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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

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PUBLIC MEETING
OF
THE DIRECTORS

-----x

Jamaica Performing Arts Center
Auditorium
153-10 Jamaica Avenue
Jamaica, NY 11432

June 13, 2022
5:12 p.m.

B e f o r e :

DAVID REISS,
CHAIR

1

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

3 David Reiss, Chair

4 Arpit Gupta

5 Alex Schwartz

6 Christian Gonzalez-Rivera

7 Christina DeRose

8 Robert Ehrlich

9 Christina Smyth

10 Sheila Garcia

11 Adán Soltren

12

13

14 **S T A F F:**

15 Andrew McLaughlin

16 Executive Director

17 Brian Hoberman

18 Research Director

19 Danielle Burger

20 Deputy Research Director

21 Charmaine Superville

22 Office Manager

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A P P E A R A N C E S (Continued):

ALSO PRESENT:

The Public

The Press

The Media

Marc Russo

Court Reporter

1

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2

Christina DeRose?

3

MS. DEROSE: Present.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Robert Ehrlich?

5

MR. EHRLICH: Present.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Sheila Garcia?

7

MS. GARCIA: Present.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Christian

9

Gonzalez-Rivera?

10

MR. GONZALEZ-RIVERA: Present.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Arpit Gupta?

12

MR. GUPTA: Present.

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Alex Schwartz?

14

MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Christina Smyth?

16

MS. SMYTH: Present.

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: Adan Soltren?

18

MR. SOLTREN: Present.

19

CHAIRMAN REISS: David Reiss,

20

present.

21

Let the record show that we have a

22

quorum. Please respond if present.

23

The next meeting of this board

24

will be an in-person, public hearing this

25

Wednesday, June 15th at the Main Theater of Hostos

1

2 Center for the Arts and Culture of the Bronx, from
3 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

4 Please note that this venue has
5 COVID-19 protocols that must be followed in order
6 to attend the hearing. The details for attending
7 this hearing during COVID-19 protocols can be found
8 in the meeting schedule on our website,
9 nyc.gov/rgb, or by calling (212) 669-7480 between
10 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. You can also pre-register
11 to speak at this in-person hearing on our website
12 or by calling the RGB. Pre-registration of this
13 hearing will land at 12:00 p.m. on June 14th.

14 The June 15th hearing will also
15 be streamed live on our YouTube Channel. To find
16 out how to watch, visit the RGB website. We will
17 also be taking comments on the proposed guidelines
18 outside of our public hearings. This testimony
19 must be submitted no later than Thursday, June
20 16th. You can find information on submitting
21 testimony on our website, nyc.gov/rgb, or you can
22 leave audio testimony by calling (929) 256-5472.

23 The final vote will take place on
24 Tuesday, June 21st, starting at 7:30 p.m. at the
25 Great Hall, Cooper Union, corner of Third Avenue.

1

2 You may attend in person or it can be watched on
3 RGB's YouTube channel.

4

5 Please note that there are
6 COVID-19 protocols and to the Great Hall. The
7 details for attending this meeting, including
8 COVID-19 protocols can be found in the meeting
9 schedule on our website, or a call to the RGB from
10 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

11

12 I'd like to thank all of you for
13 attending this public hearing. The Board is
14 looking forward to hearing for many of you
15 regarding the proposed rent adjustment guidelines.

16

17 Before we proceed with testimony,
18 I'd like to go over rules and procedures for those
19 who are testifying before the Board. Please be
20 aware that this venue requires that you are all
21 masked at all times in order to mitigate the
22 transmission of the COVID-19 virus. And so please
23 keep your mask over your mouth and over your nose.
24 And that's the way that we each protect each other.
25 There are complimentary masks at the sign-in desk
in case you've misplaced or broken your mask.

26

27 If you wish to speak, you must
28 confirm your presence with the RGB staff at the

1
2 registration table located near the entrance of the
3 hall.

4 Speakers will not be called if
5 they have not checked in the end of the
6 registration table. There is a Spanish interpreter
7 here today. When registering to speak, please
8 notify the staff, if you would like an interpreter.
9 I will try to call out several names and advance in
10 order to let you know that you will soon be called
11 to speak. If you have materials to distribute to
12 the board, you should give them to the RGB staff
13 sitting at the sign-in table near the entrance.

14 I will also try to alternate
15 speakers between tenants and owners, but this may
16 not always be possible. In order to accommodate as
17 many speakers as possible, each speaker will have
18 two minutes to give their testimony. An additional
19 two minutes of speaking time will be given to those
20 speakers who utilize interpretation services.

21 To help speakers keep track of
22 their time, we have a clock, and the clock is right
23 there. We will start the clock when you begin
24 speaking, the clock will beep when the speaker has
25 30 seconds left, will continue beeping when the

1

2 allotted two minutes are up. If you're still
3 speaking at the end of two minutes, I will ask you
4 to quickly wrap up your testimony. We expect many
5 speakers and the Board wants to hear from as many
6 speakers as possible in the limited time we have
7 this hearing.

8 We understand that it may be
9 difficult to say everything you want us to hear in
10 just two minutes. But please understand that it is
11 our responsibility to make sure that everyone who
12 has taken the time to come here and testify will
13 have the fair opportunity to be heard. We thank
14 you for your cooperation.

15 We will now begin testimony. Our
16 first speaker is Senator Zellnor Myrie. Welcome,
17 Senator. And I'll just say our next speakers will
18 be Christopher Athineos, and then Carolyn Krupski.

19 MR. MYRIE: Thank you. Good
20 afternoon. I'm State Senator Zellnor Myrie. In my
21 district, I represent a 117 housing units. Of
22 those 117,000, 49,000 are rent-regulated. That is
23 40 percent of my district, including the house that
24 I grew up in, and the one that I live in now is
25 rent-regulated.

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So let me be abundantly clear without a hint of equivocation. Any rent increase is unacceptable and unconscionable. We have a once-in-a-century pandemic and what feels like a once every year record profit for the real estate industry. And I've heard a lot of weeping and gnashing of teeth about the condition of the landlords. And if you think it's bad for the landlords, how bad is it for the tenants?

I hear a lot about the numbers not adding up, but here's what doesn't add up. When there were rats crawling over the children of our tenants at night, the numbers do not add up. When EMS has to take my own mother down the stairs during a medical emergency from the fifth floor because the elevator doesn't work, the numbers do not add up.

When asthmatics are triggered and sent to the ER because the mold is exacerbating their own condition, the numbers do not add up. And under all of those circumstances, all of those cases I've dealt with either personally or in my office, the landlord still demands rent. So we demand proper service. We demand places that we

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2 can live in, and we demand a rent freeze.

3

4 I implored this Board. Find the
5 courage to do the right thing. And this
6 administration that claims to care about Black and
7 Brown people, that claims to care about the outer
8 boroughs, you find some courage as well, stand up,
9 and do the right thing.

9

(Audience participation.)

10

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
12 is Christopher Athineos, to be followed by Carolyn
13 Krupski.

13

14 MR. ATHINEOS: My family and I
15 have devoted our lives to providing decent
16 affordable housing to New Yorkers for a little over
17 50 years. We are expected to keep the buildings
18 built in 1883 and in 1930 going. The City Council
19 passes mandates like energy efficiencies, lead
20 paint, mold, with absolutely no regard of how we're
21 going to pay for this. We're expected to test each
22 occupied apartment for lead by 2025. I've started
23 the process and it costs over \$450 per apartment.
24 That's just the testing. That's not including any
25 remediation. That specific cost is not covered
anywhere in the PIOC.

1
2 The City Council passed a law
3 requiring owners to hire engineers to inspect the
4 retaining walls in and around their buildings,
5 which are publicly accessible. This cost is not
6 reflected in the PIOC. Recently, I received a
7 violation for failure to file such a report. I had
8 to hire an engineer to do the work, not to file the
9 report, but to prove to the city that I was not
10 required to file the report despite me trying to
11 bring this to the DOB attention without success.
12 That cost over \$6,000 just to prove that I did not
13 have to file the report.

14 That \$6,000 could have tested 13
15 apartments for lead paint. Last summer hurricane
16 Ida hit. We had significant flooding which
17 affected the boiler and the elevator. We had to
18 spend thousands of dollars to pump out the water
19 and repair the electrical systems. Now we're
20 forced to spend thousands more for electrical
21 upgrades, to install pumps to help deal with this
22 in the future. Again, it's nowhere in the PIOC.

23 Passing zero percent increases or
24 low increases like two or three percent may seem
25 like help to the tenants in need. But this board

1

2 and past boards have done these residents a
3 disservice, because without reasonable rent
4 increases to cover these mandates, housing quality
5 is deteriorating to the point of no return.

6 The Board's job is not about
7 satisfying owners or tenants. It's about
8 maintaining good housing for the future. I hope
9 this Board considers the data, examines what is
10 left out of the PIOC, and look at today's inflation
11 and passes a guideline that can preserve and
12 maintain our housing stock so that the numbers make
13 sense. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: I would just
15 like to remind everyone that's here today that
16 we're here to hear from everyone. And the same
17 respect that you would like to be given to you,
18 that you give to other speakers as well. Thank
19 you.

20 Our next speaker is Carolyn
21 Krupski, to be followed by Joanna Wong.

22 MS. KRUPSKI: Thank you for
23 having me. How many of you live in a
24 rent-stabilized apartment? Okay. I want to remind
25 you that each and every tenant here today is (Zoom

1

2 inaudible) I'll say that again, is themselves, a
3 small New York business. We each have a balance
4 sheet. We each have monthly income and expenses.
5 So when you hear today that these rent increases
6 are not affordable, it's because they're not. I
7 have two questions. Can you hear me?

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

9

MS. KRUPSKI: I have two
10 questions for the board today. The first is: Can
11 you commit to taking questions from tenants and
12 providing public answers in conjunction with
13 Wednesday's hearing to resolve some of the issues
14 that have come up in the 2022 research
15 publications? Well, I appreciate that a lot of
16 time and energy went into this documentation.
17 These documents raised more questions than they
18 answer.

19

For instance, why is there no
20 conversation in these documents about the fact that
21 in two boroughs NOI increased in the past year?
22 Why is there no conversation in these documents
23 about the fact that in Manhattan where NOI is
24 decreasing the fastest, landlords are much more
25 likely to be large businesses, not small business

1

2 owners, like some of our policymakers have tried to
3 indicate?

4 My second question for the board
5 is this: What is the plan? If you move forward
6 with these rent increases, what is the plan? How
7 are you going to ensure that as tenants pay more
8 per month, that money is reinvested in the quality
9 of life in their buildings? We know from the most
10 recent census data that rent-stabilized tenants are
11 much more likely to face issues with pests, with
12 mold, and other unlivable issues.

13 How are you going to ensure that
14 my elderly neighbor with dementia doesn't have mold
15 on his ceiling? How are you going to ensure that
16 my neighbor with cockroaches in her bathroom
17 doesn't have to deal with that? How are you going
18 to ensure that our laundry facility, which we all
19 pay for, has more than one working washing machine?

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
21 your testimony.

22 MS. KRUPSKI: Can I just say one
23 more thing? None of us in this room can predict
24 the future. We're still in the middle of a global
25 pandemic. And none of us know what the economy is

1

2 going to bring. But you, each and every one of you
3 know that if you pass this rent increase, you are
4 making millions of New Yorkers more vulnerable for
5 whatever is going to come. And that is wrong.

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
7 your testimony.

8 Our next speaker is Joanna Wong to
9 be followed by Steven Talbert Williams.

10 MS. WONG: Hello. Okay. All
11 right. Thank you for taking my testimony today. As
12 a small housing provider, my first priority is to
13 make sure that our housing is, number one, safe,
14 and number two, decent for our tenants, not just
15 today, but for the future. Expenses have been
16 ballooning, and with the high inflations, I doubt
17 it's going to slow down. There is a concerning
18 trend with insurance, especially with the older
19 housing stock, which is normally rent-stabilized
20 buildings.

21 Many insurers are not renewing,
22 or if they're renewing, the renewing it great, you
23 know, big increases and large deductibles. Large
24 deductibles mean we need more cash on hand in case
25 something happens. I was recently quoted at 25

1

2 percent premium increase, even though we have no
3 history of any claims. And I was told that this is
4 a terrific renewal.

5 With expenses increasing across
6 the board, the one thing we can do is delay
7 non-essential items. Maybe we can squeeze a few
8 more years out of the boiler. Maybe we can patch
9 the roof instead of replace it. But all of this is
10 strong -- is short-term solutions. Postponed long
11 enough, all these non-essential work items
12 essentially turn into critical urgent work. So
13 since 2019, the RGB increases are now the only
14 sustainable way to keep up with expenses. So
15 please take that into consideration in your vote.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
18 is Steven Talbert Williams to be followed by Ann
19 Korchak.

20 (Audience participation.)

21 MR. WILLIAMS: All right. Good
22 evening.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Good evening.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: My name is Steven
25 Talbert Williams. My mother Linda Paula Williams

1

2 is working for -- as a secretary for the New York
3 Times, --

4

5

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We can't
hear you.

6

MR. WILLIAMS: My mother, Linda
7 Paula Stringer Williams, working as a secretary for
8 the New York Times, moved into the community of
9 PCVST in the early '70s. I was added to the lease
10 as an occupant in 1986. I was, as claimed,
11 illegally evicted as a rent controlled tenant, not
12 as a rent-stabilized tenant. As evidenced in the
13 lease -- the housing court trial of ST Owner LP
14 versus Williams, where the owners filed the actual
15 petition as myself being a rent-stabilized tenant.
16 As claimed on the day of eviction, having never
17 been provided a summons, my key card was disabled,
18 my top lock was broken, and a marshal's notice was
19 on the door saying that all property was removed
20 and sent to auction.

21

22

23

24

25

In the year 2000, my mother was
diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She was like, she
designated myself as sole beneficiary of her trust
in Linda Williams' beneficial trust. In the year
1986, Tishman and BlackRock purchased the community

1

2 of PCVST with tenants anticipating ownership of
3 their apartments, and were given notices. The new
4 owners increased rents, and my parents began living
5 paycheck to paycheck, barely making ends meet.

6 With the increase of MCIs, I witnessed many
7 childhood friends evicted or moved. Prior to the
8 Maiden Lane and deed auctions, deed in lieu
9 auctions, deed and lieu foreclosure auctions, --

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Please speak
11 into the mic a little bit more, please. Thank you.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: It turned off for a
13 second. Prior to the Maiden Lane and deed in lieu
14 auctions, Tishman and BlackRock pursued legal
15 actions, -- excuse me, against the Dizengoff
16 tenants or PCVST for fraud concerning rent
17 stabilization and succession rights. After the
18 tenants of the trial, -- excuse me, after the
19 tenants were found guilty of fraud, the owners
20 performed financial, criminal, and medical
21 background checks on all tenants.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
23 your testimony.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: There's a lot
25 more. I'll see you next time.

1

2 CHAIRMAN REISS: Okay. Thank

3 you. Go ahead.

4 MR. WILLIAMS: There was still 30

5 seconds left on the clock, right?

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: No, no, no.

7 That was past the two minutes.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: I could have sworn

9 I saw 27 seconds.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: No after the --

11 two-and-a-half minutes. We gave you a little extra

12 time.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: When the beeping

15 starts, the first beep is, you have 30 seconds

16 left, but when it repeat beeps, it's done.

17 MR. WILLIAMS: Just to add on

18 just a little bit. May I?

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: There's all

20 these people waiting on --

21 MR. WILLIAMS: Defining MCIs for

22 what you're doing for more increase in rents won't

23 necessarily pursue a better outcome for what you

24 need in life for rent stabilization to actually

25 continue.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

3

We're going to move on to our next speaker Ann

4

Korchak, --

5

MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you so very

6

much.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: -- to be

8

followed by Natalie Marquez [sic].

9

MS. MARQUES: Good evening.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good evening.

11

MS. KORCHAK: I just wanted to

12

share some numbers with you. First, inflation is

13

8.6 percent, a number we have not seen since 1981.

14

DEP just announced a 4.9 percent increase in the

15

water and sewer rates, cost \$2500 more to heat the

16

building this winter than last. My property tax

17

bill is 7 percent higher than last year, which is

18

an additional \$6,000. Every skilled contractor and

19

professional service provider I use has raised

20

their rates. Prior to the pandemic, my attorney

21

charged \$450 an hour. It's now 520.

22

My plumber has raised his hourly

23

fee to \$318 from 258. The labor and insurance

24

rates are soaring for these people. And that means

25

they're charging me more. But those are not the

1

2 most alarming numbers for my family business. This
3 is what keeps me most worried. We have a vacancy
4 rate of 10 percent and we don't have any cash to
5 renovate those apartments and house more people.

6 We've exhausted all of our
7 reserves. 80 years. That's how long my family has
8 been at this. We've ridden out some pretty
9 difficult times here in New York City. But this
10 time it feels insurmountable. We understand that
11 there's risk in running any business, but the
12 regulatory and compliance obligations and the
13 political wins that seem to want to legislate us
14 out of business means that this Board's
15 deliberations are more important than ever. You
16 have to base your decision on the numbers.

17 It's evident that our expenses
18 are increasing dramatically and rents must rise to
19 meet those expenses. We see ourselves as
20 stakeholders in our neighborhood and the city. We
21 are providing a needed service. We are supporting
22 local contractors. Many of them immigrants. Our
23 inability to adequately improve and maintain our
24 building impacts our renters, our contractors, our
25 neighborhood, and the economic well-being of the

1

2 city. Thank you.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next
4 speaker's Natalia Marques to be followed by Edward
5 Klein.

6

MS. MARQUES: Hi, my name is
7 Natalia Marques. I am a New York City
8 rent-stabilized tenant and a member of the ANSWER
9 Coalition. 2.4 million New Yorkers. 2.4 million
10 of us. That's how many rent-stabilized tenants
11 there are in this city. Do 2.4 million of us vote
12 on a rent increase? Did we vote for a six percent
13 rent increase? Who decided that increase? Nine
14 un-elected members of the Rent Guidelines Board.
15 Is that democracy?

16

We, rent-stabilized tenants,
17 we're working class and poor people. Six percent
18 is the difference between a roof over our heads or
19 sleeping on the streets. Six percent is the
20 difference between affording healthy food and not.
21 We cannot afford a six percent increase. Landlords
22 say that they need the money to provide repairs.
23 Who here lives in an apartment with cockroaches?
24 Who lives in an apartment with rats, with a leaky
25 faucet?

1
2 Repairs are a joke. Landlords
3 say that they provide housing for us, but in
4 reality, we give them money off of our hard work
5 and labor. And they hoard the housing. We demand
6 a zero percent rent increase during this pandemic.
7 You know, this is kind of, this is what happens
8 sometimes. Six percent is a lot. Six percent is
9 life or death for some people. But sometimes the
10 people that rule over us push too far. They ask
11 for two months -- too much from us, without
12 understanding the mass movement of tenants, that
13 they will unleash if they pass this six percent
14 increase.

15 We're not just demanding zero
16 increases. We're demanding housing as a human
17 right for all people. And we will not stop until
18 everyone has housing, not just in New York City,
19 not just in the State, but in the entire country.
20 I want to reiterate, we demand a six percent -- a
21 zero percent increase during this pandemic. We
22 still have -- the pandemic still is not over.
23 Working-class tenants are still struggling and we
24 will always be fighting for more.

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Let's hear from

1

2 our next speaker. Our next speaker is Edward Klein
3 to be followed by Hailie Kim. Welcome.

4

MR. KLEIN: Good afternoon,
5 ladies and gentlemen. Can you hear me?

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

7

MR. KLEIN: Very good. Did you
8 get a copy of the spreadsheet that I gave out to
9 everybody? I handed out to everybody. If you
10 could just take it out for a second. No, you
11 didn't receive, or you did?

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: I think they may
13 have not come up here yet.

14

MR. KLEIN: Oh, okay. Let me
15 give you one.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: [Inaudible about
17 it.

18

MR. KLEIN: Thank you very much.
19 Thank you so much. I'm sorry, you didn't get it
20 yet. My name is Edward Klein. I had my own --

21

(Chorus of "No rent increase.")

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Let me just
23 remind everyone that we will be sent out of this
24 venue at some point tonight and may result in
25 people not being able to be heard. So my desire's

1

2 to let everyone to be heard, including all the
3 people who are here, who are waiting for their
4 turn. So if we want to let everyone be heard, we
5 need to make space for them. So Mr. Klein, could
6 you continue, please? And could everyone let him
7 speak, please?

8 MR. KLEIN: Thank you. Thank you
9 very much, Your Honor. I respect democracy and
10 action, and I -- while I don't agree with them
11 necessarily, we do understand where they're coming
12 from and we do appreciate their concerns and don't
13 think anything otherwise. Anyway, my name is
14 Edward Klein, and I employ 25 people in this
15 beautiful city of ours. I have the good fortune of
16 being both a lawyer with my own little firm and
17 also a landlord, maybe not such good fortune.

18 The bottom line is, I've sent it
19 out before you. I gave you an exhibit because I
20 thought that that would be the best way of just
21 showing exactly what's happened over the last few
22 years. The exhibit shows the increase in rent for
23 probably most landlords in the city and certainly
24 myself, that since the HSTPA, for which you're not
25 responsible for, was created in June 2019, our

1

2 rents have not gone up much at all.

3

4 Now, that's not just the fault of
5 the HSTCPA, but it's also the fault of the de
6 Blasio administration who kind of dictated that
7 there should be increases of 0.75 percent per year.
8 So in my average, it's increased by 1.8 percent.
9 That's exactly 0.9, less than one percent on each
10 year going forward. And the expenses, as explained
11 before, have gone up.

11

12 You know, if they don't give us
13 any pity on taxes, the taxes during the de Blasio
14 administration went up 48 percent in the last two
15 years alone. Even though they gave us an 8 percent
16 break because of COVID, they took it all back and
17 they increased it by ten to 12 percent this year.
18 So it's not really fair. The insurance costs, as
19 you've heard, have increased by double digits in
20 every single borough. The New York City mandates
21 have caused us to have extra increases.

21

22 So when the word expenses
23 continued rising at a great, much greater than the
24 income that's taken in, again, without disregard
25 for the tenants that are here, noble tenants, good
26 tenants, how much of the blame can be laid at the

1
2 feed of former mayor and the New York State
3 legislators, but you are the ones who are being
4 called upon by all fair minded individuals to try
5 to fix the situation? And the answer is that
6 basically, again, having an understanding of what
7 the tenants are doing and what the tenants want,
8 but real estate at the core is balancing the
9 ballots. I've just another ten seconds. We didn't
10 tell you that when you when you went over 30
11 seconds. Anyway. Anyway, I put up multiple
12 tenants. I have just two more sentences.

13 Thank you. I put up multiple
14 tenants after Hurricane Sandy and I did it for
15 years and we did it for free. We didn't charge
16 them any rent. We started a group. Just one more
17 sentence. We started a group to give the Ukrainian
18 refugees free rent. No rent. Free rent so that
19 they could have a place where they go.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: All right, thank
21 you.

22 MR. KLEIN: That is not
23 democracy. I'm finished. Respectfully, please
24 help [inaudible] some of the damage done over the
25 last couple of years. And vote and vote for a six

1

2 percent increase. Thank you very much for your
3 courtesy, cooperation, and for opening the hearing.
4 Have a wonderful day.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our
6 next speaker's Hailie Kim to be followed by Jared
7 Cooperman.

8

MS. KIM: Good evening. My name
9 is Hailie Kim and I work with an organization
10 called MinkWon Center for Community Action,
11 representing many, many tenants in the Flushing,
12 Queens area. And in Flushing, there are 2675
13 buildings that are marked as rent-stabilized. If
14 the rent rises, the people living in those 2675
15 units are at risk. The housing situation in
16 Flushing is already dire. Asian-American seniors
17 in Flushing sleep in casino buses because they can
18 no longer afford their apartments.

19

One in four AAPI senior lives in
20 poverty. Raising the rent would only lead to more
21 homelessness among an already vulnerable
22 population. Prior to the eviction moratorium
23 taking effect, there were 300 eviction cases
24 pending in Flushing. A rent hike would force more
25 vulnerable seniors into unsafe living situations

1

2 where they would be exposed to both COVID and hate
3 crimes. When tenants in New York pay typically 50
4 percent of their income for their rent, we cannot
5 afford anything more than a rent freeze. Thank
6 you.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
8 is Jared Cooperman to be followed by Jenny Akchin.

9

MR. COOPERMAN: I would like to
10 give a few statistics today. Over the past eight
11 years, the average one year rent increase by the
12 RGB was 0.75 percent where operating expenses
13 increased by an average of 3.5 percent per year.
14 Property taxes alone increased 48 percent up until
15 de Blasio. According to the RGB, this year is PIOC
16 increased by 4.2 percent. These increases greatly
17 affect my company. The buildings we managed are
18 all rent-stabilized. The RGB increases are the
19 only way for us to properly maintain our buildings.
20 This is due to the HSTPA that was passed in June
21 2019.

22

We've been unable to use IAIs or
23 MCIs to properly receive a return on our investment
24 for most repairs made on our property. We also
25 face new huge increases of the cost of doing

1
2 business. Inflation is really hurting our
3 bottom-line. Even if you are concerned about
4 tenants facing increases, these latest guidelines
5 would not go into effect until after October 2022,
6 allowing tenants still impacted by the pandemic,
7 additional time to recover. Furthermore, any
8 tenant to receive ERAP funds are further protected
9 from any rent increase for the next 12 months from
10 the date that their building owner accepts their
11 ERAP funds. Please do the math.

12 How are owners supposed to
13 provide adequate living conditions when the
14 increase in operating expenses is many times higher
15 than the increase in rents over the past eight
16 years? How are owners expected to maintain their
17 property when they are not permitted to make any
18 money? Even though the -- and the RGB, which uses
19 NOI to show their profit, does not include any
20 mortgage expenses, which is not a way that building
21 owners buy their property. Every single building
22 owner has a mortgage expense. The NOI, which shows
23 profit, does not show the mortgage.

24 Please vote for a six percent
25 increase for a one-year lease and an eight percent

1
2 increase for two-year lease. Thank you for
3 listening and thank you for making this hearing
4 available to the public.

5 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
6 is Jenny Akchin to be followed by Aaron Weber.

7 MS. AKCHIN: Good evening. My
8 name is Jenny Akchin. I'm a proud rent-stabilized
9 tenant of 94th Street and Jackson Heights. I'm
10 also a tenant attorney working in the housing
11 court, including the one right up the road where I
12 see tenants being faced with deplorable conditions
13 and unjust evictions every day of the week. And
14 I'm here to urge you for myself, for my neighbors,
15 and for my clients to set aside this rent increase
16 proposal and freeze the rent.

17 As you know, you have one job
18 today and it's to assess the economic conditions of
19 the real estate industry, the economic conditions
20 of society, right? The real and current projected
21 costs of living right now, and any other relevant
22 data. And I just really feel like this year in
23 particular, you gotta pay attention to third one.
24 Because right now we have lost 40,500 people in the
25 city to a pandemic. One in every 200 children in

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2 the city lost a parent and an income earner in
3 their household. The cost of inflation is high,
4 but it's carried by all of us. And 11 percent of
5 that is food, right? Food on the table that we are
6 having to forego to pay your rent.

7 There are currently 227,000
8 evictions in the housing court. 200,000 of them
9 are for non-payment. There are over a million
10 people in New York City who don't -- who are either
11 behind on a payment or will be beyond -- behind on
12 a payment very soon, according to the US Census
13 Bureau. And when you looked at these conditions,
14 you said, you know what the city needs? It needs
15 the highest rent increase that we've had in almost
16 a decade. And that is a moral outrage. It is a
17 moral outrage. So this is shocking, it's
18 embarrassing. It is not how New York City works.

19 New York City is the city that
20 comes together and times of emergency. It is the
21 city that comes together in times of crisis, and we
22 need you to do the right thing now and have the
23 backs of the tenants in this city who are paying
24 your bills. We are paying for your repairs. We
25 pay and we pay and we pay at the conditions never

1

2 get better. So we need to throw that myth away.

3 We need to throw it away today, and we need to

4 freeze the rent. Thank you.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
6 is Aaron Weber to be followed by Claudia Nunez.

7

MR. WEBER: Hello. Good evening.

8

My name is Aaron. I own a family-run management

9

company who manages 30 buildings across Manhattan

10

in Brooklyn. Hey, During the de Blasio

11

administration, rent regulated apartments on

12

average, rose under one percent for a typical

13

one-year lease. These RGB rent increases are not

14

commensurate with the rise and expenses associated

15

with taxes, insurance, labor, and gas, oil.

16

During the same period over the

17

last eight years, taxes increased 61 percent for a

18

ten unit building that I manage. Payroll expenses

19

have also jumped for supers and administrators as

20

minimum wage in New York City increased 88 percent,

21

from \$8 an hour in 2014 to \$15 an hour and 2020.

22

For the same building insurance premiums increased

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an average of 8.12 percent per year over the last

24

three years.

25

But most of all, heating oil

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2 prices jumped 77 percent in just two months. It
3 cost \$6,000 to fill up our oil tank in January
4 2022. Just two months later, it cost \$10,600 to
5 fill up the same tank, which needs to two to three
6 refills a month. In addition, during COVID in 2020
7 and 2021, cleaning expenses rose 40 percent.
8 People will talk about how the quality of living is
9 inferior. But we, as property owners, need to cut
10 costs for a building that needs an exterminator.
11 With limited rent increases, property owners may
12 not be able to afford an exterminator, not be --
13 they might not be able to afford cleaning. Thank
14 you.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next
16 speaker's Claudia Nunez to be followed by Lewis
17 Barbanel. Ms. Nunez, before you start, I'd just
18 like to remind everyone to please put your mask
19 over your mouth and your nose. That's the way we
20 protect each other.

21 Thank you. Ms. Nunez?

22 THE INTERPRETER: My name is
23 Claudia Nunez and I live at the Cosmopolitan
24 Houses. I'm here to let everyone know, everyone
25 that's over here on the board the enormous impact

1
2 that we will all have with this incredible
3 increase. We just got out of a pandemic where we
4 lost jobs where many families don't have enough
5 food, and much less money to pay rent. I'm a
6 person on -- with a disability. My Social Security
7 is extremely low and I have to move in with my
8 parents.

9 The people in the Cosmopolitan
10 Houses, we have been bombarded with MCI increases
11 where we shouldn't have to pay for repairs that are
12 not our responsibility, where the landlord of the
13 Cosmopolitan Houses do not want to provide repairs
14 where we live with rats, cockroaches, and bedbugs.
15 With these rent increases, we're going to wind up
16 homeless.

17 We're victims of these landlords,
18 who we help fill their pockets every day. We are
19 in all of your hands. You are all going to be
20 remembered for this unjust increase for our homes.
21 You are all going to be part of history of a moment
22 when the amount of homeless people has -- is
23 astronomical. Whose side are you on? Of the
24 tenants or of the landlords who we are filling
25 their pockets?

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker

3 --

4

INTERPRETER: Wait, she didn't

5

finish.

6

MS. NUNEZ: We need for you to be

7

sensitive to the pain of all the tenants that are

8

here, that are fighting against these unjust

9

landlords and these unjust increases. Thank you.

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our

11

next speaker's Lewis Barbanel to be followed by

12

Basilio Garcia.

13

MR. BARBANEL: Good afternoon.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Good afternoon.

15

MR. BARBANEL: Thank you for the

16

opportunity to testify upon the Rent Guidelines

17

Board. We all understand how difficult that is to

18

live in New York City, the cost of living is always

19

extremely high and the number one expense at most

20

households is rent. At Barberry Rose, we manage a

21

thousand apartments plus, and we have issues with

22

all the buildings. I will echo all the previous

23

owners of property that the core expenses are all

24

up.

25

If you heard real estate, taxes,

1
2 water, sewer, insurance, supplies, labor, gas, oil,
3 electricity, plus all the new laws that come out
4 which lead paint, mold, and gas lines. But it's
5 interesting to note that there was a very
6 interesting, very interesting book put out by
7 Robert Fogleson regarding the Great Rent Wars of
8 1917 to 1929. And that was the first rent scheme
9 in New York post World War 1, where you had a
10 massive shortage of apartments and too much demand.

11 Now, they found interestingly
12 enough, a lot of the similarities that go on today.
13 And it ended in 1929 at the Great Panic, the Great
14 Depression. Why? Because all of a sudden you had
15 too many apartments for too few people. What I
16 find truly fascinating in New York is how we do
17 believe and it's becoming throughout the whole
18 country by controlling costs, we could actually
19 control it. But it doesn't work that way. It
20 didn't work that way in any communist country and
21 it doesn't work that way here.

22 Also, what's fascinating is how
23 President Biden put out a very interesting bulletin
24 that he wants to improve housing and create more
25 housing to reduce the cost. So there we have the

1

2 White House and providing -- excuse me, suggesting
3 supply and demand was here in New York, was still
4 holding onto this ancient idea of holding on,
5 excuse me, excuse me, excuse me, excuse me.

6 (Audience participation)

7 CHAIRMAN REISS: Can we give each
8 person the opportunity to be heard, please? Thank
9 you.

10 MR. BARBANEL: Excuse me. Excuse
11 me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse me.

12 (Sound effect). Thank you. Thank you. Thank you
13 for the respect. I appreciate that supply and
14 demand is the only way to actually allow price come
15 down. We appreciate if you could pass the six and
16 and an eight percent increase. Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
18 is Basilio Garcia to be followed by Irving Lee.

19 THE INTERPRETER: Good evening.

20 (Audience participation.)

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: Can we allow
22 each speaker the opportunity to be heard, please?
23 Please. Please.

24 THE INTERPRETER: My name is
25 Basilio Garcia, and I live in one of the BRG

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2 buildings. Very good evening to the RGB, and this
3 is my testimony. We understand that there's going
4 to be a rent increase to the percentage that you
5 all agreed to previously. It's going to be 4.3
6 percent for the first year, and 4.5 percent to 9
7 percent within two years. So now if the tenant
8 still owes any rent, this percentage would imply an
9 additional increase to his or her rent. This would
10 create massive eviction, and many people would wind
11 up on the streets.

12 Knowing full well the impact of
13 the COVID-19 pandemic had on people, since many
14 people are elderly, this is a slap and it's also an
15 abuse to all of our tenants. It would be a slap on
16 the face to people who would not be able to eat, to
17 be able to pay rents. Since their income that they
18 receive from Social Security income is also
19 extremely limited, and at the same time, it would
20 not help us to cover our basic costs. We ask all
21 tenants to please reach out to the RGB. We ask you
22 to please make sure to think before you make an
23 unjust decision to be able to arrive at a very fair
24 agreement where we will be granted justice. And
25 that would benefit us and not just those who are

1

2 out there lobbying and don't care about us, the
3 downtrodden.

4 If not for this, this is what we
5 will remember you by, by not making good on this
6 and being fair. This is how we will remember you.
7 Thank you very much. And I hope that you're aware
8 of this and you think about this and that you think
9 of this in your heart so that especially because of
10 all the tenants at the moment who are going through
11 this very difficult time and had a bitter taste as
12 a result of this. And all of you know this. We
13 can no longer tolerate this. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
15 is Irving Lee to be followed by Consuelo Angulo.

16 MR. LEE: Hello. My name is
17 Irving Lee. I'm a single -- I'm a second
18 generation property owner in Chinatown of a single
19 tenement building. And as an Asian-American
20 property owner like many others from the form of
21 the foundational basis for making ChinaTown a true
22 ethnic community. Many of our tenants live in
23 rent-regulated apartments, with some paying rents
24 below the cost of actually maintaining the
25 apartment. I have SCRIE and Section 8 tenants who

1

2 are protected from rent increases.

3 We have many Mom-and-Pop stores
4 and restaurants, often below market rate for
5 commercial businesses in New York City. Even
6 before the COVID outbreak, the advent of online
7 shopping has put many of our stores out of
8 business. This, along with the laws like 2019
9 HSTPA, restrict our ability to renovate vacant
10 rent-regulated apartments, further reducing our
11 income. With COVID, businesses in New York City
12 suffer and someone under. On top of this, a
13 campaign for canceled rent was initiated
14 undermining small property owners, that's as if we
15 were responsible for COVID.

16 Now, inflation has made things
17 more difficult and inexpensive. As prices of
18 operating costs have increased 4.2 percent, with
19 many of our buildings are over a 100 years old,
20 capital improvements are unavoidable and costs have
21 increased tremendously. This includes mandates for
22 lead paint and mold remediation.

23 As private property owners, we
24 have to be accountable on how our housing is
25 maintained. Government relies on us to pay taxes

1
2 which subsidized the city in order for it to
3 function properly. Under de Blasio administration,
4 average rent increases for one year was 0.75
5 percent while operating expenses in that period
6 rose 3.5 percent My property taxes have increased
7 20 percent for this year. My expenses up 32
8 percent, while my income has declined 21 percent.
9 In order to maintain the affordable regulated
10 housing, we need a substantial increase to cover
11 our expenses that enable to keep China Town, China
12 Town.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
14 your testimony.

15 MR. LEE: We need this to
16 preserve the small businesses like myself, which is
17 in the interest of the city and my tenants. Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next
20 speaker's Consuelo Angulo to be followed by David
21 Eshaghoff.

22 THE INTERPRETER: Here we are,
23 we're not leaving. Good evening. My name is
24 Consuelo Angulo. For me, this is a very -- this
25 moment is a very special moment, because it's the

1

2 only way to make you feel the problems that we are
3 feeling with this, with housing. And we have
4 arrived at a moment where it feels as if your heart
5 is going to explode. And enough. We can't
6 tolerate anymore. The pandemic took away the
7 lungs. And what's left over are being basically
8 eaten up by the landlords, by the rige. They're
9 just doing what they want with what's leftover.

10 I am a 69-year-old woman. I live
11 with a little bit of help from my Social Security.
12 I don't have a dignified -- I can't sleep like a
13 person because it just can't happen. Two minutes
14 is too short of a time to truly say what we want to
15 say. The only thing that I can tell you who are
16 representatives of the truly poor and impoverished
17 and the most vulnerable of society, which are us,
18 which are people that are elderly, and we just
19 don't have the strength to live like this anymore.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Please, please
21 let her finish the testimony.

22 MS. ANGULO: So I'm only -- the
23 only thing that I have to say is, I hope you look
24 in your conscience and put your hands over your
25 hearts and you say you, you attempt to do the right

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2 thing by these people, which are the vulnerable
3 people, the poor people. You help these people who
4 every night have to sleep with rats feasting on
5 their feet or cockroaches. Do the right thing.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
7 is David Eshaghoff to be followed by Sandra
8 Dominguez. Mr. Eshaghoff?

9

MR. ESHAGHOFF: Good evening.
10 Please don't be on the side of the owners or the
11 tenants. Be on the side of the numbers. It is my
12 opinion that the Board --

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: Please, allow
14 each speaker the courtesy of being able to be
15 heard. Please continue.

16

MR. ESHAGHOFF: It is my opinion
17 that the Board must focus on the mandate in making
18 sure that rent-stabilized buildings like mine can
19 continue to operate in a safe and presentable
20 manner. To do that, rent adjustments, must keep up
21 with costs. Unfortunately, the proposed range in
22 the preliminary vote will not do that. Increases
23 over the past seven to eight years have been
24 relatively flat, while expenses have drastically
25 increased. For example, my real estate taxes have

1

2 nearly doubled in the past five years. And our
3 insurance rates and fuel bills have skyrocketed.

4 Our fuel bill has more than
5 tripled to almost \$6 per gallon. Our building with
6 22 units, two of which are fair market, with a
7 \$325,000 gross rent consumes about 15 gallons --
8 15,000 gallons of oil per year. That is \$90,000
9 before any vacancies, taxes, which is another
10 84,000, insurance, basic repairs, exterminator,
11 payroll, just to name a few.

12 (Audience participation.)

13 MR. ESHAGHOFF: No, I'm not. I'm
14 not. I have taken a 100 grand out of my account to
15 subsidize that building.

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Mr. Eshaghoff,
17 this is an opportunity to --

18 MR. ESHAGHOFF: So tell them to
19 quiet, tell them to stop.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: All right,
21 please let's allow each speaker to testify to the
22 Board, please. Thank you.

23 MR. ESHAGHOFF: The May 2022 CPI
24 index was published to be 8.6 percent. How can
25 anyone square a two to four percent increase when

1
2 we're facing a 8.6 percent and rising? Inflation
3 affects everyone, including property owners.
4 Property owner are a large consumer. And this
5 increase affects us even more. New York City
6 politicians and policies cannot continue this
7 charade and subsidize the general public on the
8 backs of a few. If they want a diverse group of
9 people in the city, they should do so by
10 subsidizing the rent rather than asking for
11 property owners to do so while being taxed into
12 bankruptcy. Does no one question that COVID-19
13 cause havoc throughout the public? Property owners
14 are a member of the same communities, while
15 everyone has been subsidized were still in charge
16 of making sure the buildings were operating, clean,
17 and safe for our residents and employees, all of
18 which can --

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

21 MR. ESHAGHOFF: -- came at a
22 significant cost.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
24 your testimony.

25 Our next speaker -- I'd just like

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2 to remind everybody of two things. One is that
3 registration closes at 8:00 p.m. So if you want to
4 speak and you have not yet signed up, please go to
5 the RGB staff desk in the front to sign up. And
6 also again, just to remind you, please cover your
7 mouth and your nose to protect each of us. That's
8 why we wear masks. So if you're not wearing your
9 mask, please cover your mouth and nose. Thank you.

10

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening.

11

My name is Sandra Domingues. I also live at the
12 Cosmopolitan Houses in Woodside, Queens. I've been
13 living in these apartments for a very long time,
14 myself and my two children, both 19 and 20 years of
15 age. We live in a very limited income, which is my
16 husband's since COVID affected our home greatly.
17 It reduced our family income, and it also has
18 affected our day-to-day living. And just like
19 thousands of families in New York, we have to
20 decide whether to put bread on the table or to
21 submit to these unfair demands that are being made
22 of us.

23

With these landlords that are
24 insisting every single year to continue raising the
25 rent and providing these rent increases, during

1
2 this time, I've been the victim of my landlord
3 who's denied to make any of the -- or -- make good
4 on any of his obligations as a landlord. Denying
5 repairs that are my right as a tenant. We live
6 with different infestations in these buildings,
7 there are bedbugs, there are roaches. During these
8 times where we lost so much because of this
9 pandemic. But of course, my landlord's greed
10 doesn't stop.

11 And of course, taking advantage
12 of all the loopholes in the system and the housing
13 authority and the housing system that of course
14 favors the landlords. He keeps increasing my rent.
15 And of course one more increase that of course, all
16 of you on the Board are at the point of making at
17 the moment, one more increase. That's of course,
18 not taking into consideration all of the MCIs that
19 had been applied. There are three of them, ladies
20 and gentlemen, three.

21 You are not only responsible for
22 the loss of housing in the city, but of course,
23 massive evictions. Now I ask all of you: What
24 would massive evictions cause in the city? It
25 would be a public order issue. I beg of you to

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2 please put a stop to these unfair increases to the
3 population, to the poor of the city.

4

5 Until when are we going to
6 continue doing this? Where are we going to stop
7 helping all of these greedy landlords? Where are
8 we finally going to put a stop to all of this?
9 What side exactly are all of you on? Why should we
10 keep asking for crumbs, injustice? Why close your
11 eyes before all of the pain in the city? Please
12 put an end to this. Please. Please be fair.

13 Enough. Enough. Stop the helplessness. While the
14 landlords continue lining their pockets with with
15 our money. We don't want to -- we want justice.
16 We don't want to live on the street. Thank you.

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next
17 speaker's Glenda Suazo to be followed by Andrew
18 Sokolof Diaz. Welcome Ms. Suazo.

19

THE INTERPRETER: Good afternoon
20 to everyone. This is my statement. We don't want
21 a rent increase. For ten years, I have been
22 harassed by my landlord and the super of the
23 building. He has not done repairs in my apartment.
24 The super harasses me by putting on excessively
25 loud music in the basement of the building.

1

2 Drinking and smoking. He and his relatives, even
3 when he is not in the building, they do that. All
4 of this harassment has affected me in all levels,
5 physically, and financially. Because I have had to
6 go to work the next day while I did not sleep the
7 night before because I have been up due to the
8 super's excessively loud music and partying with
9 the drinking and the smoking.

10 Since October of the year 2021,
11 there has not been gas in the building. We have no
12 explanation from the landlord or the super.
13 According to the landlord and the super, if the
14 landlord reinstalls the gas service, the building
15 will explode. The owner/landlord provided electric
16 stoves to all the tenants except for myself. Sir,
17 ladies and gentlemen, do you think it's fair to
18 increase the rent? No. My statement would
19 continue and I would just give more examples of the
20 harassment that I have been dealing with from my
21 super and my landlord.

22 One time there was such a big
23 leak in my kitchen that my daughter slipped or slid
24 all the way because of the water. This is a
25 picture of my next door neighbor. It's a small

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2 roof, small ceiling. It is always damaged and it
3 leaks into my apartment. All of this has also
4 affected my health physically because there is mold
5 in my apartment. And all my landlord does is
6 continue collecting rent and collecting rent
7 without making any repairs, but does continue to
8 harass me constantly.

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
10 your testimony.

11 MS. SUAZO: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next
13 speaker's Andrew Sokolof Diaz to be followed by
14 Alexandra Nita. Andrew Sokolof Diaz to be followed
15 by Alexandra Nita.

16 MR. DIAZ: Thank you. Good
17 evening. My name is Andrew Sokolof Diaz. I'm the
18 co-founder and co president of the 89 Street
19 Tenants Unidos Association here in Jackson Heights,
20 Queens. I thank you very much for the privilege to
21 speak tonight, as well as your time. All nine of
22 you who are here listening to us and our pleas for
23 a no on behalf of 500 tenants, 200 households,
24 families and children, and seniors.

25 We strongly urge the Rent

1
2 Guidelines Board to vote no. And to vote for
3 working families, to vote for your neighbors, and
4 reject any rent increases on the back of renters at
5 a time when we're just barely coming out of this
6 pandemic. And more personally, at a time when me
7 and my neighbors all lost everything last year in
8 an eight alarm fire in Jackson Heights when our two
9 buildings burned and destroyed everything. We lost
10 everything we owned. We've never gone back home
11 and we remain displaced to this day.

12 I have a one-year-old at home
13 who's sick, and it's so important to me to be here
14 tonight, to just amplify the voice of our
15 neighbors, the voice of working people who can't be
16 here in this room, to tell you how hard it would be
17 to give a rent increase of six percent to real
18 estate industry who prospects with vacant
19 apartments by the thousands across the city when
20 we're hurting here, when I have neighbors who still
21 live in hotels just a mile away down here in South
22 Jamaica. We're advocating and we're working to get
23 back home. It is our rent-stabilized rights, thank
24 God to the ACR, that we can go back once our
25 buildings are fixed.

1
2 And unfortunately, but by the
3 grace of God, this is our only asset left. We've
4 lost everything, but we have a legal right to
5 returned to these rent-stabilized units. However,
6 in a twisted and cruel strategy by REBNY in the
7 real estate industry pushing this through, this
8 latest increase means the difference between our
9 seniors who are trying to get back to these
10 buildings, to be able to survive, to be able to
11 choose between food on the table, like everyone
12 else here has spoken tonight about; we can't do it.
13 Our seniors can't survive. SCRIE eligibility is
14 not accessible.

15 I know I'm going over, but every
16 single member of this Board, you know, that we are
17 counting on you to stand for us when our own
18 representatives in Albany and in Washington
19 continue to fail us day-by-day.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
21 your testimony.

22 MR. DIAZ: They've done nothing.
23 Please vote no. Vote for us. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
25 is Alexandra Nita, to be followed by Emily Breeze

1

2 (phonetic).

3

MS. NITA: Hello. My name is
4 Alexandra Nita. I live in a one-bedroom, one
5 bathroom rent-stabilized apartment with a relative
6 in Queens. I watched her struggle to find work
7 long after her unemployment benefits disappeared.
8 And I've seen how my neighbors struggle, especially
9 families robbed of generational wealth by racist
10 housing policies displaced by gentrification and
11 impacted by the still ongoing global pandemic.

12

I could give a thousand reasons
13 why raising rents is cruel and senseless, but I
14 want to take the little time I have to let every
15 tenant in the room know that we deserve better.
16 And I want officials to know that a reckoning is
17 coming to this system where housing is treated as a
18 luxury and a business instead of as a human right,
19 where landlords are at best, unnecessary middleman
20 and at worst, parasites on the working-class. That
21 reckoning looks like the good cause eviction bill.
22 It looks like a rent freeze. It looks like
23 community organizing. And if delayed long enough,
24 it could even look like mass rent strikes. Thank
25 you.

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next

3

speaker's Emily Breeze to be followed by Louis

4

Catherner.

5

MS. BREEZE: My name is Emily

6

Breeze, and I'm a rent-controlled tenant, and I'm

7

also at the ANSWER Coalition. During the pandemic,

8

when rents are higher than they've ever been

9

before, we, as tenants demand that you do not raise

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rent. In NYC, one of the richest countries in the

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world, excuse me, riches cities in one of the

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richest countries in the world, there are over

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18,000 children who do not have a roof over their

14

heads. There are over 80,000 people that are

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homeless in this city. Did you catch that?

16

80,000. But despite that, there are three

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apartments for every one homeless person. Well,

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children sleep on the street and in shelters.

19

There are empty homes.

20

There's not a housing crisis in

21

this country. There's a housing affordability

22

crisis in this country. And why are the rents so

23

high? Because the city government and the

24

developers work hand-in-hand at the expense of the

25

working-class communities, most particularly Black

1

2 and Brown communities. Again, we have empty homes,
3 empty apartments, while homeless people sleep right
4 in front of them. It is the city's obligation. It
5 is your obligation to provide affordable housing
6 for people. But instead of that, you want to raise
7 the rent? You want to raise the rent to add
8 thousands more to the street so you can worry about
9 their profits? We're worried about our homes.

10

But I say this to my fellow
11 tenants here. We know the source of our power. We
12 are the source of the power. 68 percent of New
13 Yorkers are renters. 2.4 million are
14 rent-stabilized compared to nine un-elected members
15 of this body who think that they can decide our
16 fate. We decide our fate. But we can't do it
17 alone. We can't do it alone. We have to fight
18 together united as tenants. We will win because
19 housing is a human right and we will fight, fight,
20 fight.

21

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
22 is Louis Catherner to be followed by Adam Wilkes.
23 Louis Catherner, please.

24

MR. CATHERNER: Yes. My name is
25 Louis Catherner. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant who

1
2 lives in Brooklyn. I've worked as a volunteer on
3 Met Council on Housing, Tenants' Rights Hotline
4 since 2019. I'm here to tell you what I hear every
5 week from callers all over the city. Make no
6 mistake. There is an eviction crisis underway.
7 People are struggling to stay in their homes even
8 at current rent levels. The volume of calls we
9 received has increased significantly in the last
10 few months, about 45 percent over our normal call
11 volumes just before the latest eviction moratorium
12 expired. And many more of the calls we receive are
13 about pending evictions than before. Evictions are
14 up at least 40 percent over the same period.

15 We hear from tenants everyday
16 whose savings were completely depleted during the
17 pandemic, and many others went deeply into debt.
18 Many of our callers' jobs have not returned. And
19 these are not isolated cases. These are now bread
20 and butter calls. We have not recovered financially
21 from the pandemic. An increase in rent now would
22 be the straw that breaks the camel's back. I
23 recently spoke with a caller who's been threatened
24 with eviction. Even though she received an ERAP
25 reward that was supposed to cover her back rent, it

1

2 wasn't enough. Her primary concern right now is
3 keeping herself and her young child from becoming
4 homeless.

5 When I mentioned to her, the RGB
6 is considering a significant rent increase, she was
7 stunned. She thought I had misspoke. Surely I
8 meant to say rent reduction, right? Incomes
9 haven't gone up, but everything else has. Debt,
10 food prices, energy costs, education, healthcare,
11 daycare costs, all up. And now rent might go up,
12 too? I could hear the stress, resignation in her
13 voice, knowing that once again, government might
14 fail her. I truly fear the impacts that a rent
15 increase will have on her physical and mental
16 well-being and many others. Please open your
17 hearts and eyes to what is going on in this city.
18 We need a rent reduction, not an increase. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
21 is Adam Wilkes. Adam Wilkes to be followed by
22 Esther Garcia-Luna.

23 MR. WILKES: So of the nine of
24 you, who's given 20 grand to Eric Adams? 50 grand
25 to Kathy Hochul? How much money?

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CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry. I'm
sorry, I'm gonna asking you to put your mask on.

MR. WILKES: I'm sorry.

CHAIRMAN REISS: It's to protect
all of us. Thank you.

MR. WILKES: My bad. My bad.

Okay. My name is Adam Wilkes. I'm a renter in
Jackson Heights. My landlord, Daniel Benedict
(phonetic), owns a doesn't buildings making
billions in passive income while he lounges at his
Port Washington mansion. I saw one of you, I saw
the lady on the left here, Ms. Smyth coaching some
of the landlords earlier. They pay you guys a lot
of money to give Hochul a lot of money to get onto
boards like this. Then you do your economic
bidding. And it's economic, it's cold as
calculating, but let me say this: --

CHAIRMAN REISS: Please, please
put your mask on.

MR. WILKES: I'm sorry. Sorry.
Let me say this: With this inflation, right,
grocery market, gas prices and car insurance,
health insurance, life is more expensive than ever.
This is a hot economy. And I know the landlords

1

2 pin their rationale in a hot economy. But what are
3 you gonna to do? There's millions of people in the
4 city who rent. And so many of them are struggling.
5 So many of them were just getting out of COVID.
6 And you can, and if you wanna make an economic
7 decision a utilitarian decision, help them.

8 Don't help the bottom line of the
9 landlords, 'cause every time they say, "Oh prices
10 are going up, prices are going up." It's their
11 bottom line. But they're in Long Island, they're
12 in Westchester. They're like, I -- that's where I
13 send my rent to. They're not living in the
14 buildings. They're not doing work. I mean, I
15 lived with the small gentleman who I paid rent to,
16 but he was a small time landlord. Like that is not
17 the people who pay for you to influence the
18 politicians and everything. It's the big fish like
19 Daniel Benedict and BlackRock.

20 You're public service, right? If
21 you're worried about some big gap between
22 rent-stabilized and unregulated, I think that's a
23 good thing. People will know that rent-stabilized
24 apartments are better than the market apartments.
25 That's a good thing. All real estate should be

1

2 regulated. It's -- maybe you wanna make it easier
3 for an actual small time landlord. But we're
4 talking about big fish. We're talking about the
5 profitability, the profit bottom-line of these
6 giant corporations. And you should not put them
7 ahead of the well-being of millions of people.
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our
10 next speaker's Esther Garcia-Luna to be followed by
11 Everardo Aguilar.

12 MS. GARCIA-LUNA: Good evening.
13 Every landlord who has come up here today has asked
14 you to look at the statistics, to look at the
15 numbers. I ask you to look at our numbers. I ask
16 you to look at how many of us are -- have been
17 unemployed since the beginning of the pandemic?
18 How many of us lost family members and are living
19 on one income or no income at all? How many of us
20 have been unemployed during this time?

21 That -- this young lady over here
22 talked about that three to one ratio. Do you think
23 people are on the streets because they want to be?
24 No. They're on the streets because these
25 apartments are unaffordable, they're unlivable.

1
2 These apartments are not in the kind of conditions
3 for you to be charging us this much rent. I ask
4 you to look at how many of us are immigrant
5 families, how many of us have to support families
6 in the US and outside of the US as well. I live in
7 a fifth floor apartment with no elevator, mind you.
8 And every time a big truck passes by on the street,
9 bits of the window still crumble down. They, like,
10 literally I could be just sitting on the couch and
11 you can hear cracking sounds, crumbling noises from
12 the walls. It sounds like the building is going to
13 fall down and you want to raise six percent on our
14 rent? That is not okay.

15 I speak for my family and all
16 other families who just don't know how to
17 communicate. I know that a lot of families live
18 with mold, live with rats, live with pests and just
19 so many things that we can't control. It's out of
20 our control. We don't live like this because we
21 want to. But you could at least make it a little
22 easier for us to live. Please. Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
24 is, Everardo Aguilar to be followed by Guillermo
25 Zapata.

1
2 THE INTERPRETER: Ladies and
3 gentlemen, my name is Everardo Aguilar. I just
4 wanted to say that deep down in my heart, I believe
5 that this is not the appropriate time. We want you
6 to take the time to think and to concentrate on the
7 fact that many of us have lost loved ones, have
8 lost people. Many children have lost their
9 parents. And of course now the fact that there are
10 no jobs, that means that salaries can't go up.
11 There are no jobs to be had. And of course,
12 landlords are lining their pockets. Even though
13 the State and city governments have helped out
14 landlords so that of course, they can defray their
15 costs.

16 Our homes are unlivable. This is
17 not the time to do that. We don't even have ramps
18 available for children who might require wheelchair
19 access. They want to make all sorts of repairs to
20 ceilings. They make all types of repairs to
21 ceilings and roof tops. There's vermin everywhere
22 in our apartments, in our building, and it's just
23 impossible to deal with. And truthfully speaking,
24 there is no money. There is no money to be had to
25 be able to afford rent increases at this moment.

1

2 Thank you so very much.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next
4 speaker's Guillermo Zapata to be followed by
5 Angelica Perea.

6

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening to
7 all. My name is Guillermo Zapata. I'm retired. I
8 make around \$900 a month. I am paying monthly rent
9 bill of \$700 which leaves me with less than \$200 a
10 month to be able to pay for groceries. And of
11 course, I have to pay for transportation if I want
12 to go anywhere. So of course, that means that if
13 rent prices go up, I don't know what I would have
14 to do. Perhaps I'll have to go to a shelter.

15

I know that it's not a problem
16 for many, but for many of us it is. And many of us
17 are in this predicament at the moment. Thank you
18 very much. And please forgive me for speaking so
19 low.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry.
21 Before the next speaker speaks, can we just
22 double-check the mic to make sure it's doing what
23 it needs to do?

24

Okay, so let's just wait. Wait a
25 second. Let's take care of that.

1

2

INTERPRETER: Hello. Hello.

3

Hello. Hello. You can hear me?

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah, I think

5

maybe just people need to be close to it.

6

INTERPRETER: Hello. Hello.

7

Hello.

8

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes, that's

9

good.

10

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening

11

everyone. My name is Angelica Perea. I've been

12

living as a tenant in a building now for 31 years

13

here in the community of Queens. I wanted to come

14

before you to offer my testimony because of course,

15

I'm being heavily affected by this rent increase.

16

In the 31 years, I've been living at this building,

17

I've always been a very good tenant despite the

18

fact that the services or amenities in the

19

building, of course, are not the best. And of

20

course I've come to terms with the fact that not

21

just us but many people have the same issue with

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not getting the best service in our buildings.

23

I have a one-bedroom apartment

24

that's very small. And for the 31 years, I've been

25

living there, I'm now paying more than \$1000 and I

1
2 received \$700 a month from -- for retirement. If
3 for today's youth it's difficult to be able to find
4 a job, for me, it's even more difficult to be able
5 to cover the difference of the rent that I have to
6 foot every month. Please, please know that I --
7 it's becoming increasingly more difficult for me to
8 be able to pay the rent a month -- on a monthly
9 basis. And I'm now thinking about what's going to
10 come.

11 I ask you to please consider all
12 of the elderly, all of the children that are going
13 through such a difficult time during this
14 precarious moment, would you see my garage? Thank
15 you so very much for everything. And please
16 remember, take stock of the fact that today you
17 might be in a position of power. But you never
18 know where you will be tomorrow. It's like the
19 wheel of fortune.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: So yeah, I'm
21 sorry. While you're fixing the battery -- thank
22 you. I'm going to say our next speaker is going to
23 be Amy Colado or Colado; is that right? And then
24 we're going to take a break after that just a few
25 -- All right. Please, please. This is -- we're

1

2 here to hear testimony.

3

(Audience participation.)

4

5 right. Please. Let's get the microphone ready.

6

7 this better? Is this better? A lot better? Okay.

8

9 going to hear from Amy Colado. Welcome.

10

11 please don't touch the top part of it. Try not to,
12 'cause it's the -- not you, everybody.

13

14 MS. COLADO: Thank you so much
15 for your work. Okay, so I actually wrote a very
16 long, long testimony before coming here, and even
17 added some stuff because of what the landlords were
18 saying. I decided not to do that. And instead,
19 I'd actually like to start off with saying that
20 this hearing is rigged. How? There are supposed
21 to be two landlord reps. From what I've seen in
22 the six years that I've organized, there are more
23 landlord reps on this stage that are posing as
24 public members, okay?

24

25 So we know that Alex Schwartz has
actually never or hardly ever voted in favor of any

1

2 of the votes that the tenants' side have ever
3 proposed, right? And we also know that, well,
4 David Reiss actually is a professor, right? A
5 Professor of Law and Research Director at the
6 Center for Urban Business Entrepreneurship, right?
7 He's even an author of a book called, "Paying for
8 the American dream: How to reform the market for
9 mortgages" right?

10 What I wanted to just share is
11 your scholarship focuses on secondary mortgage
12 markets, right? Predatory lending and housing
13 policy. You know everything that we're saying is
14 true. You know, very well, Mr. Reiss, of all these
15 numbers, all these testimonies that people are
16 giving, you're seeing the faces of these numbers,
17 right? And what I find interesting is that since
18 you've taken position, you've slowly figured out
19 how to increase the rents, right? You also work
20 very closely with landlords, because you work with
21 attorneys for real estate. So your business is
22 people's homes, okay?

23 So I'm gonna ask you, since I
24 have seven minutes -- seven seconds left, I'm gonna
25 ask you to use your white, male, privileged, and

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2 highly educated, and very connected upbringing to
3 reverse your increases and do what's right. You
4 don't need to hear from anyone else in the room
5 because you are an expert. Please vote for a rent
6 freeze because in reality, you know everything
7 they've been saying is bullshit. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
9 your testimony. So so we're gonna take a 15-minute
10 break. And let me just remind you, if you would
11 like to sign up to testify, you have 'til 8:00 to
12 testify -- to sign up to testify. If you don't
13 sign up before 8:00, you will not be given the
14 opportunity to testify. So please make sure to
15 sign up at the front booth. So we will be back at
16 7:35.

17 (Short recess taken.)

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.
19 Welcome back. We'll finish out the rest of the
20 hearing. And just two reminders, actually I think
21 people have been really great with their masks, but
22 I don't even see anybody with their masks not on
23 but just remember keep your mask over your mouth
24 and your nose to protect all of us. And sign-up
25 for speakers ends in a little less than 15 minutes.

1

2 So if you haven't signed up but you would like to
3 speak, speak with the RGB staff in the front of the
4 space and you can get on the list.

5 And just one last thing. If you
6 have preregistered but we haven't called your name,
7 please just check in at the front desk because we
8 think that we've called all people who are
9 pre-registered, okay? So if you -- I see one
10 person is raising their hand. Would you just check
11 in at the -- how many people? You pre-registered?
12 Could you just call out your names?

13 MS. CRUZ: Maria del Carmen Cruz.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yeah, we have
15 you. We have you. Thank you.

16 MR. SCHWARTZ: We were just
17 referring to people who registered before coming
18 here this evening. That's what we meant by --
19 yeah. For example, if we have both of you guys
20 folks have registered here, we have your names up
21 here and you'll be called shortly.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: All right.
23 We'll start up again with testimony. Our next
24 speaker is Keisha Clarke to be followed by Nelson
25 Sierra (phonetic).

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MS. CLARKE: Hi guys. I'm trying to talk as fast as I can because I have a lot --

CHAIRMAN REISS: Talk right into the mic.

MS. CLARKE: I'm trying to talk as fast because I have a lot to say. So please bear with me. I live in a Zara building that looks like a third-world living. It's sad to see that a country like America that is supposed to be home of the free. And we aren't living -- free to live happy, and safe, and comfortable life. I would really like to know if it's -- you guys honestly believe that is appropriate at a time like this, since 2020, we've been struggling. A lot of people lost their apartment, a lot of people lost their life, their job, so forth. And we are still here in September and you guys still trying to raise the -- increase rent for us and we can't afford. We cannot afford it. We cannot -- there's nobody here that can afford it. The landlord, they want money.

My landlord, he have buildings all over the place, everywhere. He's building somewhere, he's buying a property. And when you take a look at it, you come by our apartment, it's

1
2 roach-infested water coming from the garbage
3 fill-up in the back. And he needs money from us to
4 build apartment on apartment up on apartment. And
5 what happened to us? What happened to us? Well,
6 he needs six percent? I need my own apartment
7 gutted. I need all -- I need new refrigerator. I
8 need a new stove. I need a new bathroom. I need
9 new every single thing. April, winter, we're
10 freezing inside here. Every single winter we freeze
11 inside here. I have to sleep in -- I have to call
12 nonstop -- I sleep in blanket.

13 How many clothes for me and my
14 son? And we're asthmatic. The windows need to
15 come. I'm tired of calling 311 because we --
16 there's no heat. While we gonna live like this in
17 America, when they park in their pocket and live
18 comfortable, but we're freezing at all. Mold
19 nonstop in 2010, I didn't have no furniture. I
20 lost every single thing and guess what? All I did
21 was patch it up and it keeps coming back. Keep
22 patching up. We're struggling, we're suffering.

23 Go by the park. There's so many
24 homeless people because we can't afford it. We
25 can't afford it. Look at all -- look in Zara

1
2 buildings, them. See everybody who have a
3 complaint. These people are lawyers and judges and
4 everybody on them while we are struggling. I went
5 to court with them. They say they don't want to
6 judge that I have. They end up choose a judge.
7 And the judge say he doesn't wanna hear from me.

8 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
9 your testimony.

10 MS. CLARKE: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next
12 speaker's Nelson Sierra to be followed by Maria
13 Garcia. Nelson Sierra.

14 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Nelson?
15 You're still here?

16 Do you have Maria Flory
17 (phonetic) next?

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: I have Maria
19 Garcia and Flory. All right, let me call out the
20 names and then we'll see who comes up next, all
21 right? So Maria Garcia doesn't seem to be present.
22 Flory doesn't seem to be present. Maria Escobar?

23 MS. ESCOBAR: Good afternoon, my
24 name is Maria Escobar. It's a blessing being here
25 in front of you. It's a blessing to see you all

1
2 here because I know that you are all going to help
3 the people that need it. I have lived in these
4 buildings for 30 years and we've never had the
5 problems that we are currently having with Zara.
6 All this time we've had the air conditioners
7 outside and they've never been repaired. And they
8 never charged us for them. However, now they keep
9 increasing it and increasing it and saying that now
10 we have to pay for it.

11 And when it's cold outside, we
12 don't have heat -- excuse me, I have too much heat,
13 and I live on the first floor. And when I go to
14 pay the rent, I have to use the green papers
15 because they are charging me extra and so, like, I
16 can only pay when I have the money in the bank.
17 And they don't take those things into
18 consideration. So the outside of the building,
19 it's beautiful at 150, 1188th Avenue. The outside
20 of the building is spectacular. They've keep it
21 very pretty, very pristine. There are beautiful
22 flags. It's a beautiful space, but it's not the
23 same on the inside. On the inside, it's like we've
24 said, there are cockroaches, there's rats, and they
25 charge us for fixing the ceiling. They charges for

1

2 a refrigerator to even get a new refrigerator,
3 they're just going to increase it, the rent.

4

5 Before, they would paint the
6 apartment every three years. And now, when I ask,
7 it's, like, for a new paint job, they tell me, "Oh
8 no, no, no. It's fine. It can last a few more
9 years. It's fine. There's nothing wrong with it."
10 My refrigerator has not had a light in it for about
11 two years. And they're not willing to change it,
12 but they are willing to charge me for it and take
13 money from my hands into fill their pockets. Thank
14 you for listening. I hope you can help us.

15

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
17 is Moreom Perven to be followed by Carlos Ortiz.

18

19 MS. PERVEN: Thank you, RGB, for
20 having me. I'm a tenant of 8815, 168th Street,
21 Jamaica, and a member of Zara Tenant Coalition.
22 During the pandemic, including me and my neighbors
23 in the building, we are suffering, struggling,
24 paying our rent. That time, DHCR approves five
25 MCIs. MCIs either want to increase rent for
rent-stabilized building. However, we are not
receiving the service we need as a tenant. We're
still in a pandemic and still in financial

1

2 hardship. Many of my neighbors, as of today, don't
3 even have job. They are surviving with help of
4 food or and SNAP programs. And some of them even
5 not eligible, have SNAPs assistance.

6 And the NYC residents, our basic
7 food, housing, medicals, transportation, clothing.
8 Costs are going rock high, the same way our income
9 or economic system are not touching the sky for us.
10 In my building, most of my neighbors are behind
11 minimum three months rent. We are not rich people
12 and we don't have huge amount from various places.
13 We are working-class people and we don't have cash
14 sitting in our bank. RGB, you need to understand
15 what situation we are in. Landlord are build-out
16 with ERAP. And that gives the apartment vouchers.

17 Landlords are not in financial
18 hardship. We are in financial hardship and if
19 there are hardship program, landlords can open
20 their books. So RGB, please don't act like a blind
21 or deaf. Think realistically and don't increase
22 our rent. Just freeze our rent. Housing is a
23 human right. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
25 is Carlos Ortiz to be followed by Carolyn Yao.

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2

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening.

3

My name is Carlos Ortiz and I'm an organizer with

4

Catholic Migration Services services, also known as

5

CMS. I was also a rent-stabilized tenant and I

6

also lived in an apartment that was rent-stabilized

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at one point. And of course, thanks to the bad

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laws that all of our public officials have put into

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place, it is now a free market apartment and I'm

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sure I'm going to be homeless or out on the street

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in a while. I'd like to simply share the testimony

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of several people that are not present at the

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moment, just so that I can summarize what they

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wanted to say. They not only represent hundreds of

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thousands of tenants that belong to Zara, but also

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to other tenants living here in Queens and parts of

17

the city.

18

Floriarse (phonetic), one of our

19

participants who as of recent -- has most recently

20

wanted to retire, but she was not able to retire

21

because of how high the rents were, was able to

22

finally manage a rent freeze with the SCRIE

23

program. But she's afraid that if she were to move

24

to her country, or God forbid, pass away, that her

25

daughter would lose this apartment because of

1

2 inheritance laws. Maria Garcia as well, who I want
3 -- I would love to share her testimony with you.
4 Maria and her husband both lost their employment
5 during the pandemic. And as of yet, they have not
6 regained their employment. They are currently
7 \$30,000 in arrears. And they are facing an
8 eviction case just a few blocks away from this very
9 venue.

10 Of course, they asked me, what is
11 it that can be done and what do you think will be
12 the solution that will obviously occur as a result
13 of this meeting tonight. So I guess I will share
14 with you what I would like to say personally to
15 them. Of course I didn't know that I was going to
16 be getting the latest news, so to speak.

17 And you better stop that clock
18 when the interpreter is interpreting for me, all
19 right? You better stop that clock when he's doing
20 that because that's my time, all right? You said
21 you are here because you wanted to listen. Then,
22 listen, all right?

23 So I had no idea that we were
24 going to confirm this evening that the pandemic was
25 ending, that they're not rent burden anymore. So

1

2 apparently, we were also -- I didn't know that we
3 were going to confirm as well that tenants in the
4 city were no longer rent-burden. I also didn't
5 know that we were going to confirm that you were
6 sort of like the gatekeepers or safe-keepers of the
7 profit margins for the landlords in the city. But
8 we do know that Mr. Gupta does not believe in rent
9 control or rent-stabilized.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: You're not
11 allowing us to hear the testimony. If the point is
12 to hear testimony, you are making it impossible.

13 MR. ORTIZ: And I'm about to
14 close, so I'll be respectful of everyone's time.
15 All I wanna say is the following: Keeping the
16 profit of the landlords, that is not your job, that
17 is not your mission. That is not why you were
18 created, right? When people's, --

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

21 MR. ORTIZ: When people are
22 facing the same inflation, the same rise in food
23 and everything that landlords are complaining
24 about, they're not even willing to open their books
25 to get the hardship that allegedly the Mom-and-Pop

1

2 landlords need in order to operate than what you're
3 doing is just keeping their margin of profit.
4 That's what you're here for.

5

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our
6 next speaker's Carolyn Yao to be followed by Diva
7 Inesteme. Carolyn Yao?

8

MS. YAO: Hello. Hi. Can you --
9 can everyone hear me?

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes. Thank you.

11

MS. YAO: Okay. Hi. My name is
12 Carolyn. I am a lifelong resident of Queens, born
13 and raised in this city. I'm an organizer with the
14 ANSWER Coalition, Act Now to Stop War and End
15 Racism and the rent increase in this city has been
16 unprecedented. I've been here 27 years,
17 unprecedented. This is an attack on tenants and an
18 attack on the working-class. Five months ago, in
19 the Bronx, as many of us know, 17 tenants died,
20 including children in a preventable fire. Why?
21 Because the landlord Rick Grapper, he refused to
22 fix the heat, and he let the tenants die.

23

And here in Queens, very similar,
24 in LeFrak City, we've got life-threatening mold and
25 flooding from the storms. And to this day, these

1

2 landlords, not a single one of them have been held
3 accountable. They've been not held accountable for
4 the safety violations. And they have the audacity
5 to ask more of us when they don't give -- they
6 don't event give a shit about our lives. They
7 don't care about our lives. Again, not one of them
8 has been made accountable.

9 And every person today along that
10 table today, you know of the open complaints, the
11 millions of open complaints against the landlords.
12 And yet, you have proposed that the rent goes up.
13 Shame. So let's hold that landlords accountable,
14 because before we even think about giving them
15 money that we earned through our labor, make them
16 fucking accountable. Sorry. Hold all the price
17 gouging banks and corporations accountable because
18 they're also raising the costs for everything in
19 the city.

20 Make the billionaires and
21 millionaires in the city pay, not us. Make them
22 pay, not us. We're the working-class, we face all
23 this entire pandemic. We're doing the essential
24 work. We're teaching the children, we're cooking
25 the food, we're cleaning the streets, we're

1

2 providing healthcare. And we've been holding down
3 this city this entire pandemic, and this entire
4 city's existence. And so our right to a roof over
5 our heads is not a bargaining chip by some landlord
6 and these developing companies.

7

So what you're looking at
8 tonight, you're looking at people fighting back.

9

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
10 your testimony.

11

MS. YAO: You are looking at
12 people fighting back, so we will be back and bigger
13 and bigger numbers.

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
15 your testimony.

16

MS. YAO: Everyone is going to
17 promise that. No to a rent increase. Safe and
18 affordable housing for all a city, for all, not the
19 rich. Thank you.

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
21 your testimony. Our next speaker is Diva Inesteme
22 to be followed by David Chung. Our next speaker is
23 Diva Inesteme to be followed by David Chung. Diva
24 Inesteme?

25

MS. INESTEME: Good evening. My

1
2 name is Diva. I live on 94-55 57th Avenue in
3 Junction Boulevard. Because I live there for 40
4 years. My problem is Zara for -- so when Zara
5 bought this building, we'd been living there for 40
6 years. So of course my sister was harassed because
7 she was the head of household. So I started working
8 with him so that he could help us. And of course,
9 they harassed her to the point where they did her
10 end. She died. The last court date was on Holy
11 Monday and she passed away on Good Friday.

12 She was so tired she said that
13 she was tired and exhausted and poor because Zara,
14 of course, harassed her in court, in open court.
15 And of course, there's -- I have another sister
16 now, and she's actually worse. Please. Please put
17 your hand on your heart, and please help us out
18 because at this point I will have lost two sisters.
19 So we are Social Security recipients and believe
20 you me, that is not enough. Of course, the head of
21 household passed away, and now we bear the burden.
22 Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

24 Our next speaker's David Chung to
25 be followed by Maria Del Carmen Cruz.

1
2 MR. CHUNG: Good evening. My
3 name is David. I am a resident of Woodside,
4 Queens. I have lived here since I was three years
5 old. I want to first off start by saying how
6 undemocratic this RGB hearing is. How can we have
7 two minutes to talk about an issue that will affect
8 us for every second of our life? How is it that
9 only two out of the nine members are people that
10 live in rent-stabilized housing? How is it that a
11 member -- that is on your board, Arpit Gupta works
12 for a right wing think-tank called Manhattan
13 Institute that has constantly pushed rent -- to
14 pushed up to rent and made sure that there were
15 intellectual ammunition for Mayor Giuliani to have
16 stop and frisk? How is it that Christina Smyth
17 works for a law firm that represents landlords and
18 operators? How is that democratic?

19 Let's talk about the fallout from
20 the pandemic. This continues. Since 2002 when
21 renters paid 40 percent of their income, now it --
22 people are paying over 52 percent of their income
23 on rent. And it's only going to go up if the rents
24 increase. We're talking about evictions
25 continuing. There are over 227,000 cases and it's

1
2 only growing. One in four New Yorkers are rent
3 burdened. They are behind on rent. And you are
4 proposing that we increase rents? We're talking
5 about rent-stabilization which is a key factor, and
6 keeping low-income New Yorkers in their homes. 66
7 percent of rent-stabilized tenants are people of
8 color. Black, Brown, Asian, over 50 percent are
9 immigrants. And a majority are woman-lead
10 households.

11 Rent regulation is a key
12 counterbalance against gentrification, against
13 displacement, and homelessness. We will fight.
14 There is no other answer but a rent freeze. We
15 will fight and we will be back. You all better, on
16 July 1st, vote to stop rents from increasing.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our
18 next speaker is Maria Del Carmen Cruz to be
19 followed by Cesar Reyes.

20 MS. CRUZ: Hi, my name is Maria
21 Del Carmen Cruz, and I've been listening to
22 everybody here. I've been listening to the
23 landlord talking. And it's funny that they say
24 that they have to spend \$4,000 to fix an apartment.
25 And the reason why they have to spend \$4,000 to fix

1

2 that apartment is because they haven't fixed it in
3 years and years and years and years. The MCI. My
4 building was hit with three MCIs. My rent went up
5 almost \$300.

6 Money that we could not afford
7 it, but we have to pay it. Why? Because the
8 landlords have the lawyers and have the money.
9 They landlords cry a lot. It's like if you open a
10 restaurant, I need to have meat, vegetables, and
11 everything to cook, to be able to make my business
12 flourish. The same way landlords need to fix
13 apartment, so they don't have to cry about the
14 apartment be broken down, about the apartment all
15 destroyed about -- because they not doing nothing.
16 They all have landlords, they're putting all their
17 money in their pocket. My landlord live my building
18 which is a corporation. And they use the
19 corporation to steal from the poor people.

20 Because when they do what they do
21 and that people started doing things, they start
22 changing the name of the corporation. But then I
23 lost all the things. We have landlords that own
24 hundreds of buildings in this New York City. They
25 don't care about us, the tenants. We have to

1

2 listen to the people. The people cannot afford it.
3 They cry, "Oh, gas go higher, the electricity go
4 higher. Everything go higher."

5 What about us? We pay all of our
6 higher money. We had to pay for all of those
7 increases. And where are we go for money? My
8 landlord makes, and I'm going to do, yes. I'm good
9 with numbers. My building. They have ten
10 apartments empty when he's so much demand on
11 apartment. How can they can afford the themselves
12 to have apartments empty? You know why? Because
13 they waiting for you guys to raise the increase and
14 then they will rent it.

15 They use us and they are stealing
16 from us.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you.

18 MS. CRUZ: They don't deserve
19 that. You know, like as I said, you have to give
20 me one more minute because believe me --

21 CHAIRMAN REISS: There's many
22 people behind you. If everyone's gonna be heard --

23 MS. CRUZ: I understand but it's
24 not fair. Please, you talk up there. All of you
25 make a least \$100,000 up. None of you --

1

2

CHAIRMAN REISS: We need time for
our next speaker.

4

5

6

7

8

MS. CRUZ: All of us, we go
below, we making below \$45,000. You cannot talk to
people about money and increase. And this and that
when we're not making the money. You know what we
are? We are like in the middle ages.

9

10

CHAIRMAN REISS: You need to let
the other speakers speak.

11

12

MS. CRUZ: That you live in your
castle and we living or --

13

14

CHAIRMAN REISS: We need to let
the other speakers speak, too.

15

16

MS. CRUZ: You all greedy. You
have to go --

17

18

19

20

CHAIRMAN REISS: Cesar Reyes is
our next speaker. And after Cesar Reyes, we will
have Kei Pritzker. Cesar Reyes to be followed by
Kei Pritzker.

21

22

23

24

25

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening to
everyone. I would just like to start with two
observations that I feel are extremely important.
One, is that since we started back up after the
break, that we also started about 15 minutes after

1

2 break, the supposed to break? And I feel that
3 those 15 minutes are owed to the community. And I
4 know that you-all have to go back to your homes.
5 But I think that for the people that are present
6 and for everyone else, it's only right for you to
7 provide to give each person their 15 minutes.

8 My second observation is the
9 following. And I hope that the members of the
10 Board that are here today can understand what I'm
11 going to say. I would like to know of all the
12 people that are here right now at this present
13 moment, this specific moment, how many people are
14 landlords? Go ahead, raise your hands. So but how
15 many people are landlords? And I hope you stop the
16 clock that you're not stopping. It's because the
17 tenants that are here are representing and we're
18 also -- we represent the community that's being
19 affected by this.

20 I also want to take another
21 opportunity to explain the following, and just add
22 some details that I would like every one of the
23 community to know and that for you guys to know,
24 even though I kind of feel that you already know
25 this. I've heard landlords here cry and cry that

1

2 they don't have any money. But for example,
3 there's about 50 percent of the apartments in
4 Manhattan are empty and they're empty for a reason.
5 And we're talking about 50 percent of the
6 apartments in Manhattan, which is a space where
7 everything is much more expensive. So imagine
8 what's happening in our communities.

9 So I really don't want to hear
10 landlords talking about that they have no money
11 when they are purposely keeping 50 percent of their
12 apartments empty and not really addressing the
13 problem that we have here. One of the details that
14 they all share is that they lost income due to the
15 lack of rent payments. And I would like to include
16 an important detail that JPMorgan discovered in
17 some research that they did. JPMorgan being one of
18 the banks that propels this situation in the city.

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

21 MR. REYES: So the -- they --

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: Let's hear the
23 translation, please.

24 MR. REYES: They determined that
25 even though the landlords say that they lost profit

1

2 because of the lack of rent payments, they actually
3 decreased or diminished their operating costs by
4 more than 50 percent. So they wound up actually
5 gaining benefits.

6

CHAIRMAN REISS: So we'll -- our
7 next speaker is gonna be Kei Pritzker to be
8 followed by Wanda Hammond.

9

MR. REYES: So I want to finish
10 with the following.

11

CHAIRMAN REISS: Your time is
12 done. We're gonna move on Kei Pritzker.

13

MR. REYES: My time is not done
14 because you owe me about 15 seconds from when the
15 clock stopping. I've been keeping them. And I'm
16 gonna say the following: --

17

CHAIRMAN REISS: We need to make
18 room for the many other people who are here.

19

MR. REYES: One of our local
20 comrades earlier shared that there are more than
21 200,000 eviction cases in housing court right now.

22

CHAIRMAN REISS: Is Kei Pritzker
23 here?

24

MR. REYES: If you vote yes on a
25 rent increase, you will see those evictions shoot

1
2 up. And I want you guys to know and I want you
3 guys to know that that eviction, that those
4 evictions that will be subsequently happening due
5 to your vote yes for a rent increase will fall on
6 each and every last one of your consciousness. So
7 I would say the following. I think it's time for
8 you guys to do the right thing. And I think it's
9 important for you guys because you owe it to the
10 city.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Kei Pritzker is
12 our next speaker.

13 MR. REYES: Thank you.

14 Kei Pritzker, you can commence
15 your testimony. Kei?

16 MR. PRITZKER: No. No.

17 CHAIRMAN REISS: Kei Pritzker.

18 MS. CRUZ: [inaudible] --

19 CHAIRMAN REISS: Mr. Pritzker?
20 Mr. Pritzker, please.

21 MR. PRITZKER: So my name is Kei
22 Pritzker. I live in a rent-stabilized building.
23 I'm a member of the Party for Socialism and
24 Liberation. And I wanted to share a message to the
25 landlords, but it doesn't seem like they've stuck

1
2 around because this apparently isn't an important
3 issue to them. But it's important to us because we
4 actually live in these buildings. And I wanna say
5 that everything that they've said tonight boils
6 down to one thing, which is that ultimately their
7 greatest fear in all of this is that they'll have
8 to live like the rest of us, the way we already
9 live. Their greatest fear is that their little
10 investment schemes will go down in value and
11 they'll have to become renters and they'll have to
12 live in the wretched buildings that they've created
13 for us.

14 You know, they come here crying,
15 begging for you to subsidize them. They have
16 plenty to go around. They talk about, oh, our
17 bottom line. Our bottom-line, this and the other.
18 What about our bottom-line? Our bottom-line has
19 been underwater for decades. And you do nothing.
20 You do nothing. They talk about getting hit by
21 inflation. We get hit by inflation. Have they
22 ever been to a supermarket? And I think the answer
23 is probably no because they have people for that.
24 But the point is, they say, you know, we're about
25 to lose our profits. This is eating into our

1

2 profits. Who cares? Who cares?

3

4 We pay for their mortgages, we
5 pay for their yachts, we pay for their vacation
6 homes. We pay for their kids to go to private
7 school. If you can't manage that bottom-line,
8 that's your problem. That's not our problem.

9

10 Don't make it the city's problem. Deal with it.

11

12 And finally, you know, these people, they
13 contribute nothing towards society. They don't
14 build these buildings. They don't repair them. We
15 know that. All they do is collect our paychecks
16 and live back. They don't lift a finger. They
17 don't have a real job like the rest of us. We make
18 this city run. We cook the food, we drive the
19 Ubers, we make the subways run. They don't do
20 shit.

21

22 So to the Rent Guidelines Board,
23 you -- everything you've heard today, you have one
24 group of people whose greatest fear is that they'll
25 have to sell their vacation homes or sell their
26 buildings, or sell their yachts, or God forbid, go
27 back to being a renter. On the other hand, you
28 have 2.5 million rent-stabilized tenants in New
29 York City who are one paycheck from getting pushed

1

2 on the street. This is your choice. This is your
3 choice. You either side with the real estate
4 spectators, or you side with the 2.5 million
5 rent-stabilized tenants, who are very, very curious
6 to know where you stand.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
8 your testimony.

9

Our next speaker is Wanda Hammond,
10 to be followed by Paula Costanzo. Wanda Hammond?
11 Welcome.

12

MS. HAMMOND: Hi, I'm Wanda
13 Hammond and I live in a rent-stabilized building in
14 Harlem.

15

CHAIRMAN REISS: Could you come a
16 little closer to the mic? Thanks.

17

MS. HAMMOND: Hi, I'm Wanda
18 Hammond, and I live in rent-stabilized building in
19 Harlem. I have literally had to prepare for war in
20 order to have any type of services in my house.
21 One after the other, cases, the court for repairs,
22 for harassment, for overcharges. You name it, I've
23 been there. I'm coming before the Board today
24 asking that you do the right thing when you vote.
25 I am concerned about New Yorkers as I look around,

1

2 and homelessness is through the roof. Inflation is
3 through the roof. Gas is to the roof. Everything
4 is through the roof. My point being is, I was
5 thinking about prevention and intervention, and
6 that's pretty much in the hands of the Board.

7 The Board has the power in their
8 hands to intervene, to help out with homeless
9 individuals, to help out with people living in
10 shelters. So many of us are paying -- half of our
11 incomes are going to the rent. When I think about
12 six percent increase, it's unbelievable. Coming
13 out of a pandemic from one crisis after the other,
14 one crises after the other. I don't know how much
15 more New Yorkers will be able to take. But one
16 thing I do know, no one deserves to sleep on a park
17 bench. Nobody. Not nobody.

18 And I stand before you with all
19 of my other brothers and sisters who are thinking
20 about what will happen July 1st. What kind of
21 decision will you make? Will you be thinking about
22 your friends or will you be thinking about the New
23 Yorkers who've just come out, not clearly out the
24 woods of a pandemic for almost three years now.
25 People have not been able to work. Losing their

1

2 incomes, losing their homes, losing their family
3 members, losing their loved ones. I just asked of
4 you to do the right thing. July 1st, vote no.
5 Vote yes to New Yorkers.

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
7 is Paula Costanzo to be followed by, I'm sorry, by
8 sorry, Sabrina Rodriguez. I apologize. Paula
9 Costanzo, please.

10 MS. COSTANZO: Yes. Hello. My
11 name is Paula Costanzo. I live a couple --

12 CHAIRMAN REISS: A little closer
13 to the mic, please.

14 MS. COSTANZO: Can you hear me
15 now?

16 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

17 MS. COSTANZO: My name is Paula
18 Costanzo. I live a couple of blocks from here.
19 For 20 years. I worked for the city and my
20 landlord, I don't understand, they buy these
21 buildings, they know what they're buying. And then
22 they have you pay for their investment into their
23 property. And between the Rent Guidelines Board
24 and the Department of Community Renewal and
25 Disbursement, they're dismantling any kind of rent

1
2 stabilization. You know, everyone was chanting
3 before. Rent -- housing is a right. And there was
4 a landlord over there that says, "No, it's not a
5 right."

6 I don't know what the answer to
7 that is, but there must have been some reason
8 rent-stabilization came into being. There must
9 have been some reason for that. My rent right now.
10 They use this. The rent that -- the landlords use
11 the rents, the DCHR, and you. If they don't get a
12 raise from you, they fix it with these MCIs. So
13 that way, if they don't get it from you, they get
14 it from the MCI.

15 I have -- I'm going to have three
16 rent increases this year. Two of them are from
17 MCIs. One, I hope will not be from you. But
18 what's to stop them adding another MCI, you know?
19 This is their way of raising the rent. I work for
20 the city, okay? Where am I going to go? Where am
21 I going to go after this? That's all I really have
22 to say. And I hope this isn't an illusion, that
23 this hearing is not an illusion like an MTA hearing
24 on subway and bus routes, which is like a
25 condescension to the public that they're being

1

2 heard. I hope that that's not true. Thank you
3 very much.

4

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next speaker
5 is Sabrina Rodriguez to be followed by Kris Boston.
6 Sabrina Rodriguez? Welcome.

7

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening,
8 representatives of the Board. It's not fair that
9 you want to increase the rent. I've lived at 37
10 and 52 89th street for 23 years. We've gone
11 through many companies like one after the other. I
12 ask myself: Why do they want an increase of the
13 rent when there's always a different manager,
14 there's always a different owner, like, and yet, we
15 all always, they always come to the same
16 conclusion. The services are always on the
17 decline. Safety is also on the decline. And so
18 but you're in your -- we're in our apartments
19 paying rent. There was a time when my husband
20 became ill and we had to come to court because of
21 the rent. Why, I ask myself. The supers and the
22 owners of the buildings just wanted to trample over
23 our rights.

24

Now, while we're still in a
25 pandemic, when -- where food prices are increasing

1
2 and jobs are on -- are decreasing and we cannot
3 find jobs either. I feel a knot in my heart
4 because I have lost relatives. I ask you to touch
5 her hearts because we are working people. We don't
6 deserve this treatment from the supers or the
7 owners when -- we don't deserve this harassment,
8 when we ask them for help. In April, my bathroom
9 flooded. So all of that sewage came out of my
10 toilet. We called the super and he did not help
11 us. There was no answer from the owner. I
12 mentioned the stove to the super no. He never had
13 a reply.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
15 your testimony.

16 THE INTERPRETER: No. Please
17 allow me one more second. Please. I mentioned to
18 the super that my refrigerator was freezing at the
19 bottom part. Yeah.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
21 your testimony.

22 THE INTERPRETER: And I didn't
23 get any reply at all.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
25 your testimony.

1

2

THE INTERPRETER: Thank you.

3

CHAIRMAN REISS: Our next

4

speaker's Kris Boston to be followed by Maria

5

Segura. Kris Boston, then Maria Segura.

6

MS. BOSTON: Hello?

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: Hello.

8

MS. BOSTON: My name is Kris

9

Boston. I'm a 79 year-old widow living on a fixed

10

income, a portion of my husband's Social Security.

11

I'm almost embarrassed to be up here in a way.

12

After the --

13

CHAIRMAN REISS: I'm sorry.

14

Could we be quiet just so we can hear the speaker?

15

Thank you.

16

MS. BOSTON: I'm almost

17

embarrassed to be up here listening to the sad

18

stories. But I do, I have to remind myself that

19

everything is relative. I moved to New York City

20

from Wichita, Kansas in 1964. And I worked here

21

for 16 years. I left for 32 years. And when all

22

of my family passed away, I decided to go -- come

23

back after 32 years, to come back to my beloved

24

city that I had wonderful memories of.

25

My first apartment in 2011, when I

1
2 moved back, was torn down and an enormous
3 condominium was built in its place where the
4 apartments, the condominium started at five
5 million. So then I moved a few blocks up to a fair
6 market apartment. That was the first real home that
7 I had ever had in my entire life. And within three
8 years, I had to leave because he had raised -- a
9 total -- within three years, he had raised it 60
10 percent.

11 All right, so I'll move on. So
12 then I moved five years ago, I moved to a
13 rent-stabilized apartment. My rent, I pay 87
14 percent of my gross income on my rent. No. So the
15 other thing is my landlord refuses to supply heat.
16 So and oh dear, this goes so quickly. So anyway,
17 so I've called 311 hundreds of times. It does no
18 good. My Con Edison bill, it has tripled because I
19 am surviving with three heaters, space heaters.

20 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
21 your testimony.

22 MS. BOSTON: Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN REISS: Maria Segura to
24 be followed by Yokasta Rojas.

25 THE INTERPRETER: Good evening to

1
2 the RGB Board. My name is Maria Segura, and I live
3 at the Cosmopolitan Buildings at 48-46 47th Street,
4 Woodside for the last 27 years now. I work as a
5 home health aid and I take care of patients in
6 their own homes. And of course, this pay scale is
7 at the bare minimum which is why my income is very
8 limited. And if it was difficult for me to pay the
9 rent before, it became even worse during the
10 pandemic. And if you, the RGB board allows these
11 increases to pass, believe you me, Cosmopolitan
12 will not have to take me to court because I would
13 have to leave on my own accord because I wouldn't
14 be able to afford the rent. These buildings have
15 rent-stabilized apartments which is rent that's
16 being charged because of the MCIs, and I'm up to
17 here with the MCIs.

18 So dear RGB Board, I ask you,
19 that if you pass these increases, that if you are
20 partial to the landlords, then you would be
21 condemning me to living on the street. Enough
22 already. Enough already with the favoritism.
23 Enough with the increases. Enough with the
24 increases and the abuse. The system also supports
25 the landlords. Of course, you support and approve

1

2 these increases and you put us on the street, when
3 year after year, all we do as tenants is lining the
4 pockets of all of these landlords, making them even
5 filthier, even richer.

6 Again, RGB Board. Today is the
7 day. Today is the day that you can make history.
8 That you can tattoo our names on your minds. And
9 please look into your conscious. Do not allow
10 families and tenants --

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
12 your testimony.

13 THE INTERPRETER: -- so that we
14 don't show up on homeless lists. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN REISS: We have Yokasta
16 Rojas to be followed by Nahida Begum. I'm sorry,
17 Yokasta Rojas. And then Nahida Begum. Rojas?

18 MS. ROJAS: Good evening. Good
19 evening. My name is Yokasta Rojas. As I was
20 walking by today from work, I go everyday to work
21 with this heavy burden on my head. Am I going to
22 be able to stay in my studio apartment? It's 1800
23 right now, market rate is 2200. By mistake on my
24 renewal, they forgot to put the rider and I was
25 able to see how much that apartment actually cost.

1

2 And I almost fainted. I'm like, how am I going to
3 survive another year? Am I going to have to go
4 back to living into the rooms? And the rooms that
5 you go on Trulia or anywhere, they are 1500, 1000
6 for one room, to live with other people. And it's
7 not good condition.

8 So I worked for the city for 15
9 years, and I put in my taxes and I do everything.
10 I put myself through school, paying my own tuition.
11 And I don't feel like there's an end in sight.
12 Everything is going higher. \$200 for food
13 shopping. The MetroCard is 126. I didn't even
14 know when's the next hike on that anyways. So I I
15 don't feel any hope. I sometimes -- I just want to
16 leave the city, go upstate or go to Florida and
17 everywhere it's going higher.

18 So I'm like, who's on our side?
19 My building is rent-stabilized. And I passed
20 around over here going home and I hear very
21 passionate advocates telling me, "It's going to go
22 up six percent." And all of a sudden that same
23 anxiety I felt during my renewal? That same
24 anxiety I felt it? I'm like, okay, so this
25 nightmare is not over. This could happen to me any

1

2 minute. Like, where am I going to end up? I'm by
3 myself in this country. It's only my sister and my
4 niece.

5 My whole life, I've worked. My
6 whole life, I've been by myself. My parents -- in
7 the ER, my mom passed away. And all I want is to
8 just feel that I'm stabilized. There's nothing
9 stabilized about just disrupting rent
10 stabilization. We need that. And the youth like
11 me, we need that. We need to hold onto something
12 so we can keep working and being good productive
13 citizens.

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Next
15 we have Nahida Begum to be followed by Lauren
16 Springer.

17 MS. BEGUM: Good evening. My
18 name is Nahida Begum. I am two-time cancer
19 survivor. My SSI. It is very difficult to pay my
20 rent. On top of it, I have two MCI rent increase.
21 I am worried where and how I will get extra money
22 to pay my rent. This is development country, you
23 cannot live in the street. So RGB, please don't
24 increase the rent. Just freezing the rent. Open
25 your heart. We need four things important

1

2 everybody: Food, housing, health, education.

3 Housing is the one of them. Please don't increase

4 out rent. And housing is a human right. Thank

5 you.

6 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our

7 next speaker is Lauren Springer to be followed by

8 Christina Jeffers.

9 MS. SRPINGER: Good evening.

10 CHAIRMAN REISS: Good evening.

11 MS. SRPINGER: Yeah. Can you

12 hear me?

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Yes.

14 MS. SRPINGER: Okay. Sorry to

15 sound muffled. Did I -- okay. My name is Lauren

16 Springer. I'm a native New Yorker who grew up in

17 public housing and for the past 27-and-a-half

18 years, I've been a rent-regulated tenant. I'm also

19 a volunteer tenant leader with Catholic Migration

20 Services, and the steering committee member for the

21 Right to Counsel Coalition New York City Coalition.

22 I'm here tonight on behalf of my family, friends,

23 and neighbors to oppose any rent increase.

24 Tenants simply cannot afford a

25 rent increase to many are still rent burdened,

1
2 struggling financially to survive, to keep a roof
3 over their heads, or are forced into the untenable
4 position of choosing between paying rent or food,
5 medical expenses, education, et cetera. They're
6 just trying to find a way out of a global pandemic
7 that they didn't create but were impacted by, where
8 government action and inaction made things worse.
9 And the pandemic is not over. No decision to be
10 made by this Board without considering the broader
11 landscape that New York tenants are operating
12 under.

13 Since the exploration of the
14 eviction moratorium in January of 2022, there have
15 been thousands of new eviction filings each month.
16 The money allotted for ERAP was quickly depleted
17 and has yet to be replenished. The New York City
18 Law guaranteeing a right to counsel to eligible
19 tenants facing eviction proceedings, which tenants
20 fought hard to win, and which is -- was successful
21 in keeping the 86 percent of tenants in their homes
22 is being subverted by a court system that is
23 prioritizing the clearing of their dockets ahead of
24 effectuating a tenant's right to counsel.

25 Instead of slowing down cases to

1
2 deal with the heavy backlog and new case filings,
3 the court system is forcing tenants to proceed
4 without an attorney, even though they are entitled
5 to one. The State Government has fallen short in
6 addressing this moment of crisis. Specifically,
7 they fail to pass statewide RTC legislation. They
8 fail to pass good cause eviction before their
9 legislative session ended. The cumulative effect
10 of all these decisions or lack thereof, will exact
11 a heavy toll on individuals and on society as more
12 people end up homeless or in shelters. While this
13 Board has no jurisdiction over the State matters,
14 it does have decision-making power regarding rent
15 increases.

16 It does have the power to decide
17 whether it wants to be part of the problem or
18 solution, whether it wants to place another
19 financial burden on tenants that they can ill
20 afford. Know that the decision you make this month
21 will have long-lasting consequences that will
22 either keep tenants in their homes or create more
23 homelessness. I implore you to reject any rent
24 increases.

25 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. Our

1

2 next speaker is Christina Jeffers to be followed by
3 Doris Gomez.

4 MS. JEFFERS: Hi, my name is
5 Christina Jeffers. I've been in my building for 30
6 years, in 94-25 57th Avenue. My landlord is Zara.
7 Since they came to my building for the last three
8 years, it's been our nightmare. They know why
9 we're getting into it. They've been applied for
10 major capital improvements. We waiting for the
11 approval. How can they come whining for money when
12 through the pandemic, they were doing construction
13 non-stop? Our building is infested with rats.
14 They don't do proper repairs.

15 And here, tonight, I just learned
16 that you -- why are housing -- to keep our housing
17 have depend on people that never been living in a
18 fixed income housing. Why? And tonight, all UN
19 experts in here. We have to ask for not increase
20 is a criminal. If you increase the rent, all is
21 going to be the costs or create more problems. And
22 people be in the street. This is no right. How
23 can you be of the side of the landlords instead of
24 the side of the people?

25 This -- the living is no supposed

1
2 to be profitable. We need our house. We need to
3 live in peace in our house. No working to death to
4 maintain a roof in our head. I'm no agree to this
5 increases, because they getting it to the MCIs.
6 Our building, we facing over \$200 a month, and then
7 this six percent? This is no right. This is a
8 crime. We deserve our housing and be on peace. No
9 be fighting and working to death in order to have a
10 roof over our house. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN REISS: Doris Gomez?

12 THE INTERPRETER: Do any of you
13 really care what's going on here today?

14 CHAIRMAN REISS: We have one last
15 speaker --

16 THE INTERPRETER: I know. Do you
17 any of you care for what's going on here today?

18 CHAIRMAN REISS: We have one last
19 speaker, Leah Goodridge.

20 THE INTERPRETER: Because to me,
21 I think you all bored today listening to people.

22 CHAIRMAN REISS: The last speaker
23 for the night is Leah Goodridge.

24 THE INTERPRETER: You see when
25 your life is all resolved and you have money, --

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2

CHAIRMAN REISS: Leah?

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THE INTERPRETER: -- you forget about the people who have no money. We don't have the money. We don't have the money.

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CHAIRMAN REISS: Our last speaker's Leah Goodridge for the night.

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MS. GOODRIDGE: Good evening. I was on this Board for nearly four years, and I can't believe I'm coming back two years into the pandemic against this six percent rent increase. I find it very funny that when it comes to tenants, there has always been talk about those are feelings, not facts yet in the same breath, the same people will say, "Rent increase because of landlords, small landlords," without any facts.

Let's look at the facts. Fact one, New York City, unemployment is almost double the national average, the nation is at four percent. New York City is at 7.6 percent. Fact two, economists predict a recession. Fact three, nearly 50 percent to of New Yorkers are rent burdened. Fact four, median rent in Manhattan, this is for all housing, is at \$4,000.

This is a war against the working

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2 class. The next time that you go to a hospital and
3 a nurse helps you, the next time you hop in an
4 Uber, the next time you see your parents' home
5 health aid, the next time you see a waiter, a
6 waitress, the next time you see your cashier, the
7 next time you order food and see the delivery
8 person drop it off, the next time you see a tenant
9 organizer, the next time you take the train and you
10 inevitably see a homeless person to asking for
11 help. All of these people live in New York City,
12 and these are also the people outside of us in this
13 room who you have to answer to. This is one of the
14 last affordable options for affordable housing.

15 NYCHA is out. I read in an
16 article that an employee waited for over ten years
17 on the wait-list. And that was then, and who knows
18 if there will even be a NYCHA? That's a whole
19 another issue. Every year we hear this narrative
20 equating tenants on the brink of homelessness with
21 landlords struggling to make a profit. It's a
22 false equivalency. Survival to exist cannot be
23 compared with a business venture. Rent freeze now.

24 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you. We
25 have no more speakers for the night.

1

2

Do I hear a motion to adjourn?

3

Christian?

4

Do I hear a second for a motion to

5

adjourn?

6

MR. SCHWARTZ: Alex seconds.

7

CHAIRMAN REISS: We're adjourned.

8

Our next meeting will be Wednesday at Hostos in the

9

Bronx.

10

MS. AGUILARIO: Excuse me, can I

11

please speak?

12

CHAIRMAN REISS: What's your

13

name?

14

MS. AGUILARIO: My name is Ann

15

Aguilaro (phonetic).

16

CHAIRMAN REISS: Did you

17

register?

18

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Who cares.

19

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Someone

20

else didn't get called but he already left, too.

21

So two names haven't been called.

22

MS. AGUILARIO: Okay. My name is

23

Ann and I work for the city, in Department of

24

Education. I work as a teacher's assistant and I

25

have a second job. My husband also has two jobs.

1
2 I have two daughters. And with all of the MCIs
3 that Zara has imposed on us, we cannot pay the
4 rent. I'm going to tell you to please listen to
5 all of us. We're the ones that live in those
6 apartments. We're the ones that live in the
7 apartments unlike you who live in your big houses,
8 and you don't have to worry about having several
9 jobs like us. You don't have to worry about having
10 enough money to feed your families. And it's not
11 because I didn't go to school. I did go to school.
12 And even with that, rent continues to increase and
13 increase and increase. It's absolutely ridiculous
14 that we have to come from another country to this
15 country, a developed country to the -- to New York
16 City, and we have to beg you here in this space to
17 not increase our rent. I still have time, but my
18 daughter has something to tell you.

19 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I don't
20 even wanna do this anymore. My name probably
21 doesn't matter to you, so whatever. Every winter,
22 it's still so cold, and we always ask the people to
23 fix the heater. They never fix it. So that's
24 probably why me and my sister always get sick every
25 single winter. But you probably don't care, so

1
2 that doesn't matter. Sometimes, imagine a family,
3 they don't know -- they never have time to feed the
4 children. They do have the time actually, but they
5 don't have the money because they're trying to keep
6 a roof over the children's head. So they barely
7 have enough food to feed the children and they get
8 sick because they're so skinny both, not enough
9 energy to feed -- to live throughout the day. And
10 because they're so hungry, they can't focus in
11 school because their stomach is hurting, that --
12 and that affects them negatively in the education.

13 CHAIRMAN REISS: Thank you for
14 your testimony. Have a good night, all.

15 (At 9:01 p.m., the proceedings
16 were concluded.)

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STATE OF NEW YORK)
SS.
COUNTY OF NEW YORK)

I, MARC RUSSO, a Shorthand
(Stenotype) Reporter and Notary Public within and
for the State of New York, do hereby certify that
the foregoing pages 1 through 121, 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 20th day of July, 2022.

Marc Russo

MARC RUSSO

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