submitted no
later than midnight tonight to ensure that it gets

1

2 to members of the board prior to our final vote.

3 You can find information on submitting testimony on

4 our website, NYC.gov/rgb or you're going to leave

5 audio testimony by calling (929) 256-5472.

6 We thank you for your cooperation.

7 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish)

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

9 We will now proceed to testimony.

10 I believe -- I believe we have Assembly Member

11 Epstein present. Welcome. There you go.

12 MR. EPSTEIN: Yeah. It's good to

13 be here. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity

14 to testify. Good to see some of my friends and

15 former colleagues on the RGB as some people who are

16 newer to the board know that I served on the RGB

17 for five years and it's good to be back and be

18 talking to you all about your plans for this coming

19 year.

20 As you're made aware, this year,

21 28 assembly members representing all of New York

22 City called on Rent Guidelines Board to issue a

23 rent freeze for struggling tenants. That letter

24 was delivered to to your -- to you earlier today.

25 You know, as we know the past

1
2 year tenants are facing the worst pandemic that
3 we've seen, you know, in about a century. And the
4 tenants are much worse off than the landlords, we
5 can see it every day. And government has really
6 stepped in with the Emergency Rental Assistance
7 Program, which is \$2.3 billion, which is really
8 going to help small, struggling landlords as well
9 as large large landlords across the city, focusing
10 on tenants whose incomes are below 80 percent of
11 AMI.

12 But in addition to that, we put
13 money aside for tenants who lose -- incomes are
14 above 80 percent of AMI and for landlords whose
15 tenants may have no longer been in the apartment,
16 and may not want to sign off on the agreement.

17 So this issue of affordability
18 continues to exist in our city, homelessness,
19 unemployment, and rising rent, and costs really
20 affect tenants every single day. Your
21 income/expense study showed that there's --
22 continues to have financial gain for landlord
23 between 18 and 19, net operating income, NOI, grew
24 another 2.9 percent.

25 The 14th time in 15 years we've

1

2 seen this increase. You know, also rental income

3 has gone up again by over 3 percent.

4 Income/expense study found that 2019, landlords net

5 income -- net operating income of 300,000 was three

6 times or near to the median income.

7 You see the vacancy rates are

8 historic low, they will continue to be low and this

9 is -- during the beginning of the pandemic we see

10 this problem continuing. This is a moment that we

11 need to Rent Guidelines Board step-up and take

12 responsibility to ensuring that the millions of

13 tenants get the rent relief that they need. We're

14 [zoom inaudible] finding the funding we need you to

15 rent -- to freeze the rents this year.

16 And I'm available for any

17 questions if any board member has them.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

19 Assembly Member. I think we'll move on to our next

20 speaker. Thank you so much.

21 I see that we have -- next on our

22 queue is assembly member Gottfried. Welcome.

23 MR. GOTTFRIED: Evening.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Good evening.

25 MR. GOTTFRIED: So I urge you to

1

2 put off any rent increase this year and preferably
3 do rollback rent. The pandemic has made data
4 collection difficult. But we know that -- should I
5 start again?

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: No, we heard
7 you.

8

MR. GOTTFRIED: Okay. But we
9 know that both landlords and tenants have taken a
10 hit. Tenants have had a tougher time. The RGB's
11 income expense and affordability data, studies show
12 that most landlords entered the pandemic in good
13 shape. Their net operating income was robust, as
14 in previous years. The community preservation
15 corporation's testimony concludes that most
16 landlords are, "Hanging in there."

17

On the other hand, signs of tenant
18 distress are clear, especially at the low end of
19 the income scale. Data from the Community Service
20 Society and Formative Institute shows that more --
21 more of these tenants have fallen behind on their
22 rent, that -- that the average amount of rent that
23 they owe has ballooned and that most of these
24 households -- of households in rent regulated units
25 face the crisis without getting any rent reduction

1

2 or deferral from their landlords. We have every
3 reason to believe that tenant rent burdens have
4 grown even more with the pandemic requiring them to
5 pay even high -- ever higher rents will increase
6 evictions and homelessness, and diverting even more
7 tenant income resources to rent will have a
8 devastating impact on -- on New York's economic
9 recovery.

10 Therefore, I urge you to freeze
11 rent and preferably to adopt a rent rollback for
12 the coming year.

13 Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.
15 Assembly member.

16 Hi, Christina. I -- I just for
17 the record, I'll just note that Christina DeRose
18 has joined us when Assembly Member Epstein was
19 testifying. Thank you, Assembly Member Gottfried.

20 I see that we have Senator Rivera
21 joining us. Welcome.

22 MR. RIVERA: Thank you, sir. Let
23 me know when I can start.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Please.

25 MR. RIVERA: Good afternoon,

1

2 everyone. On behalf of tenants in the Bronx and in
3 my district, I'm here tonight to express my strong
4 opposition to the Rent Guidelines Board proposal to
5 increase rent for rent-stabilized tenants. Now,
6 the past year-and-a-half, as my colleagues have
7 said, New York City residents have faced
8 unprecedented challenges.

9 Early 2020, the unchecked spread
10 of COVID-19 wreaked havoc upon the city. We faced
11 loss of everyday routines, the comfort of seeing
12 our friends and family, and the loss of many loved
13 ones. The passing of many members of our community
14 continues to weigh heavily upon us and is an
15 emotional pain, but also an economic one.

16 Many families lost loved ones who
17 were the main breadwinners in their households.
18 This loss has put families at a disadvantage that
19 may take years to overcome. And some have tried to
20 take up the mantle of those who have passed, but
21 the closure of so many sectors of our economy has
22 made this feat incredibly difficult.

23 A year-and-a-half later, after COVID initially
24 spiked in New York, many have permanently lost
25 their job as businesses have closed their doors

1

2 forever. Some constituents, even essential
3 workers, have had hours -- their hours of pay cut
4 dramatically. So my constituents work tirelessly
5 to find new career path through employment
6 opportunities and even pick up multiple jobs to
7 help supplement their income.

8

But the Bronx is facing a
9 startling unemployment rate of almost 40 percent, a
10 rate that this country has not seen since the Great
11 Depression. So as a result of all these factors,
12 many families are not able to pay the rent that
13 they should, that they could two years ago,
14 notwithstanding the crisis level rates of severely
15 rent-battered families in the Bronx.

16

So we must allow the safety nets
17 of our recovery to do their work and not place the
18 burden of the real estate industries profit margins
19 on the back of low wage workers, essential workers,
20 grieving families, and unemployed New Yorkers
21 living in the dwindling numbers of rent-stabilized
22 apartments left in our city.

23

A rent freeze will allow tenants
24 to find their footing in the wake of this crisis.
25 It will lessen the blow of losing wages, losing

1

2 jobs, or losing family members and loved ones.

3 This board knows that any rent increase for New

4 York tenants is a hindrance to our community's

5 recovery and is simply not feasible for our most

6 impacted families.

7

The sweeping majority of

8 landlords are also receiving assistance, rent

9 relief from the state, and so many continue to

10 thrive due to the already incredible rents and

11 bulging portfolios.

12

So on behalf of the Bronx, of all

13 of my constituents, I urge Rent Guidelines Board to

14 vote in favor of a rent freeze this upcoming year.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

16 Senator.

17

I see we have joining us, Public

18 Advocate Williams.

19

Welcome.

20

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you so much,

21 Mr. Chair. Can I begin now?

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, please.

23

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you so much.

24 As mentioned, my name is Jumaane Williams, Public

25 Advocate of the City of New York. I want to thank

1

2 you all for giving me the opportunity.

3

4 I would remiss if I did not share
5 that, as I did last year, the were complaints of
6 tenants about the shortness of the hearings and the
7 inability of many tenants to register to testify.
8 Additionally, as you plan for next year, I hope you
9 go back to the schedule of previous years holding
10 the same number of hearings across the boroughs, as
11 we saw -- was in effect pre-pandemic.

12

13 The affordable housing and
14 homelessness crisis is now compounded exponentially
15 as a result of more than a year of facing the
16 terrible crisis of COVID-19. As we move toward
17 this public health emergency, tenants still cannot
18 appear and directly tell their stories, but because
19 of the emergency and economic devastation, it's
20 because now more than ever, the board must hear the
21 voices of tenants and act accordingly.

22

23 The board has the power to make
24 significant difference in the lives of workers,
25 those of limited means, those who are barely
26 hanging on to middle class, and most importantly,
27 those people who cannot pay their rent. And
28 sometimes we look at these things as if it was a

1

2 snapshot of one time, but it's not. And you've
3 heard these numbers before. They bear repeating.

4

I understand that two-year lease
5 increases in 2008 were 8.5 percent, 2009, 6
6 percent, 2011, 7.25 percent, and 2013, 7.75
7 percent. Those increases were not guided
8 necessarily by income expense or cost of living,
9 especially for those tenants. It was a blatant
10 attempt to -- that continue to drive up rents to
11 the point of deregulation. These high increases
12 continue through 2015. We have to remember that
13 when we take into account.

14

Currently, the CDC's only
15 adjusted unemployment was 11.4 percent in April
16 2021, 0.3 percent for March, a decrease from 4.2
17 percent from April 2020. New York State's rate was
18 8.2 percent in April 2020. Now one of the -- I've
19 been testifying for almost 20 years. One of the
20 biggest concerns that have always been, and I hope
21 it changes, is that we treat everybody the same.
22 Small landlords, big landlords, bad landlords, and
23 good landlords.

24

This is not something that we
25 should continue doing. I know it's not in the

1

2 purview of this Rent Guidelines Board [zoom
3 inaudible] have to change. With all of that said,
4 and understanding that everybody needs assistance,
5 tenants and particularly small homeowners, I ask
6 the board to, at minimally, do the minimum amount
7 that was said in the preliminary hearing if not
8 better. The minimum amount if not better.

9

Thank you so much.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,

11

Public Advocate Williams.

12

I see that Borough President

13

Brewer has joined us.

14

Welcome.

15

MS. BREWER: Thank you very much,

16

Chair Reiss and all of the board -- members of the

17

Rent Guidelines Board.

18

I am calling on the Rent

19

Guidelines Board to vote for a rent freeze. I

20

think you know that former RGB director, Tim

21

Collins, demonstrated that the board had

22

authorized, some time ago, a 211.53 percent of

23

cumulative rent increases starting in 1991, when in

24

reality, the amount needed to keep owners whole was

25

only 181.46 percent. What that means is that the

1

2 board's determinations had overcompensated property
3 owners by 30.07 percent over the past 30 years.

4

On the other hand, tenants are
5 experiencing a loss of jobs, as you know, and
6 income due to the pandemic, which has deepened
7 their financial struggles as it occurred.

8

The Furman Center at NYU has
9 found that the share of households that owe more
10 than \$3,000 in rent increased by 6 percentage
11 points compared to the prior year. Households that
12 owed more than \$10,000 in rental arrears more than
13 doubled over the same period. So we're talking
14 about the pandemic.

15

So I urge the board to review
16 these findings in the context of three decades of
17 rent guidelines for determinations that favored
18 owners over rent-stabilized tenants. When you see
19 it this way, all current affordability among
20 rent-stabilized households include the result of
21 accumulative 30 percent in rent increases since
22 '91.

23

It was the pandemic that caused
24 some tenants to suddenly become unable to pay rent,
25 no question. But the amount of total rental

1

2 arrears among rent-stabilized households is higher
3 than it should be, if there hadn't been historic
4 overcompensation for property owners. I ask the
5 board to vote for a rent-free for another year.
6 It's the right way to close this historic
7 overcompensation gap.

8 I do thank the board for
9 recommending, as they have in the past, this 0
10 percent increase for single room occupants [zoom
11 inaudible] is so vulnerable. And I do hope that we
12 can work with the small landlords. Thank you very
13 much.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
15 Borough President Brewer.

16 I see that we have Adam Liggio.
17 Am I pronouncing that correctly?

18 MR. LIGGIO: Liggio.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Liggio.
20 Welcome, Mr. Liggio.

21 MR. LIGGIO: Hi. My name is Adam
22 Liggio. I am actually on the board of the Tenants
23 Association of Stuy Town. And I'm here to ask the
24 board to make a zero increase for this year. It's
25 been very difficult for everyone, especially here

1

2 in Stuy Town. In a place that has 11,000
3 rent-stabilized apartments, it's estimated that
4 between 2,000 and 3,000 apartments are empty. This
5 was an exodus of people who just couldn't afford
6 the rent.

7 In addition, many of the people
8 who are here are still just holding on. We have
9 had a pandemic. Whole industries went out -- have
10 been put on hold, as well as the dual-income
11 household is really hurting here, because a lot of
12 people have lost their jobs. So -- and even so,
13 with all the apartments vacant, our landlord
14 refuses to make any adjustments to the rent for
15 people suffering.

16 And they appear to be warehousing
17 these 2,000 to 3,000 rent-stabilized apartments,
18 saying that they can't rent it when they will not
19 adjust it to some kind of value that it will have.
20 But yet they say they can't afford services,
21 because they won't rent these apartments. So
22 again, I ask the board to keep the increase or
23 decrease at zero.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
25 your testimony.

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I have someone whose phone number ends 082. Could you let us know your name? Oh, you're muted. And could you let us know your name? To unmute, I believe you have to press *6. Andrew, do I have that right?

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Correct.

CHAIRMAN REISS: So if the person with phone number ending 082 could press *6, we can hear your testimony when you're ready?

MS. ESPAILLAT: Hi, my name is Sarah. My family has owned the same property --

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry, Sarah. I'm sorry, Sarah. Could you give us your last name as well?

MS. ESPAILLAT: Espaillat. Sarah Espaillat.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

MS. ESPAILLAT: Thank you. My family has owned the same property for decades, and our goal is to preserve affordable housing. We cannot do that without reasonable rent increases. Over the past two years, the rent freezes have made it impossible to operate where income is 0 percent, but expenses go up by 10 percent. The rent income

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2 remains the same but expenses like taxes, water,
3 insurance keep going up and we keep getting
4 squeezed from both sides.

5

 This is not a business venture.
6 This is our livelihood. We live here. We have a
7 sense of community. We employ people in the area.
8 Everything has a trickle-down effect and I don't
9 like how people make it sound like rent goes
10 straight into our pockets and that's the end of the
11 story. No. The rent money does not go straight
12 into our pockets. It pays the property taxes, the
13 heat, the hot water, people like the super, the
14 painter, the stuff we buy from the local hardware
15 store. Those people, in turn, use that money to
16 pay their staff, pay their bills, feed their
17 families just like we do.

18

 If money is going out the door
19 faster than it's coming in, what do you think is
20 going to happen? How can we expect to preserve
21 affordable housing this way? The board should not
22 ignore the income and expense data. The data is
23 underestimating cost anyway. It's outdated. It's
24 based on 2019 pre-COVID times. It doesn't reflect
25 the cost of water, gas, and maintenance that has

1

2 gone up in the past year half since everyone has
3 been staying home. The apartment is now their
4 home. It's also their workplace. It's also their
5 school, et cetera.

6

 To make matters worse, we have
7 unpaid rent due to COVID and vacancies. There is a
8 falsehood that the ERAP is a bailout or windfall
9 for owners. This program is supposed to help
10 tenants cover their rent arrears, but that's only
11 if the tenant chooses to apply and if they qualify.
12 Not everyone qualifies. And as you know, the
13 website is not very user-friendly.

14

 We have great relationships with
15 our tenants, but some don't want to apply for the
16 ERAP program. I have a tenant who does not speak
17 English and does not text savvy. Asking him to log
18 onto the website to verify information is
19 impossible because he doesn't know what he's
20 signing off on.

21

 For other tenants, they receive
22 unemployment or stimulus checks and we've worked
23 with them anyway to figure out a way to keep them
24 in their apartment. I'm asking the board to vote
25 for increases 2 percent or one-year renewal. Thank

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2 you.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
4 much for your testimony.

5

I see Beronica is our next
6 speaker. Beronica, could you let us know your last
7 name as well? And just so you know, you're not on
8 camera, if you intended to have your camera on.

9

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: She requested
10 Spanish interpretation.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

12

MS. CEDENO: ***(Following testimony
13 was translated from Spanish to English.)***

14

"Good afternoon! Thank you for
15 allowing me to be here! My name is Berónica Cedeño
16 and I work alongside the Basta Committee and We
17 Make the Road NY. I currently live at 41-40 Dyckman
18 Street. When I first moved to this rent stabilized
19 apartment in 2013, my rent was \$1,150. That was for
20 the first lease I signed. When I signed the lease
21 for the second year, my rent was \$1,870. That was a
22 huge increase for what was considered preferential
23 rent.

24

Despite the passing of laws in
25 2019 to remedy this situation, this hasn't reduced

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2 my rent. My rent was already very high considering
3 the fact that I am a single mother of two girls
4 with few resources. The rent is already very high.
5 I've also been affected by the COVID-19 crisis
6 since I became gravely ill and lost income. I've
7 had to pay many medical bills. \$1,870 already seems
8 excessive. I have fits of panic every night since I
9 don't know when I'll be evicted from my apartment.
10 NY rents are too high! I'm afraid that my daughters
11 and I will become homeless. At present, I am barely
12 able to make rent payments. I'm not saying that I'm
13 not making payments. I am paying; however, I have
14 fits of panic since I don't know when the landlord
15 will say that the rent is no longer preferential,
16 that rent will no longer be \$1,870. It'll be very
17 difficult for me to be able to pay more than this.
18 At present, I am paying \$1,375 which is still very
19 high. I decided to be here to share my story and to
20 ask you for a 5% reduction in rent payments."

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

23 I see that we have Ellen White as
24 our next speaker.

25 MS. WHITE: Hello.

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CHAIRMAN REISS: Ellen, your
camera's not on, if you had intended --

MS. WHITE: Okay. Thank you.

Hello. Much of the media reports and testimony
this week from tenants have focused on large
corporate landlords. I fear that the hardworking
small business landlords have been forgotten.

I do have a personal stake in
this, as my parents are landlords in their 80s and
counted on their small 16 unit building to secure
their retirement. Unfortunately, this is no longer
possible. Due to rising taxes, expenses,
regulations, and COVID, small business landlords
are struggling. Instead of breaking even, they are
incurring net losses.

Over the past year, commercial
businesses have closed and residential tenants have
moved out, often leaving rent arrears and sometimes
damage to apartments that need to be renovated.
The vacancy rates are very high despite efforts to
rent the apartments.

While significant efforts have
been made to support small businesses with
important programs such as the Paycheck Protection

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2 Program, landlords have been expressly excluded
3 from these relief funds. More needs to be done to
4 support tenants and landlords alike, but the data
5 has shown that the current system does not work.

6 Rent is necessary to maintain
7 buildings, pay taxes, and pay for utilities. I
8 would request that the perspective of the landlord
9 be considered. Unfortunately, taxes and expenses
10 are only increasing even as vacancy rates have
11 skyrocketed and property values have plummeted. I
12 re-ask that the RGB follow the data and vote for
13 increase.

14 Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
16 your testimony.

17 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Our next
18 speaker's going to need Spanish translation.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome, Fabian
20 Bravo.

21 MR. BRAVO: (*Following testimony*
22 *was translated from Spanish to English.*)

23 "How are you all? Good afternoon!
24 My name is Fabián and I'm a member of Neighbors
25 helping Neighbors. I am both worried and anxious.

1

2 And like many of my neighbors, I am looking forward
3 to your decisions. If you increase rent percentages
4 for this year, many of us will face financial
5 hardship. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I faced
6 financial hardship and I incurred debt from which I
7 still have not bounced back. We haven't paid our
8 rent in months. We will probably face eviction for
9 non-payment.

10 Eventually, people like me will
11 likely seek out a shelter and, much like a domino
12 effect, more people will be living on the streets
13 and subways. We ask that you vote for a 0% increase
14 for this year. We all need some peace given our
15 current economic situation. We ask you for no more
16 rent increases, no more rent increases. Thank you
17 to all for your attention!"

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: I see next we
19 have Howard -- I believe it is Howard Chin?

20 MR. CHIN: Hello can you hear me?

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Howard. We can
22 hear you. We can't see you if you intend to be on
23 camera.

24 MR. CHIN: Yes. My video is not
25 working properly.

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. You're
3 welcome to start testifying now.

4 MR. CHIN: My name is Howard
5 Chin. I'm a small property owner in Manhattan.
6 I've manage 26 unit apartment building with two
7 retail stores. And as with any business, there are
8 profits and losses. Just at the start of the
9 pandemic my rental income, which is also my
10 retirement income, has dropped dramatically.

11 I know no other occupation -- I
12 should say establishment, where we are forced to
13 reduce the price. As you know, when you go
14 shopping everything has gone up. That includes
15 gas, transportation, food, lumber, everything. The
16 landlord, as a group, [zoom inaudible] are forced
17 to drop prices.

18 So you make this determination on
19 what percent increase you want to grant us to [zoom
20 inaudible] consideration because it's not -- it's
21 not realistic and it's not fair for us -- for you
22 give a zero percent when everything has gone up and
23 we give a lot of rent concession. Like, in my
24 building alone, I gave any roughly 12 to 28 percent
25 rent concession.

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It's really the retail store tenant and my free market tenant that's holding up the rest of the building of -- with all our rent-regulated tenants are paying very low rent. It is this free markets tenants and the store tenant that is re-subsidizing the rent so please take into consideration of you consider what's the fair percentage to give landlords. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so much for your testimony.

I see that we are joined by Sam Schreiber, I believe. Sam, you're muted and we don't see you on camera, if you intend to be on camera. You're still muted. Sam, you're still muted. We can't hear you. Sam, you're muted. We can't hear you, I'm not sure -- Andrew, do you think we should -- Sam, I think we can hear you now. Sam is off. Sam is on.

Hi, Sam.

MR. SCHREIBER: Hello. Can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN REISS: Now we can hear you and see you. Welcome.

MR. SCHREIBER: Hi. Thank you.

1

2 So my name is Sam Schreiber and I'm part of a
3 family that owns a couple of small buildings in
4 Manhattan. And, you know, I wanted to sort of get
5 into a couple of details in regards to raising
6 expenses that a lot of us colleagues and other
7 small-time landlords have incurred over the last
8 few years, primarily real estate taxes.

9 We have a couple of small
10 buildings with 10 or 15 units. And I just wrote
11 down some of the specifics of our property taxes
12 starting in 2016. One of our properties was -- and
13 I'm going to -- I'm going to approximate. 65,00,
14 2016. 86,000, 2017. 102,000, 2018. 115,000,
15 2019. 130,000 in 2020. So between 2016 and 2020
16 our property taxes doubled.

17 We have good relationships with
18 all of our tenants, free-market, rent control,
19 rent-stabilized. We want everyone to be happy.
20 And unfortunately, we have to raise the rent just
21 to break even on expense increases. This does not
22 include insurance that went up 8 percent, 10
23 percent, 7 percent, 14 percent over those years.
24 Water costs, have gone up. Utilities have gone up.
25 And unfortunately, we're going to find ourselves

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2 being outpaced by these expense increases over time
3 and will have to make decisions on what
4 improvements to make to the -- the properties.

5 Ultimately, if expenses went
6 down, we'd be more than happy to freeze rents. If
7 the city decides to rollback property taxes, we'd
8 be happy to rollback the rents. Unfortunately,
9 that's not the case and we do need some relief. I
10 sometimes tend think let's give the building to the
11 tenant so they can understand because it's
12 generally a confrontational relationship that you
13 see in the papers on landlords and tenants, but it
14 -- that shouldn't be the case. But ultimately, we
15 do need some assistance.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.
17 Thank you for your testimony.

18 MS. BURGER: David, can I make a
19 quick announcement?

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

21 MS. BURGER: I just want to
22 reiterate that your --

23 MR. SCHREIBER: I'm sorry, I'm
24 here. I lost (Zoom inaudible).

25 MS. BURGER: Your name on Zoom

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2 needs to be the same name that you registered with.
3 We have some folks on here that don't even have
4 names, one with their hand-raised, the person with
5 their hand-raised it's the name of your phone. I
6 don't know who you are. If you've registered to
7 speak, you need to leave and come back in with your
8 actual name. Maybe if you sign out of Zoom or you
9 can respond to the e-mail that you were sent.
10 Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: I think we have
12 Samantha. I believe it's Samantha Bravo is our
13 next person to testify. Welcome.

14 MS. BRAVO: Hi, Sheila. It's
15 really nice to see you again. Good evening,
16 everyone. My name is Samantha Bravo and I'm with
17 the organization Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

18 As we all know COVID-19 has
19 changed our lives in every aspect. Many lost jobs,
20 many lost their homes, and many lost their loved
21 ones, myself included. Every New Yorker has been
22 bombarded with uncertainty and has been forced to
23 create solutions for their financial situation.

24 My mother, for example, has been
25 using a bicycle this past year instead of public

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2 transportation so she can reduce her COVID exposure
3 and so that she can save money. And many of my
4 neighbors have also depended on food banks to eat
5 well. And as New York is opening again -- opening
6 again so will money-hungry landlords and many
7 landlords will try to take advantage of our
8 vulnerable situation by -- like harassing us.

9

And if you guys -- if you all
10 increase the rent it's going to be even easier for
11 them to take advantage of us and, like, put us out
12 on streets. A rent increase isn't needed or
13 necessary, a rent decrease is or a rent freeze.
14 And people still need time to get back on their
15 feet and recover from the financial and personal
16 loss they've had. So do the right thing and
17 decrease the rent. You're the only hope for
18 thousands of tenants. Thank you.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

20

I see Isabel Pedras is our next
21 speaker.

22

MS. PEDRAS: Can you hear me?

23

Give me a second for my video.

24

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. I hear
25 you and see you. Welcome.

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MS. PEDRAS: Okay. Thank you.

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My parents and I are housing providers. My father's first job in this country was as a dishwasher. He's worked seven days a week for over five decades. And even in his 80s he still does as many of the repairs as he can himself. He has revived buildings and provided homes in communities nobody wanted or cared about.

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17

But the government doesn't take into account the costs of any of these sacrifices. This month we received thank you notes from two tenants who are leaving. Yet at hearings, tenants often complain about the big conglomerate landlords. The irony is that without these increases, the government and the RGB are only making them bigger and more powerful.

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You make us beg for increases every year that you were supposedly mandated to provide. Even knowing that this year the government increased our real estate taxes in a pandemic. And increased our water and sewer costs in a pandemic. The government has given us no reprieve or assistance during COVID.

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The government also increased our

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2 costs through regulations for gas pipe inspections
3 and lead paint tests. But those costs aren't
4 included in your PIOC. The government spent the
5 last year telling everyone to follow the date and
6 the signs, but that doesn't apply here. Government
7 talks about trillions of dollars to repair aging
8 infrastructure, but nobody wants to talk about New
9 York City tenement buildings that are over 100
10 years old and the costs to repair them.

11 Instead of providing reasonable
12 increases over the last seven years, the government
13 has politicized the RGB against us. If some
14 tenants cannot afford increases, then the
15 government must do better. But that is a burden
16 that must be shared by society and not placed on
17 the backs of immigrant families to personally
18 subsidize.

19 The government could expand the
20 SCRIE or DRIE programs or create the proposed TREE
21 program, but they choose not to. And one must ask
22 why. This isn't sustainable and you know it.
23 Perhaps that is the plan. Loans and debts are not
24 an option. Banks won't lend to a business that
25 can't increase revenue or even enforce it's

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2 contracts. And that is why the only winners are de
3 Blasio, his developer friends, and the large
4 landlords that tenants are complaining about here
5 today.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
7 your testimony.

8

I see, I believe it's Barbara
9 Schildcrout. I hope I pronounced your name
10 properly. Barbara, you're muted and your camera's
11 not on. If you want to turn on your camera.

12

MS. SCHIRLDCROUT: Unmute and
13 video.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: I see you and I
15 hear you. Welcome.

16

MS. SCHIRLDCROUT: Okay. Thank
17 you. Hi. My name is Barbara Schildcrout. I'm a
18 member of Tenants and Neighbors and the Rent
19 Justice Coalition. I live at 208 East 21st Street,
20 Manhattan. That's the Gramercy Park neighborhood.

21

I've been living here for 47
22 years in a rent-stabilized apartment. Each time I
23 renew my lease, I choose the maximum time allowed,
24 which is two years. My rent has increased 360
25 percent in the 47 years. I am retired since 2016.

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2 After my Medicare insurance payment and rent are
3 deducted from my monthly Social Security, I am left
4 with \$212 for the month. It's difficult to
5 survive, which is why the Rent Guidelines Board
6 should not increase rents.

7 I have lived in Manhattan all my
8 life. I believe it would be unjust to force me to
9 move at this time in my life due to rent increases.
10 Rents should be affordable. In addition, the
11 landlord does not have a super residing in the area
12 required by law. Despite having made numerous
13 complaints, the landlord has not been required to
14 follow the law. In an emergency, no one addresses
15 the problem for one or more days. This has been
16 the case for over 40 years. Thank you for the
17 opportunity to make my statement before the Rent
18 Guidelines Board.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

21 I see Vito Signorile is here.
22 Vito you're muted and your camera is not on. FYI.
23 Okay.

24 MR. SIGNORILE: Okay. Can I
25 start?

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CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

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MR. SIGNORILE: Okay. RSA has

already discussed at great length the various

protection that have been taken for tenants. Now

New York is officially lifted all COVID

restrictions. The city's economy was already vastly

recovering, but now is certain reality. Job

openings are reaching a record high and

unemployment claims and numbers continued to drop.

Unlike the uncertainty

surrounding the pandemic last June, we have now

reached the light at the end of the tunnel.

Building owners, on the other hand, have not had

that level of relief. Any funds provided to the

universe of landlords and tenants eligible for the

new rent belief program cannot be considered an

infusion of income because it is simply money that

has been owed to landlords, that money does not

alleviate rising expenses.

On Monday, the Water Board

approved another rate increase. Even if this board

approved the highest cent of the preliminary range,

that alone would not even cover the increase in

water expenses. This year's commensurate ranges

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2 recommended a one-year guideline no less than two
3 percent, but in reality, this board should be
4 considering two years worth of data that have
5 called for moderate guideline increases.

6 Last year, the pandemic allowed
7 this board to conveniently disregard an increased
8 PIOC and a decrease of NOI. You can say the
9 pandemic justified a rent freeze, but that doesn't
10 make last years data magically disappear. We are
11 yet to see the full impact of the HSTPA on the
12 aging rent stabilized stock. The years of
13 inadequate guidelines and consistent increases in
14 operating expenses had a direct impact on NOI last
15 year and will continue to do so.

16 A third rent freeze, millions of
17 dollars in rental arrears, the HSTPA, rising
18 inflation, and the pandemic will all certainly be
19 reflected in next year's reports. Stabilized
20 housing providers can no longer be the scapegoat
21 for years of failed policies by pro tenant elected
22 officials. We've seen how well tenants can be
23 protected when government officials are put under
24 pressure from unforeseen circumstances.

25 This is a genuine opportunity for

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2 the legislature, not this board, to ensure that
3 these vulnerable tenants are protected in the
4 future. Reasonable rent guideline increases are now
5 realistically the only avenue that owners have to
6 keep up with their rising costs. Continued
7 inadequate guidelines cutoff (Zoom inaudible) to
8 maintain and repair the buildings, deteriorating
9 housing conditions will hurt both tenants and
10 owners.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
12 your testimony.

13 I see we have Elizabeth Cohen
14 next.

15 MS. COHEN: Hi. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi. Elizabeth
17 if you want your camera on, you can turn it on.

18 MS. COHEN: Okay. Thank you.
19 Okay. Can you see me?

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Welcome.

21 MS. COHEN: Thank you. New York
22 City of rent control tenants like me and my
23 rent-stabilized neighbors need the help of the Rent
24 Guidelines Board to survive. It is essential for
25 families like mine. I have watched two good

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2 friends, divorced mothers with children forced to
3 leave our neighborhood, their school, and friends
4 because they could no longer afford the rent and
5 what they earned.

6

Let's be clear. What's being
7 decided for the Rent Guidelines Board is not just
8 abstract business investment and profit models, it
9 affects the lives of real people like me. Many
10 people assumed the rent control tenants like me,
11 have real cheap rents. That's not true. I have
12 lived in my apartment for more than 62 years.
13 There have been four landlords.

14

My current landlord, the Parkoff
15 Organization owns 66 buildings. Like the majority
16 of landlords in New York City, they're a very rich
17 corporation, not a mom and pop business. My
18 building alone has 72 apartments in it. As a rent
19 control tenant, I paid until 2019 enormous 7.5
20 percent increases every year plus fuel pass alongs
21 and an MCIs. My income did not increase at the
22 same rate and it has impacted everything, including
23 my ability to buy groceries for myself and my
24 children.

25

Despite these enormous rent

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2 increases, My landlord did not make repairs to our
3 building or to my apartment. My building currently
4 has 70 violations. About a year ago, the building
5 department forced the landlord to put up a
6 scaffolding in front of the building because the
7 facade of the building was crumbling and pieces
8 falling off. They are concerned that people on the
9 sidewalk might be injured or killed because the --
10 if the scaffolding wasn't there.

11 Two years in a row, my landlord
12 broke a major water pipe in an apartment above
13 mine. The water cascaded down in the lobby for two
14 days, knocking out the ceiling and saturating the
15 wall of all the apartments in the line with water.
16 Mold in the walls resulted in the landlord
17 literally repeatedly whitewash them rather than
18 remediate the problem.

19 We are unable to use our kitchen
20 or the west bedroom for more than five months.
21 They still got their 7.5 rent increase and fuel
22 pass loans. The idea that landlords need these
23 rental increases --

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
25 your testimony.

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2 MS. COHEN: -- to make repairs is
3 ridiculous.

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
5 much for your testimony.

6 MS. COHEN: The current landlord
7 did not make the building or my apartment --

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: We just want to
9 make sure -- we have 200 people signed up today.
10 So we wanted to make sure everyone has --

11 MS. COHEN: I'm almost done.
12 Thank you. Even with these increases and deep
13 enough pockets to buy more buildings, he did not
14 make the repairs. The heartlessness and greed of
15 the large board corporate landlords, --

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: We have over 100
17 people waiting to go next. I ask you to drop out.

18 MS. COHEN: Okay. Thank you.
19 Okay. Thank you very much. And I just wanted to
20 say that -- I just really -- I just want to sum up,
21 please. What I urge you to do is to rollback rent
22 control --

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: You're way over
24 your time Ms. Elizabeth.

25 MS. COHEN: -- increase rates to

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2 rollback the rent control for rent-controlled
3 tenants and to freeze the rent for rent-stabilized
4 tenants. I think this is essential for the lives
5 of many families and the tenants are asking --

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. We're
7 going to have to move onto the next speaker.
8 You're taking time from others.

9 MS. COHEN: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
11 much for your testimony.

12 MS. COHEN: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: I believe our
14 next speaker is -- speaker is Monique Dana.

15 MS. DANA: Hi.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

17 MS. DANA: Sorry. Just getting
18 it on.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. We hear
20 you, but we don't see you yet.

21 MS. DANA: Hi. My name is
22 Monique and I'm a small property owner. Property
23 owners are the only small businesses that are
24 continuously asked and expected to subsidize their
25 customers. I live with my tenants in my building,

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2 and this building is my life savings and my
3 livelihood.

4

If you want rent freezes or
5 rollbacks, you need to find a way to provide owners
6 subsidies so that we can maintain our properties.
7 I should not be forced to subsidized New York City
8 tenants. This year, my real estate taxes went up 8
9 percent, my building insurance went up 29.8
10 percent, and my other operating cost increased
11 significantly as well.

12

The rent of my highest paying
13 stabilized tenant does not cover his apartments
14 portion of the building's real estate taxes, and I
15 have to subsidize the other portion of taxes as
16 well as completely cover his heat, hot water,
17 insurance, utilities, maintenance, labor, and other
18 operating costs. In fact, his rent only covers 56
19 percent of the operating costs attributable to his
20 apartment and I cover the other 44 percent of
21 expenses attributable to his apartment.

22

Would you invest in property if
23 you were required to take money out of your pocket
24 every year to subsidize your tenants? Think about
25 that and ask yourself that question. Chairman

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2 Reiss of the RGB has said that since HSTPA was
3 enacted in 2019, that rent increases enacted by the
4 RGB, are virtually the only source of income that
5 rent stabilized owners have to cover increasing
6 operating costs.

7 That's why we need you to pass
8 the proposed two and three percent increases, so
9 that we can continue to provide affordable, safe
10 housing and for us to survive and pay our expenses.
11 If you do not pass these increases, your legacy
12 will be the urban blight of New York City. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
15 your testimony.

16 I see our next speaker is Karen
17 Flaherty? Welcome.

18 MS. FLAHERTY: Yes. Thank you.
19 My name is Karen Flaherty and I'm here with Tenants
20 and Neighbors and Rent Justice Coalition. I live
21 at 11 East 17th Street, Union Square, and my
22 landlord is Transworld Equities. I am asking for a
23 rent freeze.

24 This testimony is personal, but I
25 believe it reflects other senior citizens who are

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2 in rent-stabilized apartments living on a fixed
3 income from Social Security and perhaps a pension
4 and not eligible for rental assistance.

5

In 2020 during COVID, my spouse
6 became hospitalized for West Nile virus, which
7 threw us into a tsunami of tests, specialists, and
8 hospital stays. We have a Medicare supplement, but
9 not all expenses are covered and in most cases at
10 co-pay is required. At the same time, my medical
11 expenses continued. We saw our emergency funds
12 depleted by the end of the year and a rent increase
13 would present a financial hardship.

14

We have been at the current
15 address since 1978 and part of the Loft Law and
16 eventually grandfathered into rent stabilization.
17 There are six floors and all floors were covered,
18 written out only two floors remain with this
19 status. We have had five landlords since 1978.
20 Over time, we have seen a 500 percent rent
21 increase. We currently pay over 30 percent of our
22 income to the landlord. The other four floors in
23 the building are paying market rents of 12 to
24 20,000 per floor.

25

Demographic is six adults living

1
2 per floor. In addition, there was a ground-floor
3 retail space. They have multiple buildings that
4 fit this successful business model. I believe that
5 the services offered to the tenants are minimal and
6 seemed to be actively pursuing the rent-stabilized
7 tenants by ignoring our request to dispose of
8 garbage properly, guaranteeing the right to peace
9 and quiet for all tenants, cleaning of all public
10 areas to name a few.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
12 Karen.

13 MS. FLAHERTY: You're welcome.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
15 your testimony. I believe our next speaker is
16 Nadya Kundrat. Nadya, you're muted. And your
17 camera's not on. If you want it to be on. Hello.

18 MS. KUNDRAT: Hello. Okay. Our
19 immigrant grandparents fled socialism, came to this
20 wonderful country. During the Great Depression,
21 they bought a foreclosed building. Our
22 grandparents turned a single-family Brownstone into
23 ten apartments. Our family kept the building
24 during bad times. During unsettling times. We now
25 are the longest surviving family-owned building on

1

2 the block. That's right. Our family has owned a
3 building on our block the longest time.

4

Several other apartment building,
5 Brownstones, were sold to wealthy people who turned
6 them back into single-family homes. I can say then
7 the past few years, about ten Brownstones were
8 taken off the affordable apartment list. Why?
9 Because all the rent regulations don't allow
10 property owners to make a profit.

11

Rising expenses, lower income, or
12 no income at all. People sold. No immigrant
13 family now could buy an apartment building because
14 the bank would never give them a loan because they
15 wouldn't make any money.

16

However, now we see aggressive
17 and predatory investors ready to pounce as a
18 family-run businesses struggle to survive. Will
19 they care about our tenants like we do? Will they
20 live in the building like we do? Will they be
21 asked to make funeral arrangements like we have
22 been? Were they part of the community like we are?
23 We provide affordable housing in that community.
24 Please consider our rising costs. When Mayor de
25 Blasio started our taxes were (Zoom inaudible) now

1

2 they're 82.

3

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
5 your testimony.

6

7 MS. KUNDRAT: Please know --
8 here's a bill on our taxes.

9

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
11 your testimony.

12

13 MS. KUNDRAT: [Zom inaudible],
14 look at the loss. This is a lot.

15

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: -- move on to
17 the next speaker so everyone has a chance to speak.
18 Thank you for your testimony.

19

20 MS. KUNDRAT: Thank you.

21

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. I
23 believe our -- our speaker is Dorca Reynoso.

24

25 MS. REYNOSO: Hi.

26

27 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi. Welcome.

28

29 MS. REYNOSO: Thank you. I'm
30 here today to ask the board to truly serve its
31 purpose. Do not continue to aid landlord's in
32 displacing families and the name of profit. At
33 this point, the way we feel in neighborhoods of
34 color and poor neighborhoods, it's like if you do
35 not have money and you're not white, you do not

1

2 belong in the City of New York.

3

4 This reign crisis is not a new
5 problem. It's just has been accelerated by the
6 pandemic. The neglect of some elected officials
7 and their willingness to turn a blind eye to the
8 games that some landlords play just so they can get
9 some campaign donations, it's truly shameful.

9

10 Landlords and developers maneuver
11 the law and the system in order to increase their
12 profits. In this way they either do re-zonings or
13 play games like turning apartments into co-ops,
14 playing games like warehousing apartments, and then
15 pricing out that tenant.

15

16 I've been in my building for the
17 past 24 years, and I cannot tell you the number of
18 tenants that have been removed from here. Right
19 now, my apartment building has 62 units and it's
20 over 75 units vacant for at least 15 years, just in
21 the my landlord, David Israel owns 11 buildings,
22 449 units, and just in the past three years, he has
23 evicted 24 families.

23

24 These are people, not
25 commodities, not stocks and bonds. People,
26 families that have a right to remain in their

1

2 homes. While we sit here and discuss and while big
3 landlords hide behind this small landlords, we just
4 keep talking about their profits and what they're
5 losing while people are truly losing their homes.
6 In what this young man just spoke about how light
7 at the end of the tunnel. For whom?

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Your
9 testimony.

10 MS. REYNOSO: Thank you. And
11 please protect people not profits. We need a
12 renting -- rent rollback.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our
14 next speaker is Adrian Gerstel. Adrian, you're
15 muted and we don't see if you want to be on camera.

16 MS. GERSTEL: Thank you. Thank
17 -- thank you very --

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: We hear you, but
19 we don't see you if you want to be able to --

20 MS. GERSTEL: Okay. Now can you
21 see me?

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can see you,
23 welcome.

24 MS. GERSTEL: Thank you so much
25 for doing this. It is such an eye-opener. I have

1

2 been testifying at the Rent Guidelines Board way,
3 way, way back when they held them at the Cooper
4 Union, The Great Hall. I get extremely upset when
5 I hear -- when I hear tenants talk. We have a huge
6 divide.

7

 The tenants who are speaking are
8 tenants or big managing companies and landlords,
9 there is world of difference between a small
10 owner-occupied -- the last person saying that big
11 landlords are hiding behind small landlords, come
12 on, give me a break.

13

 All right. So I live in the
14 North Slope in Brooklyn. We bought our house 40
15 years ago -- 41 years ago, when it was red-lined.
16 We got a mortgage from the former owner. It was a
17 six-unit. All I have is four rental-stabilized apt
18 -- I don't have, like, whatever people are talking
19 about. I have four rent-stabilized units.

20

 We have the arts in the building.
21 The tenants is an artist. There's one who's
22 playwright, a college English professor, a house
23 manager at a Broadway theater, a dancer who's a
24 pre-K theater -- pre-K teacher. They've been in
25 the building from 33 years to 20 years. Oh, my, I

1

2 can't believe that. All I say is consider what a
3 one percent increase would do and that would come
4 to \$9 a month.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
6 much.

7

MS. GERSTEL: \$9 a month, a cup
8 of coffee, a paper, Netflix, donuts. \$9 a month.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Adrian, we need
10 to move on to our next speaker, so everyone gets a
11 chance to speak. Thank you so much.

12

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Time
13 is really --

14

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: David. So I
15 think we've been almost into an hour. If we can
16 just repeat. For those, maybe who are joining that
17 are Spanish speakers, that they can listen on the
18 telephone. So --

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. We just
20 going to do that in Spanish, right?

21

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah, We're just
22 going to do that in Spanish.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

24

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So I don't know
25 if Liz or Olvin can read that. I think it's the

1

2 number 6.

3

4 MR. CABA: Sure. I can read that
5 right now. Sure. Sure.

6

7 (Speaking Spanish.)

8

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
10 Olvin.

11

12 MS. BURGER: Can I just make a
13 quick announcement?

14

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Uh-huh.

16

17 MS. BURGER: I just want to let
18 people know where we are on the list. We are
19 diligently looking for attendees who have
20 pre-registered, but there is an issue if your name
21 doesn't match the name that you registered with.
22 So I'm just going to tell you where we are on the
23 list because you were e-mailed your registration
24 number. So if you've been passed, if you could
25 either check your name or if you could reply to the
26 e-mail you were sent.

27

28 The next tenant who's going to
29 speak is number 14 and the last owner who spoke was
30 also number 14, but I know owner number 10 is here
31 so we're going a little bit backwards to owner
32 number 10. You'll be the next owner to speak but

1

2 basically we're going to 14 and above. So if your
3 number was less than that, please let us know
4 through e-mail or by checking your Zoom name or
5 checking your phone number because we cannot locate
6 you at this moment. Thank you.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: I believe our
8 next speaker is Vajra Kilgour. If I have that name
9 pronounced properly. You're muted and your
10 camera's off. You're not muted now.

11

MS. KILGOUR: I'm not muted. My
12 camera -- okay. Turn the camera on.

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

14

MS. KILGOUR: Can't see me much,
15 but you can see my lovely view. I'll move this
16 around a bit. I'm going to make a point real quick
17 at the beginning that somebody was interrupted
18 making at the end of her testimony and that is, the
19 repairs are not made because of a lack of money.
20 Repairs are not, not made because of a lack of
21 money.

22

When landlords have more money,
23 they invest it in more buildings, they invest it in
24 the stock market, they buy a new boat, they buy a
25 new house, we're talking, obviously larger

1

2 landlords. Landlords make repairs when they have
3 to and that is an enforcement issue. That is a
4 regulatory issue and an enforcement issue.

5

6 You will not encourage landlords
7 to make more repairs by giving them more money,
8 number one. Number two. Small landlords,
9 everything seems to get turned upside down.

10 There's small landlords saying, you're mandated to
11 supply rent increases. No, You're mandated to
12 prevent rent gouging. And yet every year the rents
13 go up and they -- they go up and homelessness goes
14 up. They stay the same at a very high rate and
15 homelessness goes up -- and they go up and
16 homelessness goes up and you keep repeating that
17 pattern and I don't know why you would expect to
18 have a different result. So that does not work.

18

19 Now, there are so many
20 deregulated apartments in so many buildings that
21 the only purpose of now at this point almost giving
22 the landlord's rent-regulated apartments and
23 increase is to help them to force out their rent
24 regulated tenants by raising their rents. Small
25 landlords can open their books. They can open
their books, they can open their books, they can

1

2 open their books. We always pretend that's not
3 what's -- that they don't -- that it's too hard.
4 They shouldn't have to open their books. They can
5 open their books, they are guaranteed a hardship
6 increase if they opened their books. That's how
7 they fix that problem.

8 Now, somebody said we should turn
9 our building over to the tenants and then they'll
10 see it but they're in no hurry to turn the building
11 over to the tenants. They're in no hurry to turn
12 the building over at anybody. They want to keep
13 that building. These buildings make money. So all
14 of this is a pile of stuff and please do not listen
15 to it. Rent should have been rolled back a long
16 time ago and it should at least, at the very least
17 be frozen. You're having a social experiment that
18 stinks..

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
20 your testimony. I believe our next speaker is
21 Stephanie Danalangel.

22 MS. DANALANGEL: Yes. Hi.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

24 MS. DANALANGEL: Thank you. Yes.

25 My name is Stephanie and my family and I run three

1
2 small properties in Manhattan. I have to say we do
3 feel like prisoners of these buildings because
4 we're constantly working to maintain them. The
5 city and state spring new laws, regulations
6 frequently that we need to adhere to. They're
7 costly and time-consuming. We're not going out and
8 buying boats, we're not going out and buying new
9 buildings just as the tenants speaker said before.
10 That's not true. We are investing the money back
11 into our buildings and that's what the small
12 property owners are doing.

13 And you, the Rent Guidelines
14 Board already recognized that an increase is
15 warranted by acknowledging that with a five to four
16 vote in favor in increase at your May 5th virtual
17 preliminary vote. We need to continue paying our
18 expenses. They've increased 28 percent since 2014.
19 Property taxes alone have increased 48 percent
20 since 2014. Rents have only increased 5 percent.
21 In a year where property values are down, our real
22 estate taxes this year increased 7.99, and that's
23 only because they were capped at 8 percent.

24 Another rising expense is going
25 to be the DEP approved water rate, which is going

1

2 to be over 2 percent this July. Why? To offset
3 operating revenues and overdue bills that are
4 delinquent -- on a delinquent account due to the
5 pandemic.

6

Well, owners need relief too.

7 Even though those tenants don't seem to think so,
8 we do. We've been impacted severely by the HSTPA
9 of 2019. We can't make these repairs that were
10 doing. The last three rent freezes, heavens
11 forbid, a fourth one could be catastrophic. But it
12 won't only affect owners, it will ultimately
13 continue to affect tenants in so much as we cannot
14 afford to maintain our buildings the way we'd like
15 to and the way tenants would like us -- would like
16 us to.

17

And if you keep denying as any
18 kind of rent relief, it will be horrible for the
19 tenants in a long-term as well. If owners have to
20 keep digging into our pockets -- and contrary to
21 what many of these tenants are saying, we do have
22 to dig into our pocket to subsidize the buildings.
23 Why bother? We will just get out and (Zoom
24 inaudible)--

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

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25

MS. DANALANGEL: -- just make money. We implore you to please approve a rent increase of 2 and 3 percent respectively for both 1 and 2 years. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for your testimony.

MS. DANALANGEL: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REISS: I believe next is Nora Kenty; is that correct?

MS. KENTY: Yes. Hi. Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

MS. KENTY: Thank you. I'm Nora Kenty. I'm a housing attorney at Mobilization for Justice or MFJ. We're a non-profit that provides free civil legal services to low-income New Yorkers. And I represent tenants in the Bronx. Mostly people of color who are facing eviction or who have habitability conditions like lacking water, gas, or electricity.

I feel very fortunate to be able to work under Right to Counsel, which New York city communities organized and fought so hard for. Over the last year, and honestly long before that, I

1

2 have seen struggling families spend every dime they
3 get toward rent. Many barely even noticed their
4 stimulus checks. They went straight to their
5 landlords.

6

Unemployment benefits, to the
7 landlord's. First paychecks after getting back to
8 work during the pandemic, to the landlords. Every
9 penny of my clients goes to rent instead of food or
10 their kids or certainly any form of self-care that
11 might help them get over the trauma of the last
12 year.

13

Many of my clients are on a fixed
14 income due to age or disability and would become so
15 heavily rent burdened if there rent were to
16 increase that they would likely be forced out. We
17 would see senior citizens losing their homes of
18 decades and families having to enter shelters. We
19 need a rent rollback.

20

Market rents have decreased across
21 New York City, and I think it would be ludicrous if
22 the only rent increases that happened during the
23 pandemic were on rent-regulated housing. That's
24 totally backward. We're a city of tenants,
25 two-thirds of the city are renters. The average

1

2 New York city landlord, average owns 21 buildings.
3 Those landlords are not struggling. Most of my
4 clients in the Bronx live in large buildings whose
5 owners have big law firms on retainer.

6 I know that some landlords are
7 struggling for sure and fortunately for them,
8 landlords are the ones getting assistance during
9 the pandemic. The \$3.5 billion in rent relief
10 assistance for New York is all going to landlords
11 and utility companies. Landlords can apply for it
12 directly. They don't need tenants to apply. We
13 need a rent rollback now.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
15 your testimony.

16 I think Edward Klein is our next
17 speaker, I believe. Welcome.

18 MR. KLEIN: Yes. Can you hear
19 me?

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Thank you.

21 MR. KLEIN: Thank you so much.
22 Thank you for opening these hearings to the public
23 in these perilous times. I greatly appreciate it.
24 My name is, Edward Klein. I have my own law firm
25 in New York City for the past 32 years. I'm an

1

2 employer, I'm also a landlord in the city.

3

I to convey a message. The

4

simple message that I conveyed to you last year.

5

[zoom inaudible] living quarters in New York, rest

6

on mutually equitable foundations. To expect

7

landlords to accept the RGB freezes and 1 percent

8

increase that we've had for the last eight years,

9

for expecting us to be subject to a virtual freeze

10

of any ability to secure a return on their

11

investment and their properties. I mean, would you

12

take a stock and returned zero percent?

13

To suffer the elimination of any

14

vacancy increases after apartment's have been

15

vacant for 20,30,40 years. To act as the guarantor

16

for housing, which we've been asked to do by

17

Governor Cuomo and the mayor and the city council

18

over the past 15 months of crisis, which indeed is

19

a crisis for everyone concerned, it doesn't result

20

in better housing or more available housing for New

21

Yorkers. I sympathize with all the tenants that

22

have spoken. I mean, it doesn't address the

23

reality that you can't have zero return on your

24

investment.

25

The present rent stabilization

1

2 system has resulted in very little additional
3 housing being built for New Yorkers over the past
4 several years. Over the past ten years even. The
5 real estate community has been fleeing New York
6 City because -- the last three or four years in
7 anticipation of and following the passage of the
8 HSTPA. That alphabet soup of the statutes that
9 were passed on June 15, 2019.

10 It essentially froze rents while
11 expenses continued to go up. So why should the RGB
12 agree to a 2 percent increase? For many reasons.
13 First, the increase will result in better housing
14 for tenants. Yes. Notwithstanding what you're
15 hearing from many tenants, many good tenants, the
16 landlords will be able to invest in their
17 properties. And now, what was claimed before that
18 21 -- number of 21 for the average landlord is
19 simply false.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, sir.

21 MR. KLEIN: I'd like to make two
22 more point. Ten more seconds?

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: We need to make
24 sure that there's time for everyone to testify.
25 Thank you very much.

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MR. KLEIN: Okay. Thank you for hearing us out and please vote for a 2 percent increase. Have a great day.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. I think, is Charlie -- I believe Charlie Anderson is our next speaker.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. I'm here.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Charlie, just so you know. We can hear you but we can't see you if you want to be on camera. There we go.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. Thank you for the reminder.

Hello. Good after -- good evening. My name is Charlie Anderson and I will be reading testimony on behalf of the state Assembly Member, Deborah Glick, who was unable to be here in person this evening.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

MR. ANDERSON: New York City is emerging from a crisis few of us could have imagined as we entered 2020. New York City has so far reported almost 1 million cases of COVID-19 and more than 33,000 deaths leaving families and communities to deal with a tremendous amount of

1

2 grief.

3

4 The pandemic and the ensuing
5 shutdowns and forced to protect public health
6 created an economic disaster for the city and its
7 residents. Workers lost their jobs with New York
8 reporting its worst single year job loss numbers
9 since the 1930s.

9

10 As infection rates have dropped
11 and businesses have reopened, I have watched the
12 city slowly come back to life with great relief,
13 but also with the knowledge that it will take time,
14 work, and healing for New York to recover from the
15 traumas in the past 15 months. The same goes for
16 the economy. While federal aid has helped city --
17 the city solve some short-term challenges, the
18 recovery for tourism, hospitality, restaurant
19 industries is projected to take years, not months.

19

20 Last year, I was grateful that
21 the Rent Guidelines Board understood the crisis
22 being faced and passed the zero percent increase
23 for one-year lease renewals. This year, the board
24 is proposed a 0 to 2 percent increase from one year
25 renewals and 1 to 3 percent increase for two-year
26 renewals. Given the economic and security so many

1

2 New Yorkers continue to face, I believe it is
3 unconscionable to saddle New Yorkers with an
4 increase -- with any increase in their rents.

5 The process of getting the city
6 back on its feet and returning to a sense normal
7 productivity will take the efforts of all New
8 Yorkers and residents should have to -- should not
9 have to contend with housing and security as they
10 work to rebuild their communities. I understand
11 that landlords are also facing economic
12 difficulties, but their eligibility for additional
13 federal aid and the likelihood that some funds will
14 be made available to them means that they have
15 access to supports that simply are unavailable to
16 many tenants.

17 I strongly urged you to take the
18 compassionate, responsive, and moral action, and
19 freeze rents for both 1 and 2 year lease renewals.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
22 your testimony.

23 I believe our next speaker is
24 Carolyn Meckler. Carolyn, you are muted and we
25 don't see you, if you want your camera on.

1

2

MS. MECKLER: Now can you see me?

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: I can hear you

4

but I can't see you.

5

MS. MECKLER: Okay. I found -- I

6

found the --

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: We can see you.

8

Welcome.

9

MS. MECKLER: Thank you. I'm a

10

small property owner on the Upper West Side. I

11

manage a single building with five units with my

12

daughter. We live in the building and we don't

13

take a salary for maintaining the building. I have

14

never once evicted a tenant in 21 years.

15

I sympathize with the struggling

16

tenants but there are a lot of programs in New York

17

City to help struggling tenants. No fixed income

18

senior should struggle. There's SCRIE for them,

19

but there's no equivalent program for a struggling

20

landlord.

21

In 2020, my building made \$2,540.

22

I didn't take a salary, neither did my daughter.

23

In 2019, I had to replace the boiler and I lost

24

over a \$100,000. This is not maintainable. 28

25

percent of my income goes to paying property tax.

1

2 In 2020, my property tax increased 6 percent.

3 Every single year the city asks for more money.

4 There's got to be a balance and you guys need to

5 find a way. If you want us to keep rents down, you

6 need to keep our costs down.

7 My last thing I want to say is

8 I've struggled to improve my building for both my

9 stabilized tenants and from my no,. And when I

10 spent \$30,000 in legal and engineering fees to try

11 to add a washer/dryer room to my little building,

12 the city said no because -- it said it wasn't

13 handicapped accessible. But this is a brown stone

14 with no elevator. That's an illogical statement

15 and that hurts both -- everybody and makes no

16 sense. So it prevents me from raising my rent on

17 my non stabilized tenants and (Zoom inaudible).

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

20 Thank you so much for your testimony. Our next

21 speaker --

22 MS. CABRAL: (Speaking Spanish.)

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: -- I believe is

24 Solanger Cabral. Solanger, you're muted and your

25 camera's not on.

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MS. CABRAL: *(The following was translated from Spanish to English.)*

"My name is Solanger Cabral and I live at 650 w. 173 Street in Washington Heights. I live in a rent stabilized building. I am asking the RGB to please vote for a rent freeze given the current situation. The pandemic heavily affected my community. We have lost income and had gas service for about six months because of our landlord. We have only been able to get repairs done in the building because we called 311. If not for this, we would be living in deplorable conditions and surrounded by vermin and roaches.

I am aware that if you vote on behalf of the landlords, 2.5 million New Yorkers will be affected by the RGB's decision. We don't want any more increases. In our building there are three empty apartments. The rent for these apartments was previously \$800 and the going rent is now \$2,800 for each. In other words, any potential renter is turned away because he cannot afford the rent. This building has had several landlords, at least three who just pass the property on to the next buyer. I think that the RGB

1
2 needs to take this into consideration before voting
3 on behalf of landlords. It needs to think about the
4 fact that we have been affected by a pandemic and
5 that there are people who are currently seeking
6 mental health/therapy options due to their anxiety.
7 These people worry about the passage of time and
8 where it is that they are going to live. Where will
9 we live? On the street? I ask you to put yourselves
10 in tenants' shoes. Please vote for a rent freeze!
11 It's not fair and I believe it is something we
12 should consider. The bigger pandemic will be the
13 homeless population and those with no income who
14 are not in a position to pay a rent increase. Thank
15 you for the opportunity!"

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so much
17 for your time.

18 MS. CABRAL: (Speaking Spanish.)

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

20 MS. CABRAL: (Speaking Spanish.)

21 MS. FIGUEROA: ***(The following was***
22 ***translated from Spanish to English.)***

23 "My name is Solanger Cabral and I
24 live at 650 w. 173 Street in Washington Heights. I
25 live in a rent stabilized building. I am asking

1

2 the RGB to please vote for a rent freeze given the
3 current situation. The pandemic heavily affected my
4 community. We have lost income and had gas service
5 for about six months because of our landlord. We
6 have only been able to get repairs done in the
7 building because we called 311. If not for this, we
8 would be living in deplorable conditions and
9 surrounded by vermin and roaches.

10

I am aware that if you vote on
11 behalf of the landlords, 2.5 million New Yorkers
12 will be affected by the RGB's decision. We don't
13 want any more increases. In our building there are
14 three empty apartments. The rent for these
15 apartments was previously \$800 and the going rent
16 is now \$2,800 for each. In other words, any
17 potential renter is turned away because he cannot
18 afford the rent. This building has had several
19 landlords, at least three who just pass the
20 property on to the next buyer. I think that the RGB
21 needs to take this into consideration before voting
22 on behalf of landlords. It needs to think about the
23 fact that we have been affected by a pandemic and
24 that there are people who are currently seeking
25 mental health/therapy options due to their anxiety.

1
2 These people worry about the passage of time and
3 where it is that they are going to live. Where will
4 we live? On the street? I ask you to put yourselves
5 in tenants' shoes. Please vote for a rent freeze!
6 It's not fair and I believe it is something we
7 should consider. The bigger pandemic will be the
8 homeless population and those with no income who
9 are not in a position to pay a rent increase. Thank
10 you for the opportunity!"

11

12 MS. CABRAL: Okay.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
14 your testimony.

15 I believe our next speaker is Gina
16 Bolden-Rivera. Gina? You're muted, Gina, and your
17 camera is not on if you want it on. Gina, we still
18 can't hear you, you're muted. I believe you can
19 unmute or turned on your video by hovering over
20 your name. That might help you. I'm not sure what
21 device you're on, but Gina, we can't hear you.
22 Andrew, maybe it makes sense to bring someone in
23 while Gina works through the technological issues.
24 MS. GARCIA: Andrew, can I -- can
25 I just recommend, David, that we remind folks what

1

2 numbers to press when we remind them that they can
3 go. So star 6, because you can call in on an iPad
4 and still call on the phone. You can do with both.
5 So some people might be seeing it, and think that
6 they can hit it on the screen and they can't.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Okay.

8

All right. You --

9

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: And -- and let
10 me just add. I've -- in some instances I've tried
11 to promote and either they're not accepting or it's
12 not. So I just asked to speak and then they become
13 a panelist. So in that situation, if you're
14 looking for video, it may not -- you may not be
15 able to do it at that point, but you would still
16 certainly be able to speak. But we always try to
17 promote. If we can't, then we allow them to speak.

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay, great. So
19 Gina, if you could figure out how to unmute, I'm
20 going to ask Sheila Gitlin to speak. And then
21 Gina, I'll ask you to speak afterwards. Sheila,
22 your camera is not on if we're on.

23

MS. GITLIN: How do I get the
24 camera on?

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: I don't know if

1

2 I can --

3

MS. GITLIN: Oh, I think I see

4

it.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Yeah. We

6

see you.

7

MS. GITLIN: Video setting on.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. You're on

9

-- you're on the -- you're on the camera. We can

10

see you.

11

MS. GITLIN: Oh, yeah. Oh, okay.

12

All right.

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi.

14

MS. GITLIN: Thank you for giving

15

me the opportunity. I wanted to say that the money

16

generated from the property to properly maintained

17

the building is desperately needed. Our car can't

18

run without gas, and rent is the gas for the

19

building.

20

Real estate taxes has gone

21

through the roof, excuse the pun, and continues to

22

soar. I supply the heat for all my tenants more

23

than what the law requires. I have double

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insurance, and one is flood insurance. I have a

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tenant on SCRIE, frozen rent.

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I recently had two vacancies, had to rent them for the same rental as the previous tenants. They both had a choice of one or two years. Both took two years, of course. Zero percent for one year, second year, one percent increase. How can I continue to accommodate my tenants when I get zero percent or \$11 increase for the second year?

Repairs or costs, I recently paid over 4,000 to have worked on on my deteriorating parts of my roof and building, which was causing severe water problems in the apartment. I have great tenants. I love them, and I believe they love me. I want to be able to upkeep their homes. And if this is going to continue, I'm, you know, possibly I'm going to lose the building.

So I don't know where to go with that. I think I covered everything. I am an owner of a six-family in Brooklyn. And when I hear everybody saying there should be a rent rollback, that freaks me out. I won't be able to pay the mortgage or nothing.

This is -- you know, I own the building, and I understand it's rent-stabilized.

1

2 And I would love to give breaks to all the tenants,
3 it -- it's just ripping my heart out. But I need
4 money to support my tenants too. I mean, there has
5 to be a better way to go about doing this. I'm not
6 one of those big landlords, I'm not making
7 millions. I'm getting away with next to nothing.
8 And I do better for them, more heat for them than I
9 have in my own house.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
11 Sheila.

12 MS. GITLIN: You're welcome. And
13 my heart goes out to everybody. I want to see
14 justification for both sides.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

16 MS. BOLDEN-RIVERA: It should be
17 ready, darling.

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: We know. We now
19 can hear you. You -- you are now unmuted. So if
20 you want to turn on your camera, fine. Or if you'd
21 just want to testify with your voice, that's also
22 fine.

23 MS. BOLDEN-RIVERA: Hi. Did you
24 call Gina Bolden-Rivera?

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Gina, is

1

2 that you? Please -- please --

3 MS. BOLDEN-RIVERA: Yes, it is.

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: -- please start
5 your testimony.6 MS. BOLDEN-RIVERA: Hi. Okay. I
7 am an owner occupant of a seven-unit apartment
8 building which has five rent-stabilized tenants.
9 My tenants have lived in the property between 5
10 years and 30 years. Therefore, four out of the
11 five tenants, they are rent-stabilized and they pay
12 between 40 and 60 percent of market rents. My real
13 estate taxes have increased 5 to 10 percent
14 annually. My utilities increased for the last few
15 years, and my rents have only increased 0 to 3
16 percent.17 I have a very good relationship
18 with my tenants, which is why I was able to survive
19 during the pandemic. Even though I did not suffer
20 a personal hardship, I am still angry. Angry
21 because as I listened to the moratorium on rent
22 evictions get extended and extended, and I heard my
23 fellow small-property owners talk about mortgage
24 arrears and tax arrears, I knew that it could have
25 easily been me because I realized that there was no

1

2 one that cared about a small property owner of a
3 seven-unit building.

4 Despite everyone talking about how
5 small businesses were suffering and tenants were
6 suffering and small owners were suffering, the
7 relief programs developed were for small businesses
8 and tenants, but not for small owners until much
9 later in the pandemic. I realized that unlike
10 small businesses which were classified as such,
11 small property owners were not considered any
12 different than property owners of 100 units, 500
13 units, or 1,000 units. So no new regulations or
14 considerations have been developed by the
15 government or the politicians to relieve the small
16 property owners. Yes, I am fortunate because my
17 tenants (Zoom inaudible) cared about me, that I was
18 an unemployed for 15 months, so they paid me.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Gina.

20 MS. BOLDEN-RIVERA: They cared
21 about me.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

23 MS. BOLDEN-RIVERA: You're
24 welcome.

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. I

1
2 believe our next testimony is from Jeanie Dubnau.
3 Jeanie. you're muted, and you are not on camera if
4 you want to be on camera. Jeanie, you're still
5 muted. Oh, no, still muted, sorry. Andrew, do you
6 want to promote someone else in the interim, and
7 we'll try to resolve this? Sheila, I didn't
8 exactly follow those technological instructions
9 you'd given previously. Do you want to kind of
10 state them?

11 MS. GARCIA: Well, if folks are
12 promoted and they are on their phones, they can
13 press star 6 on their phone pad and it will unmute
14 them on the web so that we can hear your voice. If
15 you don't do that, we won't be able to hear you.
16 So if you do join the Zoom meeting and see us and
17 hear us, you'll have to press star 6 in order for
18 us to hear you.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: I see Frank
20 Cicero. Frank, why don't you go ahead with your
21 testimony? You're unmuted which is good, but your
22 camera is not on if you want that on. And then
23 Jeanie, we'll try to resolve your technological
24 difficulties, and then we'll go back to you.
25 Frank, the floor is yours.

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MR. CICERO: Yes. Good evening.

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I want to thank all those responsible for removing the fuel cost adjustment, the surcharge for rent-control tenants. That was very unfair, and rent-control tenants are still feeling it in 2021. I live in a one-bedroom and I'm paying 1,227 a month. Meanwhile, a one-bedroom opposite to me that's rent-stabilized is paying 944. That's 283 or 285 less than me. There is a three-bedroom, rent-stabilized apartment in my building where they're paying 1,150 a month, which is \$77 less than me, and they're enjoying three-bedrooms.

Where is the common sense, and where is the protection for rent-control tenants? This fuel pass along, we're still feeling it in 2021. I'm asking the board to please review the surcharge because it's only a surcharge, it's not part of the rent. And to please freeze the rent-control so that we are treated fairly, and justly like rent-stabilized tenants. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for your testimony.

Jeanie, have you been able to unmute? Or it looks for my end that you're still

1

2 muted. All right. So Andrew, do you want to
3 promote someone? Let's leave Jeanie up here in
4 case Jeanie can figure out how to unmute. But
5 let's keep moving on with someone else, maybe.
6 Jeanie, when you figure it out kind of let me know,
7 and then I'll have you speak after the person who's
8 speaking currently is finished.

9 I see Lincoln Eccles is our next
10 speaker. Lincoln, you are muted currently, and
11 your camera is not on. Lincoln? There you go.
12 You're unmuted and if you want to put your camera
13 on, that would be great.

14 MR. ECCLES: My camera? Where's
15 the control for the camera? Hold on one second.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: You seem like
17 you have good company with you.

18 MR. ECCLES: Yeah. I have the
19 next landlord of New York City is in my hands, if I
20 can hold on to the property. Where is the camera?

21 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Lincoln, I had
22 to promote you with just to talk because you
23 weren't accepting the promotion. So if you just --

24 MR. ECCLES: Okay.

25 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: -- go ahead and

1

2 speak, that would be great.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: And then Jeanie,
4 well, we see you now. So Lincoln is going to speak
5 and then Jeanie, if you could unmute yourself after
6 Lincoln, that would be great. All right, Lincoln,
7 go ahead.

8

MR. ECCLES: All right. Let's
9 see. Since 2002, I think, we need to see that the
10 -- that the water bill for rent-stabilized
11 properties or in the city has gone up 116 percent,
12 property tax has gone up 136 percent. In that
13 time, rent has only increased 43 percent.

14

In the De Blasio's
15 administration, we had -- this is across the board,
16 property tax increase of 48 percent and a water
17 increase of 14 percent, and our rent increase has
18 been basically 5 percent. To me, my property tax
19 has gone up a full 100 percent. The HSTPA has
20 basically screwed us small owners because most of
21 my tenants stayed in place for years that I've
22 mentioned. So I'm not getting any 20 percent
23 increase as to any other. And I've had debts and
24 move outs from 2018, 2019, 2020.

25

And most of that, I'm screwed

1

2 where I have these very, very depressed rents. I
3 have a tenant that was paying \$350 a month. I need
4 minimum \$800 just to break even when I factor in
5 all the costs for that particular apartment.

6 We need a consistent series of
7 increases. It's like it's -- I understand the
8 emotion of -- of the -- the tenants but the --
9 these politicians that are coming in here and
10 saying that there needs to be a freeze, they're not
11 doing their job, and their job is to support the
12 tenants with assistance -- rental assistance.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Lincoln, thank
14 you for your testimony.

15 MR. ECCLES: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.
17 Jeanie, we can hear you, and we could see you so
18 you could begin your testimony, too.

19 MS. DUBNAU: Okay. So landlord
20 organizations are claiming they will no longer make
21 profits because of the recent progressive changes
22 in the New York State Rent Laws. Can you show me
23 where these have decreased the rents? I don't
24 think so. I don't think so.

25 Have you studied the fact that

1

2 landlords have actually increased their profits in
3 New York City, or you are only looking at the
4 increase in costs? Net operating income for
5 landlords actually went up 2.9 percent last year.
6 Check me if I'm wrong. I've spoken before the RGB
7 every year for many, many years, and the landlords
8 always say, They cannot make a profit unless the
9 rents increase.

10

Well, as I've said every year,
11 Let's open the books to prove they're not making a
12 profit. I'm asking the public members -- the
13 public members: How many landlords have applied
14 last year for a hardship increase? They had a zero
15 percent one-year lease, right? Did anybody apply
16 for hardship increase? I don't know. You know the
17 hardship increase exists, and yet you never make
18 the landlords apply. Why is that?

19

So we know that 72 percent of
20 rent-stabilized tenants who permanently lost their
21 jobs got no rent relief from the landlord, either
22 in the form of a rent reduction or rent delay.
23 Many people, 38 percent of rent regulated tenants,
24 reported having less than \$1,000 in their savings
25 account. 38 percent -- 44 percent of

1

2 rent-regulated tenants say they're classified as
3 essential workers, and 76 percent of tenants,
4 rent-regulated, reported being on pre-pandemic
5 public assistance program. Now --

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
7 your testimony. Thank you, Jeanie.

8 MS. DUBNAU: Okay.

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: And our next
10 speaker, the last three digits of their phone
11 number is 555. You're --

12 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yes. Okay.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: -- we can hear
14 you so the floor is yours.

15 UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: She's
16 looking back.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: The person whose
18 phone number is 555. We're ready to hear your
19 testimony.

20 MR. SMREK: Hello.

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi. We can hear
22 you.

23 MR. SMREK: Okay. Yeah. My name
24 is Phil Smrek and I am a resident of North
25 Brooklyn. And I first want to say that, you know,

1

2 when I hear some of the independent landlords call
3 in and talking their hardships, I have to agree
4 with them. I'm a rent-stabilize tenants. I've
5 lived in my apartment for 32 years.

6 And perhaps down the line, there
7 should be some type of delineation between the mom
8 and pop landlord that has maybe one or two
9 buildings with, you know, under 25 units, and then
10 these huge corporations -- because the first
11 question I have is: Why, in all of these
12 testimonies, do we never hear anyone say, I'm a
13 representative of this large conglomerate and we
14 own, you know, 300 buildings around New York City
15 and we have thousands of units and we need to have
16 an increase. I haven't heard one of those people
17 testify before the RGB and I'm just kind of curious
18 as to why that is.

19 The other thing is, I just wanna
20 share a little story with you. I recently ran into
21 a friend of mine who is in the moving business, and
22 he moves people, you know, out of the city into the
23 city. And I asked him, I said, so what are the
24 trends, what's going on now post-COVID? And he
25 basically said to me, listen a lot of these young

1

2 people that had one-bedroom apartments in the city
3 that were paying \$3 thousand plus a month, he goes,
4 They're not going back to those apartments now, the
5 trend is to move out to Crown Heights, Bed Stuy,
6 much cheaper places.

7 And I said, Well, what about here
8 in North Williamsburg? And he said, listen, these
9 people haven't gone anywhere. He's like, They've
10 got the money. They're not worried. They can
11 stay. And he said, You, he goes, You're one of the
12 lucky ones, Phil, you've got a rent stabilized
13 apartment. It's your 40 acres and a mule. And I
14 started laughing and I thought, Well, you know
15 what, It's kind of true, yes, I am one of the
16 fortunate people.

17 But let me just share with you
18 this. I put a lot of heart and soul into this
19 community. I've been a member of this community.
20 I've participated in events, helped develop this
21 community. Five years ago, I was in a high pitched
22 construction and harassment battle.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

24 MR. SMREK: So my point is this,
25 each time you raised the rent, it erodes our 40

1

2 acres.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
your testimony. Our next speaker is Saritha
Ramakrishna. Welcome. You are muted.

6

MS. KRISHNA: Thanks. My name is
Saritha Ramakrishna. I'm a tenant living in Bed
Stuy. I'm also a tenant hotline volunteer for the
Metropolitan Council on Housing. Every week I take
calls from tenants in need of advice and assistance
and provide that as best as I and other volunteers
and staff can. Many tenants who I speak to are
living in rent-stabilized units.

14

I've spoken to individuals
anxious about losing their home for themselves,
their relatives, and their children and who are
otherwise exhausted from navigating the piecemeal
resources that are out there for tenants. So many
people have lost jobs and income in the pandemic.
And while we are seeing signs of recovery, these
economic effects really do remain.

22

Nearly every shift I've had in
the last few months, I speak to an anxious caller
who is months behind in rent and really not sure
what's going to happen to them. I've also spoken

25

1

2 to tenants caught in ugly power dynamics between
3 themselves and their landlords. Some of whom are
4 completely unwilling to make repairs and are
5 constantly overstepping existing legal bounds.
6 It's only because many know that they can.

7

8 Despite this, tenants have
9 enormous stake in the city, often times they were
10 the ones doing the essential activities that kept
11 the city running and continues to do this work in
12 its recovery. A rent increase would mean adding
13 even more to the heavy burden tenants already face,
14 one that was already spiraling out of control prior
15 to the pandemic.

16

17 The tenants I speak to have a
18 right to good lives and futures in the city that
19 they've contributed so much to and ultimately
20 sustained. It's critical that you all at the Rent
21 Guidelines Board not allow for rent increases this
22 year. Thank you so much for the consideration.

23

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
25 your testimony. I believe Emily Mock is going to
introduce our next speaker, I believe. Emily, you
are muted.

26

MS. MOCK: Yeah. This is Johnny,

1

2 Mr. Tsui.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

4

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Before we start

5

-- one second, if we could give four minutes to

6

this speaker.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

8

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: They are going

9

to do consecutive translation, he's going to speak

10

in Cantonese. And Roxie is on and she will

11

translate in English.

12

MR. TSUI: Hi. My name is Johnny

13

and I've lived in Manhattan, Chinatown for the past

14

29 years. I know a lot of tenants that have been

15

affected by the current pandemic. I would like to

16

push for the Rent Guidelines Board to reduce rent

17

this year as a lot of people have lost their jobs

18

in this pandemic.

19

So I understand that the

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government has tried to provide rent relief twice

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to tenants in these past months. That money is

22

given so that the landlords will not kick us out.

23

If we are kicked out from our buildings the

24

landlords can rent out those apartments to people

25

that can pay higher rents.

1
2 I want to thank the New York
3 government for providing protection to tenants
4 however, I also want to stress the urgency that we
5 are facing right now. I am a volunteer at the
6 Chinatown tenant's union. I have seen a lot of
7 tenants who cannot qualify for these programs and
8 have had to take out loans to pay the rent. And
9 they're still worrying about how to pay off those
10 loans.

11 MR. TSUI: So I want to speak
12 about this from my heart. But essentially, these
13 landlords, when they purchase our buildings, they
14 know the rent-stabilized tenants living these
15 buildings. The landlords are happy to see us gone
16 as tenants. There are many of us as tenants who
17 are struggling and I would like to ask for your
18 help in keeping us in our homes and for us to be
19 able to stay in New York.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
21 your testimony.

22 MR. TSUI: I also want to say that
23 I'm fighting for the next generation of kids that
24 are going to be living in Chinatown after me. And
25 there is something in my heart that it's hurting me

1

2 very much that I would like to share, but -- thank
3 you.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
5 your testimony. I believe our next speaker is
6 Josefina. Josefina you're muted and your camera is
7 not if you want your camera on. Josefina, you're
8 still muted. Andrew, do you want to promote
9 someone as we try to work through the technical
10 difficulties?

11

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. She may
12 have to hit star 6.

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Josefina, can
14 you hit star 6 so that we can hear you speak?
15 Could someone translate that into Spanish. too?

16

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
17 Spanish.)

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.
19 Andrew, maybe worth promoting somebody while
20 Josefina figures that out. You're still muted
21 Josefina. I think our next speaker is Aracelis
22 Figueroa. Aracelis, you are muted and your
23 camera's not on if you want it on. I hear you.

24

MS. FIGUEROA: Hello.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello.

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MS. FIGUEROA: I don't know if
the camera -- where's the camera? Can they see me?

CHAIRMAN REISS: No. We can't
see you, just a picture of you. You can turn your
camera on, but you don't have to. It's up to you.
But we can definitely hear you if you want to
testify.

MS. FIGUEROA: Well, I don't know
where the camera is, so I'm going to speak.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay, good.
Welcome.

MS. FIGUEROA: I signed to speak
Spanish. It's my strong language.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. We can
have someone translate for you.

MS. FIGUEROA: Okay.

***(The following was translated
from Spanish to English.)***

"My name is Aracelis Figueroa and
I am a mother representing the District 9 Community
in the Bronx. The Mayor approved Intro 146 that
helps many families with CityFHEPS, but he made
amendments to this bill which don't allow citizens
to make above certain income levels. This doesn't

1

2 allow them to appropriately provide for their
3 families in order to be in compliance to receive
4 CityFHEPS [vouchers].

5

My question is for the Mayor and
6 the RGB. How will we be able to keep our homes and
7 continue to pay these rents if so many people are
8 entitled to this aid to pay for their rent and
9 daily expenses? If you raise people's rent, that
10 would affect people's lives. If you make x amount
11 of money, you will lose the benefit of these
12 programs. That is my question for the Mayor."

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
14 your testimony.

15

Josefina, it looks like you are
16 unmuted, so I think we going to hear your testimony
17 now.

18

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: If you can give
20 us your first and last name and then began
21 testifying, that would be great.

22

MS. BURGER: David, because
23 Josefina didn't put their last name, we're not sure
24 it's the right Josefina.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. What did

1

2 you last name should be, Danielle?

3

4 MS. BURGER: I don't want to say
5 that, but the person who registered registered in
6 English, which doesn't mean they don't speak
7 Spanish, but they registered in English.

7

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. We can't
9 hear them, so maybe we're going to move onto the
10 person -- will leave Josefina on the line and when
11 they're ready to speak, let us know. But let's
12 start with testimony from the person whose phone
13 number ends 075. If you can unmute yourself by
14 pressing star 6, then we can begin your testimony.
15 And maybe if that can be repeated in Spanish,
16 that'd be great.

16

17 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

17

18 MS. BURGER: This is Alvin Doyle.
19 Alvin, if you can hear us press star 6 to unmute
20 yourself.

20

21 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

21

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.
23 Andrew, maybe start promoting someone else. And
24 Josefina and Alvin, if you could figure out how to
25 turn on your sounds so we could hear you then will
26 will have you speak after the next person. Alvin,

1

2 you're still muted. Josefina, you're not muted but
3 we can't hear you speak.

4

 MS. VENTURA: I'm here. I'm
5 here.

6

 CHAIRMAN REISS: Josefina. Am I
7 saying your name properly?

8

 MS. VENTURA: Okay. Josefina
9 Ventura, yes.

10

 CHAIRMAN REISS: Josefina, the
11 floor is yours.

12

 MS. VENTURA: Okay. Yeah. So
13 good evening. My name is Josefina Ventura. I'm
14 co-chair of Riverside Neighborhood Association in
15 Washington Heights. The COVID-19 pandemic has
16 created a huge economic crunch in New Yorkers who
17 are more [zoom inaudible) than ever. This crisis
18 has caused massive layoff, furloughs, and hundreds
19 and thousands of unemployment claims, which
20 translates, tenants can't pay their rent.

21

 Many household are behind in rent
22 payments and without a job, making their situation
23 precarious, almost at the brink of holdovers once
24 the moratorium ends by August 31st of this year.
25 This is the main reason we need the RGB to approve

1

2 a 5 percent deduction in our rent, tenants can't
3 pay more rent increases. We need the Landlords to
4 open up their books. Let's see and analyze
5 financial statements to make sure if they are
6 really losing money. Thank you so much.

7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
8 your testimony. The person whose phone number ends
9 075 -- Alvin, if you could press star 6, so we
10 could hear your voice, you could testify. And
11 Andrew, do you want to promote someone else in the
12 interim? Alvin, if you can press star 6.

13 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay. I'm
14 sorry, I'm looking for the next person.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Alvin --
16 Alvin we can hear now. Do you want to begin your
17 testimony?

18 MR. DOYLE: Yes.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

20 MR. DOYLE: I can do it.

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

22 MR. DOYLE: Okay. My name is
23 Alvin Doyle and I'm from Stuyvesant Town. I'm also
24 a longtime member of the Stuyvesant Town-Peter
25 Cooper village Tenants Association. I'm advocating

1
2 a rent-freeze for tenants. In my apartment
3 building, on each floor, we have eight apartments.
4 But for most of this past year, our -- we -- four
5 of our apartments have been empty. At the
6 beginning of this month, we got one new tenant so
7 we still have three-apartment empty and it's over
8 -- for over one year. Rent-stabilized tenants are
9 the tax base of New York and tenants need help in
10 order to pay their rents and pay their taxes and
11 help our city. So that's why I advocate a zero
12 percent increase.

13 Thank you for your time.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you Alvin
15 for your testimony.

16 And our next -- our next speaker
17 has not been promoted yet. And I believe our next
18 speaker is Konstantin Hatzis. Welcome. You are
19 muted and your camera's not on if you want to put
20 your camera on.

21 MR. HATZIS: All right. Can you
22 see me?

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, welcome.

24 MR. HATZIS: Awesome. I'll go
25 ahead and start. Over the course of the pandemic,

1
2 we've seen historic levels of unemployment, looming
3 mass evictions, and homelessness. For those of us
4 fortunate enough not to have lost our homes due to
5 financial instability, we are still faced with the
6 burden of paying rents that were considered
7 unaffordable even before the pandemic began when
8 the economy was said to be booming. Some of us
9 received unemployment assistance and stimulus
10 checks that were an immense help in paying bills
11 and buying groceries and no much else.

12 However, just because we can
13 maintain a level of stability, does not mean that
14 we are not struggling. You don't have to be on
15 unhoused or living in a shelter to be struggling.
16 Not being able to afford to move to a better or
17 safer home is struggling. Working two or three
18 jobs just to pay rent is also struggling. And
19 that's a typical story for many New Yorkers.

20 Rent Stabilization was created as
21 a way to maintain an affordable housing stock in
22 New York City and to protect tenants from the whims
23 of greedy landlords. Right now, my dilapidated
24 one-bedroom rent-stabilized apartment is \$1,500 or
25 about the asking price for a one-bedroom market --

1

2 market rate apartment in my area.

3

4 Rents across the city have fallen
5 over the past year, yet the RGB thinks it's
6 appropriate to raise the rent by as much as 3
7 percent on some of the most financially vulnerable
8 people during a pandemic. We have not even begun
9 to recover from everything that transpired over the
10 past 18 months. We simply cannot afford the damage
11 that a rent increase will cause to the working
12 class people across the city. Instead, we need a
13 major rent rollback to a level that is truly
14 affordable in our current contexts.

15

16 The RGB must protect tenants from
17 greedy landlords who place an overwhelming burden
18 on tenants to fund their personal lives. If you
19 want to raise the rent, then fix and maintain my
20 apartment, get rid of the mice, roaches, and
21 bedbugs in the building. Fix the leak in my
22 ceiling and holes in my floor and maybe even give
23 me windows that aren't permanently fogged up and
24 obstruct my view outside.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
your testimony. I believe our next speakers, Sarah
Lazur. Sarah, we see you but you're muted. You're

1

2 still muted.

3

MS. LAZUR: Hi. Thank you.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi. We can hear

5

you now.

6

MS. LAZUR: Great. All right.

7

All right. My name is Sarah Lazur and I live at

8

825 St. Marks in Brooklyn. During the pandemic I

9

lost my job and even though the unemployment

10

supplement helped, my income for 2020 decreased by

11

30 percent. On the other hand, my rent doubled.

12

One of my house mates moved out

13

and there was no way to replace her and I was on

14

the hook for both rooms. And when I found an

15

apartment for just me, the rent was double what I

16

used to pay, and my rent burden is now 60 percent

17

of my income.

18

I'm one of the lucky people in my

19

neighborhood because my unionized job used to pay

20

okay. I had a retirement account and I know I'll

21

find another job eventually. But this year was a

22

huge setback. I had never been on unemployment

23

before in my life and it's hard to talk about it,

24

but I've fallen behind on student loans and I've

25

spent savings on rent and moving costs.

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And the cumulative effect also mean that down the road I'll have to retire a year later, if not more. And like so many of my neighbors, my whole life has taken a rollback, and it's only fair for the rent to rollback to compensate for the hardships that this pandemic has placed on middle class, working class and poor New Yorkers alike.

Rent stabilized tenants don't have assets to refinance or to sell off when catastrophe hit. And for decades they've been enriching landlords, the vast majority of whom have multiple properties, giving them continuous profits, even in times of economic crisis.

As a member of the Crown Heights Tenant Union, I've seen dozens of [zoom inaudible] histories and they show how the system has been stacked against us. Our rents are already inflated, not only because of past RGB votes, but also because landlords harass countless previous tenants out of their homes, racking up a cycle of 20 percent vacancy bonuses eventually deregulating half the neighborhood. That's why their complaints of economic hardship now are offensive. We need a

1

2 5 percent rent rollback to even begin to do right
3 by New York City tenants. Thank you.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
5 your testimony.

6

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: David?

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

8

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. Before we
9 go on, we'll just let everyone know we're at tenant
10 number 44. We have -- we have gone through all the
11 preregistered owners at this point so going
12 forward, it will be tenant. Folks, and we are on
13 number 44. I also just wanted to say if there are
14 folks here who didn't register, they don't want to
15 wait, that you can submit testimony to the board.
16 The testimony must be submitted no later than
17 midnight tonight to ensure that it gets to members
18 of the board prior to her final vote. You can find
19 information on submitting testimony on our website
20 at nyc.gov/rgb or you can leave audio testimony by
21 calling (929) 256-5472. (929) 256-5472.

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. And
23 we should do that in Spanish as well, right?

24

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.).

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Esteban Giron is

1

2 our next speaker. Thank you for your patience.

3 The floor is yours.

4

5 MR. GIRON: Good evening. You
6 can hear me?

6

7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, we can hear
8 you and see you.

8

9 MR. GIRON: Great. My name is
10 Esteban Giron. I'm a member of the Crown Heights
11 Tenant Union and also part of the Rent Justice
12 Coalition. I also serve on the Board of Tenants
13 PAC. My husband and I have lived at 951 Carroll
14 Street in Crown Heights for the past eight years.

14

15 Until we both contracted COVID
16 and my husband lost his job, we were paying at
17 about 30 percent of our monthly income on rent.
18 Now, with only one income we are at 75 percent in
19 rent. So we're not alone. Jobs have not returned
20 to New York City at the same rate that they have in
21 other cities and many families find themselves with
22 at least one former income earner unemployed. It's
23 going to be a long time back for families like
24 mine.

24

25 We are -- I actually am dealing
with the debilitating symptoms of long COVID or

1

2 Post-Acute COVID, which is anywhere from 30 to 60
3 percent of COVID sufferers will have. That means
4 that, in New York City, 300,000 to 600,000 folks
5 right now are going to be temporarily disabled and
6 unable to work. This is a second pandemic that's
7 going to be with us long after the masks have come
8 off for good.

9 Now, to say here that I think
10 it's rich to hear landlords complaining that
11 tenants wouldn't want to apply for emergency rental
12 assistance when they've never filled out a form
13 with those sorts of details ever in their life to
14 turn into the government. The tenant movement
15 fought really hard to cancel rent, which would have
16 fully compensated small mom and pop landlords for
17 their arrears, if they had opened their books just
18 as though if they had applied for the hardship from
19 DHCR, which we know they don't do.

20 So the Emergency Rental
21 Assistance Program is not our fault, it's not the
22 tenants movements doing so, landlord shouldn't get
23 to use the programs inadequacy to further burden
24 the tenants who try to get that rent covered for
25 the most vulnerable landlords. Mom and pop lenders

1

2 should also stopped letting the RSA use them to
3 bring maximum profits to the corporate landlords.
4 That said, I urged the board to rollback rents and
5 stop entertaining the notion that there is, in any
6 way, an even or balanced fight here. Landlords
7 profit is not equal to us having a roof over our
8 heads. Thank you.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
10 your testimony. Our next speaker is going to be --
11 I'm waiting for them to be promoted to panel -- to
12 panelists. I think it's Saleha Sattar. You are
13 muted and we do not see your camera, if you want
14 your camera on.

15

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: David, I tried
16 to promote the speaker and they didn't accept my
17 promotion. But she -- the testifier is testifying
18 in Bengali.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

20

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: So I can try
21 promoting again.

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Is this Saleha
23 Sattar? Is that who we're talking about?

24

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yes. Yes.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Saleha, can you

1

2 hear us?

3

MS. SATTAR: Yes. Thank you so much for giving me a chance for my -- give my -- my opinion here. Okay. So if anybody's here for translate my speech? Anybody's here for help me?

7

8 -- is that --

9

MS. SATTAR: Bengali -- Bengali, yes.

11

12 --

13

MS. SATTAR: If not -- if not -- if not, it is okay. If not that is okay just for two minutes, okay?

16

17 --

18

MS. SATTAR: My name is --

19

MS, GARCIA: Would you like me to see if anyone in the coalition can jump in and do it for you or would you like to proceed in English?

22

MS. SATTAR: I gave name, Rema [zoom inaudible but she's not here. So if is here is okay.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Well, yeah --

1

2

MS. SATTAR: I think it's okay.

3

I'll give you a speech in my two minutes. Okay.

4

Thank you so much for -- okay. So My name is

5

Saleha Sattar, I'm a leader with the Bangladesh

6

Tenants Union and my landlord is (inaudible).

7

Actually, -- sorry. I'm sorry for that.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: We -- we hear

9

you fine.

10

MS. SATTAR: Yeah?

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah.

12

MS. SATTAR: One year problems

13

cannot be finished two minutes, I know that,

14

everybody knows that. I have had to face a lot of

15

problems. The main problems is our -- our work

16

place. We are working class immigrant households

17

and we have been seriously hurt by the COVID-19

18

pandemic and struggle to pay rent. If one cannot

19

work for a year or more, he or she retires for the

20

last three or five years back.

21

If the rent is the problem, how

22

people pay extra there? I know that the people of

23

this country live happily in peace. But today we

24

have to talk about our problems in this way. But

25

we respect in this -- but we respect the law of

1

2 this country. Always we respect all kinds of law.
3 But now I say, we do not want an increase in rent,
4 we want to rollback in rent. Thank you so much for
5 everything.

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
7 your testimony.

8 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you. That
9 was beautifully said. We had arranged -- someone
10 named Rema was going to come in and translate, but
11 that person wasn't present, so we apologize for
12 that, but that was well done. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: And our next
14 speaker is going to be promoted soon. I see the
15 name -- I'm sorry I -- I want to catch the name
16 properly if I can. I think last name is Khan. I'm
17 not sure if it's Dr. Khan or MD Khan.

18 MR. KHAN: MD Khan.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Oh, welcome.

20 MR. KHAN: Welcome. How are you?

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Good. Thank
22 you. The floor is yours.

23 MR. KHAN: Yes. My name is MD
24 Khan. I live in 88-15168, State Jamaica, New York
25 11432. I am living there at Reality Housing

1

2 Holding Corporation (phonetic) building. This
3 building is a lot of building, but I living -- this
4 building we get total -- rent established in this
5 building 188 apartment. Residents is the
6 Bangladesh people living is at 57. Before these,
7 there is a lot of people living here, but right now
8 is the only 57.

9 Backend apartments is very bad
10 right now. And we are very, very suffering from
11 Zara Realty. So we have a lot of Bangladeshi
12 people living this apartment because Zara Realty.
13 So many Bangladeshi coming again, is says living
14 this building but Zara Realty not allowed any
15 Bangladeshi tenant is by the rent these
16 Bangladeshi, so I cannot understand. This -- this
17 is the law country, but Zara is the -- too much
18 harassment from Zara many, many tenants.

19 So I just request this -- I am a
20 Bangladeshi tenant in there and I am a secretary,
21 but I cannot do nothing, but we are a lot of
22 program, a lot of demonstration, did it, but we
23 should not be any result about me, about -- about
24 our tenant. So last, I said, we -- we do not -- we
25 do -- we do not want that increase in rent, we want

1

2 a rollback in rent. Thank you very much,
3 everybody.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Mr.

5

Khan.

6

MR. KHAN: You are welcome.

7

MS. GARCIA: Andrew --

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm waiting for

9

--

10

MS. GARCIA: Andrew, can you

11

confirm that we are talking about Rema with a last

12

name B, as the person who is supposed to come in

13

support with interpretation in Bengali?

14

MS. BURGER: I already hit that

15

row on the sheet. Just give me a second and I'll

16

check it. I think that was the name. Yes. But I

17

can check it.

18

MS. GARCIA: Okay. I'll just

19

make sure that they know that they're members were

20

testifying because I didn't know that we were

21

waiting for her. I thought it was another

22

interpreter. Thanks.

23

MR MCLAUGHLIN: We can decide to,

24

you know, hold off and then go back to them if we

25

feel like that's a better way to proceed.

1

2 MS. GARCIA: I think it's their choice, to be
3 honest, but --

4 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay all right.
5 Sure.

6 MS. BURGER: The woman who
7 testified was the only one who requested
8 interpretation. Just for the record. So if
9 somebody else needs the interpretation, somebody
10 else can do it. If you could just let us know and
11 we will try to arrange it.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. I think
13 we're going to move onto our next speaker, Ziaul
14 Hassan. You are muted Ziaul, and your camera's
15 off. Okay, Now we can hear you and now we can see.
16 Welcome.

17 MR. HASSAN: Hello, sir. My name
18 is Ziaul Hassan. I'm living in 8830 [zoom
19 inaudible) Bluebird, Jamaica, New York, in the Zara
20 Development apartment -- Realty apartment. But we
21 face lot of problem since when we living in Zara.
22 They did not fixed our windows and especially in
23 the wintertime, they don't give us sufficient heat.
24 So this is one of our problem in our apartment and
25 now we're facing in pandemic, we lost our job, and

1

2 it is very difficult to pay the rent in that
3 moment. And last of all, I can say to you, we do
4 not want to increase in rent. We want to rollback
5 in rent. That's it. Thank you.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
7 your testimony.

8

MR. HASSAN: You're welcome.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: I believe are
10 next speaker is Antonia Martinez. Antonia, if you
11 unmute and if you want to put your camera on, we're
12 ready for your testimony. Hello.

13

MS. MARTINEZ: Hola. Hi. Good
14 evening.

15

**(Following was translated from
16 Spanish to English.)**

17

"Good afternoon to all! Thank you
18 for your time and attention! I'd like to begin by
19 addressing the RGB and reminding you that at
20 present the working class is going through very
21 difficult times. It's even more dire for many of us
22 who still have young children at home who are
23 completely dependent on us. Many heads of
24 households lost their income at the onset of the
25 pandemic.

1
2 At least one parent from each
3 household is still unemployed due to a company's
4 closure or because the company itself couldn't make
5 rent payments even before the pandemic. Some of us
6 have still not been able to find jobs. It's been
7 especially difficult for some of us who lost
8 parents, children, aunts, uncles, friends,
9 neighbors to COVID-19. Many parents had COVID-19
10 and, as a result of this, they incurred unexpected
11 but inevitable expenses. It is of utmost importance
12 that the RGB clearly analyze the difficulty we're
13 currently living through and make a fair and
14 reasonable decision! At present, it is especially
15 difficult to make rent payments since many of us
16 are paying upwards of 60 to 80% of our salaries.

17 All of our income goes towards
18 rent. To make matters worse, in the case of our
19 building, we've had to deal with constant
20 harassment, racism, and unlivable conditions for
21 several years at the hands of the landlord and his
22 employees. In the name of all NY citizens, we ask
23 that you dismiss any sort of rent increase since
24 it's the last thing we need at this moment.
25 Instead, what we need is help in finding jobs in

1

2 order to have a respectable income and a place to
3 live."

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
5 your testimony. I believe our next speaker is
6 Lesvia Mendez. Lesvia, you're muted and your
7 camera's not on. Andrew, maybe promote someone
8 else in the interim.

9

MR MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. She's
10 Spanish speaker, so we can translate that for you.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Yeah. If
12 someone could translate asking her to unmute and
13 turn on her camera if you'd like.

14

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Did we lose her?
16 I think we lost her. Yeah. So, Andrew, do you
17 want to maybe promote a couple of people just so we
18 have someone on deck? I see, I think our next
19 speaker is Mahfuzul Islam. You're muted and your
20 camera's off, if you want to turn that on.
21 Mahfuzul Islam, you're muted. If you could unmute
22 yourself. Andrew, do you want to maybe promote
23 someone else too? I see Toni --

24

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Just made it.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. I

1

2 see Toni Cabrera. Toni, can you unmute yourself?

3 And if you want to turn on your camera? I might --

4 Andrew, even promote a third person as people

5 figure this out --

6 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. That,

7 again, is a Spanish speaker, if you look at the --

8 the --

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry,

10 Andrew.

11 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. I'm

12 sorry.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Can you ask Toni

14 Cabrera to unmute himself and give instructions as

15 appropriate?

16 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Toni, welcome.

18 MR. CABRERA: (Speaking Spanish.)

19 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can hear you

21 and we can also see you. Thank you, Please --

22 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: -- your

24 testimony.

25 MR. CABRERA: Okay.

1

2

(Speaking Spanish.)

3

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

4

MR. CABRERA: (**Following was**

5

translated from Spanish)

6

"Well, in regards to rent payments

7

I don't believe there should be any increase or

8

additional payment. This affects specifically many

9

Latinos who've seen their savings dwindle as a

10

result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As you can surely

11

understand, many of us have lost our jobs and are

12

currently unemployed. By increasing rent payments

13

the quality of life of those of us who are

14

currently unemployed will be severely affected.

15

This is why so many of us have had to apply for

16

benefits to pay for back rent and cover our

17

expenses. I believe...I am convinced that at the

18

moment no rent increase should take place. There

19

should be a moratorium when it comes to these

20

issues. Officials intend to allow these increases

21

and the only ones who would benefit from them would

22

be landlords. This is my testimony and I'm at your

23

disposal to answer any concern from the RGB."

24

."MR. CABRERA: (Speaking

25

Spanish.)

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CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so much for your testimony. I see that Lesvia Mendez is back. If you can unmute yourself.

MS. MENDEZ: Yes. I unmute myself.

CHAIRMAN REISS: That's great. We don't -- we don't see you. If you want to put on your camera, you're welcome to.

MS. MENDEZ: It's all right. Time's of essence.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Your testimony is welcome now. Thank you.

MS. MENDEZ: Thank you. Just a minute. So where is my page? I lost my page. I'm sorry. Okay. Good evening. My name is the Lesvia Mendez. I live in Amherst and I have lived in my apartment for the last 30 years. Again, my concern is that I am retired on a fixed income. As you know, Social Security give you a few dollars, almost nothing, but they continue raising Medicare. Also landlords are allowing to continue increasing our rents with all kinds of MCIs -- I'm sorry. All kinds of MCIs to improve their property. I repeat, to improve their property.

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Just what they are doing, you know, in New York City? Remember, many families have to share apartments in order to be able to pay their rent. Some are out in shelters, and also, many are roaming the streets with all their belonging. Please, when you are going to cast your final vote, think how many people are going to be affected by your decision.

Also, let's not forget, especially this pandemic year, people are still trying to find -- to put their house in order. The pandemic is not finished and thousands of people still do not have a job. Have mercy. Whatever increase you are asking is unfair. Millions of people don't have that money. Remember the loved one that they have lost. Please, have -- have mercy.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for your testimony. I saw another -- Oh, I see. Kaia Westbrook, you're muted.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: Kaia Westbrook.

MS. GRAND-CAPONE: Actually, my name is Andrea Grand-Capone. Kaia is my daughter

1

2 and this is her account that she uses for her
3 school Zoom, so I apologize.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: It's okay. I'm
5 hearing some feedback, Andrea, just wait one
6 second.

7

MS. GRAND-CAPONE: Okay.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. We're
9 good to go. Kaia, I'm sorry, Andrea --

10

MS. GRAND-CAPONE: Yeah.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: -- please. The
12 floor is yours.

13

MS. GRAND-CAPONE: Okay. Good
14 evening, everyone. Thank you for the opportunity
15 to speak. My name is Andrea and I'm a single
16 mother to a seven year-old daughter. We live in a
17 rent-stabilized apartment in the Cobble Hill
18 section of Brooklyn. My daughter attends a really
19 excellent public school that it took us three years
20 to get into off the wait-list and it's walking
21 distance to our home in a very safe, wonderful
22 neighborhood.

23

I managed to get a rent stable
24 lease in this neighborhood in 2004, and I've lived
25 there since then, and my daughter's lived in the

1

2 apartment for her entire life. In October of 2019,
3 our building was acquired by some owners who have
4 basically managed to dislodge almost all of the
5 rent-stabilized tenants through ongoing
6 construction projects that I feel have been
7 unnecessarily prolonged.

8 My daughter has asthma and I was
9 forced to move her temporarily to live with her
10 grandmother because the construction dust was a
11 problem. I've made multiple city complaints. The
12 landlord completely denies there's an issue, even
13 though there's been lead found in the construction
14 dust, and they are now trying to evict us, even
15 though I have been completely current on my rent
16 throughout the entire COVID-19 pandemic.

17 I work in the film and television
18 industry which was largely shut down due to the
19 pandemic, and I still, under the crushing strain of
20 unemployment, managed to pay my rent every single
21 month.

22 I just wanted to say that a rent
23 increase at this time would put an unnecessary
24 strain and undermine the stability and the homes of
25 the most vulnerable among us, and in times of

1

2 crisis we should be protecting and safeguarding the
3 most vulnerable among us, including the
4 economically disadvantaged, the elderly, women, and
5 people of color, all of whom have been
6 disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
8 your testimony. I see Flor Moran is our next
9 speaker, Flor, you are muted and your camera's not
10 on, if you want your camera on.

11 MR MCLAUGHLIN: She's also
12 testifying in Spanish. Translation to help me.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

14 MS. MORAN: (**Following was**
15 **translated from Spanish to English.**)

16 "Good afternoon! My name is Flor
17 Morán and I live at 434 61 Street, Apt. 1D in
18 Sunset Park, Brooklyn. I'm here to testify and
19 offer you my opinion as to why you shouldn't
20 increase our rents. My husband is the only one who
21 is currently working.

22 At present, I am not working since
23 I am home taking care of my children until schools
24 open up again for in-person learning. My husband's
25 wages are not enough for us to cover all of our

1
2 expenses. It is so hard to make ends meet given
3 today's cost of living. We are paying more for
4 groceries, electricity, gas, clothes and other
5 necessities. Can you imagine what would happen if
6 we had to pay more for our rent? My husband had
7 COVID and wasn't able to work for quite some time.
8 All of our savings have gone to pay for rent,
9 groceries, utilities, and other necessities. Our
10 current situation worries us and keeps us up at
11 night. For this reason, I ask you to please
12 consider all the hardships experienced by tenants
13 before deciding to increase our rent. I not only
14 ask this of you on behalf of my own family, but on
15 behalf of all tenants who are living in the same
16 conditions. Please listen to our needs and worries
17 and help all of NYC's tenants by not only voting
18 for a 0% increase for a year, but for two. Thank
19 you for listening and have a good night!

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
21 your testimony.

22 Our next speaker has phone number
23 ending 105. If they could press star 6 to unmute
24 themselves, we could hear their testimony, and if
25 somebody could translate that, that'd be great.

1

2 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
3 Spanish.)

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Andrew, do you
5 want to promote someone also, just as we work
6 through these technical issues? This person is
7 ready. Yes. Person ending with phone 105, we
8 would like to know your name and we'd like to
9 listen to your testimony.

10 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
11 Spanish.)

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: You're unmuted,
13 but we can't hear you, but if you could talk, we're
14 ready to listen.

15 MS. BURGER: This is Lena
16 Melendez.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Lena Melendez,
18 we can't hear you. You're unmuted, but we can't
19 hear you.

20 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
21 Spanish.)

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Andrew, do you
23 want to promote someone else? Then We'll circle
24 back to Lena Melendez. Lena, can you hear us?

25 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking

1

2 Spanish.)

3

4 out to her.

5

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So then
7 we'll turn right now to Pilar De Jesus, if you want
8 to unmute yourself and if you want to put on your
9 camera, we're ready to hear your testimony. Pilar?

10

11 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
12 Spanish.)

13

14 MS. DE JESUS: Sorry, guys.

15

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

17

18 MS. DE JESUS: Hi. Good evening.
19 Good evening. My name is Pilar De Jesus. I'm the
20 Senior Advocacy Coordinator at TakeRoot Justice.
21 That is Quim, my sidekick. And I'm here to testify
22 not only as a Senior Advocacy Coordinator in the
23 tenant unit at TakeRoot Justice, but also as a
24 tenant.

25

26 And because my time is limited,
27 because when we have limited hearings, which is I
28 -- my opinion is pretty bad given the number of
29 tenants that -- rent-stabilized tenants that live
30 in the city and should be having access to this
31 meeting.

1
2 But I just wanted to say some of
3 these words that, for me, in my opinion, they're
4 not going to be nice words. They help me think
5 when people are talking here about rent increases.
6 I think about death. I think about violence. I
7 think about the mental health, the instability that
8 these discussions are causing the humans that are
9 living in this housings that before this
10 catastrophe, because people use the word pandemic
11 and crisis, but in my opinion, this is a
12 catastrophe.

13 This is something I've never seen
14 in the 40 years that I've existed on this planet.
15 And in the 60 something years that my mom has lived
16 here. And it's just really, like, I don't know
17 what word to use to say how you as the board,
18 especially members who even are considering a rent
19 increase, what violence that's going to cause the
20 tenants.

21 Do you see the mental -- the
22 unhealthy mental instability we have going on in
23 this city, with the homeless, right, the homeless
24 catastrophe we have going on in the city So is it
25 that that's what you want to do, add more violence

1

2 to this city? And it seems like that.

3

4 And the landlords here, who are
5 complaining broke, like I'm -- with my other folks,
6 open your books. I know for a fact that before
7 this catastrophe, many of these landlords have been
8 using money to pay for people to harass my tenants,
9 especially the undocumented tenants. Pretend like
10 they were ICE, so that they could violently, in my
11 opinion, be doing what we call domestic terrorism
12 to our tenants. So I'm just going to end on this.
13 Please really consider what harm your causing to
14 the mental health of New Yorkers.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
your testimony, Pilar.

16

MS. GARCIA: Lena can go next,
17 she's on.

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry, on
19 105?

20

MS. GARCIA: Correct.

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. So I'm
22 sorry, Sheila, what's the name?

23

MS. GARCIA: Mendez [sic]. Lena
24 Mendez.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Lena, we're

1

2 ready to hear your testimony, if you unmute.

3

4 hear me now?

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. We can.

6

MS. MELENDEZ: Okay. My name is
Lena Melendez, and I am a member of the Riverside
Edgecombe Neighborhood Association. For decades
landlords have raised rents illegally using IAI's,
where landlord don't have to produce a single
receipt, and no inspectors ever came to check if
those renovations were done. Most of those rents
have not been lowered back to where they should be.

14

You can't find an apartment in
New York City under \$1,600. Imagine trying to
scrape together \$1,600 if you're earning minimum
wage. The reality is that rents go up, yet wages
don't go up. The re-zonification of low-income
neighborhoods keep producing unaffordable rents,
and a net loss of rent-stabilized units instead of
the affordable units they're supposed to add.

22

We are not fully economically
recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic. Many
businesses did not survive and those jobs are gone,
leaving many to struggle, searching for work still.

25

1
2 Tenants who are backed up on
3 rents are having a hard time navigating the
4 Emergency Rental Assistance program online. It
5 didn't work the first time that rental assistance
6 was made for people who had to do it online and
7 it's not -- it's really difficult to do it online
8 now. Uploading documents, people can't navigate
9 the system online. Its -- most of the time it
10 crashes. You can't get through. It's a mess.

11 But I'm worried that once the
12 eviction moratorium is lifted, we will see the true
13 devastation of this pandemic. For these reasons,
14 we are calling for a 5 percent rent rollback.
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
17 your testimony. Paloma Lara, you're muted and your
18 camera's off, in case you want to turn it on.

19 MS. LARA: (*Following was*
20 *translated from Spanish to English.*)

21 "Good evening to all of you! My
22 name is Paloma Lara and I live in Washington
23 Heights. My neighborhood is primarily made up of
24 immigrants, the majority of them being Dominican.
25 This community has the biggest number of

1

2 rent-stabilized apartments in the borough of
3 Manhattan. It is also one of the most affected
4 communities by COVID-19.

5 There have been many deaths and
6 very high levels of infection. There are also many
7 people who've lost their jobs or have experienced
8 salary cuts. This is not the moment to raise rents;
9 this would be detrimental to Black and Latino
10 families. A rent increase will make way for mass
11 evictions. People will be forced to decide between
12 paying for groceries or the rent. More importantly,
13 no one wants to be evicted from their home. Some
14 families may even be considering taking out high
15 interest loans to pay their rent. This will only
16 drown them in debt. More importantly, and to quote
17 Pilar who spoke before me, we need to understand
18 that this is a tragedy. Our communities have been
19 heavily affected by everything that's happened. It
20 is not the time to raise the rent. It is a time to
21 support our community given the suffering they've
22 faced.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
24 your testimony. I see Amy Collado. If you want to
25 unmute and if you want to put on your camera,

1

2 that'd be great. And Andrew, if you want to bring
3 someone up on deck, that'd be great to. Amy, we're
4 ready to hear you.

5

MS. COLLADO: Hi. I'm not sure.

6

There we go. Okay.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: We see you and

8

we hear you.

9

MS. COLLADO: Thank you. Okay.

10

Hi. My name is Amy Collado, I'm a tenant

11

organizer, small business owner, and

12

rent-stabilized tenant. During this pandemic I

13

became head of household, since my partners

14

independent record label and the entire music

15

industry came to a full stop. I also needed to

16

support my family, such as my sister, with

17

groceries, since my 11 year-old niece began

18

learning remotely, and for my mother, who couldn't

19

afford to sustain herself on her fixed income, and

20

being afraid to go outside.

21

Additionally, many of the tenants

22

I work with continue to remain rent burdened, even

23

since finding jobs. I've personally helped many

24

pay the internet bill so that they can continue to

25

stay connected.

1

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25

I share this to continue to paint the reality of who continues to remain mostly impacted. By now, we've all noticed that the RSA [zoom inaudible], sad attempt to organize and strategically put forward the small landlord story, to show a very minority experience.

I just want to remind everyone that before 2020, landlords had experienced profits of over 40 percent, for more than 13 years consecutively. We know that a majority of NYC landlords are corporations with huge portfolios. Even before the pandemic, I worked with buildings who are part of the Alternative Enforcement Program, where each year 200 buildings are listed as hazardous and in disrepair. Many listed as small, and none who had used any of their profits to maintain their buildings. back then.

Each year we hear landlords complaining of hardship and do very little to maintain their buildings, even when they do see increases. A landlord mentioned \$9 being nothing, but to a hardworking tenant barely making ends meet, \$9 is a metro card to and from work, or to pick up their kid from childcare. \$9 can mean an

1

2 extra carton of food, of eggs, of bread, and a
3 carton of milk a month.

4

We ask that this board not
5 consider the reality of -- to consider the reality
6 of us struggling tenants and not the 2 percent and
7 3 percent proposed by landlords. We call for no
8 increases. Thank you.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
10 your testimony. I think our next speaker is Adina
11 Marmelstein. Adina, your muted and your camera's
12 not on, if you want to put it on. Adina, your
13 still muted. There's two Adinas now. There we go,
14 we see you.

15

MS. MARMELSTEIN: Yeah. I just
16 found unmute.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello, hello.

18

MS. MARMELSTEIN: [inaudible].

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: So Adina, we
20 hear some feedback. Do you have two devices on
21 right now?

22

MS. MARMELSTEIN: Okay.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: I think that's
24 better. No. Still feedback.

25

MS. MARMELSTEIN: Yes. I'm just

1

2 trying to -- when you got me on, you changed my
3 whole screen by -- I'm trying to get my screen
4 back.

5

 CHAIRMAN REISS: We see you. So
6 if you want to testify, we see you and hear you, If
7 you want to testify.

8

 MS. MARMELSTEIN: No. But my
9 documents, they got covered because this screen --
10 wait. Let me get out of one device, that's the
11 only way I'm going to --

12

 MS. GARCIA: Double click on the
13 screen, it should get smaller.

14

 CHAIRMAN REISS: Sheila, you
15 should run a technical, you know, consulting
16 company, I think.

17

 MS. GARCIA: Any organizer in the
18 city has been supporting folks with technology
19 throughout this pandemic, so we've learned a lot of
20 tools of the trade. Adina seems to be frozen on my
21 screen.

22

 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah, I think --
23 Adina, you're frozen. I don't know if that's a
24 reflection of your internet or something else. I'm
25 not sure. Andrew, do you want to promote someone

1

2 else in the interim?

3

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. Sure.

4

Let me -- I'm going to go back.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Adina, if you

6

can hear me, you might want to just testify with

7

your voice and not use your video possibly that'll

8

make it easier.

9

MS. GARCIA: What number are we

10

up to now?

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm going to --

12

Sheila, I'm going to call on Mahfuzul Islam while

13

we're -- get that information.

14

MS. GARCIA: We're generally in

15

the 70s.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Mahfuzul Islam,

17

can you hear me? And you -- we're ready to listen

18

to your testimony. It looks like you're not muted,

19

so we're ready to hear you.

20

MR. ISLAM: I -- My name is

21

Mahfuzul Islam. I'm a tenant organizer with Chhaya

22

CDC. I've been working with tenants for quite

23

awhile now and I've been hearing all the hardships

24

they've been going through. I see that this is a

25

difficult time for everybody, but considering

1

2 circumstances of where landlords are able to
3 compensate for the losses from the last year
4 through IRAP, tenants need a break themselves in
5 this situation.

6 So from our end, from the
7 experience regarding hearing from the -- hearing
8 the hardship of all the tenants from this past
9 year, we believe that a rollback would be -- would
10 be great for the tenants and if possible, you know,
11 if not, a freeze -- a rent freeze. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
13 your testimony.

14 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: I'm trying Adina
15 again. Hopefully --

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Sure. That
17 sounds good. Adina, if you -- we -- we --

18 MS. MARMELSTEIN: Yes. Can you
19 hear me?

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: We can hear you.

21 MS. MARMELSTEIN: Okay. Yeah,
22 okay. Great. Thank you. I know everything about
23 tech but some reason -- anyway, when you put me on
24 it just sparked my screen. Thank you.

25 My name is that Adina

1

2 Marmelstein, Group Garden Village. Lived entirely
3 Upper West Side, my apartment, 360 Central Park
4 West for the 31 years. Landlord ruined our lives,
5 always living in fear of eviction, loss of home and
6 possession. As a child, my dad died, landlord
7 threw all our possessions on the street, \$50
8 monthly, nothing to do with nonpayment.

9

We shouldn't live to live like
10 this in the greatest city, in the greatest country.
11 1990, my sister and I signed a lease together and
12 after we moved in, landlord whited my name off the
13 lease, nowhere in lease ever my name. The landlord
14 got all the rent increases right out at lease. And
15 that's a violation of RBG and DHCR guidelines.

16

31 years fighting their court and
17 legal proceedings to save my apartment and senior
18 that lives with me, forcing -- 2019 to sign it.
19 Stipulation. Judge Ruth Carol [sic] Feinman said
20 that if I don't sign it, I'll be evicted, pay the
21 landlord \$86,000 arrears. They claim attorney fees
22 and interest. Landlord created arrears by not
23 accepting some rent and now leaves us powerless.

24

We are going to be evicted end of
25 the memorandum, August 31st, our beloved home view,

1

2 Hudson River, New Jersey. Tenants have no power.

3 We are the fabric of the good neighbors and people

4 of New York. Relied on government reduced

5 electricity eligible but couldn't get COVID rental

6 or cash assistance.

7 Our landlords in [zoom inaudible)

8 owns 33 apartments in Manhattan and 100 in New York

9 city. Landlords do not suffer, big or small. New

10 Yorkers spend their lives fighting to keep their

11 homes. Many, 20 year olds have moved dozens of

12 times. And landlord's favorites in court's --

13 court's lawyers have money for representation to

14 fight for increases. And we represent to you, all

15 is fair Democratic. But our homes are in constant

16 jeopardy where we navigate our lives.

17 300,000, 30 percent Upper West

18 Side's moved out during the pandemic. Who can keep

19 apartments when you can't afford and pay rent?

20 Landlords got they're rent in COVID. Those didn't

21 stop for all who couldn't and still can't pay rent.

22 Because, you know, there's no jobs, rising prices,

23 struggling to make our homes payments.

24 Unemployment rate is only based on receiving

25 unemployment.

1
2 We've done COVID food, helped
3 paid rent, from -- at UIs and was package used.
4 Low poverty level, aging, our world not open. For
5 rent board has given landlords increase so long.
6 Landlords get taxes off the repairs, construction,
7 MCI. We have no [zoom inaudible] number, power,
8 but to pay our rent without repairs, no party. Our
9 roof over our heads is our party begging work. No
10 rent increases, we a lot more than this not to be
11 kicked out and have rights to live in our homes.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you,
14 Adina. Thank you. So I didn't kind of pre-clear
15 this with the board, but it's past 8:00. I'm
16 thinking a ten minute break is in order. Do I --
17 do I -- okay. So we're -- we're not going to end
18 the meeting, but let's all just -- we'll mute
19 ourselves and put on -- our cameras on mute as
20 well. For those in attendance, we will be back in
21 ten minutes, which is at 8:13. And we look forward
22 to hearing your testimony at that time. Thank you.

23 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
24 Spanish.)

25 (Short recess taken.)

1

2

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25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Members,
it's 8:13. And if you turn on your cameras just so
we know that we're all here, that'd be great.
Well, I know Christina and I are here.

MS. DEROSE: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN REISS: And Robert, and
Scott, and Alex, and Leah, and Sheila, and Andrew,
most importantly. And Cecilia.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Oh, David.

CHAIRMAN REISS: All right. I
think it's critical mass, Andrew, to proceed; is
that right?

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. I think
that's good.

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Maybe it's a
good time to just reread that announcement about
Spanish folks who would like to call in and give
that information out. So if Olvin or Liz can read
that for folks, that'd be great.

MR. CABA: Very well.
(Speaking Spanish.)

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. I think
we're ready for our next person to testify. Okay.

1

2 I see we have Hilary Berrezueta.

3

4 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah. It could
be Jennifer actually.

5

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Could be
Jennifer. So the person whose name says Hillary,
7 is there a person actually named Jennifer? Is that
8 what you're telling me, Andrew?

9

MS. BURGER: Maybe.

10

11 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yeah, Maybe.
12 She signed up -- it's the same last name but she
signed up is as --

13

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Jennifer
Berrezueta? If you unmute yourself. And Andrew,
15 if you can bring someone up on deck. Jennifer,
16 you're still muted.

17

MS. BERREZUETA: Okay. Yeah.

18

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. We hear
you.

20

MS. BERREZUETA: Yeah.

21

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

22

23 MS. BERREZUETA: (*The following
was translated from Spanish to English.*)

24

25 "Good evening! First and foremost,
I'd like to greet all of the members of the Board.

1
2 My testimony is as follows. We do not agree, mainly
3 all of those who are in need, like me, like so many
4 others who live here in NYC that there should be a
5 rent increase. Especially because as all of us know
6 we are all going through COVID, through a pandemic.
7 We have been left with no jobs and are unable to
8 pay for utilities, rent, or groceries for our
9 children. On top of all of this, I was the victim
10 of an accident in 2019 and I returned home eight
11 months later in 2020. It was a very bad accident. I
12 haven't been able to work since that time.

13 A rent increase would be unfair
14 because I am not working. I have no other means to
15 pay any more than I already do. I am both a mother
16 and father to my daughters and the only income in
17 the home is from my job. I don't quite know how it
18 is that we'll be able to pay for a rent increase if
19 it goes through. Please look inside your hearts! A
20 rent increase would not be fair to any of us!"

21

22 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

23 MS. BERREZUETA: (Speaking
24 Spanish.)

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so

1

2 much for your testimony. I believe our next
3 speaker is Emmanuel Yusuf. Emmanuel, welcome.

4

MR. YUSUF: Yes.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

6

MR. YUSUF: Hello, ladies and
7 gentlemen. Good evening.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Evening.

9

MR. YUSUF: Well, like I told you
10 before, it is nice to have some kind of something
11 to present evidence because nothing change in my
12 building. My name is Emmanuel Yusuf and I
13 represent 1111 Gerard Avenue. Hello?

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: We're here. We
15 can hear you.

16

MR. YUSUF: Okay. 1111 Gerard
17 Avenue. I've been living here for about 25 years
18 and there is not a change. If you can see, we have
19 some kind of numbers to the building. We have D
20 minus or something like that. So the landlord is
21 not taking care of the building and again, I want
22 you guys to please consider what's going on in New
23 York City here.

24

Before the pandemic, people are
25 really sick and tired of all these increases in the

1

2 rent while the landlord, they are having fun.

3 Well, I do not say this one with any kind of

4 prejudice or something like that, but that's what

5 is happening. Please, people are getting very,

6 very tired and angry.

7 Look at what is going on. People

8 are becoming sick. I don't know what is going on

9 in New York City. We don't want New York City to

10 become a city of zombies because, you know, some

11 people have been kicked here and there, senior

12 citizens and everybody.

13 I am having a problem paying my

14 rent because I am just on Social Security. So

15 before I pay my medication and everything else, I

16 have nothing else. And I'm begging you to rollback

17 the rent for 5 percent at least so that everybody

18 will be able to even have a little smile and

19 confidence in you guys. And I believe that you see

20 what is going on.

21 Personally, I cry sometimes when I

22 see, you know, some people being kicked here and

23 there because of --

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for

25 your testimony.

1

2

MR. YUSUF: Be -- be -- thank

3

you.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. I

5

think our next speaker is Elinor Campos. Welcome.

6

MS. CAMPOS: *(The following was*

7

translated from Spanish to English.)

8

"Good evening! First and foremost,

9

I'd like to greet all of the members of the Board.

10

My testimony is as follows. We do not agree, mainly

11

all of those who are in need, like me, like so many

12

others who live here in NYC that there should be a

13

rent increase. Especially because as all of us know

14

we are all going through COVID, through a pandemic.

15

We have been left with no jobs and

16

are unable to pay for utilities, rent, or groceries

17

for our children. On top of all of this, I was the

18

victim of an accident in 2019 and I returned home

19

eight months later in 2020. It was a very bad

20

accident. I haven't been able to work since that

21

time. A rent increase would be unfair because I am

22

not working. I have no other means to pay any more

23

than I already do. I am both a mother and father to

24

my daughters and the only income in the home is

25

from my job. I don't quite know how it is that

1

2 we'll be able to pay for a rent increase if it goes
3 through. Please look inside your hearts! A rent
4 increase would not be fair to any of us!"

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

6

Thank you. Our next speaker is Felix Cortijo.

7

Felix, you're muted.

8

MR. CORTIJO: Muted. You can see

9

me now?

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: We can't see --

11

we could hear you, but we can't see you, if you

12

want to turn on your camera.

13

MR. CORTIJO: Camera. I don't

14

know how you mess with this camera.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: You don't have

16

to turn your camera on. You -- it's nice if you

17

can, but it's not necessary.

18

MR. CORTIJO: Okay. It's not

19

necessary? Great. Well, I hope that the Rent

20

Guidelines Board listens to all the testimonies

21

that are been given out by all these tenants. They

22

suffering a lot. It's not -- it's not fair that

23

the Rent Guidelines Board will raise the rent to

24

them.

25

You're doing -- you're doing very

1
2 well, Mr. Reiss. The Rent Guidelines Board
3 should've brought their own -- their own
4 interpreters instead of bringing that also to the
5 tenants to bring the interpreters. It's definitely
6 inhumane for them to -- let's change the script.
7 Let's change -- let's see if it was you who was
8 over here asking us and we -- asking us for -- for
9 help and for assistance. Would you -- would you do
10 that? I mean, the -- you would be the one in need
11 and we're the ones that we decided whether you need
12 it or not.

13 I'm just a community resident in
14 the neighborhood and I understand what some of the
15 tenants are going through. A lot of these
16 buildings, they need repairs. That's what they --
17 the tenants complain about. Not just that they're
18 increasing the rent. Because I tell them -- I tell
19 them listen, you could run the building on your own
20 rents. You don't need anybody else to tell you how
21 much or how little or whatever. You could take all
22 that rent and run your own building, okay?

23 MR. CORTIJO: Now, many -- again,
24 many -- many apartments need repairs. Like for
25 example, me. My -- my floor is all wood and it

1

2 squeaks, and I have a problem with my -- the guy
3 underneath me, he wanna kill me. Well, you know,
4 landlord, fix the floor. Now fix the floor, you
5 know. And if you come around, you've been living
6 for a building for 20 something years just like --
7 just like I have been and many tenants have, you
8 see the depreciation.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

10 Peter?

11

MR. CORTIJO: Depreciation. No,

12

no, no, no. Okay. Thank you.

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Your time is up.

14

Thank you. Our next speaker is phone number ending

15

497. Andrew, do we have a name for that person?

16

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: It's Ervin.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry. Say

18

it again?

19

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Ervin Bennett.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Purvin [sic]

21

Bennett. You're muted. If you press star 6, you

22

can unmute yourself.

23

MR. BENNETT: Can you hear me

24

now?

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CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Welcome.

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MR. BENNETT: Good evening. My name is Ervin Bennett. I live at 215 East 164th Street for the past 30 years. My landlord is Einstein Associates. I live in my apartment past 30 years. We never seen a pandemic like this before in -- in this -- in this country.

In New York, we have thousands of dead in the Bronx where the -- where the income runner are dead. The landlord don't make repairs, but they're working on their buildings. In my community as I speak, there are four buildings where you have scaffold around them where they are working on roofs, [zoom inaudible]. It's my building, they installed forty cameras. You know that I'm -- MCI, coming. Where you care nothing about it because the landlord thinks ultimate money, where you the board have nothing to do about. What you had something about is to rollback rent.

We have seen where the -- the income earner have died. Our children lose their parents. Our children lose their grandparents. The children can't afford them to lose their community also. You also think about that. You

1

2 can make our children stay in the community. You
3 can let them stay in their school, they can stay in
4 -- in -- in their home they're living to now by
5 rolling back rent where these children can stay,
6 where we don't have the pandemic of losing people
7 who have been out in the street, losing their home.

8 I pay over 40 percent of my -- of
9 my income for rent. Please do something to help
10 us. You're only one can help us now by rolling
11 back the rent and save our community, save our
12 community, save our community. Save the city of
13 New York by rolling back rent where people stay in
14 their homes, where people can together once more
15 and stay in their homes, please help us by rolling
16 back rent.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
18 your testimony.

19 MR. BENNETT: Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our
21 next speaker is George Sotiroff. George, are --
22 hey, welcome.

23 MR. SOTIROFF: Thank you. Ladies
24 and gentlemen of the Rent Guidelines Board, how
25 many of you have lost your employment because of

1

2 COVID-19? No hands? How many of you are
3 rent-burdened? No hands? How many of you will be
4 victimized by the predatory landlord industry's
5 attempt to evict 1.4 million rent-stabilized
6 tenants once the rent moratorium is lifted? Still
7 no hands.

8 How many of you empathize with
9 the rent burdened? Oh, two hands. How many of you
10 understand just how detrimental to society are the
11 aims of the predatory landlord industry? Same two
12 hands? How many of you believe that people
13 generally are aware that before becoming president,
14 Donald Trump secured \$88-and-a-half million in
15 subsidies and tax breaks to the luxury housing for
16 the rich of New York City?

17 What's wrong with this picture?
18 Have we completely lost it as a society? It
19 certainly appears so. If your counter argument is
20 concern for the small landlord, then how many of
21 you are willing to guarantee a 10 percent profit to
22 any landlord willing to open his books? Do I see
23 any hands? If not, why not? A guaranteed profit
24 of 10 percent should be irresistible to anyone
25 crying honestly of pecuniary strangulation. You

1

2 know perfectly well that every single landlord, big
3 or small, is going to fight like a Trump to conceal
4 his financial records from prying eyes.

5

Ladies and gentlemen, not one of
6 you is president of the United States. None of you
7 is governor of the great State of New York. Not a
8 one of you is mayor of this vibrant and exciting
9 city. Not one of you has any of those kinds of
10 power, but with the little bit of power that you do
11 have here, you can and you must do the right thing
12 and vote for a rent rollback. Thank you.

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
14 your testimony.

15

MS. BURGER: David, can I make a
16 quick announcement?

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah.

18

MS. BURGER: I just want to
19 reiterate the issue where your name needs to match
20 the name that we're looking for and maybe you're
21 sharing a Zoom account on a computer, maybe you
22 don't realize it's just your first name. There's
23 someone with their hand up with the initials M.S.
24 We do not have you on the pre-registration list.
25 If you are pre-registered and that's why your hand

1

2 is up, please e-mail to the e-mail address that's
3 got in touch with you. Thank you.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thanks,
5 Danielle. I think our next speaker is Gloribel
6 Castillo. Gloribel, I think you're unmuted, but
7 your camera's off if you want to put it on.

8

MS. CASTILLO: Sure.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

10

MS. CASTILLO: Hello. Okay. So
11 My name is Gloribel Castillo, and I live in Bronx,
12 and I'm a CASA leader, and this is what I have to
13 say. I'm here today to tell you about my problem's
14 not paying rent for three months. For us, the
15 pandemic has ruined everyone's life as --
16 everyone's life. Me as a single parent. I am very
17 angry and scared.

18

Well, it's -- well, it's not the
19 same when you were working and getting your salary.
20 Sorry. And you can manage your bills -- you can
21 manage your bill. Now, I am unemployed in the
22 pandemic with 3 -- \$703, which is a nightmare
23 because my rent is 1,362. The money is not enough
24 to pay my bills -- to pay my bills like the
25 internet for my daughter's school and my food and

1

2 credit cards.

3

4 On April, I received my
5 daughter's college tuition payment, right in March,
6 but the amount, the \$7,850, in which I paid half.
7 By August 1st, I have to pay the other half. RGB,
8 please help us -- help us. My child -- first comes
9 my child, then the rent. Please do something about
10 it. Thank you.

11

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
13 your testimony. Our next speaker is Gabriella
14 Carrera.

15

16 MS. CARRERA: My name is -- oh.

17

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

19

20 MS. CARRERA: Welcome and thank
21 you. Hi. My name is Gabriella Carrera. I'm with
22 Movement for Justice in el Barrio. At Tuesday's
23 public hearing, our member, Berlin Sanchez, a
24 monolingual Spanish speaking immigrant woman of
25 color had taken time off work to testify to your
26 board, but she was not provided with an English
27 interpreter on either Zoom nor YouTube and the
28 public was unable to understand her testimony.

29

30 The same problem occurred last
31 year when another member of our organization and an

1

2 essential worker gave testimony at -- in Spanish at
3 one of your hearings. This caused us to submit a
4 written complaint to your board, which apparently
5 was ignored because the problem persists a year
6 later. The voices of immigrant women are -- that
7 are essential workers need to be heard by everyone
8 and not muffled.

9

We ask again that you change the
10 way you organize these hearings to demonstrate the
11 respect non English-speaking tenants deserve, and
12 so that their struggles may be understood by all.
13 I will now read Berlin's testimony in English and
14 ask that you provide us with her full two minutes
15 so that this time, her voice may be understood by
16 all.

17

My name is Berlin Sanchez and I'm
18 a member of Movement for Justice in el Barrio, and
19 we do not want you to vote in favor of the rent
20 increase. We had certain problems as a result of
21 the pandemic. We were left without jobs, without
22 food, nutritional necessities. We were unable to
23 pay for metro cards. We have children in our homes
24 and we do not have the means to buy the milk and
25 diapers.

1
2 The pandemic has affected us to
3 such an extent that it has left us without wages
4 and our rent accumulated for the majority of us who
5 are low-income. Therefore, if you all vote in
6 favor of rent increases, the only thing you will be
7 giving rise to is that overdue rent payments
8 continue to accumulate. We trust that you will
9 make the best decision to support the community
10 that is most affected.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
12 your testimony. Our next speaker has not been
13 promoted yet. I believe our next speaker is Imelda
14 Vazquez. Imelda if you unmute yourself and if you
15 want to put on your camera.

16 MS. VAZQUEZ: Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

18 MS. VAZQUEZ: Hello, my name is
19 (The following was translated from Spanish To
20 English.) Imelda Vazquez.

21 "Hello, my name is Imelda Vázquez
22 and I live at 115 McKinley Street, Apt. 21A and I'm
23 here with CASA. During the COVID-19 pandemic I lost
24 my job. I am a single mother with two small
25 children. I owe approximately \$7,000 in back rent,

1

2 aside from the electric bill, other utilities,
3 Internet service, as well as basic home expenses.
4 The eviction moratorium expires August 31st and I'm
5 worried. I can't afford a rent increase since I am
6 unable to pay more than I already do by working
7 part time.

8 The first round of stimulus
9 payments that the government offered us has been
10 both traumatizing and frustrating for many of us
11 since we have not been recipients of that aid.
12 During the pandemic, landlords denied us basic
13 services thus trampling our very dignity. We've
14 paid the rent month by month and the fact that many
15 have defaulted on payments is a proven fact given
16 the pandemic. Rents cannot be increased! We don't
17 want that. We want a rent rollback and not a rent
18 increase. Thank you!"

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

21 Someone with phone number ending
22 866. I believe that is Andres Vargas. If you hit
23 star 6, we could -- you -- welcome. Please
24 testify.

25 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

1

2

MR. VARGAS: Hello.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi. Welcome.

4

Please testify.

5

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

7

MR. VARGAS: (*Following was*

8

translated from Spanish to English.)

9

"Good afternoon! My name is Andrés

10 Vargas and I live at 1050 Carroll Place here in the

11 Bronx. I'd like to testify today because the

12 pandemic has heavily affected me since last year. I

13 am not the only one. There are many New Yorkers who

14 have been affected by this situation. I barely

15 worked last year. The same goes for this year since

16 New York has not bounced back from this. Rents are

17 already too high, even to simply move to another

18 apartment.

19

If you decide to increase rents,

20 there will be no affordable apartments left for us

21 to pay for. Other expenses have also gone up,

22 including supermarket prices for groceries and

23 transportation. Supposedly there will be fare

24 hikes. We have still not fully recovered from the

25 COVID-19 pandemic. I am not the only one who has

1

2 suffered. As I said before, there are thousands of
3 New Yorkers who have suffered.

4

5 Lastly, the landlord has not been
6 considerate with us given what we've already gone
7 through. He only thinks about money and the back
8 rent that is due, despite being the owner of more
9 than fifty buildings in the City. I ask that you
10 please put yourself in our shoes and that you not
11 increase the rent like last year. Last year, rents
12 were frozen and I hope that is the case this year.
13 Thank you!"

14

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
16 your testimony. Our next speaker is Marilyn
17 Mullins. Marilyn, if you could unmute and if you
18 want to put on your camera, that'd be great.
19 Marilyn?

20

21 MS. MULLINS: Yes. Okay. Hello.

22

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi. We can hear
24 you.

25

26 MS. MULLINS: Okay.

27

28 CHAIRMAN REISS: If you want to
29 put your camera on, that will be great too but it's
30 not necessary..

31

32 MS. MULLINS: I'm going to give

1

2 it a shot. Okay. I don't know how to start my
3 camera. Could you start my camera for me? Okay.
4 Oh, okay. Start the video for me. Okay.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

6

MS. MULLINS: Thank you. Okay.

7 Thank you. Hello, my name is Marilyn Mullins and
8 I'm a CASA leader. I live at 1072 Woodycrest
9 Avenue, High Bridge section of the Bronx for 39
10 years. My landlord is David Einstein.

11

COVID have impacted us all. The
12 way I was impacted was by my landlord harassing me
13 for my share of the rent and Section 8 share of the
14 rent. He wrote a letter on April 22nd, stating
15 that I had 14 days to pay my share of the rent and
16 Section 8 share of the rent. The amount had to be
17 paid in full.

18

The letter was given to me by
19 superintendent on April 24th, which I know by then
20 the court's was not open. The amount was
21 \$1,788.99. I didn't have the amount to give him
22 but by being with CASA, I knew a little new -- I
23 knew a little something. I would have to choose
24 between paying my rent and my utility bills and
25 buying medicine.

1
2 We don't need another rent
3 increase, we need a rent rollback. I have major
4 violations in my apartments which the landlord
5 takes no consideration of giving me no service at
6 no time. I fell in my bathroom and the next month
7 I'm supposed to have surgery. My landlord have not
8 reached out to me, but that's all right. It's all
9 good too. My landlord had put paperwork in for MCI
10 -- oh.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
12 your testimony.

13 MS. MULLINS: You welcome. Thank
14 you for listening to me.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. I
16 think Richard Washington is our next speaker.
17 Richard, you're muted. Okay. Great. And if you
18 want to unmute -- put on your camera, that'd be
19 great too.

20 MR. WASHINGTON: I don't see
21 where I can.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: No worries.

23 MR. WASHINGTON: Okay. Well, I
24 want to give my testimony. How you-all doing
25 today. I feel like there should be a rollback on

1

2 rent because yes, a lot of people have experienced
3 hardship during the COVID pandemic but -- there are
4 a lot of conditions that happened pre-COVID
5 pandemic where there are molds, holes in the walls,
6 ceilings falling down, and then you expect people
7 to still continue to pay rent, especially now when
8 they've lost their jobs and they can barely pay?

9

And I can speak from experiences,
10 there this one woman in my building, she's a senior
11 citizen, she had a fire in her apartment and her
12 wall is completely damaged and all the electrical
13 systems are illegal in the building. And the
14 landlord's still don't fix it. And from all the
15 testimonies I've been hearing, the landlord's
16 saying that their costs went up, this and that.
17 You know what? This is not the job for you. Sell
18 your building. Because you need to provide safe,
19 clean, updated, and improved apartments to all
20 rent-stabilized tenants. No matter what. End the
21 story.

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
23 your testimony. Next speaker is Ruth Rodriguez.
24 Ruth, you're muted, Ruth. Okay. you are unmuted
25 now. Welcome.

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MS RODRIGUEZ: Hi. My name is Ruth Rodriguez. I am retired and I feel really grateful that I'm retired and that I am not facing what my fellow tenants are facing; having to try raise children, worry about bills, face the prospect of homeless, illness, losing friends and relatives, and now they owe thousands of dollars.

What other good -- goods or services a we expected to pay for when we don't receive them? And the tenants of New York City, many of us, we've been subsidizing landlords by fixing our own repairs for years, you know. And I used to do that when I didn't know my rights. But people owe thousands of dollars.

Already, we're seeing so many people homeless on the street. You look at some of them and they look okay, but they haven't had a haircut, and they have a shopping cart, and they could be any one of us, or any one of our children. And we're in this together. This pandemic has affected the whole country. And as New Yorker's we should be shouldering the burden not making it profitable for some while others of us have to pay the share that the landlords and other New Yorkers

1

2 should be shouldering.

3

4 This is a worldwide tragedy, but
5 it affects individuals, you know, families. My
6 neighbor, Imelda just spoke. Most people don't
7 speak up, you know. Some people just go their way,
8 they're evicted, they go. At least now we have
9 some representation in our building and we've been
10 fighting for our rights. We need rents forgiven
11 and lowered not raised.

12

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
14 your testimony. Our next person is on the phone.
15 I think they're unmuted. If you can just say your
16 name, that'd be great.

17

18 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER:
19 (Speaking Spanish.) Can you hear me?

20

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Welcome.
22 And we look forward to your testimony.

23

24 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Hi
25 yes. Hello to all. I live in 1187 Anderson Avenue
26 in the Bronx. I would like the rent not to be
27 increased because of the pandemic. We all have --
28 were hurt to the maximum. I wasn't able to pay my
29 rent. I work -- I'm a city worker. And with my
30 income, I was unable to pay my rent like before

1

2 when -- before the COVID happened.

3

4 And I -- I was -- also my family,
5 my mother, she's bed-bound after having COVID, one
6 of my sons too, and most of my income went to, you
7 now, buy -- to buy medicine and food and other
8 stuff because I don't receive any outside benefits,
9 any resources. And I will beg you to please help
10 us.

11

12 Unless -- instead of being a part
13 of the problem, please be a part of the solution
14 and help us stay healthy and continue to, you know
15 -- to help us get -- you know, live a better life
16 with our family. I will be greatly appreciated if
17 you guys just helps us and we can all live in peace
18 together.

19

20 We can keep an open mind. We can
21 come to terms on what can we do to, you know, to
22 come to a good term instead of hating us. You
23 know, help us please. God bless you all. Let God
24 open your mind and perhaps, you know, we could --
25 we could be part of your family, you never know.
26 We all -- we need all the help we can get from you
27 guys. I think that we can -- we can -- everything
28 will work for the best if we all think -- put our

1

2 heads together. God bless you all. Thank you for
3 listening. Thank you. Bye-bye.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
5 your testimony.

6

MS. BURGER: David, just really
7 quick. There is a Robert with his hand up. I just
8 want to allow him to talk and ask his last name.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great.

10

MS. BURGER: Robert.

11

MR. GUMBS: Yes, that's me,

12

Robert Gumbs.

13

MS. BURGER: Okay.

14

MR. GUMBS: Can I speak?

15

MS. BURGER: You can speak. Go
16 ahead.

17

MR. GUMBS: Yeah. Listen, I'm
18 honored to have the opportunity to speak here. But
19 quite frankly, I think the premise of this whole
20 thing is a bit ridiculous. Now, somebody else had
21 mentioned this earlier. I'm on the bus, but I've
22 listening to just about this whole thing.

23

We have finished -- and not even
24 finished yet technically. But we have gone through
25 a worldwide pandemic and I see the first thing that

1

2 the landlord is worrying about is their rent. Now,
3 if somebody calls them, a group of, you know,
4 spiteful, greedy, you know, little mice, they get
5 offended. But what else would you call a small
6 group of people that want to take advantage of
7 their fellow human beings after one of history's
8 greatest tragedies?

9 I don't understand why we're even
10 discussing this. The whole rent is something --
11 listen to me, the whole rent issue is something
12 that should be talked about maybe next year, all
13 right? Or maybe a year-and-a-half from now. And
14 the idea that people would even talk about -- even
15 think about a rental increase, the -- I don't
16 understand what's happening to us as a society. We
17 all -- is like we've lost all of our basic day to
18 day morals to even bring up such a topic with a
19 pandemic still raging, okay. I'm glad that it's
20 gone down, but this thing is still raging and to
21 talk about this is ridiculous. It's heartless and
22 it's cruel.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
24 your testimony.

25 MR. GUMBS: Thank you very much

1

2 for your -- allowing me the time to speak.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our
4 next speaker is Maria Budram. Maria, you're muted.
5 If you could unmute. We see you so that's great.
6 But if you could just unmute, that'd be great and
7 we can listen to you.

8

MS. BUDRAM: My name is Maria
9 Budram. I'm a CASA member and I live at 888 Grand
10 Concourse in the Bronx. I'm here today to ask the
11 RGB not to give the landlords a increase. The
12 landlord -- we -- because of the pandemic, the
13 landlord is treating us really, really bad, all
14 right? In a year-and-a-half ago, a lot of people
15 had lost their jobs, loved one, still rent, we have
16 to find food, medicine.

17

I'm a retiree and the landlord
18 harass me although I still pay his rent. They sent
19 me to housing court and then they withdraw it. I'm
20 living off a pension and there's other seniors with
21 little bit of pension. We have to pay between 40
22 and 60 of our wages for rent, food, medicine and
23 other necessity. We are asking for our rent to
24 rollback and stop the harassment. No repairs. And
25 if they do, it's a sloppy job.

1
2 I want to ask one question of the
3 RGB. Over the years, we meet and it's the same
4 thing, the landlord need the rent. Do you ever
5 considered visit him, the poor neighborhood where
6 black, brown, red, white, blue people live? To see
7 the condition they're living out there. The
8 landlord do not need a rent increase this year.
9 The landlord get abatement from the government,
10 business loan -- let me finish, let me finish.
11 They pay no interest. We need a rent way back we
12 have people living in the train, living on the
13 street --

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

15 MS. BUDRAM: -- with nowhere to
16 go -- let me finish, Nowhere to go.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Maria, there's
18 many other people after you to speak.

19 MS. BUDRAM: You RGB, give this
20 landlord an increase in rent who do not want to be
21 at tent city.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: A lot of people
23 after you --

24 MS. BUDRAM: And one day you may
25 wake up and see a tent right in front of my house.

1

2 We need you listen to us. We are not animal and we
3 are not living in a third world country. This is
4 America, one of the greatest country in the world.
5 But you and the landlord treat us like we're
6 nobody.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

8

Thank you for your testimony. We're going to move
9 on to Nadia Metayer. Nadia, you're muted, Nadia.

10

Okay. You're unmuted.

11

MS. METAYER: Can you guys see

12

me?

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: I can't see you,

14

but we can hear you.

15

MS. METAYER: Here I go.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Now we can see

17

you.

18

MS. METAYER: All right. Good

19

evening all. I loved the last speaker by the way.

20

I will say this and I'll keep it short and sweet.

21

We all want to talk about -- or the media has only

22

been talking about the COVID pandemic. But let's

23

talk about the pandemic previous to that.

24

The bad landlord's pandemic.

25

That landlord has -- that pandemic has ruined and

1
2 has affected tenants for decades. Let's talk about
3 that pandemic. Let's talk about the bad service.
4 Let's talk about the MCIs the IAIs, which they've
5 collected for decades. So I don't want to hear
6 this BS about we need money. And for small time
7 landlords, I do understand your hardship, but if
8 you took this job, you deal with the hardship.
9 Like someone said earlier, if you can't deal with
10 it, find a new job.

11 Why don't you guys do what
12 teachers do and driving an Uber if you need money.
13 Okay. If you guys want to reward bad service, this
14 is what you're going to do. I want you guys that
15 are okay for the -- or want a rent increase, please
16 go visit a restaurant and order your favorite food.
17 If there's a rat or roach in your food, don't
18 become a Karen or Ken and complain. No, no, no.
19 What you're going to do is give that servicer a big
20 fat tip because you believe that bad service should
21 be rewarded. So please give that servicer a big
22 fat tip. Okay. And I just want to say God bless
23 to everyone, stay safe, and goodnight.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
25 your testimony. I believe our next speaker is

1

2 Agueda Jones Guzman. Agueda Jones Guzman you're
3 muted and your camera is not on.

4

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: He is a Spanish
5 speaker. So translation.

6

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
7 Spanish.)

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: All right. I
9 think I'm going to -- Agueda Jones Guzman the floor
10 is yours.

11

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
12 Spanish.)

13

MS. GUZMAN: (The following was
14 translated from Spanish To English.)

15

"My name is Agueda Guzmán and I
16 live in the Bronx, one of the boroughs considered
17 one of the poorest in NYC. As a teacher, I was able
18 to witness many parents shed tears over not having
19 enough money to pay their rent. Allowing for an
20 increase at this time would definitely be
21 catastrophic.

22

We would certainly lose many
23 people who have many wishes and they would be
24 forced to move out of NYC because they are living
25 in depressing situations. They are paying

1

2 exorbitant amounts in rent and they are living in
3 deplorable conditions. No one is listening to us,
4 no one rents apartments out to us. No one pays
5 attention to us. We can no longer continue living
6 in NYC in these conditions. I believe that we are
7 paying the highest rents. Because of this, I think
8 it would be highly depressing if we were to receive
9 a rent increase. Thank you so very much!"

10 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
11 Spanish.)

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Yes we
13 can.

14 MS. GUZMAN: (Speaking Spanish.)

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
16 your testimony. Next, we have Yamilex Martinez.
17 You're muted -- unmuted now. Great. And no camera
18 if you care.

19 MS. MARTINEZ: (Speaking
20 Spanish.)

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: (Speaking
22 Spanish.)

23 MS. MARTINEZ: **(Following was**
24 **translated from English to Spanish.)**

25 "Good afternoon! My name is

1

2 Yamilex Martínez and I'm a member of CASA. I live
3 at 1050 Carroll Place. I do not accept a rent
4 increase, since just a while back we filed an
5 application for rent relief, so that we don't lose
6 our apartments. There are still many people like me
7 who have yet to find employment and depend on
8 unemployment benefits.

9 With the little we receive, we
10 have to pay bills and purchase groceries. Whenever
11 we go to the supermarket, we don't buy all of the
12 things we need. We are not ready for a rent
13 increase, but rather a rent rollback. Thank you!"

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
15 your testimony. Our next speaker is Fitzroy
16 Christian, welcome. Fitzroy? I think we've lost
17 him temporarily.

18 MS. GARCIA: He definitely froze.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Andrew,
20 do you want to promote someone else in the interim?

21 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: I just
22 re-promoted. There he is.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Fitzroy, can you
24 hear me? You're muted, Fitzroy. If you can unmute
25 yourself, that'd be great. I think you're good.

1

2 MR. CHRISTIAN: Yeah. I keep
3 being kicked out, rejoining.

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Well, you're
5 good for now?

6 MR. CHRISTIAN: Okay. My name is
7 Fitzroy Christian, a tenant in a rent-stabilized
8 apartment in the Southwest Bronx. I'm a CASA
9 leader and also a member of the Rent Justice
10 Coalition. Tonight my message to the Rent
11 Guidelines Board, and in particular to public
12 members, is not just to demand a rent rollback, but
13 to alert it to the obvious consequences of your
14 recent vote to increase rent during the global
15 pandemic and the ongoing economic crisis in New
16 York City. These are consequences you obviously
17 wish -- hope to wish away but will be there when
18 you get your collective heads out of the sun.

19 So this is what will happen.
20 Tens, if not hundreds of thousands of evicted New
21 Yorkers will face severe illness from exposure to
22 COVID-19 and a sizable amount of them will die. In
23 clear and simple terms, if you insist in raising
24 rent in our current unprecedented health and
25 economic climate, you'll be complicit in the

1

2 violence of tens of thousands of evictions, as well
3 as condemning thousands upon thousands of already
4 marginalized peoples of color and poor people of
5 all races, ethnicities, and ages to known sickness
6 and death.

7 That will be your legacy. That
8 will be your shame. That will be your burden to
9 carry the rest of your lives. You're delusional
10 declarations that tenants are being helped by
11 federal state financial programs indicate that you
12 are not willing to accept proof that the federal
13 state efforts are willfully insufficient and not
14 universal in the coverage and will leave tenants no
15 better off than they are when the pandemic started.

16 If you add rent increases to this
17 burden already being carried by so many New
18 Yorkers, you're saying that you're willing to
19 sacrifice people's lives and to press you to profit
20 for stakeholders in an industry that's
21 traditionally realized more than \$0.40 in each
22 dollar they invest. You're saying that property
23 and profits are to be prioritized over people.
24 You're saying that people who are poor, or who have
25 been racially and ethnically discriminated against

1

2 for generations are -- deserve --

3

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
5 much for your testimony.

6

7 MR. CHRISTIAN: -- I'm going to
8 continue. I'm just about to finish if you'd give
9 me a few more seconds please.

10

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Sure.

12

13 MR. CHRISTIAN: They deserve to
14 suffer even more so that multi-millionaires and
15 billionaires can enhance their already overly
16 luxurious lifestyles. You have the obligation to
17 prevent poor marginalized and desperate people from
18 --

19

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Mr. Fitzroy, we
21 need to move on to our next speaker.

22

23 MR. CHRISTIAN: -- homelessness,
24 hopelessness, illness, and death, so that the rich
25 can become even richer.

26

27 CHAIRMAN REISS: Fitzroy, thank
28 you so much for your testimony.

29

30 MR. CHRISTIAN: Give us a rent
31 rollback. That's is your obligation to the public
32 of New York City.

33

34 CHAIRMAN REISS: We need to move

1

2 on to our next speakers. Thank you so much. Our
3 next speaker is Yoselyn, I believe, I don't have a
4 last name.

5

MS. GARCIA: Gomez.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Say that again.

7

MS. GARCIA: Yoselyn Gomez.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Ms. Gomez, the
9 floor is yours if you turn your --

10

MS. GOMEZ: Okay.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: -- microphone
12 on.

13

MS. GOMEZ: I'm here.

14

(*following was translated from*
15 *Spanish to English.*)

16

"Good evening! My name is Yoselyn
17 Gómez. Tonight I'm not going to speak to you about
18 the pandemic, because the pandemic is actually made
19 up of the landlords here in NYC, beginning with the
20 main landlord who is our leader. You are all the
21 real pandemic! It is you because you all know what
22 we're going through. You all know what we've lived
23 through! How can you even begin to talk about a
24 rent increase at this time? And who's idea was it?

25

I ask those of you sitting there

1
2 to please explain this to me. Landlords collected
3 an entire year's worth of COVID Rent Relief, a new
4 program. They never made any repairs. They didn't
5 do anything! And now you want a rent increase? What
6 else do you want? Huh? Do you want us to end up on
7 the streets when there are over 4,000 odd homeless
8 people living in the subway and everywhere else? Is
9 that what you want? Do you want to see more people
10 living on the streets? Do you want to see a greater
11 homeless population? If that's what you want to
12 see, then go right ahead and increase rents. Add a
13 10% increase, why don't you? If that's what you
14 want. We don't need a 5% rent rollback. We need a
15 10% rollback in NYC just so that we can survive.
16 That's my testimony this evening. Thank you!"

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
18 your testimony. Our next speaker is Judith
19 Marshall. Judith, if you can unmute yourself star
20 6. Judith, with phone ending 260, if you can
21 unmute yourself by pressing star 6 on your phone.
22 Andrew, could you promote someone else if there's
23 technical difficulties here?

24 All right. I see Digna Ramirez as
25 well. If you could unmute yourself with star 6,

1

2 that would be great. If that can be translated
3 into Spanish.

4

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
5 Spanish.)

6

MS. RAMIREZ: (Speaking Spanish.)

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. We can
8 hear you. Welcome. Yes, We can. Thank you.

9

MS. RAMIREZ: (***following was
10 translated from Spanish to English.***)

11

Hello. Good evening. My name is
12 Digna Ramírez. I live at 1187 Anderson Avenue in
13 the Bronx. I'm a single mother of two small
14 children. The main issue at hand is the rent
15 increase. As it is, I can barely make my rent
16 payment. Due to the pandemic, I became unemployed.
17 I can barely make the rent now let alone pay for an
18 increase. I would probably become homeless with
19 both of my children; this is my fear.

20

I don't think this would be fair
21 considering everything that's happening. I had a
22 job and was a bit stable. The pandemic knocked us
23 off balance. I am currently not working; I am
24 receiving unemployment benefits. However, what I
25 receive is not enough to pay the current rent. I

1
2 can't pay this rent. How will I afford a higher
3 rent? That's my fear! I hope you're understanding
4 and can put yourself in our shoes. Please know that
5 there are many mothers just like me out there,
6 elderly folk, and homes with only one working
7 individual to put food on the table for the entire
8 family. I don't think it's fair since landlords are
9 making money, but we the tenants are not. At
10 present, we don't have the means to survive. Thank
11 you!"

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
13 your testimony. Our next speaker is, Juanita
14 Rodriguez. Juanita, welcome.

15 MS. RODRIGUEZ: I'm here.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome. Your
17 camera is not on if you want to put your camera on.

18 MS. RODRIGUEZ: (Speaking
19 Spanish.) You hear me? (Speaking Spanish.)

20 MS. GARCIA: (Speaking Spanish.)

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. We can.

22 MS. RODRIGUEZ: (**following was**
23 **translated from Spanish to English.**)

24 "My name is Juanita Rodríguez and
25 I live at 1515 Stellar Avenue, Apt. C71 and this is

1
2 my testimony. I am a member of CASA. Why shouldn't
3 rents be increased at this time when we're going
4 through so much difficulty? Landlords don't make
5 any repairs. There are many homeless people at this
6 time and some are even expecting their landlords to
7 put them out on the street. Why is the City going
8 to allow rents to be raised at this time? It's a
9 very delicate time for our community. Our community
10 is going through so much, for example mental
11 instability, sickness as a result of the pandemic.
12 We've incurred so much debt from
13 purchasing groceries that have experienced rising
14 prices. People now have to think about whether they
15 should eat or pay the rent or the electric bill.
16 Why do you think we need a rent increase? Do you
17 want minorities to leave NY State? Do you also want
18 the State to have to deal with a homelessness
19 pandemic, too? I don't believe this is the time to
20 do this. I think this is a very complex moment.
21 Landlords can survive. They can cover their
22 activities. We have also dealt with abuse whenever
23 they don't complete repairs. I have health issues
24 because my landlord dumps all of the trash on the
25 sidewalk. He's harassing me so that I'll move.

1

2 That's what they do, they harass you. Thank you!"

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
4 your testimony. Our next speaker is Toshima
5 Garner. Toshima, if you could unmute. Welcome.

6

MS. GARNER: Hi. Can you hear
7 me?

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: We can hear you,
9 we can't see you -- well, we can see you too.

10

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

11

MS. GARNER: Okay. Hello. My
12 name is Toshima Garner and I'm with Casa. I live
13 at 359 East 163rd Street in Bronx, New York for 15
14 years. My landlord is East 163, LLC. The COVID 19
15 pandemic has impact many family's ability to pay
16 rent, health issues risk restricting the potential
17 to seek employment. In my complex alone East 163
18 LLC buildings 351 to 359, there is over 100 HPD
19 violations, as well as multiple housing court
20 proceedings for lack of services, building why.
21 And it has only increased.

22

The lack of services such as but
23 not limited to the bare necessity of running hot
24 water. Reference housing court docket number
25 13412/20. In conclusion, I'm asking that a freeze

1
2 be put on rent increases so families, the tenants,
3 can have an opportunity to recover from the
4 economic-financial burden. COVID-19 pandemic has
5 placed one us. Due to the already high rent, many
6 of us are at the limit of rent subsidy and will
7 push us out of those carrier -- categories and into
8 eviction. Also, landlords should not be rewarded
9 for the abandonment and lack of services doing such
10 an horrific time. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
12 your testimony. Our next speaker is -- has phone
13 number ending 816. I'm not sure who that is.

14 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: It's Kim.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Kim. Okay.
16 Kim, you're welcome. If you could also give your
17 last name, Kim, we'd love to hear from you.

18 MS. GRAFFAGNINO: Yes. My name
19 is Kim Graffagnino. I'm sorry, I only just joined
20 15 minutes ago because --

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

22 MS. GRAFFAGNINO: Thank you. So
23 I'm calling because I think during these times, to
24 raise the rent will cause massive evictions. We're
25 already one of the most expensive cities to live

1

2 in. And right now I live in a rent-stabilized
3 apartment for 21 years that is 25 percent above the
4 market rate right now. And because of the law
5 passed in 2019, my landlords won't decrease my
6 rent, because now if they even lower it just during
7 these times, they have to keep it at that, which
8 gives them no incentive in any way to decrease it.

9 I think during these times, we
10 should consider a temporary freeze or even
11 decreasing some of the rents that are above the
12 market rate. I'm in a studio apartment with a mini
13 fridge, 325 square feet, I shouldn't be paying the
14 amount of money that I do. I have absolutely no
15 amenities. And I did have a good relationship with
16 my landlord until now because it's really tough
17 times and they don't want to -- they told me that I
18 can blame the city for that. So this is why I'm
19 calling.

20 I think we should really consider
21 what we're going through, one of the worst economic
22 times since the Great Depression. And we shouldn't
23 be raising rents when rents are already so high,
24 especially like I told you, it was calculated on
25 spending between 23 to 25 percent above the market

1

2 rate even in a rent-stabilized apartment.

3

4 And it just, to me, is
5 unacceptable. I just know that landlords have to
6 pay the mortgage and everything like that, but
7 they're going to actually get more from us if they
8 give us an affordable rent right now during these
9 times, and then maybe re-evaluate in the next, you
10 know, year or two, once the pandemic is over and
11 maybe job numbers are up.

11

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you, Kim,
13 for your testimony.

13

14 MS. GRAFFAGNINO: And that's all
15 I had to say. I'm sorry. Thank you very much for
16 allowing me to speak.

16

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
18 your testimony. Our next speaker is Comfort Kumi.
19 You're muted. If you press star 6, you'll unmute,
20 we can hear you. Comfort, if you press star 6, we
21 can hear you. Yeah, we're ready.

21

22 MS. KUMI: Hello.

22

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello. We hear
24 you.

24

25 MS. KUMI: Okay. My name is
26 Comfort Kumi, and I live in a stabilized apartment.

1
2 My landlord is 1081, 1083, Sheridan Realty. I am
3 with CASA. I've been living there for, like, 30
4 years. At this point, all I'm going to say in
5 short is things are very, very hard for people.
6 Nobody no work, you can't pay rent, it's rough to
7 pay all this increased rent and increased lease,
8 you know. As a retired person, your money is just
9 a few little change, and every two minutes you
10 think everything is changed.

11 I'm talking about myself. Today,
12 today, today. One-and-a-half years now, I don't
13 have no fridge. No fridge. There's a hole in my
14 bathroom, no repairs as a whole. So I don't see
15 why the government just keep giving these landlords
16 all this money. Money, MCI, what, they just put,
17 you know, the stable self-sheltering streets, you
18 know, for people to see, just to see that they're
19 doing work there. And after some time they took it
20 off, they don't do no repairs and just pocket the
21 money.

22 So can there -- is there any way
23 for them, for the government, RGB, to help? For
24 government to say, studio is paying for this, three
25 rooms is paying for this, three-bedroom is this,

1

2 because these are landlords are killing and --

3

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
your testimony.

5

6 MS. KUMI: No more increase for
rent, no lease increase, and we need a rent
7 rollback. Thank you for your time.

8

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our
next speaker is Fausto Urena de la Cruz. You're
10 muted, Fausto, if you want to unmute.

11

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

12

13 MR. DE LA CRUZ: (Speaking
Spanish.)

14

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

15

16 MR. DE LA CRUZ: (**following was
translated from Spanish to English.**)

17

18 "Good evening to all! My name is
Fauto Ureña de la Cruz. I live at 1201 University
19 Avenue, Bronx, NY, along with my wife, my son, his
20 wife and my three small granddaughters. I am with
21 CASA. Paying for rent in New York has never been
22 easy. Rent prices in New York are too high. In my
23 own personal case, I've suffered the consequences
24 of gentrification.

25

I was displaced from my apartment

1
2 in Manhattan in 2016. The COVID-19 pandemic has
3 caused many people to not be able to pay their
4 rent. I am under an exile system. My son has
5 supported us and has allowed us to live with him.
6 It's been very difficult to pay the rent. This is
7 because the expenses outweigh the income along with
8 paying for groceries and transportation. I don't
9 see how it's possible for rents to be increased. I
10 think there should be a rent freeze and more
11 opportunities to have low-rent apartments so that
12 we don't have more homeless people on the street,
13 as someone already stated. Thank you very much!
14 Have a good night!"

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
16 your testimony.

17 MR. DE LA CRUZ: (Speaking
18 Spanish.)

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next
20 speaker, I believe, is Manty Kaba.

21 MS. KABA: Yes.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

23 MS. KABA: Hi. How are you?

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Good. Thank
25 you.

1
2 MS. KABA: Yes. It's Manty Kaba.
3 CHAIRMAN REISS: Please testify.
4 We can hear you.
5 MS. KABA: Okay. (Speaking
6 French.)
7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. You're
8 going to testify in French?
9 MS. GARCIA: We have a French
10 interpreter.
11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.
12 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Hal was supposed
13 to be -- is Hal with us? Hal Burgel was going to
14 testify with her.
15 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. I can get him
16 on, just give me a second.
17 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Sounds good.
18 MS. KABA: Hello?
19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Hello.
20 Just one moment, please.
21 MS. KABA: Okay.
22 MS. GARCIA: Manty, we're getting
23 Hal for you, one second.
24 MR. CABA: (Speaking French.)
25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Olvin, a new

1

2 skill. Do you think it makes sense --

3

MS. GARCIA: He's on.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Is he on?

5

MS. GARCIA: Yeah.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

7

8 MS. GARCIA: I don't know, how do
you want him to identify himself of staff?

9

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: How is he on?

10 Is he an attendee right now or --

11

MS. GARCIA: On the Zoom as an

12 attendee, I'm assuming, yes.

13

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Do you know what

14 he's signed in as? I don't see Hal. Is he on a
15 phone?

16

MS. GARCIA: Oh, geez. This is a

17 little hard for me to do on the --

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: What's the last

19 three digits, Sheila, of his phone number? Do you
20 know?

21

MR. CABA: David, if you'd like,

22 if it's easier, I can do it consecutively with her.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. I think

24 we could do that. Sheila, is that okay?

25

MR. CABA: That's fine.

1

2

MS. GARCIA: I trust Olvin.

3

4

MR. CABA: (following was
translated from French to English.)

5

6

7

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21

22

"My problem is the rent issue. My brother helps me pay the rent and unfortunately he's not working at the moment. At the moment, I'm being taken to Housing Court and I'm afraid that I'm going to be put out on the street. At the moment, my biggest fear is that I'm going to be evicted from my apartment. The paperwork hasn't arrived at my home, but I'm afraid that I'm going to get there at some point and see it posted on my door. I'm at home and I can't sleep at night because I'm afraid that I'm going to wake up the next day and be evicted. Of course, I'm embarrassed by this entire situation and I'm trying to do the best that I can. I'm sick at the moment and I know that I am getting sicker. I've been at this apartment now for thirteen years. I don't want to leave my apartment. I don't want to go anywhere else.

23

24

25

Unfortunately, we can no longer sleep in the apartment because of vermin. We even called 311 to see if they could come and inspect

1
2 the premises for rats. I'm waiting for them to make
3 repairs in my apartment. Where I prepare my meals
4 is completely gutted because of roaches and vermin.
5 It's disgusting and you can't even stand to look at
6 it. One would think there are animals living in the
7 apartment. Again, I'm very afraid and I can't sleep
8 at night. If there's any way that the RGB can help
9 me with this situation, I would really appreciate
10 it. There was also an MCI that took place in the
11 building and, of course, my apartment was not among
12 the ones that had repairs done. Thank you!"

13 MS. KABA: So my problem is the
14 rent issue. So it's actually my brother helps me
15 pay the rent, and unfortunately, he's not working
16 at the moment. So at the moment, I'm actually
17 being taken to Housing Court and I'm afraid that
18 I'm going to be put out on the street. So at the
19 moment -- so it's impos -- so at the moment, my
20 biggest fear is that I'm going to be evicted from
21 my apartment. The paperwork hasn't arrived at my
22 home, but I'm afraid that I'm going to get there at
23 some point and see it posted on my door.

24 So of course I'm at home. I
25 can't sleep at night because I'm afraid that, you

1
2 know, I'm going to wake up the next day and I'm
3 going to be evicted. And of course, I'm also
4 embarrassed by this entire situation and I'm trying
5 to do the best that I can. And I'm also sick at
6 the moment. And I know that I'm getting sicker by
7 the moment. I've been at this apartment now for
8 three years, three years now. I've been at this
9 apartment now for 13 years. And I don't want to
10 leave -- I don't want to leave my apartment. I
11 don't want to go anywhere else.

12 Unfortunately, we can't even
13 sleep in the apartment now because there are vermin
14 in the apartment. We even called 311 to see if
15 they could come and inspect the premises, so I'm
16 waiting for them to come and make the repairs in my
17 apartment. And where I actually prepare my meals,
18 everything is ruined because, of course, rodents
19 and roaches -- it's disgusting, as a matter of
20 fact, you can't even look at it. You would think
21 that there are animals living in the apartment.

22 So again, I'm very scared about
23 the current situation. I can't really sleep at
24 night. If there's any way that the RGB can help me
25 with the situation, I would really appreciate it.

1

2 Because of course, there was an MCI that was also
3 -- that took place at the building, and, of course,
4 my apartment was not one of those repairs.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
6 your testimony.

7

MS. KABA: (Speaking French.)

8

MR. CABA: (Speaking French.)

9

MS. KABA: (Speaking French.)

10

MR. CABA: Speaking French.)

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
12 is Ana Galvez.

13

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: He needs Ana's
14 translation.

15

MS. GALVEZ: (*following was
16 translated from Spanish to English.*)

17

"Hello. How are you? Good evening
18 to all! My name is Ana Galvez and I live at 295
19 East 141 Street in the Bronx and I am with CASA. I
20 would like to say just one thing to you: I feel
21 pity and shame that you are even considering
22 raising We are afraid of being affected. I not only
23 speak on my behalf. We are in fear of being
24 evicted.

25

I not only speak on my behalf, but

1
2 on behalf of my entire community. I am an
3 immigrant; I have no benefits. And yet, I continue
4 fighting day in and day out by working on the
5 streets and selling fruit, vegetables, anything. I
6 am ashamed to think that you all think and believe
7 that this problem is not real. Ladies and
8 gentlemen, we are all suffering; we want to stay in
9 our homes. I've been living in this apartment for
10 more than sixteen years. And it's incredible that
11 you would even think of evicting me. I only ask you
12 to be considerate.

13 And if this issue is not resolved,
14 you won't just have one or two or even three people
15 living on the street, you will have millions, and
16 we will protest so that you are aware that this is
17 real. Thank you for listening to me. I am both sad
18 and upset that you all think that the issue
19 regarding our homes is not a real one. Thank you
20 for listening!

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
22 your testimony. Our next speaker is Aurelia
23 Hernandez. Aurelia, if you unmute yourself, and if
24 you want to put on your camera, that'd be great.

25 MS. HERNANDEZ: (following was

1

2 **translated from Spanish to English.)**

3

4 "Good evening! My name is Aurelia
5 Hernández. I live at 1064 Carroll Place. I've been
6 living in this apartment for nineteen years. I
7 belong to a tenant's association supported by CASA.
8 With CASA's presence, we've been part of a rent
9 strike for the purposes of a cancellation or
10 abatement of at least 50%. The rent strike is due
11 to there being thousands of unemployed individuals
12 who are working but don't make enough because of
13 reduced work days.

13

14 The other reason for the strike is
15 because of the repairs in the apartments. Because
16 of the aforementioned, landlords should not be
17 allowed to raise rents. As far as prices are
18 concerned, everything is expensive; they have
19 actually doubled, and we need to buy more things to
20 protect ourselves from the virus, such as masks,
21 hand sanitizer, alcohol, as well as other expenses,
22 such as medical ones.

22

23 A few weeks ago, I visited the eye
24 doctor and I had to pay \$300 for my glasses. My
25 daughter needed braces and I wound up charging
26 \$4,500 on a credit card and why? Because I didn't

1

2 have the money. And that's the reality of those of
3 us who are poor, the poorest of populations. We all
4 wind up incurring debt because most of what we make
5 goes towards paying the rent. Other bills aside
6 from rent? There are other bills that need to be
7 paid: Con Edison. Thank you for allowing me to
8 speak!"

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: (Speaking
10 Spanish.)

11 MS. HERNANDEZ: (Speaking
12 Spanish.)

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.
14 Thank you for your testimony.

15 MS. HERNANDEZ: (Speaking
16 Spanish.)

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our
18 next speaker is Jean Carlos. You're muted and your
19 camera's not on, if you want it to be on. Hello?

20 MR. ORTIZ: Hello.

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello. Welcome.

22 MR. ORTIZ: Hello. Hello.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. We're
24 ready to hear your testimony.

25 MR. CABA: (*The following was*

1

2 *translated from Spanish to English.)*

3

4 MR. CARLOS: Okay."Hello! My name
5 is Carlos Ortiz. I live at 1050 Carroll Place, Apt.
6 4K. I am here for those who are living through this
7 abuse as well as for me. How can there be a rent
8 increase when we're still in the throes of the
9 pandemic? We are all going through many hardships.
10 We are a family of four, including a thirteen
11 year-old boy.

12 I currently pay \$1,793 in rent for
13 a one-bedroom apartment because they got rid of the
14 living room to convert it into a bedroom. That's
15 abuse. It's been difficult to get repairs done.
16 They previously came to make the repairs; however,
17 up until now the stove is still not working. It
18 doesn't work. The repairman dropped by to replace
19 it and said that it needed to be replaced. They
20 stopped by to repair the entrance door to the
21 apartment and it is still damaged. They state that
22 in order to get repairs done, they need to receive
23 payment. Ever since I moved into this apartment, I
24 would pay my rent on a monthly basis. I lost my job
25 at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 and
 nothing has ever been the same. Some of us have

1

2 jobs, but even those jobs are not full time. We
3 seldom work 40 hours a week to cover all of our
4 expenses. That's my testimony."

5

(Speaking Spanish.)

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
7 your testimony. Our next speaker is Mireya Vilma.

8

MS. VILMA: Yes.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

10

MS. VILMA: (Speaking Spanish.)

11

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

12

MS. VILMA: (The following was
13 translated from Spanish to English.)

14

"Good evening! My name is Mireya
15 Vilma and I'm a member of CASA. I've been living at
16 1749 Grand Concourse for eight years now. My family
17 and I are going through a very difficult time. I
18 worked two jobs to pay the rent. I worked as a home
19 health aide to my sister and I also worked five
20 hours part-time elsewhere. My sister became ill
21 when she got COVID-19 and she then suffered two
22 strokes. She was admitted to the hospital five
23 months ago.

24

Now, she is unable to walk and
25 uses a wheelchair. I lost that job. I, too, got

1
2 COVID, but it was not severe. I can't sleep at
3 night just thinking about how we're going to pay
4 the rent. I can't believe that you're actually
5 considering a rent increase at this moment. How can
6 that even be during a pandemic? And, by the way,
7 the pandemic hasn't ended yet. Do you not think of
8 others? Have you no heart? Do you not think of
9 others' pain? Of course, you have your homes and
10 are able to pay for them. However, we can't! What
11 will we do? If rents go up, we will wind up on the
12 street. There will be more homeless people on the
13 street. There are already so many people committing
14 evil acts on the street. Please think about what
15 you're about to do!

16 Think about it a thousand times if
17 you must! I am in the process of filling out the
18 rent-assistance application; however, I am very
19 afraid because I don't know whether or not I'll
20 qualify. I wasn't eligible for the first round of
21 aid. I'd like to reiterate the following for the
22 thousandth time, no rent increases! It's just not
23 possible! Have a good night! And, I hope you have a
24 good night, because many of us don't have that
25 luxury knowing that you may pass the rent increase.

1

2 Goodbye! "

3

4 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
5 your testimony.

6

7 Our next speaker is Fanta Doumbia.

8

9 MS. DOUMBIA: Yes. Good evening
10 everyone. My name Fanta Doumbia. I live in 1060
11 Sheridan Avenue, Apartment 1D. Right now I'm not
12 working because of COVID-19. So I don't have a job
13 right now. My rent is higher. I cannot pay right
14 now. So I need help, please.

15

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
17 your testimony.

18

19 MS. DOUMBIA: Okay. You're
20 welcome.

21

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: I think I next
23 speaker is Abigail Aviles. You're muted, Abigail.

24

25 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

26

27 CHAIRMAN REISS: You're muted and
28 also your camera is not on if you want to put on
29 your camera.

30

31 MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

32

33 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

34

35 MS. AVILES: Hi.

36

37 CHAIRMAN REISS: Hi.

1
2 MS. AVILES: Good evening. My
3 name is Abigail Aviles. My husband and I are
4 rent-stabilized tenants at 4205 Layton Street,
5 which is in Elmhurst, New York. As you can see
6 from my Zoom background, this is the view from my
7 window in my apartment. This is Elmhurst Hospital.
8 And if you have been reading the news at all in the
9 last year, you would know that Elmhurst Hospital
10 was the epicenter of the epicenter.

11 And again, this is right across
12 my window. So you can imagine the constant sirens
13 of ambulances that I would hear and that I have
14 been hearing in the last year. And with every
15 ambulance I would wonder which one of my neighbors
16 is dying tonight. And as you know, many of my
17 neighbors died. I lost family members and I lost
18 friends. And that's the reality of of living in
19 the epicenter of COVID-19.

20 At one point there was frozen --
21 like freezer trucks outside of my window, right.
22 So, like, the bodies of my neighbors were right
23 outside my window, right? Like that is the reality
24 of the COVID-19 pandemic in my community, right.
25 And Elmhurst and Corona face deep, deep rent

1

2 burdens, right. And because of deep rent burdens,
3 we live overcrowded with multiple families per
4 apartment. And because of that overcrowding, this
5 why we had the most deaths.

6

We are the most risk of eviction.
7 And even now we are the least vaccinated. If my
8 community cannot even afford to take a day off of
9 work to get vaccinated, I promise you they cannot
10 take a -- they cannot afford any rent increase.

11

I am unemployed like many of my
12 other neighbors and my family members. And my
13 community is majorly black, brown, working class,
14 and immigrant families. So any rent increase will
15 directly lead to displacement. And when my
16 community is affected, it will die. Rent increases
17 have disproportionate racial impacts. So we need a
18 rent rollback for immigrant and racial justice.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

21

Our next speaker, I'm not sure if
22 it's pronounced Dulce or Dulce Ventura.

23

MS. VENTURA: Hi. Yeah. It's
24 pronounced Dulce.

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Dulce, welcome.

1

2 We look forward to your testimony.

3

MS. VENTURA: Thank you. So my
4 name is Dulce. I live in the Bronx. I just wanted
5 to come here and share my thoughts. I'm 100
6 percent against raising the rent this year after
7 everything, so -- so many of us have experienced.
8 It's been difficult for many of us, financially, to
9 sustain ourselves and our family. Increasing the
10 rent will just make it even harder for us to catch
11 up.

12

I've been lucky enough not to have
13 lost income during this crisis but with two kids in
14 the house, doing remote learning, and being home
15 alone all day is very difficult because we have to
16 buy extra food. Con Ed is piling up, so is a lot
17 of other expenses that we have. We've also had
18 family loss, and that's expensive and other things.
19 The expenses have literally tripled for us and for
20 many of us.

21

UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: I
22 want --

23

MS. VENTURA: John, Give me one
24 second, please. Right now, I'm hoping to qualify
25 for this rent relief. I've actually been without a

1

2 refrigerator for a month because the landlord
3 refuses to give us a new rent -- a new
4 refrigerator, or even fix the one we have because
5 we have missing rent. So I really hope that this
6 year you guys don't vote to increase the rent.
7 It's not fair for a lot of us. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
9 your testimony. My understanding from the RGB
10 staff is that, they've identified everyone who
11 registered from the list of attendees and they have
12 no more registered speakers.

13 Andrew, I'm getting that right,
14 correct?

15 MS. BURGER: No. There's at least
16 one person on the phone.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry.

18 MS. BURGER: And I might have an
19 update in a couple of minutes. We can go to
20 Clentine Fenner. Clentine, you can talk if you
21 unmute yourself, star 6.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Clentine, if you
23 press star 6, we can hear you. Yeah, I think we --

24 MS. FENNER: I'm here. I
25 apologize. I'm here now.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great. We got

3

you.

4

MS. FENNER: All right. Thank

5

you. Let me say good evening and I'm so glad that

6

I'm able to get on. And quickly, hopefully, I can

7

say this within within two minutes. I can relate

8

closely with every tenant that has spoken tonight,

9

especially the gentleman, I believe he has two

10

children who practically had tears in his eyes and

11

cried because he can't afford tuition, he can't

12

afford rent. And that's the same here.

13

I'm African-American, 71 year-old

14

retiree, and I never thought that I see the day

15

that I would have to cut my medication. I never

16

thought I would see the day that I would have to

17

choose whether to buy food, pay rent, or go ahead

18

on and pay for my medication. Yes, I have Medicaid

19

but it does not cover it all. I've been on

20

medicine, had a brain bleed. The medication was

21

\$600 but Medicaid would not pay for it.

22

I want to address another small,

23

I believe a landlord who, she said there are many

24

applications that we can -- or programs we can

25

apply for. But bear in mind a lot of these

1

2 programs are predicated on the amount of income
3 that you have. And it's a shame that in America,
4 if you're making \$40,000 they would tell you that
5 that is too much. So I want to address her and let
6 her know that yes, there are programs out there,
7 but you have to be in poverty. You have to be
8 practically destitute in order to apply for.

9

I have three things left in my
10 life. I have prayer, I have a vote, and I have my
11 voice. And my -- and my -- I have hope too. And I
12 hope that those politicians that spoke tonight that
13 were in front of their doors, yes, fight to reduce
14 the rent. I'm opposed to these rent increases.

15

My prayer is that everyone on the
16 rent guidelines board, the politicians, and the
17 landlords who pay these politicians behind closed
18 doors and the politicians, some of them will not
19 admit it. My hope is that everyone will get
20 together, that the City Council will rollback
21 property taxes so that we could afford to do what
22 is necessary to live as human beings. And I thank
23 you for the time. I appreciate it.

24

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
25 your testimony. I think we have Letitia Martin.

1
2 MS. MARTIN: Yes. Hi.
3 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.
4 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
5 Spanish.)
6 MS. MARTIN: Hi, my name is
7 Letitia Martin and --
8 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
9 Spanish.)
10 MS. MARTIN: -- Letitia Martin.
11 Yeah.
12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.
13 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
14 Spanish.)
15 MS. MARTIN: No. Martin.
16 MS. BURGER: We can hear you on
17 the mainline.
18 MS. MARTIN: Okay. I heard a lot
19 of the voices and I agree with so many of them.
20 One of them is that it shouldn't either result of
21 what we're doing right now. And another one is the
22 voice of all women and men of any ethnic background
23 should be heard, not just some of them. All of
24 them.
25 My name is Letitia Martin and my

1

2 husband's name is William Martin. We reside at --
3 for 40 years and over, 950 Woodycrest Avenue in
4 Bronx. And we've been there for a very long time
5 with many, many different landlords. But my main
6 -- my main reason for being on right now, is
7 because we both have fixed incomes and -- but our
8 rent is not fixed. We just signed a one-year lease
9 and we hardly cannot pay that.

10 I do realize that there are lots
11 of agencies that could help us because we over the
12 age, I just found that out. But I still feel that
13 it should -- you should vote for the fact that the
14 landlords should not get anything because none of
15 them are listening to us now. They are probably in
16 their beds sleeping somewhere not caring about what
17 the average person that pays the rent for them is
18 doing.

19 I grew up knowing that rent come
20 first. I grew up that way. So because of the
21 little pension we have and the stimulus that helped
22 us, we were able to pay our rent. We really, you
23 know, are thankful for that. But what's going to
24 happen, you know, when one of the pensions is gone,
25 which will be very soon. I don't know, you know, I

1

2 hope, plea and pray that everyone here -- and my
3 heart goes to everyone, that things will get
4 better, you know. But life shouldn't -- this
5 shouldn't be me happening right now. This is
6 America as someone had brought out it out. (Zoom
7 inaudible) -- thank you.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
9 your time.

10

MS. BURGER: David, I have some
11 Judith Morrishow on the phone.

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Great.

13

MS. BURGER: Judith, you can
14 speak if you press star 6 to unmute yourself.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Judith, you have
16 to press star 6 so that we can hear you. Yeah. I
17 think we hear you now. Go ahead.

18

MS. MORRISHOW: Good evening and
19 I apologize for my earlier, you know not being able
20 to press my name.

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: No worries.

22

MS. MORRISHOW: Anyhow. My name
23 is Judith Morrishow. I'm a retired senior. I
24 reside at 1310 Sheridan Avenue for 27 years. I am
25 a CASA member. My landlord is considered one of

1

2 the worst. Here's a few reasons why we are asking
3 for a rent rollback.

4 In the winter, my apartment is
5 extremely cold. Just a small amount of heat. No
6 repairs have been done. You cannot reach the
7 landlord. Notice in the lobby instructing you to
8 direct all repairs to super. At present our super
9 is not around. Notes on lobby, second noticed,
10 super will not be available until -- from June the
11 1st to June the 28th, I tried to reach the
12 replacement super and I couldn't reach him.

13 I have problems with my bathroom.
14 I can't flush my toilet. Some problem with the
15 handled on the tank so I have to draw water from --
16 from the faucet and flush the toilet. I mean, this
17 is -- this is unbelievable, unbelievable.
18 Unbelievable. I left two messages, no call has
19 been returned.

20 Now, what's the problem that rent
21 increase? I don't think that's possible. On the
22 20th each month, the landlord sticks the rent
23 receipt under your door. What about your tenants
24 during the winter when we are freezing? You're
25 comfortable in your fancy house in Riverdale. I

1

2 was there for you a few years back, where we
3 visited you begging you to do repairs.

4

I am tired of all the little
5 mices running around. It is disgusting. Please
6 clean the building. How would you feel if one of
7 your family was living under these conditions? We
8 are asking for a rent (Zoom inaudible) not an
9 increase. Ladies and gentlemen, under Rent
10 Guidelines Board, please hear our cry. Give us a
11 rent rollback.

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
13 your time.

14

MS. MORRISHOW: Landlords you can
15 -- you can apply for the hardship relief. Thank
16 you for listening to my testimony.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

18

MS. BURGER: David, I just
19 promoted Patria De Jesus.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

21

MS. BURGER: She's going to be
22 speaking in Spanish.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Could
24 someone asked Patria to --

25

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking

1

2 Spanish.)

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: It's on.

4

MS. DE JESUS: Okay.

5

(Speaking Spanish.)

6

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking

7

Spanish.)

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, welcome.

9

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking

10

Spanish.)

11

MS. DE JESUS: (***Following was***

12

translated from English to Spanish.)

13

"My name is Patria De Jesús García

14

and I live at 950 Woodycrest and my complaint is

15

that since 2012 I've paid \$1,500. I am currently

16

paying \$1,904. I can't believe that as a single

17

mother I will have to pay more due to a rent

18

increase. This after seeing our jobs disappear

19

during the pandemic because our children are at

20

home. Aside from all of this, the building has lots

21

of issues. We file our complaints, the super is

22

sent to begin the repairs, and then nothing is

23

completed. We have lots of roaches and mice. In

24

summary, we have lots of issues with this building.

25

I ask you to please sympathize with the most needy

1

2 and poorer populations. Please, if possible, freeze
3 our rents!"

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
5 your testimony.

6

MS. DE JESUS: (Speaking
7 Spanish.)

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: I think,
9 Danielle, are we opening this up to unregistered
10 speakers at this point?

11

MS. BURGER: Yes. At this point,
12 if you have registered and you're here, we
13 apologize, but we can't find you because you're
14 Zoom name might be different, your phone number
15 might be different. One-person who's on the phone
16 has their caller ID blocked, so what we're going to
17 do is, we're just going to open it up. If you
18 could -- if you're on the phone and you'd like to
19 speak and you haven't spoken yet, please press star
20 9 and we'll get this translated into Spanish in a
21 minute. And if you're on video, there's a function
22 to raise your hand.

23

And if your hand is raised, then
24 we're going to call on you, regardless of whether
25 you were pre-registered and we didn't hear from you

1

2 or you were not registered. So if we can get that
3 translated into Spanish, I would appreciate it.

4

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
5 Spanish.). Yeah.

6

MS. BURGER: If if we could also,
7 just one more thing, Liz, except I don't have the
8 numbers handy. I'm not sure if anybody's listening
9 to the other hearing on the telephone in Spanish,
10 they're not going to be able to speak if there are
11 over there, they need to come over here.

12

MS. FIGUEROA: Okay.

13

MS. BURGER: Brian, or someone
14 can you just read off this meeting ID and the
15 telephone number they need to call if they're on
16 the telephone to come into this meeting and the
17 pass-code. Brian, do you have that?

18

MR. HOBERMAN: I believe there
19 was one person who was on -- to throughout the
20 whole meeting. I'll check --

21

MS. BURGER: Okay.

22

MR. HOBERMAN: -- and see if
23 they're still there.

24

MS. BURGER: If you're on the
25 other hearing, listening and you do want to speak,

1

2 raise your hand and then we'll give out the
3 information.

4

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
5 Spanish.)

6

MS. BURGER: I think we could
7 just get started promoting people in the order that
8 their hand are raised.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay.

10

MS. BURGER: If you could please
11 say your name when you are allowed to speak so we
12 can mark it for the record. Thank you.

13

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
14 Spanish.)

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: I think we have
16 Anthony Rome. Welcome.

17

MR. RANDU: Yes, hello? Yes,
18 hello. Could you hear me?

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. We can
20 hear you and we can see you.

21

MR. RANDU: Okay. Thank you.
22 Yes. Well, my name is Daryl Randu (phonetic). I
23 don't know -- I'm sorry for it for showing up as
24 Anthony Rome. That's -- that's my other -- my user
25 name for another e-mail. So but my name is Daryl

1

2 Randu and I live at 944 Marcy Avenue,
3 Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, and I lived there for
4 23 years.

5 I love living in my neighborhood
6 because I'm close to my family, it has convenient
7 shopping locations, and especially because it's
8 very close to my doctor's office, which I have to
9 frequently visit. I am -- currently I'm not
10 working due to escalating health issues and extreme
11 hardship related to the coronavirus pandemic, and
12 I'm on a very tight budget due to limited savings.
13 And as my savings decrease, I find myself
14 struggling to find new ways to cut back on spending
15 so I can dedicate as much of my money as possible
16 to rent.

17 Sometimes, I have to sacrifice
18 food. I'm using the train and all these [ZOOM
19 inaudible] entertainment. And so the slightest
20 percent rent increase will have a devastating
21 effect on my savings and my ability to stay in my
22 home and pay for my utilities.

23 Over half of rent-stabilized
24 tenants pay more than 30 percent of the income to
25 rent. This means they are rent burdened according

1

2 to the Office of Housing and Urban Development.

3 From 2018 to 2019, the landlord's net operating

4 income grew to 2.9 percent. The 14th increase in

5 the last 15 years. The average monthly unaudited

6 NOI residential-only properties citywide was \$499

7 per unit in 2019. That is directly from the Rent

8 Guidelines Board report. And that is a net

9 operating income of \$499 per unit per month.

10 I will just pray that you can,

11 you know, you guys can help us and not raise the

12 rent because we're struggling especially due to

13 this pandemic, so please do not cause a rent

14 increase.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so

16 much. If the person with a phone number ending 515

17 can press star 6 and give us their name, we'd

18 appreciate it.

19 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking

20 Spanish.)

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Danielle, may be

22 worth promoting, you know, 1, 2, or 3 people, just

23 so we -- as we work through the technical

24 difficulties. Call in user 1, I don't have a phone

25 number for you. I don't know if you see yourself

1

2 as call in user 1, but if you could press star 6.

3

4 Catala?

5

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. If they
7 can press star 6. Yeah. You can go ahead. Who is
8 it Sheila?

8

9

10 MS. GARCIA: Ramon.
11 MR. CATALA: Ramon.
12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Ramon, can you
13 -- you have two minutes.14 MR. CATALA: Yeah. (Speaking
15 Spanish.)16 CHAIRMAN REISS: (Speaking
17 Spanish.)18 MR. CATALA: **(The following was**
19 **translated from Spanish to English.)**20 "Good afternoon to all! My name
21 is Ramón Catala and I live at 1885 Nichols Avenue
22 in the Bronx. I'd like to remind the Board that
23 even before the onset of this pandemic, many
24 tenants had already been losing their homes for the
25 past four or five years and that was with them
working. Many wound up in shelters because they
couldn't pay the rent or handle the rent increase

1

2 which were truly exorbitant.

3

4 Now, we're living a veritable
5 nightmare with the pandemic. Many tenants have lost
6 their jobs, their savings, Many of these landlords
7 are millionaires and their homes are in excellent
8 condition. This is why we can't allow the Board to
9 go through with another rent increase. We don't
10 want to see more people evicted from their homes.
11 Thank you!"

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

14 MS. GARCIA: 515, you need to
15 lower whatever you're watching so that we don't get
16 the feedback.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: 515, you can
18 speak now. It's your -- it's your turn to testify.

19 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
20 Spanish.)

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: We're getting a
22 little feedback. Do you have two things listening
23 to the hearing at the same time?

24 MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking
25 Spanish.)

26 CHAIRMAN REISS: 515, I think I'm

1

2 going to have to mute you because of your feedback,
3 But if you could figure that out. Okay. That's
4 great. Thanks. If you can figure out the feedback
5 then you're welcome to testify 182, if you want to
6 unmute yourself, star 6, we can hear your
7 testimony?

8

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking

9

Spanish.)

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: And Danielle,

11

maybe promote some -- one or two more people as we

12

-- so we could --

13

MS. GARCIA: And just remember

14

folks that if you are promoted, you have to accept

15

in order to become a panelist, or if you don't,

16

you'll just stay on in the attendee and we won't be

17

able to hear you.

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: So I think

19

Anjelica Rojas, we can listen to you if you can

20

unmute. Welcome.

21

MS. ROJAS: (*Following was*

22

translated from Spanish To English.)

23

"Good evening to all of the

24

members of the RGB! I'd like to testify today as to

25

why there shouldn't be a rent increase. Last year,

1
2 I became unemployed. I worked a total of three
3 months. This year, I am only working one day. When
4 I went back to work, I got sick with COVID-19. I
5 was very ill and had no medical services. The rent
6 continues to go up; I've received two letters from
7 my landlord where he indicates that he's taking me
8 to court. The landlord makes no repairs. As a
9 result of a leak, my ceiling caved in and my
10 furniture was ruined. I had to throw them out. He
11 had the audacity to not provide us with basic
12 services such as heat and hot water during the
13 lockdown period of the pandemic.

14 I think it would be inhumane if
15 you increased rents at the present time. This has
16 been very difficult. It's affected me emotionally
17 and physically. It's a very difficult time for my
18 children, my mother, and me. I don't think it's
19 fair that they get a rent increase. It's as if
20 landlords are being rewarded when they don't
21 provide basic services. Thanks for listening! I'm
22 sorry for becoming so emotional."

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: No problem at
24 all. Thank you for your testimony.

25 MS. ROJAS: (Speaking Spanish.)

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry. I

3

think I'm having trouble -- I have Pedro testifying

4

next, perhaps? Ending five -- Pedro, if you could

5

unmute and give us your full name, please. And

6

could that be translated into Spanish?

7

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking

8

Spanish.)

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: So I'm going to

10

ask either -- Pedro or a person ending phone number

11

515, if you could unmute yourself with a 515 by

12

pressing star 6. Yes. 515, we can hear you.

13

Could you tell us your name?

14

MS. GOVAN: Hi. My name is Laura

15

Govan (phonetic) and I'm with CASA.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Welcome.

17

MS. GOVAN: Should I continue?

18

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah. We have

19

some feedback. Why don't you testify? We can hear

20

you over the feedback.

21

MS. GOVAN: Okay. I live at

22

1504, Sheridan Avenue for 33 years. Present

23

landlord says 1504 Sheridan, LLC, Chestnut Holding

24

Company. Based on information, I believe the

25

landlord has not accepted money and I have a

1

2 housing court case pending to be heard in the Bronx
3 Housing Court.

4

I want to point out that many
5 people are affected by the COVID-19 and couldn't
6 afford to pay rent. Landlords saw an increase in
7 the net operating for 14 consecutive years. Many
8 landlords received tax exemptions and credits and
9 -- in return for providing affordable housing.

10 Landlords who are financially struggling, they file
11 a hardship application with DHER, and it was
12 reported that only three applications are currently
13 processing.

14

Meanwhile, the majority of the
15 tenants who applied for rent relief in 2020 have
16 been rejected based on -- Rent Guidelines Board own
17 data that shows that two years of rent freeze did
18 not impact [zoom inaudible] the operating income at
19 all, and did not produce any crisis for corporate
20 landlords.

21

Homelessness increased for the
22 13th consecutive year in 2020, and more than 1.4
23 million New Yorkers are behind in rent, and more
24 than 220,000 cases have been filed in the housing
25 court within -- with the largest concentration in

1

2 the Bronx.

3

4 And again, I say, Rent Guidelines
5 Board own data shows that two years of reprieve did
6 not impact landlords net operating income at all,
7 and did not produce any crisis for the landlords.
8 Therefore you should rollback the rent, freeze the
9 rent. And I conclude my testimony.

10

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
12 much for your testimony. And, Pedro, I saw that
13 you had unmuted. You certainly can go next. And
14 let me just say before you start, the person with
15 phone ending 182 and the person with phone ending
16 515 --

17

18 MR. ORTIZ: Okay.

19

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: -- if you press
21 star 6, you can unmute yourself and speaking after
22 Pedro. I mean, want to say it in Spanish?

23

24 MR. ORTIZ: (following was
25 translated from Spanish to English.)

26

27 "Good evening! My name is Pedro
28 Ortiz and I live at 1502 Cleveland Avenue in the
29 Bronx. I am worried about the following issue. We
30 are now living through a period of awareness where
31 both New York and the world have been heavily

1
2 affected by a pandemic. New Yorkers have to support
3 one another because our rents are too high. With
4 all due respect, landlords have made lots of money
5 under previous administrations in NYC. Rents should
6 be reduced by at least \$900 to \$1,000. When they
7 built all of those new buildings, sheet rock panels
8 were worth between \$3.50 to \$4.00. Labor was paid
9 at \$8.50/hr. They've made millions and they need to
10 be considerate.

11 Rents should be reduced and not
12 increased. There are far too many poor people and
13 God created this world so that we can all inhabit
14 it and nourish ourselves. We have to help others!
15 It's not fair if only a select group of people
16 become rich. Children and the elderly need to eat
17 and people should be able to put food on the table.
18 Those of you who do not consider others' needs will
19 have to answer to God. Let no one lie before God.
20 God is in control of everything here on Earth. We
21 are nothing with Him. You will all have to answer
22 to Him. Have a good night!"

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you --

24 MS. BURGER: Was 515 the person
25 who just spoke though?

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm not --

3

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Yes. Yes. Yes.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry. I'm

5

sorry about that. Yes. So -- okay --

6

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: It's just 182,

7

It's just 182.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Let's do Pedro

9

and then we'll do 182 if they can unmute by

10

pressing star 6.

11

MR. ORTIZ: (Speaking Spanish.)

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for

13

your testimony. Phone number ending 182, if you'd

14

press star 6, then we can hear your testimony.

15

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking

16

Spanish.)

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: I see someone.

18

There's no name. If you can unmute yourself. 182,

19

why don't you go first and then the other person

20

could go second?

21

MS. FIGUEROA: (Speaking

22

Spanish.)

23

MS. LORA: (The following was

24

translated from Spanish to English.)

25

"Good evening! My name is

1

2 Fiordaliza Lora. I live at 1210 Clay Avenue and
3 I've been living at this address for three years. I
4 had two jobs and lost one of them during the
5 pandemic. I was left with one job which wasn't
6 enough for us to support ourselves. I rented out a
7 room and the person left because he lost his job.
8 My father passed away and we used up our savings on
9 the burial. It has not been easy!

10 Groceries are expensive and we
11 have to put food on the table. We'd like for you to
12 cancel the rent and that they're not be an
13 increase. We also have many needs in and around our
14 buildings. We had a fire and there are still
15 repairs that need to be completed. We thank you for
16 your attention and we hope that the authorities
17 will pay close attention to us and see what can be
18 done. I am very grateful. Thank you! Have a good
19 night!"

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
21 your testimony.

22 For the gentleman who has a long
23 string of numbers and letters, if you know who I'm
24 talking to, if you could unmute yourself where we
25 see you, but we don't hear you. But you can

1

2 testify.

3

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sheila, you

5

wouldn't happen to know who this person is?

6

MS. GARCIA: I do not recognize

7

him, but I will text text to see if anyone does.

8

MS. BURGER: He may not know that

9

his name is so crazy. The gentleman sitting in a

10

black chair with a TV behind his back.

11

MS. GARCIA: Lorenzo? (Speaking

12

Spanish.)

13

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

14

MR. FERMIN: (following was

15

translated from Spanish to English.)

16

"My name is Lorenzo Fermín and I

17

live at 1485 McCombs Road. I've been living in this

18

building for over twenty years with my family, my

19

son, and my wife. This is one of the buildings that

20

gets the least number of repairs completed. The

21

landlord doesn't complete repairs under normal

22

circumstances, much less during a pandemic. We'd

23

like for you to look inside your hearts and not

24

grant landlords any more rent increases. They've

25

always made money since rents always have to be

1

2 paid.

3

 Tenants have to do anything possible to pay their rents. They have to give up eating and buying clothes. They have to go without buying a shirt or a pair of pants to report to work since the job situation is not very good at the moment. There are not too many jobs to go around. Please look inside your hearts and do not destroy us the way that COVID-19 has. COVID-19 only left us with loss, loss of family members, loss of money, all types of loss. We don't want another rent increase to crush us like a tsunami. No rent increases! They don't deserve it! They didn't make repairs under normal circumstances, much less during a pandemic. They are waiting for everything to open up again so that they can evict people from their apartments and they know people no longer have the income they previously had. Please look inside your hearts and do not grant landlords any more rent increases. Thank you!"

22

 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for your testimony.

24

 Danielle, do we have anyone else?

25

 MS. BURGER: Not that I'm aware

1

2 of. This is your last chance to speak. If you'd
3 like to raise your hand, you can use that function
4 on video in Zoom. It says "Raise hand." If you're
5 on the telephone, you haven't spoken already, you
6 can press star 6. We have a couple of new people
7 who have raised their hands.

8

MS. GARCIA: There on here.

9

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Antonio Franco,
11 please, you have your turn to testify.

12

MR. FRANCO: Okay. Thank you so
13 much and good evening, everyone. And what -- yeah.
14 I'm here to testify or to say that we shouldn't
15 have a raise in rent. This pandemic is, I think
16 lots of people have mentioned, has been a tragedy,
17 a world tragedy. It's not only hitting New York,
18 it's hitting lots of people around the world, and
19 right now we're discussing an increase in rent is
20 really something that shouldn't be happening.

21

We should be worried about giving
22 food to our families. We should be worried about
23 getting medicine for those who need medicines. We
24 should be worried about getting jobs because many
25 people have lost their jobs. So increases in

1

2 whatever it is, in housing, in transportation, in
3 anything, those things shouldn't be happening. I
4 think the decision is very easy. We mustn't get an
5 increase in our rents, in our housing.

6 Before this pandemic, there was
7 already a housing crisis, so that problem is not
8 going to be solved in a very long time. I think we
9 all understand that and then increasing rent is
10 only going to make more difficult to solve that
11 situation. So yes, in my opinion, and because of
12 all the problems I've seen with my neighbors, with
13 myself, with my own situation, I see that it is
14 impossible to have a raise. And, yeah, that's my
15 opinion.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
17 your testimony.

18 Mariatou Diallo, I think, is going
19 to be next. Mariatou, if you could unmute
20 yourself. And if you want to put your camera on,
21 we'd welcome that too.

22 MS. DIALLO: I can't -- can I
23 speak without camera?

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Certainly, you
25 certainly can. And we're ready to hear your

1

2 testimony.

3

4 me?

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeas.

6

MS. DIALLO: Good evening. My
name is Mariatou Diallo. I am with CASA. I live
at 1060 Sheridan Avenue since 2014 until now. My
landlord is at 10481064 Sheridan Investor, LLC. I
am here tonight to testify for rent rollback
because I believe that the rent should never be
increasing at this time.

13

Before even think about
increasing rent, you should take a look at -- for
-- about people living condition through the
pandemic. I am a single mother with a nine years
old girl. I am very worried about being evicted.
I please the rent guide people to consider all
people, all resident it is and living in New York
City. Think about them, how when they increase in
rent, how going to be more affected?

22

We been affected already and
increasing a rent is not a solution for people,
like no income come in. Nobody know help. We
don't know where to go now. So please take the

25

1

2 consideration for all of people. Listen to people.
3 Listen to your people. You guys supposed to stand
4 up for all resident in New York City, resident
5 people not to increase the rent.

6 But you the one gave opportunity
7 the landlord to keep asking for increase in rent
8 because they can ask for you to increase rent. But
9 you have -- you the one has to make a decision. So
10 please this time, this moment, you should even
11 don't think about increasing rent. So I'm against
12 increasing rent. I am here to rollback. Thank you
13 for listening to me.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you so
15 much for your testimony. I see that we have Sandra
16 Mitchell?

17 MS. MITCHELL: Thank you very
18 much for this space for us to testify. Thank you
19 so very much, I appreciate it immensely. Again, my
20 name is Chaplain Sandra Mitchell. I am a woman of
21 faith and I'm making my petition for my community,
22 for people in my building, and for those who are
23 suffering with disabilities and mental health
24 issues as I am a mental health advocate and
25 counselor, for no rent increase, zero rent

1

2 increase, and asking for a rent rollback.

3

4 I am a member of CASA and I'm
5 also a member and tenant leader of the Northwest
6 Bronx Community Clergy Coalition. I live in the
7 Fordham Hill section of the Bronx. Coming out of
8 the shelter after losing my apartment in Riverdale
9 due to losing my job. I am still recuperating from
10 2013. I was already in a crisis before the
11 pandemic and raising rent during the pandemic, and
12 another strand is coming, it would be modern-day
13 genocide.

13

14 And so I'm asking, I am pleading,
15 I'm humbly pleading before God Almighty, to the
16 Rent Guidelines Board, for zero rent increase and a
17 rent rollback.

17

18 Thank you so very much for your
19 attention and time.

19

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
21 your testimony.

21

22 Danielle, anyone else?

22

23 MS. BURGER: Last chance. Press
24 star 6 to raise your hand on the phone. Use the
25 raise hand function if you're watching on video.

25

26 If we don't have any takers, we're going to adjourn

1

2 this meeting.

3

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

4

MS. GARCIA: (Speaking Spanish.)

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: So just as it

6 seems like we're wrapping up, I may have been

7 remiss in not thanking Ms. Figueroa, Olvin Caba,

8 and Roxie Chang at the end of our last hearing but

9 thanks so much for the translation and for the

10 informal translations that some others have

11 provided. But it's so important to the work that

12 we do that we are able to work with you and thank

13 you for taking such good care of our speakers and

14 the board. We're all grateful.

15

And again, thank you to our board

16 members who really have spent quite a bit of time

17 on these hearings. We've been able to hear

18 everyone who has wanted to speak, which is a great

19 thing, something we've committed to do.

20

So thank you all to that and, as

21 always, thanks to Andrew and Brian and Danielle and

22 Charmaine for running a very seamless virtual

23 hearing even though this is a pretty new thing, not

24 just for us, but for the people who have come to

25 testify before us today. So thanks to all and to

1

2 all a good night.

3

4 go.

5

6 Andrew. Always.

7

8 Olvin, I think you should double your hourly rate.

9

10 awesome. Thank you.

11

12

13 appreciated.

14

15

16 reminder that for the proposed language that you

17

18 want to be considered at the final vote, we will

19

20 p.m. So if you want to make a proposal, the final

21

22 you. If you have any questions about it, please

23

24

25 to just maybe give the phone number real quick if

1

2 people want to call in and give testimony by
3 midnight tonight?

4

MR, MCLAUGHLIN: Sure. And so if
5 you would like to call in a testimony, audio
6 testimony (929) 256-5472. If you'd go to our
7 website nyc.gov/rgb, there is a link there under
8 quick links where you can actually submit video
9 testimony as well. We'll keep that up.

10

The deadline is the idea that
11 that's the deadline to get the board members so we
12 legally know that we can get that to them. But
13 we'll leave that open, you know, in the morning
14 tomorrow as well if people want us and that's fine.
15 But we put the deadline of today so that we can
16 actually make sure that we can get it to everybody.
17 But if people still want to leave throughout the
18 morning tomorrow, that will be -- that will be
19 open.

20

MR. CABA: Andrew, would you like
21 that interpreted?

22

MR, MCLAUGHLIN: Sure.

23

MR. CABA: Thank you. (Speaking
24 Spanish.)

25

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

1

2 Andrew, we need a motion to adjourn for a hearing;
3 am I right?

4

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: We do.

5

MR. SCHWARTZ: Andrew, what time
6 is the deadline for the language? Did you say 2:00
7 p.m.?

8

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: 2:00 p.m.
9 tomorrow, yeah.

10

MR. SCHWARTZ: Okay.

11

MR. MCLAUGHLIN: The e-mail has
12 everything that you need on it and that at some
13 point during the -- we will e-mail out all -- all
14 the proposals that we get -- we will e-mail to the
15 board members tomorrow and then at some point
16 they'll be on the website tomorrow as well so the
17 public can view them.

18

MR. CABA: (Speaking Spanish.)

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.
20 Andrew, are we ready? All right. Do I have a
21 motion to adjourn?

22

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: I so move.

23

CHAIRMAN REISS: Christian makes
24 a motion.

25

Do I have a second? Alex has a

1

2 second.

3

4 Robert, you missed your
5 opportunity to be the second.

6

7 Thank you all and I will talk to
8 you all soon. Have a good night to everyone
9 listening.

10

11 MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Thank you.

12

13 MS. DEROSE: Good night.

14

15 MR. ERHLICH: Have a good night.

16

17 MS. BURGER: Thanks, everyone.

18

19 MR. SCHWARTZ: Thank you.

20

21 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Bye.

22

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

24

25 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Thanks, guys.

26

27 (At 9:00 p.m., the proceedings
28 were concluded.)

29

30

31

32

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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 251, 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 19th day of August, 2021.



MARC RUSSO

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