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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

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PUBLIC MEETING
OF
THE DIRECTORS

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Hostos Community College/CUNY
450 Grand Concourse
Bronx, NY 10451
June 5, 2023
5:00 p.m.

B e f o r e :

NESTOR DAVIDSON,
THE CHAIR

1

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

3 Board of Directors:

4 Nestor Davidson, Chair

5 Arpit Gupta

6 Alex Schwartz

7 Doug Apple

8 Christina DeRose

9 Robert Ehrlich

10 Christina Smyth

11 Genesis Aquino

12 Adan Soltren

13

14 **S T A F F:**

15 Andrew McLaughlin

16 Executive Director

17 Brian Hoberman

18 Co-Research Director

19 Danielle Burger

20 Co-Research Director

21 Charmaine Superville

22 Office Manager

23

24

25

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: All right.

3

We're going to get started. Thank you.

4

5

I'd like to welcome you to this public hearing of the New York City Rent Guidelines Board. This is the first of four public hearings to consider comments concerning proposed rent

6

adjustments for leases for apartments, lofts,

7

hotels and other housing units subject to the Rent

8

Stabilization law of 1969 and the Emergency Tenant

9

Protection Act of 1974. These adjustments will

10

affect renewal leases commencing between October

11

1st, 2023 and September 30th, 2024.

12

I will now take roll call. Please

13

respond if present.

14

Doug Apple.

15

MR. APPLE: Present.

16

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Genesis Aquino.

17

MS. AQUINO: Present.

18

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Christina

19

DeRose.

20

MS. DEROSA: Present.

21

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Rob Erlich.

22

MR. ERLICH: Present.

23

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Arpit Gupta.

1

2

MR. GUPTA: Present.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Alex Schwartz.

4

MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Christina

6

Smyth.

7

MS. SMYTH: Present.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Adan Soltren.

9

MR. SOLTREN: Present.

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Nestor

11

Davidson, present as well.

12

Let the record show that we have a

13

quorum.

14

The next three meetings of this

15

board will be public hearings to comment on the

16

proposed guidelines. They will be held on June 8th

17

at the Jamaica Performing Arts Center, 153-01

18

Jamaica Avenue in Queens.

19

June 13th, we'll have a virtual

20

public hearing about which I'll say more in a

21

moment.

22

And June 15th at Saint Francis

23

College at 179 Livingston Street in Brooklyn.

24

Each of these public hearings will

25

take place from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Anyone who would

1

2 like to comment on the proposed rule at a public
3 hearing must sign up to speak. People wishing to
4 speak at the public hearings can pre-register in
5 advance. You can pre-register online through our
6 website nyc.gov/rgb or you can sign up by calling
7 (212) 669-7480 from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday
8 through Friday.

9 Pre-registration ends at noon on
10 the business day prior to each hearing. Note that
11 to ensure that you are able to speak at the virtual
12 hearing on June 13th, pre-registration is required
13 for those who do not pre-register for our in-person
14 hearings. Registration is also available in person
15 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. All of the hearings will be
16 live streamed and Spanish interpretation will be
17 provided at each hearing. Other interpretation is
18 available on request.

19 We will also be taking comments on
20 the proposed guidelines outside of our public
21 hearings. If you are unable to attend our hearings,
22 you can submit written, audio and video comments
23 prior to the hearings for the board members to
24 review through June 15th.

25 Instructions to submit these

1

2 comments will be available on the board's website.
3 Again, that's Nyc.gov/rgb by email at
4 Ask@rgb.nyc.gov or by calling the Rent Guidelines
5 board at (212) 669-7480.

6

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

10

Before we proceed with testimony,
11 I would like to go over the rules and procedures
12 for those testifying before the board. If you wish
13 to speak.

14

You must confirm your presence
15 with RGB staff at the registration table located
16 near the entrance of the hall. Speakers will not be
17 called if they have not checked in at the
18 registration table. There are Spanish interpreters
19 here today. We really appreciate your help with
20 this.

21

When registering to speak, please
22 notify the staff if you would like an interpreter.
23 I will try to call several names in advance to let
24 you know that you will soon be called on to speak.
25 If you have materials to distribute to the board,

1

2 please give them to the RGB staff sitting at the
3 sign in table near the entrance.

4 I'll attempt to alternate speakers
5 between tenants and owners if we have both. But
6 this may not always be possible. And most
7 importantly, in order to accommodate as many
8 speakers as possible, each speaker will have two
9 minutes to give testimony. An additional two
10 minutes of speaking time will be given to those
11 speakers utilizing interpretation services to help
12 speakers keep track of their time. We have a clock.

13 We will start the clock when you
14 begin speaking. The clock will beep once when the
15 speaker has 30 seconds left. We'll continue beeping
16 when the allotted two minutes are up. If you are
17 still speaking at the end of two minutes, I will
18 ask you to wrap up your testimony quickly. We
19 expect many speakers and the board wants to hear
20 from as many speakers as possible in the limited
21 time we have for this hearing.

22 We understand that it may be
23 difficult to say everything you want us to hear in
24 just two minutes, but please understand that it's
25 our responsibility to make sure that everyone who

1

2 has taken the time to come and testify will have a
3 fair opportunity to be heard. We thank you in
4 advance for your cooperation.

5 Shall I call? Just tell me.

6 So now the announcements are going
7 to be read in Spanish.

8 (Spanish translation.)

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10 Thank you so much. All right. Now I will announce
11 our first three speakers. We'll hear first from Mr.
12 Alex, then from Pablo Zevallos. And then from
13 Thiago Branco. Thank you. Is the mic not on. That
14 one. You turn the mic on. Apologies. One second
15 we'll get the mic going.

16 Is that unbutton on. There we go.

17 MR. X: You know what I could be
18 doing? I could be at home watching Monday Night
19 Raw. But I'm here babysitting you. Which I have no
20 patience for. Where are their events? Their
21 concerns. Before I get to that, whatever decision
22 you make at the final vote meeting won't affect me.
23 Why? I live in Section 8 Housing. I have a
24 non-public section eight voucher.

25 Therefore, the HPD, not the RGB,

1
2 determines my fate. And also therefore my rent is
3 too damn low. Weather events are concerns. You got
4 a microphone inside. You don't have one on that
5 side. Forcing everyone to shift over here, which is
6 inappropriate. You didn't tell us we had to pass a
7 security check, which is also inappropriate. This
8 auditorium, also that one also, or whatever this
9 theater, plus the other one, aren't wheelchair
10 accessible. You need to hold these public hearings
11 there wherever and subway train stations that are
12 fully wheelchair accessible.

13 This is a bad place to hold them
14 here in Bronx County. Why not hold them at 851
15 Grand Concourse Avenue, which lies near subway and
16 railroad train, railroad train stations that are
17 fully wheelchair accessible. The building itself is
18 fully wheelchair accessible. In the future, you
19 hold public hearings here anywhere, and you want us
20 to pass a check. You didn't tell us before a time,
21 Not after. I don't want surprises. You understand
22 what I'm saying? Tell us before talk.

23 And by the way, those two goons
24 who checked my possessions back there wore gloves.
25 All that rabbit stole my business. They wore gloves

1

2 but I don't play that because they were
3 disrespectful. I don't play that. So say he wants a
4 security check. Tell us what? For a time, not
5 after.

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7

Good evening.

8

MR. ZEVALLOS: My name is

9 Pablo Zevallos and I'm a tenants right's attorney
10 testifying in support of a rent freeze. A freeze is
11 a needed to correct the fact that this board has
12 previously ordered rent increases that have
13 substantially outpaced landlords inflation adjusted
14 costs. Between 1990 and 2021, rent stabilized,
15 inflation-adjusted income from rent has increased
16 by 41%, while costs have increased by 35%,
17 facilitating a net operating income increase of
18 50%.

19

Helping drive this trend is that

20

according to a data analysis by Tim Collins,

21

between 1990 and 2022, prior incarnations of this

22

board have ordered rental adjustments that exceeded

23

the increases necessary to maintain fixed operating

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costs to rent ratios and inflation adjusted NOI by

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17%.

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Indeed, RGB orders have enabled the very profiteering that the rent stabilization law was enacted to counter. In the present day, rents are soaring, rent collection is rebounding and inflation to which this board has never tethered its past adjustment orders, is slowing. Meanwhile, tenants face mounting struggles. Two thirds of the lowest income renters and one third of rent stabilized tenants without vouchers pay a majority of their incomes in rent.

Many of my clients trying to get back on their feet tell me that between the rent and other costs like food, health care and raising children, there is not enough to go around. With fewer than 1 in 100 apartments renting for under \$1,500 being vacant, and with vouchers and anti-discrimination enforcement in short supply, there is little chance of moving elsewhere.

These tenants cannot afford an increase. In light of this Board's historically, excessive rent increases and the needs of overburdened tenants, I urge this board to adopt a rent freeze. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Thank you.

1
2 MR. BRANCO: Hi, my name is
3 Thiago Branco. My building is comprised of 39
4 units. 21 are rent stabilized. One quarter of those
5 21 are designated emergency housing and three units
6 are purposely vacant. The landlord refuses the
7 orders to reduce the rent and holds out on lease
8 renewals to create emergency housing vacancies. Two
9 tenants living with HIV and Aids who don't know any
10 better, she says, I'm not renewing your lease for
11 tenants who can be ousted without just cause.

12 All she has to do is manipulate
13 the caseworkers into a one page back door rental
14 agreement that's often illegal, but cheaper than an
15 SRO. In the end, the tenant either signs the
16 agreement or is relegated to a hotel where alcohol,
17 drugs and criminal behaviors are common. Every time
18 the board agrees to an increase, people with HIV
19 and Aids move closer to a park bench.

20 It incentivizes landlords to seek
21 more creative ways to fundraise -- to flood rent
22 stabilization law and turn this body into another
23 money making tool at their disposal. Example,
24 registering a three room apartment as five rooms to
25 increase the unit's market value and the legal

1
2 rent. Finally, the owners and tenants' members
3 position are clear. Yet, as another increase looms
4 upon us, I wonder what the public members will
5 succumb to the greedy landlords who now hold all
6 the cards. Or as the people of integrity, we expect
7 them to be examined, testimony, analyze data and
8 take a long look at the big picture before
9 rendering a decision we all know they don't have to
10 live with. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
12 Our next three speakers will be Betty Collard,
13 Jessica Altagracia Wolford and Theodora Figueroa.

14 MS. COLLARD: Thank you. Good
15 evening. My name is Dr. Betty Collard. I'm a
16 primary care physician and public health and
17 prevention specialist living here in the Bronx and
18 working in Manhattan and the Bronx. I'm also a
19 Northwest Bronx community and clergy Coalition
20 Health Justice Steering Committee member. And I'm
21 here speaking against proposed rent increases.
22 Housing is widely recognized as a strong
23 determinant of health outcomes.

24 Doctors know that housing affects
25 health more than any medicine or procedure that we

1
2 prescribe. As you know, we are facing a crisis. The
3 Bronx experienced the highest rate of eviction
4 filings in 2022. More than 80% of people who live
5 in the Bronx are renters, the highest percentage of
6 any borough. And we're already seeing acceleration
7 of rent hikes in the Bronx, more so than any other
8 borough. As much as 7% in Morrisania Crotona, 9.8%
9 in Parkchester Soundview and a whopping 12.9% in
10 Throggs Neck Co-op City.

11 As rents spike, I see the
12 direct impact on the health of my patients. Carmen
13 was ashamed to tell me that her diabetes got worse
14 because she couldn't afford both medicine and rent.
15 Donald started using drugs again when he got a
16 notice that his rent was going up and he saw
17 homelessness on the horizon. He was already -- he
18 had already overdosed once before, and I fear it
19 will happen again now that his rent -- his --
20 excuse me, his housing is unstable.

21 It is shameful to see the number
22 of veterans in my clinic who have come home to the
23 Bronx just to face eviction and homelessness. As a
24 doctor and as a Bronx resident, I implore you not
25 to raise rents. If we want to address the explosion

1

2 of evictions. If we want families to thrive in
3 healthy homes and communities, then we must instead
4 roll back rents.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
6 you. Thank you.

7

MS. WOLFORD: Good evening.
8 My name is Jessica Altagracia Wolford. I'm a proud
9 New Yorker, born and raised in Kingsbridge and
10 currently live in Riverdale. I'm a mom, a wife, a
11 caregiver for my aging grandparents families very
12 important to me. My husband, three year old
13 daughter, and I recently moved because the rent on
14 our market rate apartment was increased by over
15 50%. It cost us thousands of dollars to move. In
16 those 90 days since we were notified about our
17 impending rent increase, My grandpa was diagnosed
18 with dementia and we have been desperately trying
19 to find affordable, quality care for him and my
20 grandma while managing the chaos of moving with a
21 young child. My grandparents have lived in the same
22 rent stabilized apartment for over 40 years.

23

The building literally shakes
24 when the one train goes by, and there are currently
25 95 open HPD violations on their pre-war 24 unit

1
2 building. My grandparents are in their mid 80s and
3 have made the -- and have to make the arduous walk
4 up four flights of stairs every day. They live on a
5 fixed income. Unless you're wealthy, there isn't a
6 single person in the Bronx who doesn't feel the
7 crushing pain of making rent every month. In our
8 family, like so many across the Bronx and frankly,
9 across New York, the bottom line is shared by and
10 felt by all of us.

11 When the board votes to raise
12 rents for tenants like my grandparents, it's not
13 just the tenants who suffer. Their families,
14 caregivers and dependents must bear the financial
15 and emotional burden to make it work. I represent
16 thousands, if not millions, of New Yorkers who are
17 doing their best to get by, who are doing their
18 best to get by, facing a future where we have to
19 make hard choices between groceries, prescription
20 drugs and the daily essentials required to care for
21 our families. I promise I'm almost done. We, the
22 people of New York, are sick and tired of waiting
23 for action. We can't afford to move, but we can't
24 afford to stay. We're trapped in a vicious cycle of
25 poverty, screaming into the void.

1
2 The crisis we face requires
3 so much more work to undo decades of harm and
4 disrepair, but to make it through today, to make it
5 through this year, we need this board and the
6 people in power to listen to our stories, to come
7 to the moral and logical conclusion that any rent
8 increases for rent stabilized apartments would hurt
9 our neighbors and grandparents and set us all back.
10 It would be a huge missed opportunity to protect
11 the middle class in our borough and provide some
12 semblance of relief that acknowledges we're all in
13 this together. Thank you so much.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
15 you. Thank you very much. Theodora. All right. Our
16 next three speakers after Ms. Figueroa will be
17 Diana Larrazabal, Demarai Barbosa and Ramon
18 Acatala. Thank you.

19 THE INTERPRETER: My
20 apologies. Was Teodoro Figueroa called?

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes.
22 Thank you.

23 THE INTERPRETER: Good
24 afternoon. My name is Theodora Figueroa. We are
25 coming representing justice for El Barrio. We are

1

2 here so that you do not approve a rent increase.
3 Since last year we barely got a rent increase. But
4 of course, we didn't have an increase in our
5 salaries. But the rents, of course, are extremely
6 high and we live in precarious condition.

7 We have no heat or hot water
8 during the winter and our walls are full of
9 humidity. We live in very bad conditions and that
10 is why we're here. We're hoping that a rent
11 increase is not approved. We do everything possible
12 to provide all of the complaints to the landlord.
13 And of course, the landlord does nothing with that
14 information.

15 In my case, for example, I
16 paid for all of the improvements in my apartment. I
17 told the landlord about that and he completely
18 ignored me. And that is why we're here demanding
19 that you do not pass a rent increase. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you
21 so much. Thank you.

22 THE INTERPRETER: My name is
23 Diana Larrazabal and again, I am part of the
24 Movement Justice for El Barrio. I'm here today
25 representing residents of New York City. Residents

1

2 who are retired residents who work long hours to
3 pay for their rent and residents that also have
4 disabilities. Our apartments are not only a living
5 space, they are also our homes. And for that reason
6 we are here today demanding that rents not be
7 increased. Rent increases will affect us both
8 physically and mentally.

9 We will be forced to find
10 second jobs which again will tire us, will become
11 very tired as a result of this and provide more
12 stress. We are already stressed as it is. During
13 the COVID pandemic, many people lost loved ones
14 that, of course, were the economic backbone of
15 their homes. Families are still trying to recover
16 from the after effects of the COVID pandemic and of
17 course they will not be able to do so unless New
18 York City supports these families. It would be
19 inhumane to pass an increase at this point, knowing
20 fully well what the consequences would be. If New
21 York City truly wants to fight or help families
22 against this increase, please help us in our
23 struggle. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
25 you.

1

2

MR. BARBOSA: Good evening.

3

My name is Demarai Barbosa. I represent Nueva York,

4

Lourdes, as well as the Bronx community. I was born

5

and raised in the Bronx 42 years. So I've seen the

6

changes in our community and I've been a community

7

advocate for many years. Growing up in the Bronx,

8

I've seen the beautiful, the ugly and the most

9

expensive.

10

And as someone who does live in

11

rent stabilization for many years, Being told that

12

rents are going to go up in our area has impacted

13

so many people. Right now there are literally 7000

14

cases in the Bronx housing court alone for eviction

15

based off the fact that people cannot afford to pay

16

the rent hikes and the increases that are

17

happening.

18

As someone who doesn't have a

19

second income or someone that has someone else to

20

help pay that rent, but still going to school,

21

going to work and helping their community. We are

22

facing losing our homes. So I want to know what's

23

being done. We're asking and we're pleading and

24

begging. Don't hike up rents beyond what we can

25

afford right now it's rent stabilization. We're

1

2 being told a two year lease is going to go up to
3 7%. We're struggling as it is.

4 So how can we afford? How can
5 we live? We're also facing the increase of
6 transportation. So if you put everything together
7 transportation, living, food, medicine,
8 prescription, disability, doctor's appointments,
9 what do we sacrifice? Where do we feel? Where do we
10 succeed? Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
12 you.

13 THE INTERPRETER: Good
14 evening to everyone. I live at 52 Harrison Avenue.
15 After many years of living in this building, after
16 having lived for several years at this building,
17 the landlord is increasing the rent. There is no
18 security in the public hallways. The cameras are
19 not functioning. The main entrance to the building
20 is also damaged. The parcels that are left on the
21 first floor are stolen. And there are also
22 burglaries in some of the apartments. Of course.
23 Other -- the landlord does not pay attention to any
24 of this and anyone can just walk into the building.
25 The super, of course, is present at the meetings

1

2 and also invites the landlord. But of course he --
3 whenever he attends the meeting, he is not willing
4 to participate and we are threatened by this.

5 He, of course now wants to
6 stockpile the apartments and use them for shelters,
7 so he'll use one apartment for one person and
8 another apartment for another person. I was able to
9 garner enough strength to be able to clean my
10 building, and I was able to do it. Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
12 you. So we'll next hear again from Ramon Catala.
13 And then after that, we'll hear from Mark Shih. And
14 Kim Statuto. I'm so sorry (inaudible).

15 THE INTERPRETER: Good
16 afternoon to everyone. My name is Ramon Catalan. I
17 live in Tompkins Avenue in the Bronx. I'm retired.
18 But I feel so sorry for all of those women that I
19 see every single day on their way to school with
20 their children pushing their baby carriages. I see
21 many of these women who have to push their baby
22 carriages and they go to local churches to stand on
23 line to be able to get food from these churches.
24 But there are already people on all of these lines.
25 They do this every day. It's a routine. At this

1

2 point. They'll go to one church one day, and then
3 the next day they'll go to another church.

4 I know that Mayor Adams
5 doesn't have a lot of time for these people. But I
6 also remember that we stood on lines at the local
7 school where I voted and where we all voted for
8 him. The rent that is being offered to us at the
9 moment is not something viable for us. And Mayor
10 Adams knows this because he was part of the
11 committee that laid this entire plan out. He can
12 revoke these amounts of rent that he's proposing to
13 the board and he can propose this to the landlords.
14 He has the power to do so. So if he doesn't do the
15 right thing, what's going to happen is that the
16 next elections, those that will vote will be the
17 owners landlords. Okay. Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
19 you. So, Mark Shih will be next.

20 FEMALE VOICE: Oh, Mark, I'm
21 sorry Mark.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
23 you, Ken.

24 MR. SHIH: Okay. Thank you.
25 Hi, all. Good evening. My name is Mark Shih. I'm a

1
2 resident of the Kingsbridge neighborhood of the
3 Bronx. I live on Heath Avenue, and I'm also a
4 primary care doctor working in the Bronx in the
5 South Bronx by Concourse Plaza. And I every day see
6 patients in my clinic whose biggest concern is not
7 their blood pressure or their diabetes or their
8 heart disease. And the things that that I kind of
9 want to talk about, but it's about their rent and
10 keeping a roof over their heads and the heads of
11 their families.

12 And that, of course, affects
13 their health. Right. If you're spending most of
14 your money, as was discussed a little bit earlier,
15 if you're spending most of your money on your rent,
16 you're not going to have money to pay for your
17 medications, to make your doctor's appointments, to
18 buy the healthy food that you need to keep your
19 chronic disease under control. And it's not just me
20 saying this. It's not just the experiences I've had
21 with my own individual patients.

22 There's research that shows this.
23 There's data that shows that for patients who are
24 more rent burdened, who are paying 30%, up to 50%
25 of their of their income on their rent, they're

1

2 less likely to make their appointments. There's
3 less likely to keep up with their medications.
4 They're more likely to access care in emergency
5 rooms. And that level of care that we're trying to
6 prevent here in primary care.

7 And so rents going up has a
8 severe and direct impact on people's physical and
9 mental health. I also take care of people who have
10 previous experience homelessness. I work in a
11 supportive housing site and I see the trauma that
12 that causes on people's physical and mental
13 well-being as well. And that's a really difficult
14 trauma to recover from if people are able to
15 recover at all. And rents going up as they are
16 projected to rent, staying where they are honestly
17 puts more and more people at risk of experiencing
18 that trauma.

19 Now I live and work in the
20 Bronx. I actually moved to New York to be in the
21 Bronx because I love the community that's around
22 here. I like the organizing and the activism and
23 the love that people have for the place that they
24 live. And it's really frustrating to see that being
25 put in danger by people not being able to stay in

1

2 their homes. So both as a community member here and
3 then as a health care worker, I think it's
4 essential that we do not increase rents any further
5 and actually push for a rollback of rents. Thanks.

6

7 you.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank

9

My name is Kim Statura. I'm a CASA member.

10

Cliffside, CASA woo, woo, Cliffside Properties LLC

11

Is a landlord of several properties here they have

12

rent stabilized buildings. Mom and pop landlords

13

don't own rent stabilized buildings. Stop trying to

14

make us believe that who's getting these rent

15

increases because it's not true. Corporate

16

landlords are the owners of rent stabilized

17

buildings. The RGB continues to give increases to

18

corporate landlords who don't pay water bills

19

because the tenants get the notices, who don't pay

20

carnet because the tenants gets the notices.

21

The landlords refuse to open

22

their books and allow the real numbers, the real

23

numbers to be revealed. Cliffside Properties

24

acquired more buildings during the pandemic. Right

25

along with other corporate landlords. These

1

2 landlords also received ERAP funds and now are
3 being seen -- not as being seen that they are
4 adhering -- they aren't adhering to the rules and
5 regulations that were set. They are taking tenants
6 to court before the year is up for rent that wasn't
7 paid so they can evict them. But you want to give
8 them more money, more money, more money while they
9 put us in the streets.

10 If the landlords are really
11 hurting, which they're not. Wave crashes isn't,
12 Langsam isn't, none of them are hurting as tenants
13 are we did, we didn't purchase properties during a
14 pandemic. I didn't, I know they didn't. I know she
15 didn't.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you
17 very much for your testimony.

18 MR. STATURA: No, I'm not
19 done.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
21 you.

22 MR. STATURA: These landlords
23 just received an increase last year. You just gave
24 them one, yet they didn't use any of that money to
25 fix their buildings. They give us patchwork jobs

1

2 that we are supposed to live with. If you continue
3 to increase rents, you're looking at putting us in
4 homes -- in the homeless population. And no, I'm
5 not finished, so don't say it. Corporate landlords
6 don't need more money. They need to open their
7 books. See us for the real people we are. Show us
8 the numbers. Stop the greed that you constantly
9 give landlords. Stop the greed.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
11 you.

12 MR. STATURA: Janet needs a
13 break.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
15 you.

16 MR. STATURA: To recover -- a
17 -- to recover. Please don't give another increas we
18 can't afford. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
20 you.

21 Can you introduce your name.

22 MR. STATURA: Please don't cut her
23 off. That's an eight year old. I will get up.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay.
25 Thank you.

1
2 MS. BRUCE: Hello, my name is
3 Avery Bruce and I'm eight years old and I am here
4 today once again begging the rent guy lightbourne
5 to not -- the rent guidelines board to not give
6 landlords of rent stabilized buildings and other
7 increase. My parents are working two and three jobs
8 just to make rent payments. I barely get to spend
9 time with my parents because they're working all
10 the time to pay rent. I begged you last year, and
11 yet you gave an increase.

12 MR. STATURA: Thank you.

13 MS. BRUCE: Hurting my family
14 even more. Another increase will take my parents
15 away longer hours, and I will have less time with
16 them because they will have to work longer hours
17 making me a latchkey kid. I don't want to be a
18 latchkey kid. I want -- I want to be a normal child
19 with my parents who will be too tired to spend time
20 with me. Because you gave man more, more increases.
21 Help save the children and allow working parents to
22 be able to spend time with us. We deserve to grow
23 up normal. Please don't raise the rent. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
25 you. Our next two speakers will be Stephanie Etter

1

2 and Regis Galvez.

3

MR. ETTER: Hello, my name is
4 Stephanie Etter. I am a professor of economics at
5 BCC. So I live with my partner who is an artist and
6 a musician, and even with my partner who I share
7 rent with, I have to work two jobs just to survive
8 and qualify for an apartment that is almost -- you
9 know, that is within even an hour's worth of
10 commute from my job, I have to work two jobs just
11 to qualify for an apartment within an hour commute
12 from my job. I'm an economist, so I can explain
13 some important facts to you. Workers wages have
14 been stagnant since 1970s in this country. And with
15 respect to the real minimum wage, they've fallen.

16

We, the workers, create more
17 and more profits every single year for huge
18 corporations and give more and more of our money to
19 landlords, even while our wages don't keep pace
20 with the cost of living. Workers have been slammed
21 in every which way as the cost of living continues
22 to increase. Why are we even debating whether or
23 not landlords deserve to be one of the only groups
24 in society that don't have to experience what the
25 rest of us do, which is namely stagnant wages for

1

2 the labor that we offer to this economy.

3

4 Rising rents are directly
5 responsible for this city, losing everything that
6 makes it one of the best places on earth to live.
7 If you look at the data, rising rents are directly
8 correlated with less diversity, the loss of art and
9 music scene, which is a tragedy because New York
10 City is one of the most important cultural hubs of
11 the world.

12

13 Higher rates of homelessness,
14 higher rates of crime, even higher suicide rates.
15 If people like me or my partner disappear from this
16 city, which is what rising rents are doing, they're
17 shoving people like us out, this city would
18 literally lose everything that makes it special.

19

20 But take a second to imagine
21 what would happen if landlords disappear. Housing
22 would become a human right. There would be a
23 decrease in homelessness, crime and desperation.
24 There'd be a decrease in inequality. And people
25 stressed up to here because they're living paycheck
to paycheck at a time period of immense inequality.
Pushing forward higher rents would be
unconscionable. You'd be destabilizing society.

1

2 You'd be displacing people like me. A university
3 professor who teaches our next generation. Thank
4 you.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6

Thank you. Sir, the microphone. Thank you.

7

THE INTERPRETER: My name is

8

Marisol Morales. I'm free as the wind. I live at

9

1050 Carroll Place. I live in a mediocre building

10

where our landlord -- where are you guys are

11

actually helping him. You guys who are actually

12

landlords as well. Living off the money that we

13

give you to massacre us. After the pandemic he

14

acquired ten buildings. Additional, more. People

15

like you who are sitting down. The -- where are you

16

guys? Where are we living? In buildings where there

17

is no heat. There is no hot water. Together with

18

the rats that were supposed to be killed by the

19

cats that they were going to send.

20

The cats haven't arrived.

21

Because Adams became Adams famous on TV saying that

22

he was going to fight the rats while I go to work

23

Avenue to Madison Avenue the buildings of the rich

24

are -- the street sweeper passes daily per hour,

25

sweeping the street where the increase from you

1

2 guys where you increase (inaudible) in mediocrity
3 until when but be conscious that while you're
4 sitting there you have heat, hot water and the you
5 don't have the rats that Adam supposedly was meant
6 to (inaudible)

7 Unfortunately, I can't ask for
8 help because supposedly the government says I make
9 too much. But the government massacres me with
10 taxes. From my salary, I have to spend \$500 a month
11 so I can -- it's not enough. I have to save \$500 to
12 pay for the rent and my expenses.

13 You have to go -- it's not
14 enough for me to go to work, eat, or have lunch
15 while you guys are eating filet mignon. I have to
16 eat eggs because I can't eat eggs.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
18 you.

19 THE INTERPRETER: One more.
20 While you help the landlords massacre us in court.
21 Here in New York, even the worst people, pedophiles
22 get attorneys. We ask for an attorney.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
24 you.

25 THE INTERPRETER: Well, you

1

2 guys are sleeping in your beds every night. Be
3 conscious of the fact that (inaudible) and I hope I
4 don't get arrested when I have to jump the
5 turnstile to be able to go to work and to pay the
6 landlord my rent.

7

MALE VOICE: The guest can
8 afford to come here to fight the rent. That's the
9 problem.

10

THE INTERPRETER: Hello my
11 name is Mercedes Escoto. I live in the Highbridge
12 area in a deplorable building. They never fixed
13 anything there and never. During the last 15 years
14 with stabilized rent, absolutely nothing gets
15 fixed. You are waiting for us to be able to spend
16 -- pay the rent, the increases and everything else
17 that they add. So I want to ask a question. They're
18 supposed to be nine people sitting there from RGB.
19 I see -- I count to ten. I would like to know the
20 reason why there's ten instead of nine. Did you add
21 and why?

22

I would like to know because
23 we are basically blind. Like everything else that
24 Adams does, we have no idea about and looking on
25 the internet, I found what does it mean? Rent

1
2 Control Board. Why was the rent control board
3 created? In according its -- I found it in English.
4 It was created to reinforce and administer policies
5 including limits on the rent increases and to allow
6 a level of rent that is affordable for tenants.
7 That is supposed to be the reason why RGB was
8 created. That's what it says on the internet. And
9 so the reason that we're here is indicating that
10 RGB is not doing their job and why isn't it doing
11 it? The dispute has continued for years. We're not
12 here because we want to be. This here is showing us
13 like we're being oppressed, like we're slaves, work
14 slaves.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
16 you.

17 THE INTERPRETER: We don't
18 have time to go to the movie theater. We don't have
19 time to go on a trip because we have two and three
20 jobs to be able to pay the rent for the landlord so
21 that he increases every year. But if you were doing
22 your job, which is supposed to be to help us fix
23 the dispute between the landlord and the tenant, do
24 it because the fact that we're here --

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you

1

2 for your time.

3

4 THE INTERPRETER: -- shows
5 that you're not doing even the minimum of what
6 you're supposed to be doing.

6

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank
8 you. Our next three speakers. Thank you. Excuse me.
9 Our next three speakers will be Raina Wang and
10 Janine Sierra. Is Raina here? Is Raina -- please,
11 please come forward. We want to keep the order
12 because we've had people pre-registered.

12

13 Excuse me. I'm sorry. Our next
14 speaker Reina Wang. Excuse me. I'm sorry. Our next
15 speaker will be Raina Wang. Thank you. Please, if
16 you've registered, we have an order of speaking.
17 Thank you very much. Thank you. We want to make
18 sure that we hear from everyone. Thank you.

18

19 MALE VOICE: Oh, I don't know
20 ask you question.

20

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Oh,
22 sorry. We did get a question. We have a staff
23 member helping us just keep the queue and keep
24 organized and keep the time. There are only the
25 staff member. Thankfully, there's one staff member
26 who has joined us to help keep the process moving.

1

2

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25

MALE VOICE: So he's not a member of the board. He's just with us today and he's helping us with the process.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Thank you. Please. Thank you. Reina. Thank you.

MS. WANG: Hi. My name is Reina Wang. I'm a member of the Party for Socialism and Liberation. So I have a question for all the tenants and workers in this room. Who here got a raise of 7% or more this year? I definitely didn't. And I'm lucky enough to be unionized.

And so our union helped us negotiate a rent -- or not a rent increase, a wage increase of 3%. So tell me if you're proposing a rent increase of up to 7%, how we're supposed to pay our bills if that's twice -- more than twice as much as my wages are increasing? Plus we're in the middle of an inflation crisis that's causing skyrocketing prices of everything we need to survive. Food, utilities, gas. Under this capitalist system of housing, tenants are told that it is our responsibility for some reason to bear the burden of inflation and rising rents while our.

Wages stagnate, that it's our

1
2 responsibility to take on a second or third job,
3 our responsibility to make increasingly difficult
4 sacrifices, to spend less time on our family, to
5 buy lower quality food. While landlords and
6 corporations are making skyrocketing record
7 breaking profits. Why is it our responsibility? And
8 our government, including this undemocratically
9 elected Rent Guidelines board, will always defend
10 the right of the rich to their profits over our
11 right to survive.

12 We cannot keep begging these
13 politicians who are accepting financial incentives
14 from the developers to care about us. We need to
15 build a new system that puts our needs first.
16 Housing is a human right, so it makes no sense that
17 housing, which by the way, we the workers, build
18 and maintain, should be allowed to be used as
19 landlords, as a vehicle for profit. First of all,
20 the Rent Guidelines board should be under the full
21 control of tenants, and poor tenants should hold
22 the majority. We need to place the burden of
23 inflation and the housing crisis on corporations
24 and landlords.

25 We can start by taxing their

1

2 profits and making them pay for affordable and
3 public housing programs. We should call for the
4 seizure of hoarded vacant properties to create
5 permanent affordable housing, especially for the
6 migrants seeking refuge in the city and the
7 thousands of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

8 New York City must continue to
9 provide a right to shelter, and it must become an
10 affordable, rent controlled city where landlords
11 are not allowed to charge more than 20% of a
12 landlord's income.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14 MS. WANG: And to get there, we
15 need to continue organizing with our neighbors. We
16 need to build a citywide coalition of tenants
17 pushing for real radical solutions to meet our
18 housing needs. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very
20 much. Bienvenida Paez. Okay. Janine. Oh, is she
21 coming? Thank you. And if I could ask the
22 translator.

23 MALE VOICE: Yeah. I mean, she
24 allowed to talk little better but accessibility of
25 (inaudible).

1

2

MS. PAEZ: Good afternoon

3

everyone. My name is Bienvenido Paez and I am a

4

CASA member. I have lived with my daughter for the

5

past 20 years and 3534 Bronx Boulevard. I have done

6

charity work for 34 years with the government and

7

other institutions. I am board certified. Helping

8

people in many areas. I need a rent freeze now.

9

I can no longer work because of

10

the negligence of the people that work for the

11

landlord and all the medication I have to be taken

12

every day. I walk with a rollator walker, a

13

wheelchair. Now I am disabled and so is my

14

daughter. I am paying for more than 30% of my

15

income in rent. I am being charged illegally for

16

washing machines that I do not use and that I had

17

before the landlord took over the building. My

18

landlord owes me for rent reduction.

19

And instead they dishonestly alter

20

my account and charge me as if I owe them. I feel

21

they retaliate against me for asking for help

22

because they were not doing the repairs. For a very

23

long time I have experienced complete decrease in

24

service in the apartment. Whenever I contacted the

25

manager office to make a report about anything

1
2 related to the repairs, the apartment I was told to
3 tell the super. I was given the runaround all the
4 time. I was -- I will always call her to no avail.
5 When I told her the repairs were needed, she told
6 me she needed the okay from the office which have
7 told me to call her. Then she will tell me to call
8 her back when I will call her back. She often come
9 with papers for me to sign. Those papers will say
10 that she has done the work or she has done the
11 repairs, but the repair were never done.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13 MS. PAEZ: I will sign the repair
14 and he never -- there never happens. For four years
15 I was left with three closed radiators. I developed
16 multiple chronic skeletal issues due to the lack of
17 heat and the darkness of the water falling from the
18 ceiling throughout the apartment.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20 MS. PAEZ: Due to the black mold
21 that persists in my bedroom, I almost lost one eye
22 and I was told that I would need a cornea
23 transplant in the future. I develop arthritis,
24 osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and 16
25 different other conditions, all because of the

1
2 negligence of the lack of service. I also lost my
3 dog of because of the mold. When I can't sleep, I
4 sleep very uncomfortable on a sofa in the living
5 room during the day. I used to sometimes go and lie
6 down on my bed, but then the floor of the apartment
7 collapsed to the ceiling of the neighbor. My bed
8 broke, all because of floor from the rusted
9 radiator that for four years they never wanted to
10 fix.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
12 your testimony.

13 MS. PAEZ: I will not be able to
14 pay a rent increase with my disability check. My
15 insurance does not cover all my medications. And I
16 have to pay for them. Sometimes I just buy them. If
17 I get another increase, how could I afford to pay
18 medication that I have to take?

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20 MS. PAEZ: And their negligence,
21 all the necessity that we need. Finally, I need a
22 rent roll back or I need a rent freeze. My landlord
23 does not deserve a rent increase. What?

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
25 your testimony. Thank you. We have many people we

1

2 need to hear tonight. Thank you.

3

MS. PAEZ: A lot of threats and
4 broken promises to make repairs. My landlord said
5 that she got a letter from Section 8, that I was
6 moving. She laughed and said, We are very happy. I
7 was moving. And I asked -- they asked me what was
8 going to take for them --

9

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: We've got many
10 people we need to hear from. Thank you.

11

MS. PAEZ: What I want -- and how
12 to and how much. She said that I was causing them
13 too much problems for asking for the repairs. They
14 have no humanity. The landlord and the person that
15 work for the landlord --

16

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Ma'am, we need
17 to hear from others. Thank you.

18

MS. PAEZ: Can you increase my
19 rent. She is a very rich woman. A millionaire. I
20 have given reason enough why I want a rent rollback
21 and a rent freeze. Rent roll back and rent free.

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
23 Thank you. Thank you.

24

MS. PAEZ: Wait.

25

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

1

2

MS. PAEZ: Pick this place.

3

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Ma'am, we have many people we need to hear from, ma'am. Thank you.

5

MS. PAEZ: There is no --

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7

8

MS. PAEZ: How do you say capacity for me to go down and talk like everybody down

9

there?

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11

12

MS. PAEZ: This place is not good for us, for people with disabilities. A lot of my

13

friends, they decide not to come because they can

14

make a dance there.

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16

17

MS. PAEZ: They feel that they are no hurt, I think and you have to do a change.

18

And you can't give money to those people who have

19

so much money. We don't have any money.

20

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21

MS. PAEZ: You can't do this us.

22

23

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: We need to move on, Ma'am. Thank you.

24

MS. PAEZ: It's too much already.

25

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very

1

2 much. Thank you.

3

MS. PAEZ: It's too high.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
5 your testimony. I need to hear from -- we have many
6 speakers to speak.

7

MS. PAEZ: You can't do this. It's
8 too much.

9

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
10 Thank you.

11

MS. PAEZ: (inaudible).

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
13 Thank you. We have many speakers we would like to
14 hear from tonight. Thank you. I'd like to recognize
15 Janine Siri, if we could get the microphone back
16 down.

17

MS. PAEZ: You need to freeze the
18 rent.

19

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: If we could get
20 the microphone back down.

21

MS. PAEZ: Freeze the rent.

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. I
23 really appreciate it. Thank you. Thank you, ma'am.
24 Thank you, ma'am. Thank. Miss here, please. Thank
25 you. Please.

1
2 MS. SIRI: All the tenants here
3 and the millions we represent and those who have
4 already spoken have stated time and time again that
5 their landlord has intentionally denied them
6 repairs and services. Gas, heat. Hot water.
7 Extermination, everything. Our landlord denied and
8 continues to deny us hot water and heat to this
9 day, even after HPD took them to court and it was
10 ordered on March 22nd of this year that our hot
11 water must be 120 degrees every day, all day. It
12 has never been 120 degrees any day. And HPD is
13 still coming out. We have been boiling pots of
14 water for over a year.

15 We had to boil over ten pots of
16 water at Thanksgiving and Christmas just to wash
17 our dishes. My son is xyy autism and cannot, like
18 many elderly and as you saw, disabled people bathe
19 with a pot of hot water. So he screams taking a
20 cold shower. The landlord is well aware that he is
21 screaming every single time he takes a cold shower,
22 but he has intentionally denied buying oil. If you
23 were walking down the street and someone
24 intentionally hurt a disabled person to the point
25 that they were screaming in agony, would you hand

1

2 them money? Sorry about that fall. You wouldn't
3 hand them money. Well, that's what this board is
4 doing.

5 We pay for our own repairs. We
6 boil our own water, which costs us money every
7 month on our con ed bills. And you are giving them
8 the money, the increase. Where is the logic in
9 that? We pay for our repairs. We pay those hot oil
10 prices ourselves. How can you give them an increase
11 for that? How can you continue to allow them to
12 hurt my son? Every day our refrigerator door is
13 fallen off twice. If it falls off on him. He also
14 has hemophilia. They've known. I've told them.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
16 Thank you.

17 MS. SIRI: Yeah. I mean, this is
18 ridiculous. The logic doesn't make sense.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very
20 much. Our next three speakers will be Marcos
21 Sierra. Mercedes Escoto. And Chef Geneva Wilson.
22 And if you've already spoken. Thank you. And we'll
23 go back a long way. Thank you.

24 MR. SIERRA: Good evening,
25 everyone. My name is Marco Sierra and I am a

1
2 member, a proud member of the Working Families
3 Party, the Bronx Chapter. I live in the Norwood
4 section of the Bronx with my four daughters, my son
5 and my girlfriend. My pronouns are he him. Let me
6 be clear. We do not have a housing crisis. We have
7 an affordability crisis. The national average of
8 rent to income ratio is 30% nationally. However,
9 residents of the Bronx, the lowest paid borough per
10 capita, paid 50% of their income in rent.

11 That is a usurious disparity,
12 especially in a borough that trails egregiously in
13 indicators that are considered the measures of a
14 successful future, such as adequate and affordable
15 housing, low unemployment, healthy food options,
16 voter engagement and participation. The Bronx is
17 the unfortunate leader in many areas that often
18 reflect an adverse future for its residents.

19 This discussion brings to mind
20 the recent investments in our education system
21 regarding socio emotional learning and the
22 disconnect between the system and the child, most
23 specifically the poem. Because I ain't got no
24 pencil. I won't read the poem because of time
25 constraints. But I encourage everyone in here,

1

2 especially you, on the guidelines board, to please
3 read that poem.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

6 MR. SIERRA: According to Maslow's
7 theory of hierarchical needs for any person to
8 excel and have upward mobility, the solid
9 foundation of safety and security must be met. If
10 you allow these exorbitant rent increases to take
11 effect, you are willfully and intentionally
12 creating an obstacle preventing the success of
13 working class families and working class people in
14 the city of New York. In a system that is built
15 with inherent obstacles for the advancement,
16 especially in low income and working class
17 communities. This is the opportunity to change the
18 narrative from special interest centered politics
19 to people centered policies.

19

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20

21 MR. SIERRA: Let me just finish,
22 please. I'm almost done. To people with centered
23 policies. We have been hit. We have been hit hard
24 by an unprecedented pandemic and economic and other
25 challenges, the likes of which we have never seen
before and that we are still recovering from. We,

1

2 the working class residents of this amazing city,
3 need as much support as possible to keep our
4 families and communities together because that is
5 the only way we go farther.

6 I'll close with this. I usually
7 do. A multi year increase of 5% increase will force
8 me to decide whether I'm going to pay my son's
9 tuition for his school or do I pay the rent and
10 stay in my home. My son's education is very
11 important to me and my home is also important to
12 me. So please give us and all New Yorkers the
13 support that we need in ensuring a 0% increase.
14 Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Ms.
16 Wilson. We have Mercedes Escoto, I believe, has
17 already testified. No, no, that's okay. Thank you,
18 Chef Geneva Wilson. Thank you.

19 MS. WILSON: Good evening. My name
20 is Chef Geneva Wilson. Okay. I had to reintroduce
21 myself. Right. The people's chef. How many jobs do
22 I have? I'm a chef. Community organizer. MWBE.
23 Okay. These are all the things that I do. Plus, I'm
24 a cert member. Okay. I'm with OEM. I'm out here for
25 the community every day with the community. And I

1
2 fight for everyone. But who is fighting for me?
3 Where is it when I can't with all these things that
4 I do, I still, still got to pull out my food stamp
5 card. Don't play games with me. Still got a food
6 stamp card and get Medicaid services. If they
7 already had a rent increase, why are we giving it
8 again? There's not people that's just laying around
9 playing with their fingers. There's hard working
10 people out there. There's people out there going to
11 school, getting it in, wanting to be a positive
12 part of that community.

13 How can you be that? My fear --
14 what my biggest fear is, is when I wake up and I
15 know I have to go to a school. I have to be at
16 District 14 and I love it. I love what we do. I
17 love helping. But every day before I close my eyes,
18 I got to look at my rental agreement and I have to
19 check my insurance because the first thing that I
20 see, dispossess. I am not going to be the next
21 homeless chef.

22 I want to be the next successful
23 chef. That's all I ask. Is let me be. Let me do let
24 me provide and do everything my community asks for
25 because nobody gave me a raise. I checked that

1

2 mailbox and I stopped checking the mailbox because
3 I see the same damn thing in there. There's no
4 difference. I need you to please respect us. Thank
5 you.

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. We
7 are now joined by New York City Council member
8 Pierina Sanchez. Thank you.

9

MS. SANCHEZ: Good evening. Good
10 evening. My name is Council Member Pierina Sanchez
11 and I represent Kingsbridge, Fordham University
12 Heights, Mount Eden and Mount Hope. And I also
13 serve as the New York City Council's chair of the
14 Committee on Housing and Buildings. And over the
15 last 18 months that I have been in office, I have
16 been emphasizing the housing and affordability
17 crisis confronting our city unequally, impacting
18 our most vulnerable residents, many of whom you are
19 hearing from today.

20

I first want to thank you, members
21 of the RGB, for sitting here and listening and
22 conducting this important hearing. My purpose today
23 is to strongly urge you all to pass no increase
24 this year.

25

On May 2nd, over the protests of

1
2 many tenant voices, this board voted to set a range
3 of possible increases between 2 and 5% for one year
4 lease renewals and 4.4 to 7% for two year renewals.
5 Now, let's put this in context. The economic
6 fallout of the Covid 19 pandemic. Subsequent
7 inflationary pressures and increased cost of living
8 have affected all New Yorkers, tenants and owners
9 alike. But owners? Let's talk about them for a
10 second. Owners of rent stabilized properties have
11 continued to bring in profits, maybe slightly lower
12 profits, but still profits. Tenants, on the other
13 hand, they are not facing reduced profits. That's
14 not their plight.

15 They're facing housing
16 instability, homelessness, broken social bonds. In
17 my district, where I have the difficulty of
18 representing the school districts with the highest
19 number of little babies, children who live in
20 temporary housing, who live in shelters there --
21 they're facing broken social bonds. They're facing
22 multiple hour trips to get to school every morning
23 at eight, nine, ten years old. This is not a crisis
24 that is affecting everyone equally. And I won't
25 rehash the statistics.

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You've heard them here today, maybe 1 or 2, 13% of renters missed at least one payment last year 14% of rent regulated tenants experienced an eviction attempt an eviction attempt last year. What does that feel like on the ground? Make my job easier. Help me to stabilize my community. Help me to drive down crime in the real way. Rent Guidelines, board members.

I know it's not easy necessarily sitting up there and listening to hours and hours. Thank you for doing that. But also, I'm going to be even more thankful if you do what you were created to do, which is to stabilize our communities, which is to protect tenants, be true to the original intent of the Rent Guidelines Board, freeze rents during this difficult time. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our next speaker will be City Council Member. Stephens from Stephens office.

MALE VOICE: That's how I feel.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Steve. Thank you.

MS. STEPHENS: Good evening. I'm Councilmember Mathias Stephens, and I represent

1

2 District 16 here in the Bronx. I'm not only a
3 council member, but I'm a person who have and has
4 had the same struggles of everyone in this room.
5 The rent is too damn high. My daughter, who is a 23
6 year old college student, currently lives in a rent
7 controlled apartment, and this proposed increase
8 would devastate her and would actually make her
9 homeless.

10

The average income household
11 income in the Bronx is 43,000, 26,000 per year.
12 That is not enough even to survive the increase
13 with the increase of groceries, health care, child
14 care, education and daily necessities to keep a
15 household running. Our city is undergoing a housing
16 crisis and this plan rent increase has no
17 beneficial results for our community members.

18

Housing is a basic human right
19 and we must provide security to our community
20 members with the rent rollback. It saddens me each
21 and every day on how many people come into my
22 district office who are facing evictions and about
23 to lose their home looking for assistance. Let me
24 remind this board that it's your responsibility to
25 protect the tenants that is why you were created. I

1

2 implore you not to just listen today but actually
3 take steps to protect our community.

4

Our -- my colleague who was just
5 here said it. We need real solutions that will
6 really drive communities that we know the solutions
7 to. We know that we have high crime numbers in my
8 district, specifically in District 16 and 14. We
9 have the highest numbers of housing insecurities.

10

I have the highest number of
11 young people in temporary housing. And having rent
12 increases will not help that. We are displacing
13 families. We are creating a city that is a shelter
14 city because if they cannot afford the rent, they
15 will be in shelters. It is cheaper and if you want
16 to look at economics, it is cheaper to keep people
17 in their homes.

18

We understand that landlords are
19 saying their profits -- they won't have a problem
20 with their profits, but they will not. They will be
21 fine. I promise you. None of them will be homeless
22 if you do not increase the rent. Not one developer
23 or landlord will be homeless. So once again, I
24 implore you not to just listen here today. I
25 implore you to take action and lead with love and

1

2 protection. Thank you.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4

Our next three speakers will be Leticia Webster,

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Juan Cantiga and Simon Yale. Thank you. Sorry.

6

Thank you.

7

MS. WEBSTER: I wasn't -- didn't

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plan on speaking before I came here, but -- and I

9

don't live in the Bronx, but I've been through this

10

movie before in my neighborhood on the Upper West

11

Side, and I've photographed for buildings that were

12

on rent strikes. In SROs above the Zabar's store,

13

which was an SRO owned by the Zabar's by Columbia

14

University. And fighting the good fight for rent

15

strikes, which can be legal. And people should go

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on, get an escrow account, go on rent strike, you

17

know.

18

And I photographed in the most

19

appalling situations that people were living in.

20

They were paying rent and -- you know, their

21

ceilings were falling down, their toilets didn't

22

work. And those photographs helped to in housing

23

court to -- you know, rule in favor of the tenants.

24

In the 1980s, a great tenant leader predicted that

25

Manhattan would become the pleasure dome of the

1

2 rich.

3

4 And that's happened. That's --
5 all the SROs are gone. Of my building used to be
6 100% rent stabilized and rent controlled. It is now
7 -- you know, they're just a handful of us old
8 people left. They're hanging on. And the rest of it
9 is fair market, where whoever invented that word is
10 crazy because people, families are moving in, they
11 move in, they stay year, they're offered a one year
12 lease and their rent goes up \$500. Three working
13 families in my building have had to move from the
14 city.

15

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17

18 MS. WEBSTER: In a recent study,
19 182 cities were looked at in the United States for
20 affordability for college graduates. New York was
21 number 182. We're not going to have young people.
22 Rich people are going to have to use robots to
23 shine their shoes. I don't know what you're
24 thinking but you can't do this.

25

26 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
27 your testimony. Is Juan Cantiga here. Thank you.

28

29 MR. CANTIGUA: Good evening. My
30 name is Juan Cantigua. I'm going to keep this --

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thanks.

3

4

MR. CANTIGUA: Can we stop the clock? Thanks.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6

MR. CANTIGUA: So I'm going to keep this simple. I'm not here to complain about my landlords. I don't have any problems with that. But a lot of us have the same issues. And I'm here to talk about the real problem, which is why I'm here. New York City has a serious homeless problem. And in New York City, it is a lot easier to end up homeless than it is to get an apartment. And that's something people don't talk about. You know, we glorify this city and all the good things about it, but it's incredibly difficult for us. Most of us are a paycheck and a cup of coffee away from being homeless and that's a fact.

19

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25

Now I don't know what can be done to fix this problem. You know, there's a lot of brilliant people out there that can come together and figure this out. By increasing the rent on us in our communities is not going to do it. It's not going to solve it. It's going to put more people in homeless shelters, get more people evicted, cause

1

2 more problems. Take funding from a thousand other
3 programs to patch these little problems up. Make it
4 worse for everybody.

5 So something to consider. And this
6 is somebody it might be beyond you guys might be.
7 You know, our mayor, Eric Adams, this is for you.
8 We got to start considering finding funding for
9 landlords to better their apartments, to better
10 their environments. They have thousands of
11 apartments that are empty, unusable, unused, and
12 millions of homeless people in New York City, we
13 can find ways to solve this problem without hurting
14 our communities.

15 Because I promise you, increasing
16 the rent on regular people is not going to do it.
17 It is not going to do it. And it's not this year,
18 not next year. You can increase it by five, 10%. It
19 doesn't matter. The problem is, we have a lot of
20 struggling people in this city and we have a lot of
21 apartments that aren't up to par. And we have to
22 find a way to fix that issue where it's not costing
23 the people this money. The city has to step in at
24 this point.

25 And I'm not -- you know, I don't

1

2 know anything about politics. I don't know anything
3 about economics. But if the city steps in and finds
4 a way to fund, find funding for people to --

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6 MR. CANTIGUA: -- better their
7 apartments and their buildings, we won't have these
8 problems. They won't be complaining about getting
9 rent increases because everybody will be taking
10 care of.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12 MR. CANTIGUA: Thanks for your
13 time. Eric Adams, get stuff done, man.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. So
15 after Simon Yale, our next speaker will be Michael
16 Kay and then Corinne Mongeau Golden. And then
17 Vivian Carter. Is Simon here? Simon Yale. No. Okay.
18 Michaela Kay.

19 MALE VOICE: State and federal
20 government in the city what are --

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Is Michaela
22 Kay here? Thank you. And I would just remind
23 everyone that we have a large number of people we
24 want to be able to hear from everyone. So if people
25 could please try to keep your time to two minutes,

1
2 we'd very much appreciate it if we could ask the
3 translator.

4 Sorry, could we ask the
5 translator to repeat that? Many, many thanks.
6 Please, Ms. Kay.

7 FEMALE VOICE: They don't comply
8 with that our time. So why do we need to comply
9 with that time?

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you,
11 Ms. Kay, please. Thank you.

12 MS. KAY: If I still have two
13 minutes. I'm with the Party for Socialism and
14 Liberation. I'm also a rent stabilized tenant who's
15 lived in some form of stabilized -- subsidized
16 housing for most of the time. I've lived in New
17 York. I'm here today because last year, during one
18 of the worst housing affordability crisis, our city
19 has seen this unelected panel who's probably never
20 experienced the fear of a late rent bill in your
21 lives, decided to raise rent guidelines by the
22 highest these -- we've ever been in -- its ever
23 been experienced in our city's history. You know
24 why? According to the RGB, this was to address, I
25 believe you said, the needs of both tenants and

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2 landlords. Well, I have something to share.

3

4 As a rent stabilized tenant, I
5 already struggled to make my very high rent every
6 month. And my management company, Bronstein
7 Management. I'm not sure if you're here. Couldn't
8 wait to take advantage of the rent increase as soon
9 as possible. 26 extra dollars for anyone who wants
10 to do the math. When I told them I couldn't afford
11 this because I was already struggling and ask could
12 we work something out? They simply said not
13 possible. That would be really hard for us.

14

15 But thanks to sites like just
16 fix.org who owns what I recommend? I know that my
17 family owned management company they call
18 themselves owns 122 buildings across the city. Now
19 does this sound like they're hurting for my \$26 a
20 month? No. Right. Do you think a company that's
21 managing well over 6800 apartments is addressing
22 the needs and safety of each tenant, as the RGB
23 suggests? No. Right. Because according to HPD,
24 they've had over 17,000 housing complaints since
25 managing, and the building with the most open
violations has seen the most deregulated,
stabilized units with 59in less than ten years,

1

2 which is criminal.

3

4 I think if the RGB really cared
5 about tenants' needs that our right to affordable
6 housing would be guaranteed instead of us having to
7 bargain for it year after year in the RGB and the
8 city both would make sure landlords with complaints
9 were held accountable instead of profiting off of
10 our communities or forced to live in these
11 dangerous conditions.

11

12 So you know what we need? Yes, we
13 need a rollback. Yes, we need a freeze. But we
14 really need a truly democratic body for the tenants
15 by the tenants. So this doesn't keep on happening.
16 Thank you. We shouldn't have to plead our case year
17 after year to a panel who's just going to turn a
18 deaf ear, then vote for landlords because this is
19 who they are. They are the landlords, right?

19

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
21 your testimony. Thank you.

21

22 MS. KAY: By ourselves we feel
23 really powerless in these situations, but together
24 as tenants we are powerful and we can make a change
25 in this city. Right? Are y'all ready for a change?

25

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for

1

2 your testimony.

3

MS. KAY: I'm ready for a change.
Thank you. I've seen changes in other cities. We
can make a change in New York City because the
tenants united.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
your testimony.

9

MS. KAY: -- can't be defeated,
the tenants united.

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12

MS. KAY: They defeated the
tenants united will never be defeated. The tenants
united we'll never get defeated!

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
Thank you. Please. Thank you. We'd like to hear
from our witness, please.

18

MS. GOLDEN: In America, in the
immigration. My name is Corrine Obongo Golden. But
I was renamed by 104 East 176 LLC by the manager.
My new name in the Bronx is, Monkey go back to the
jungle. African nigga bitch. Because I started to
organize my building and I asked, decent condition.
But I guess as a monkey originally from Africa and
from the Congo, I can tell you in the jungle the

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2 animals live for free. Here I pay rent, so my
3 jungle is very expensive for me. So anyway, as
4 educated monkey, I will say to you today that I'm
5 here to represent the ones that are enfranchised
6 like me. From this masquerade Dell'arte comedy,
7 fake hearing board that.

8 Is with a vampiric agenda year
9 after year, even during the pandemic. You
10 continuously refuse to listen to the voice of the
11 tenant. Always fighting way to with process and
12 protocol to advance Dracula propaganda definition
13 of a bad landlord who harassed, bullied and
14 oppressed his tenant with his best tool without
15 accountability what so ever.

16 Because in June, guess what?
17 Reward is coming. Increase of rent. Poor landlord
18 poor corporate poor LLC with tax tax cut, federal
19 fund, Freddie Mae and so forth. Bank bailout
20 multiple program like ERAP during the pandemic. But
21 for the tenants surprise rent increase.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you
23 for your testimony. Thank you.

24 MS. GOLDEN: No, it's not
25 finished. We're going to let me finish. Regulation

1

2 of the rent is coming. Tenants right with it. I
3 will always enjoy the disparition of his marketing
4 board. Dracula board. It will be televised. And
5 remember I said it. It will be the end of a
6 vampiric monopoly. Power to the tenant. Power to
7 the working class against the vampire system that
8 you represent.

9

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10

MS. CARTER: My name is Vivian
11 Carter and I've been a resident of New York for 44
12 years, presently working on outreach for contract
13 to New York City sanitation, a job I consider an
14 interesting and worthwhile retirement job. A rent
15 stabilized apartment enabled me to complete law
16 school in New York City in the 1980s and serve in
17 lower paid government jobs while I trained to be a
18 lawyer. And I also saved to buy a home where I
19 raised two children in Queens.

20

And as a result of divorce,
21 unfortunately, I was the partner who had to rent
22 again. So for the past 14 years, I have been
23 renting usually around 1000 to 1200 a month in the
24 outer boroughs. In 2016, while working for the New
25 York City Council, I rented an apartment in

1

2 Riverdale from my current landlord, Samaroo
3 Associates, LLC of Rockland County, who owns about
4 six buildings in the Bronx in Inwood. The building
5 is 12 units, almost 100 years old. But I like the
6 pre-war charm and large trees on the property.

7 So I put up with the drafty
8 windows and lack of insulation, which the landlord
9 could easily have fixed with grant money, as I
10 later learned, and never has, I have been paying
11 \$1,600 for rent, which seemed a bit high but
12 manageable at the time when I was working as a
13 grant writer before the pandemic.

14 Afterwards, my income declined and
15 I was paying over 50% of my after tax income on
16 rent, like many Bronxites. Okay, so in the six
17 years I have lived in this apartment, I noticed
18 several tenants leaving. Their apartments were not
19 rented. The landlord was asking over \$2000 for the
20 apartments, though the heat's unreliable and there
21 are many unaddressed repair issues. There are now
22 seven tenants and five vacant apartments. The
23 landlord recently said My rent would be going up to
24 \$2,200 a month. After I pay my taxes, utilities and
25 rent. That would leave me with a couple of hundred

1

2 dollars a month for food, transportation, health
3 care and other essentials.

4

I tried to request my rent history
5 and found out the building was not registered.

6

Although there are two clearly rent stabilized
7 leases for tenants in the building, not myself. And
8 they had been living there a long time. So I filed
9 a rent overcharge case with DHCR. It's a six year
10 backlog to have it heard.

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
12 your testimony.

13

MS. CARTER: I May die before that
14 is heard. I just wanted to say that in my opinion,
15 I am now paying rent at the risk of eviction under
16 protest because I refuse to pay \$2,200. And it's a
17 shame that greed is destroying so many things in
18 New York City. There's warehousing, there's short
19 term rentals like Airbnb, and there's privatization
20 of Mitchell-lama Co-ops. And these are all the
21 reasons that my son left New York City and moved to
22 Denver. And I have one child left here in the city.
23 So it's very unfortunate that we can't stay.

24

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
25 Our next three speakers will be Elizabeth Thompson,

1

2 Jeannie Dubnow and Robert Gumbs.

3 MS. CARTER: My landlord increase
4 my rent three times, last year. Three times.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Is Elizabeth
6 here? Is Elizabeth Thompson here? She's coming
7 down.

8 MS. GOLDEN: And they keep doing
9 it. And now you want to give them another increase.
10 Three times in one year illegally.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay, here we
12 go. Is Elizabeth Thompson here? Please join us.
13 Thank you. And if Genie, you could join us next.
14 And then Robert Gumbs, if you could join us. We
15 have a large number of folks to get through and we
16 want to hear from everyone. So thank you.

17 MS. THOMPSON: Good evening. My
18 name is Elizabeth Thompson. They call me Miss Liz
19 and Kingsbridge Heights. I've been in that building
20 40 years, and when I moved in, nobody told me they
21 was fighting the landlord. We went on plenty rent
22 strike and things that when I moved in, we had the
23 laundry. We had two doors in the front that gone.
24 He promised because Nicky promised that he was
25 going to put it back and did not put those things

1

2 back. Cold water all the time. If I know how to
3 take a cold water shower, it would be great. But I
4 like hot water. It is ridiculous that y'all let
5 these people do it to us. They're getting the Covid
6 money. We didn't get any. And if we got it, we had
7 to pay back money.

8 This man is something else. He is
9 the slumlord. He was the number one slumlord. And
10 they move him to the fourth. But he is a slumlord.
11 He's constantly taking our money and buying new
12 buildings. And that's not right. Y'all need to stop
13 giving these people and let them get over us. We've
14 been keeping things together as taxpayers. I work
15 for North Central, and I know I pay tax. And it's
16 ridiculous that y'all sit there and let them get
17 by. They get money. They get money all the time.
18 That was is it K51 they put in for all those loans
19 and they get -- and they don't give us a -- excuse
20 my French, a damn thing. They repairs forget it.
21 The judge says do the repairs. It took him two
22 years to do the repairs. And I had to borrow
23 \$10,000 for it. And he still haven't did the up to
24 date repairs. The building is shrinking.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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MS. THOMPSON: Y'all excuse me. I get too excited. It really is shrinking. And it's leaning rats. We had two incinerator. We only have one now. We have 82 tenants.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for

--

MS. THOMPSON: And we need help.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MS. THOMPSON: I'm coming back and I'm going to raise my voice again. I have to make sure I take a picture of y'all. I know. I've seen y'all before.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MS. THOMPSON: I'm too old for this.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

Please. Thank you.

MS. DUBNOW: Hello. My name is Jeannie Dubnow. I'm not from the Bronx. I'm from Washington Heights, right across the river. I'm from an organization called Rina Riverside Edgcombe Neighborhood Association. I have some things to say to you. Mayor Adams is a landlord. And he loves real estate. That's why hedge funds

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2 owners and billionaires donated millions for his
3 election. That's why he stacks the Rent Guidelines
4 board against tenants. He's paying back the owners
5 for their support.

6

Here are the RGB members he has
7 chosen. Arpit Gupta teaches finance at NYU. He said
8 he's a little skeptical of rent control, which he
9 says is a one time transfer of equity from
10 landlords to current tenants.

11

Gee, I hope the tenants aren't
12 getting too rich. Poor landlords. Christina Smith,
13 Esquire. Landlord's lawyer bought and paid for.
14 Enough said. And the appointment of Nestor Davidson
15 and Doug Appel was met with jubilation by landlord
16 groups and the landlord media.

17

They were happy. Landlords and the
18 mayor point to rising costs for building
19 maintenance as if tenants were not faced with
20 rising costs. What about profits? Okay, let's not
21 look at cost. Let's look at profits. Landlord
22 profits averaged an astounding 37.8% of every rent
23 dollar in the most recent year. Never satisfied.
24 The real estate industry thinks the job of the RGB
25 is to keep their bloated profits.

1

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
3 your testimony.

4 MS. THOMPSON: But the rent
5 stabilization law was enacted to protect the public
6 from unregulated profits.

7 Thank you.

8 MS. THOMPSON: Serious public
9 emergency.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
11 your testimony.

12 MS. THOMPSON: As a tenant
13 organizer, every every week I meet tenants who
14 simply can no longer pay their rent. They're hard
15 working folks or retired seniors who are desperate
16 to remain in their homes.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
18 your testimony. Thank you.

19 MS. THOMPSON: So any landlord who
20 can show that their profits are less than 5% can
21 get a rent increase, but they never ask for it
22 because they have to open their books.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24 MS. THOMPSON: That crooks. Okay,
25 that's it. RGB.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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MS. THOMPSON: I would like you to

find a two bedroom apartment in northern Manhattan

for what? A family of four could afford. Median

household income \$55,000. How much can such a

family afford? A third of their income would be

1529. Show me where you find that. A two bedroom

for 1529.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for

your testimony.

MS. THOMPSON: You can.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MS. THOMPSON: Freeze the rent.

Freeze, roll back. Rent roll back. Rent roll back.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

Robert Gumbs. Yeah.

(Audience participation.)

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Mr.

Gumbs. Thank you. Please. Thank you, Mr. Gumbs.

MR. GUMBS: Good evening. My name

is Robert Gumbs. I am a native New Yorker. First

from Harlem, now in the Bronx. I'm also a naval

veteran. Disabled. Combat naval veteran. And I tell

you, quite frankly. I have never been so ashamed of

1

2 my country as I have been. Since returning from the
3 last that I participated in. Now, what really
4 angers me and I don't really mean to get into
5 personalities. But you know as well as I do. That
6 this whole exercise, this whole evolution, this
7 whole morality play is pure bullshit. Okay.

8 You get a certain Stipend or
9 whatever it is. Come here right. Let the savages
10 yell and scream at you. And then at the end of the
11 day, you pick up a nice check or some favors.
12 Right. For future use and that's it. Nothing
13 changes. How in the name of common sense and
14 humanity can anybody speak about the poor oppressed
15 landlords? You sound more like Donald Trump than
16 people who are dedicated to trying to help tenants
17 in this city. See, I understand what this is all
18 about. I understand the game that's being played.
19 Nothing is going to be accomplished out of this.
20 Not a damn thing. And I think it's a disgrace. What
21 I appeal to these folks here and when they get
22 around their friends and neighbors start holding
23 your elected officials --

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 MR. GUMBS: -- accountable.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
your testimony. Thank you.

MR. GUMBS: That's what needs to
happen.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MR. GUMBS: Okay.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
Thank you for your testimony. Thank you.

MR. GUMBS: Yelling at this
corner.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MR. GUMBS: You will achieve
nothing with that.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MR. GUMBS: But if your elected
official is.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
your testimony.

MR. GUMBS: She wasn't here
tonight.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MR. GUMBS: Don't vote for her.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MR. GUMBS: It's just that simple.

1

2 Vote for the people whose interest --

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4 MR. GUMBS: -- are with your

5 interest.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7 MR. GUMBS: And I am proud to be a

8 member of CASA with the only -- one of the only

9 groups in this damn city that I have seen since I

10 have come back from the wars. That is about doing

11 the goddamn thing.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13 MR. GUMBS: Vote. Don't just yell

14 at them. Vote.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16 MR. GUMBS: You all take care.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. I'd

18 like to -- I would like to now welcome Bronx

19 Borough President Vanessa Gibson. Thank you.

20 MS. GIBSON: I'm tall. Good

21 evening everyone. Thank you so much to the members

22 of the Rent Guidelines Board for convening this

23 important hearing tonight in the South Bronx

24 regarding the proposed rent hikes that the board is

25 considering. Access to safe, quality and affordable

1

2 housing is a fundamental right. The rent
3 stabilization system is one of the cornerstones of
4 affordable housing in our city.

5 It has proven to be truly a
6 lifeline for hard working middle class and fixed
7 income families. Over the past year, we have faced
8 multiple challenges relating to housing New Yorkers
9 and helping them stay in their homes. With the end
10 of the Covid 19 era, we have seen the resumption of
11 evictions in housing court. That ain't right. As
12 one of the sponsors of the city's historic right to
13 counsel legislation, I know the devastation that
14 families experience every day when they are facing
15 eviction.

16 This law has enabled thousands
17 of residents and families to stay in their homes.
18 And I will always stand up for right to counsel to
19 make sure it works, that it's fully implemented and
20 fully funded. The current system that we have with
21 asylum seekers coming into our city has put added
22 pressure on our shelter system. As our city works
23 to get migrants into permanent housing, we must
24 remain cognizant of the impacts that this will have
25 on our overall housing stock, the overwhelming

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2 growth of our shelter population and the need for
3 real and deeply affordable housing is at an all
4 time high. This is a crisis and a call to action
5 and we cannot continue to ignore this issue.

6 Inflation has also increased the
7 financial stress faced by nearly all families in
8 the Bronx and our city. The board must take this
9 into account the financial pressures facing our
10 families. As you consider this proposal the
11 potential 2 to 5% increase in rents for one year
12 leases and 4 to 7% increase in two year leases
13 would be devastating for residents during this
14 crisis. Let us remember last year's increases was
15 the largest in a decade, and this increase this
16 year would prove to be untenable for many of our at
17 risk tenants, many of whom are rent burdened today.
18 I urge the RGB to protect our vulnerable New
19 Yorkers, hard working seniors, hard working
20 families by rejecting these proposed rent
21 increases.

22 Increasing rents by these levels
23 would simply force tenants out of their homes being
24 evicted in the shelter system, homeless with no
25 roof over their head. At this critical time, RGB,

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2 we cannot and should not support any rent increase
3 that will punish our tenants and have lasting
4 consequences on our city. I hope you will consider
5 what this rent increase will do for New Yorkers,
6 but certainly for all of the residents of this
7 great county of the Bronx, we ask you to reject the
8 proposal. Thank you for having me tonight.

9

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10 Our next three speakers, just to make two quick
11 announcements. First, the registration desk outside
12 will close at 8 p.m. Sorry. The registration desk
13 will close at 8 p.m. Thank you.

14

THE INTERPRETER: Hello. Hello.

15

Sorry.

16

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17

And we're going to hear from three more speakers
18 now and then we're going to take just a very brief
19 break. And we'll be back. We need to give our
20 interpreters a break.

21

Our next three speakers are next

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-- thank you very much. Our next three speakers

23

will be not more than not one more block. Marisol

24

Morales and Jocelyn Gomez. Thank you. This is --

25

there somebody who signed in as not one more block?

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2 Okay. Marisol. Thank you. Ms. Morales. Yes. Thank
3 you. Ms. Morales. Sorry. Is this the gentleman who
4 identified as not one block more?

5

THE INTERPRETER: They're telling
6 me Ms. Morales already spoke.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. Thank
8 you.

9

THE INTERPRETER: This is Jocelyn
10 Gomez.

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. And
12 sorry. Is this the gentleman who identified as not
13 one more block? Okay, why don't we hear from you,
14 and then we'll -- because that's the order we have
15 please.

16

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening.
17 I'm Jocelyn. I'm a CASA leader. We don't know who
18 exactly is here to help out the tenants because all
19 the people -- the faces on the board on the stage
20 over here, it doesn't look like you're really
21 willing to help us. That's really sad. At least in
22 the previous years we had someone that was actually
23 part of our community, someone from the Bronx that
24 was actually here supporting who knew the order
25 that the tenants were going to speak and who was

1

2 actually out here supporting the tenants and
3 waiting for you guys to actually represent us.

4 No, it's like you're representing
5 just the mayor because you're definitely not
6 representing us. We don't really need to be here to
7 listen to like, statistics or like, you know, if
8 rent is -- the value of things like, no, we're here
9 for business. I came here tonight to speak to you
10 and to speak to all the tenants over here in the
11 Bronx, because we're not going to pay one more dime
12 in an increase of rent.

13 You should be ashamed. The rent
14 has to go down. No one here is going to pay one
15 more dime of rent. We should all go on a rent
16 strike. You can't come here and increase our rent
17 because we're not going to pay you one more dime.
18 You we -- don't know what you guys do with your
19 money, but we know what we do with ours and we're
20 not going to pay more.

21 All the tenants over here, we're
22 all going to go on strike because we're not giving
23 you one more dime. This is our money. A We're not
24 paying one more dime of rent. I don't care if you
25 increase it, we're not going to pay it. We work too

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2 hard and we're not giving going to give you more
3 money in rent.

4

5 The tenants over here in the
6 Bronx, we're not doing that. Go take that somewhere
7 else. We're not giving you one more dime.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9

(Audience participation)

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11

(Audience participation)

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13

Please. Thank you. Please.

14

MALE VOICE: Hey. Right. Peace,

15

y'all. I'm going to talk to my peoples over here

16

first, because y'all ain't really relevant, but

17

okay. This is what oppression looks like. This

18

board. This is what white supremacy looks like.

19

This board. This is what colonization looks like.

20

This board. They are our oppressors and we must

21

defeat them. They do not belong here. Now for you

22

all. The Rent Guidelines Board is an illegitimate

23

body. That's y'all.

24

It is an oppressive board

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controlled by landlords to crush people's dreams of

living in easeful life. The fact is, property

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2 rights cannot exist on stolen land, especially in a
3 country founded on indigenous genocide and black
4 slavery.

5 Being a landlord is not a job. It
6 is power over others. Do they really think that
7 they are a lord of the land? Are we in feudal
8 times? Do we not have rights that should guarantee
9 us food, water, clothing and yes, shelter? The
10 median income, the median household income in the
11 Bronx is \$43,726, according to census data in 2001
12 -- 2021.

13 How are you expecting anyone to
14 pay if there is a rent increase? How are you
15 expecting anyone to not be evicted? If there is a
16 rent increase when apartments are going for
17 outrageous sums of money, the cruelty is the point.
18 The control is the point. The fascism is the point.
19 I give a declaration tonight. I give a declaration
20 tonight. That the Rent Guidelines Board is
21 illegitimate. Undemocratic is a project to continue
22 white settler colonization and should be dismantled
23 immediately.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 MALE VOICE: Power to the people.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. We will return shortly. Thank you. We are going to take a brief break. We need to give our translators a break.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. We'll be back. Thank you.

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(Recess taken.)

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Do we have everyone? Okay. All right. Yeah, mic is on. Are the translators ready? Thank you. So just a quick announcement. Exactly. If our translators are ready. Great. I'm going to continue to call in groups of three. If you could please come up and be prepared to testify. We want to make sure we can hear everyone tonight.

And one more reminder.

Registration closes at 8 p.m. So ten more minutes.

Thank you. Our next three speakers will be Anna

Galvez, Marquita Byfield, and Valentin Lopez.

Valentin. Excuse me. Valentin. So Anna Galvez. Is

Anna here? Galvez. Okay. Thank you.

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening.

My name is Ana Galvez, I am a CASA leader. I live

at 295 1/49 Street. Let me tell you that I live

1

2 this in the flesh. What's happening to everyone out
3 there with the tenants? And I ask you. You want to
4 increase our rent? Have you asked if our salaries
5 have gone up? Have you asked us if our salaries
6 have gone up?

7 No, you do that. It's an increase
8 of \$1, ladies and gentlemen. And please go ahead
9 and tell us how much it is that you want to raise.
10 Have you increased your employees salaries? Please
11 don't sit here and show us these long faces
12 pretending that you understand us. You don't
13 understand anything that we're going through. Do
14 you want to evict us? Have you seen how all the
15 shelters are? Are you going to open your doors to
16 me? Because if that's the case, I'll do it right
17 now. Can you start? Will you house me in your
18 homes? Who will do it? So please don't come here
19 and tell us. Put yourself in our shoes. Look at my
20 shoes. I can't even make enough to buy new shoes.
21 Today. It's not fair that I have to decide between
22 groceries and the rent. And yes, I have not paid my
23 rent. I can if I want to. Ladies and gentlemen, the
24 rent.

25

But I don't have enough. CASA will

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2 be that the Bronx not pay one more cent of rent.
3 Not one more cent. No more rent increases. No more
4 rent increases. No more rent increases. No more
5 rent increases. No more rent increases. No more
6 rent increases. You can tell the mayor that. Thank
7 you.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9

Great.

10

THE INTERPRETER: My name is

11

Valentin Lopez. I'm also a CASA member. We're

12

fighting for a cause because our rents are

13

increasing. We can no longer deal with this

14

suicide. Even I'm at the point at the brink of

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being on the streets. I have a six year old here

16

with me because, of course the resources they get

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are not enough. I'm disabled. I don't know if

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tomorrow I also want to say that the shelters are

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full because the city is at its brink. The mayor

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has forgotten about us. Those of us living here in

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the city. Those of us who work hard every single

22

day to build this city.

23

For those that come from the

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outside. Of course not culpable of that, but we

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have has forgotten the small of us who live here

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2 who have been massacred. But we don't have any
3 help. You have to be conscious and aware. These
4 homes are filled with roaches with rats over me.
5 And I was in bed and thank God the rat did not do
6 anything to my son. I'm so tired of fumigating
7 roaches. It doesn't matter what I do about rats.
8 It's been two years now, and we've told the Super
9 (inaudible). I called you, and they haven't come.

10 They only came to make one single
11 repair of the kitchen sink. There was an issue with
12 the alarm. The fire alarm. And yesterday they
13 replaced one. Because I'd been to for two and a
14 half years to replace the alarm. The bathroom. They
15 did a shoddy job. It's just too much abuse. They're
16 not aware. They have no conscious. We should have a
17 (inaudible) to do away with all of those thieves
18 and all of those delinquents are doing away with
19 (inaudible).

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21 THE INTERPRETER: They have no
22 conscience. You know what it is, listen right now
23 as you know, (inaudible) So someone's going to have
24 to put their hands on (inaudible) If he can't be
25 mayor, then he should give that job to someone

1

2 else. He was offered that job to protect us. Not to
3 make more money.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

6 THE INTERPRETER: The police that
7 protects us are the ones that kill every one of
8 these cars. And this is not something that the
9 mayor(inaudible) to. He's not wearing his pants on
the way he should. It's embarrassingly sad.

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
11 your testimony. Thank you.

12

13 THE INTERPRETER: We have no one
14 here to protect us. They've done it with me and
with many people as well.

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
16 your testimony.

17

18 THE INTERPRETER: The criminal has
19 more power than someone in the community. And this
20 is the most powerful (inaudible). And it's
embarrassing.

21

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

22

23 THE INTERPRETER: Such a powerful
(inaudible).

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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THE INTERPRETER: Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I just want to make sure we did not miss Makita Byfield. Thank you. And let me just announce our next three speakers. So if you could come forward, please. Chase Lauda, Santiago Ortiz and Chaplain Sandra Mitchell. Thank you.

MS. BYFIELD: Good evening. My name is Makita Byfield. I'm a proud New York native and even prouder to call the Bronx my home. In my short 19 years, I've been homeless twice. The underlying cause of each incidence of my family's homelessness has been a lack of safe, permanent and affordable housing for all New Yorkers. It makes absolutely no sense that my family was evicted because we could no longer afford our quote unquote, affordable housing unit.

Please note my household was led by my mom, who worked several jobs at the time. And now nine and a half years after that initial eviction, I am afraid for my family who is doing their best to not re-enter the shelter system again and still barely getting by. For the countless other Bronx residents who are closer to homelessness than they are to the wealth that is

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2 needed to survive this housing affordability
3 crisis. For all those who have and will continue to
4 experience the trauma of an eviction after the
5 moratorium has been lifted. I originally wasn't
6 going to speak today, but decided to because I am
7 afraid for the future of Bronx residents. I'm
8 afraid and I am urging you to not increase the
9 rent. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11 MS. MILES: Hi, my name is
12 Savannah Miles. I am also a youth advocate who was
13 born into Bronx public housing. Some of my earliest
14 memories are of my mom advocating in welfare court
15 for her housing voucher to include all of her
16 children.

17 If you didn't know that was
18 possible, they can exclude your children from
19 housing vouchers if they quote unquote, are making
20 too much money. What is too much money as a 14 year
21 old child in the Bronx, which is statistically the
22 most impoverished district to this day, I've never
23 been afforded the privilege to stop fighting the
24 public housing system ever since last August, I was
25 falsely accused of a crime. You may be wondering

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2 what that has to do with anything, but housing is
3 as intersectional to the identity of the criminal
4 civil legal systems as my blackness is to my
5 womanhood.

6 The two cannot be separated. If
7 you need another example of this intersectionality,
8 I think that we can take a look at the police that
9 are here around this room and the metal detectors
10 that have been added to host those specifically for
11 today for this meeting, the way in which we are
12 being criminalized by simply walking in to advocate
13 for our own housing needs.

14 While I was in custody. About an
15 hour after I had been arrested, I was rendered
16 effectively and immediately homeless without even
17 having the chance to plead my case. This is what
18 you called guilty until proven innocent. One month
19 later, I'd visit Harvard Law School for the first
20 time. What should have been one of the most
21 exciting moments of my career. Because it is not
22 often, nor is it ever, that a Bronx girl like me
23 has the opportunity to bless the campus of Harvard
24 Law School.

25

I should have been happy and I

1
2 should have been excited. But I was filled with
3 trepidation, otherwise known as fear, knowing that
4 I'd still be able to return without a place to live
5 or without a place to study. Two months later, when
6 I sat for my first LSET exam, which is the law
7 school entrance exam, I was still homeless. Three
8 months later, when my case was dismissed, I was
9 still unable to afford a place to live, and when
10 winter rolled around, I was barely able to escape
11 sleeping on the streets.

12 The further that you expand these
13 rent increases, the further you expand what
14 homelessness looks like. It doesn't just look like
15 Jordan Neely, Rest his soul. It looks like all of
16 us in this room today. It looks like everyone who
17 is one missed payment away from eviction because
18 all it takes is one missed payment in order to be
19 evicted. It looks like anyone who has had to choose
20 between paying their rent and putting food on the
21 table.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23 MS. MILES: It looks like college
24 graduates with debts that are further than our
25 lifespans. Thank you. It looks like every New

1
2 Yorker who is forced to take eight roommates
3 because they cannot afford to live alone. It looks
4 like those same roommates being the cause of you
5 being homeless again. It looks like every person
6 who is sleeping on couches, park benches and subway
7 stations. It looks like me. And six more months, my
8 lease ends again. The way you vote today will
9 answer my next question. So I'd like for you to
10 tell me, will I have to return to being homeless
11 again?

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. I'd
13 like to welcome Chase Lauda. Chase.

14 MR. CHASE: My name is Chase and
15 I'm with the Party for Socialism and Liberation.
16 And I'm here to say that the housing crisis in the
17 city is absolutely unsustainable. New Yorkers who
18 have lived in the city for decades are struggling
19 to survive, and the cost of living is increasing
20 because of greedy landlords and corporations which
21 are putting undue influence on our politicians.
22 People should feel safe and secure in their homes
23 and not be terrified or afraid of being evicted or
24 priced out of their neighborhood. Why is the cost
25 of living so damn expensive?

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And we're not going to stand by as our neighbors are having their lives destroyed because landlords want to make a quick buck at the expense of all of us New Yorkers. We will not let our communities be destroyed and ravaged by greed. We demand that the communities of the city should control the rent and the land and also the housing. New Yorkers deserve better. Why should you? All the Rent Guidelines board determine how much we should have to pay? Do you all even live in the communities in which you're discussing? The communities should determine how much they have to pay.

Hundreds of thousands of units have been lost since 1994, when it was determined that you could you could take rent stabilized units and turn them into market rate. And it's absolutely been devastating. And we demand that these units be reconverted back to being rent stabilized and more importantly, that the city becomes fully rent controlled city where no tenant will pay more than 20% of their income to rent.

We will not stand for this blatant destruction and displacement of our communities and

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2 unnecessary burdens which sit on the shoulders of
3 working class New Yorkers. We will organize until
4 the city becomes livable and sustainable for
5 everyone.

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7

Thank you. Santiago Ortiz.

8

THE INTERPRETER: I'd like to say

9 hello to the people in the audience first and then
10 now I'm going to speak with the representatives of
11 the RGB. I call this a protest actually, because we
12 all know that the landlords are rich. They're so
13 rich that they gained 37, \$0.38 off of every
14 subsidy that they give us. Of course, they don't
15 even think about the fact that on the street and
16 keep us poor. Because as you can see, and I know
17 that you're not flying. If you go to store, for
18 example, to buy something everything is expensive.
19 I don't want any of you (inaudible) But I don't
20 know if you would be able to put up with what we've
21 had to.

22

And this is the situation

23

(inaudible) Landlord. And of course the mayor is

24

also a landlord. And I'm sure that you all came

25

here with that same idea to say yes. Why don't you

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2 lower that to zero and instead putting up
3 increasing the rent? Make sure you lower it. Thank
4 you.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6

Our next speaker is Chaplain Sandra Mitchell. While

7

we're waiting, let me also invite Judith Mauricio,

8

Brianna McClure and Julius Bennett as our next

9

three speakers after. Is chaplain Mitchell, here.

10

Okay. Thank you. Someone. Thank you. We're bringing

11

the mic over. Thank you very much.

12

MS. MITCHELL: I'm practicing my

13

Spanish. My name is Chaplain Sandra Mitchell like

14

Mitchell Lama projects. That we might something

15

might have to take over. But I'm standing here with

16

the Holy Bible ain't got no holes in it, and I'm

17

standing on God's promises. Rent Guidelines Board.

18

Please hear me. Please hear me. I'm a registered

19

voter. I am a leader in CASA. I'm a leader in the

20

Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. I'm

21

an ordained chaplain. I am universal. I study all

22

of the religions and I respect them all.

23

And so I am pleading with you. I'm

24

pleading with you. This is a servant of the most

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high God, pleading with you, pleading with you,

1
2 giving you respect, the respect that you deserve,
3 that this holy word comes against you. I can't
4 throw because I don't have six strokes fighting
5 this fight. Six And God has helped me throughout
6 these 53 years living in the Bronx and seeing the
7 same thing for 53 years. This is a shame. It's a
8 shame before God and God will not be mocked for his
9 people to suffer like this no more. Basta. It stops
10 now. I mean, in working working for Columbia
11 Presbyterian Hospital, environmental, Health and
12 Safety, having a stroke.

13 And so what? It happens all the
14 time. Losing my job, losing my apartment, my
15 apartment on Broadway. Okay. I'm not no slouch. You
16 see, I'm standing here with six strokes. I went to
17 the courts and I had no lawyer before. Right to
18 counsel. That's why I worked with CASA and the
19 right and the right to counsel to be birthed.
20 That's our baby.

21 And the Rent Guidelines board. I
22 didn't know about the Rent Guidelines board. I
23 didn't never had to deal with it. But as I started
24 to get a little bit older, in those 53 years, I
25 found out about you. And I said, Well, glory, but

1

2 this is really a shame. I pray. I pray the humble
3 prayer of a servant. Father God, our Father, in the
4 name of Jesus. Visit each and every one of you in
5 your bedroom. Flip it over if you have to, because
6 I've been flipped. Flip it over. If you had to
7 touch your hearts. Don't be the modern day pharaoh
8 with a hardened heart. Don't be a modern day
9 pharaoh. We need rent freeze right now. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very
11 much.

12 MS. MORRISON: Good evening. My
13 name is Judith Morrison. I moved to 1310 Sheridan
14 Avenue in 1994 after losing all my belongings to a
15 fire. The building was a beautiful building at the
16 time. As time went by, we had so many different
17 landlords didn't know how to deal with that. Right
18 now we are with the worst -- I am a senior on a
19 fixed income. From time to time I find myself going
20 to the pantry just to get some extra help. The
21 lines. Sometimes it takes us about two hours before
22 we receive any food. I'm not ashamed to say it.

23 We, the seniors, is asking for a
24 rent roll back. In the winter, I don't have -- they
25 don't give enough steam in the in summer. If you

1
2 want to get any repairs done you have to call 4 or
3 5 times. I mean, sometimes it's so difficult for me
4 to get up out of the bed in a cold house. I have a
5 question to ask you guys. A few of I'm quite sure
6 everyone there has family. How would you feel if
7 your relatives is being treated in in this way? I
8 mean, it's unbelievable. I'm not -- you know,
9 recently, not too long ago, I received a letter
10 stating that I have to pay \$20 more on my rent
11 because of the MCI. Why do I have to pay that? Why?
12 I don't have no extra money. You guys, you can show
13 some compassion. Think about people in the winter
14 when it's so cold. The buildings are terrible. It's
15 not maintained.

16 I get sad when I get up in the
17 mornings and look outside. It's all the garbage.
18 People shouldn't be treated like that. I'm in this
19 building from 1994 and we never had that. I'm
20 trying to get her, but where can I go? I'm a fixed
21 income. I don't have a lot of money and I need to
22 take care of myself because I'm dealing with some
23 personal issues right now with my health. I mean,
24 if there's anything I don't know, I'm not sure. But
25 this is what I'm asking for. A rent rollback.

1

2 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3 Brianna McClure.

4 MS. McCLURE: Hi. Good evening. My

5 name is -- excuse me. Breanna McClure. I did not

6 intend on speaking this evening, but I must,

7 because every single person's voice in this room

8 matters. Because we're dealing with a real issue

9 here. I myself am from Harlem, born and raised.

10 I've been there for four generations. I am a

11 college graduate, and I had been living with my mom

12 for several years as a college graduate. Why?

13 Because if I try to afford the extremely expensive

14 housing, then I'll go into debt. Why? Because I

15 have student loans. Why? Because I want to be able

16 to obtain economic mobility for myself. By the

17 grace of God, I was able to finally obtain rent

18 stabilized housing. And a few days later I hear

19 that the Rent Guidelines Board wants to potentially

20 increase it by 15%.

21 How am I ever supposed to achieve

22 any sort of stability, economic independence, if

23 not only the rent keeps improving excuse me, going

24 up, but also my quality of life decreases with a

25 15% increase in my supposed to ask for a 15%

1
2 increase in my raise for my job. So not only is
3 this an issue for our working class here, but this
4 is also an issue for every single person in this
5 room, no matter where they come from, for the
6 people that have housing, if we increase their
7 rent, they're going to fall into homelessness. Our
8 shelters are already at an exacerbated place right
9 now. And again, the situation is going to get worse
10 and worse and worse. So again, I'm just here to
11 tell my story. I'm from Central Harlem. I want to
12 stay in Harlem. And we rely on rent stabilized
13 incomes. The average income in Harlem is around
14 54,000.

15 So again, when you do the math and
16 look at what that is in terms of one third, again,
17 that's around one 1500. So when we take the very
18 thing that has stabilized so many families, that is
19 stabilized, my family, where I am at today, then
20 where do we fall? We fall into extreme disrepair,
21 homelessness and instability. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next
23 three. Again, our next three speakers will be
24 Julius Bennett, Terence Burrows Natia Ruiz.

25 (Audience participation.)

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3

Please.

4

MR. BENNETT: Good evening.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6

MR. BENNETT: Okay. Help me now.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8

MR. BENNETT: Julius Bennett is my

9

name. I am a New Yorker. I happen to be 86 years

10

old. And I spent all of them here in New York

11

working for the rights and the welfare of others.

12

And as I -- I'm now 86, I'm fighting for a decent

13

place to live. Something's wrong, but I'm not going

14

to talk long. I'm going to present a solution to

15

us. And my recommendation is we have our people.

16

CASA. United of of New York. People who are working

17

in housing and tenant rights. Okay, we have a RGB

18

board. Whose responsibility it is to see that we

19

are all right in our apartments.

20

So what I am recommending and I'm

21

willing to help lead. We start a campaign. Where we

22

remodify the board. So it is representative of the

23

people, just like the United States Constitution

24

stated. When a government does not serve the

25

people, then the people have a right to change the

1

2 government. And so let's change the board. The
3 mayor is the boss. Anytime an organization does not
4 function, then the president goes.

5 I believe it is on June 27th, our
6 elections begin. We begin our primary. Then we as
7 CASA leaders and united leaders, et. cetera, and
8 all the leadership that has come together, we
9 refocus our focus. That we help get a mayor who
10 will put together a board that represents the
11 people and housing, has some control over the
12 private landlord.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14 MR. BENNETT: And allows us to
15 live out those rights that are so inalienable as
16 described in the Emancipation Proclamation.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

18 MR. BENNETT: And so I'm saying
19 that we shall change things and we're going to do
20 it.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you, Mr.
22 Burrows.

23 MR. BURROWS: Can you hear me?

24 TENANTS: Yes.

25 MR. BURROWS: Good. Okay. I have

1
2 lived on both ends of the United States. I lived in
3 California for about six years and I lived over
4 here. Okay. I'm a native of New York. My ancestry
5 goes back to the 1860s. I have never seen a country
6 so sloppy as this right now. Never. This is
7 unbelievable. Senior citizens. They've lived in
8 their apartments or their homes for, what? 40, 50,
9 60 years. Being put out for no reason. Landlords,
10 they keep raising the rents. Okay. But when it
11 comes to the repairs, where are they?

12 This is my proposal. They need to
13 -- instead of coming up with these increased rent.
14 A situation's. What they need to do is they need to
15 get to these landlords. Okay. And what they need to
16 do. As get them together. Thank you. Thank you.
17 What they need to do is get them put them
18 together. Okay. Instead of building a stories to
19 reach the Empire State Building, whatnot. Yeah.
20 Build another one and deposit them in there and put
21 on the title on the prison.

22 No parole and confiscate their
23 property and let them see what it feels like. This
24 is wrong. When I lived in California, I saw the
25 prices going up. I saw the rents and everything

1

2 going up. I got out of there just in time. Thank
3 you. I put on the YouTube. I looked there nothing
4 but tents all over from the north to the south.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6

MR. BURROWS: Tents.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8

9 happening here.

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11

Thank you.

12

Thank you.

13

14 be done. Thank you.

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16

Natia Ruiz. Is Natia Ruiz here?

17

(No response.)

18

MS. CHAEREA: Hello. Hi.

19

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20

21 name is Eva Santos Chaerea and I am a member of the
22 Bronx chapter of the New York Working Family
23 Party's. Most importantly, I am a mom of three
24 children and in 2011 I was faced with the hardest
25 decision a mother can have. I paid an increase in

1

2 rent or continued to feed my children. Their
3 increase was from \$1100 to nearly \$2,200. There was
4 no way I could pay twice my rent and continue to
5 support all the other costs associated with raising
6 my children in a city like New York.

7 My autonomy to decide was stripped
8 away from me when we were evicted and I was forced
9 into the shelter system. Sadly, I know where path
10 is well, too well. I was there with my mom when I
11 was a young girl because when I was a child, my
12 mother was moved from shelter to shelter for three
13 years because we were fully undocumented. As a
14 documented. Still, I am a DACA recipient and a
15 person from the Dominican Republic. I know my story
16 is one of the many that are shared from New Yorkers
17 here and not just in the Bronx, the whole New York.
18 I know this because it was true for my mother from
19 2000 to 2004. And then it was true to me as a
20 mother in 2011.

21 It became true. And I wanted to
22 continue to raise my children in the only home that
23 I know that is the Bronx. But I don't want them to
24 be raised and be part of the cycle just like I was.
25 My children deserve a brighter future and an

1
2 affordable future, and the direction of their
3 future starts on June 21st. When you, the Rent
4 Guidelines board will vote on pushing every single
5 mothers out of the shelter systems or giving their
6 children an opportunity to survive in this city.
7 Please make the right choice. I don't want my
8 children to go back and repeat what I did. I want
9 them to have a better future. As a mother, I fear
10 for them to repeat my stories.

11 I just want ten more seconds to
12 briefly say I had to separate my partner. And today
13 we have to share custody. And I don't live with my
14 children because I can't afford housing. I just
15 can't. And it's unfortunate that I have to continue
16 to live like this. And my story is just one of many
17 mothers and fathers and New Yorkers out here that
18 don't have a home. I'm currently homeless. I had to
19 sleep in my car during Covid and yeah. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
21 Robert Williams. Our next three speakers. Our three
22 next three -- thank you. Our next three speakers
23 will be -- thank you. Thank you. Our next three
24 speakers will be Edwin Martinez, Rosa Jaquez and
25 Cesar Martinez. Edwin Martinez, please. Thank you.

1

2

MR. MARTINEZ: Hi. Good evening.

3

Thank you for listening to us. Thank you for being

4

here. My name is Edwin Martinez. I'm a single

5

person. I'm struggling as it is as a single person.

6

I couldn't imagine the families. But single people

7

also suffer a lot because we don't get a lot of

8

services. So that's one thing. Sorry, I'm a little

9

nervous. Adan and Genesis and the public members,

10

thank you for being here. I want to know, like,

11

what can -- I want to ask you if you can take this

12

issue to the United Nations, take it further,

13

because. It's out of hand. We cannot lay our heads

14

on our pillows comfortably when we owe money every

15

month. Okay. It's just not feasible.

16

So I ask -- sorry. So I want to

17

tell you, I want to tell you quickly, my two idols

18

right now are Donald Trump and Jorge Santos. And

19

why? Because they beat the system, okay? They have

20

reached levels of success that we probably will

21

never reach. So I think if we come together. Okay.

22

Come up with a strategy and get a lawyer or get a

23

counsel, a good, smart counsel. Okay. Just like you

24

have, we can possibly beat this. Because if Donald

25

Trump did it and Jorge Santos has done it. We can.

1

2 I bet you we can do something and get and find a
3 loophole for this solution so quickly.

4 I can't see. According to the
5 Cornell University New York City laws, residents
6 due to COVID 19. As we all know, Manhattan lost
7 117,275 residents. Brooklyn lost 95,022. Queens
8 lost 74,321. The Bronx lost 47,706 residents. So
9 that's a lot of money, right? That left New York
10 City. Okay. And although they left ERAP and. ARAP,
11 assisted the landlords. Okay. So they got their
12 cut.

13 Now market rates are super high
14 again. Our retail revenues are rising again.
15 Vacancy rates are back. So where can -- why are you
16 charging us more money? So with our council you can
17 -- we can dip into the rent ledgers because I'm
18 telling you right now, even in the Bronx right now.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

21 MR. MARTINEZ: My landlord and
22 other landlords, they're cooking the books, and we
23 need to get into the books.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 MR. MARTINEZ: You hear me?

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3

4

MR. MARTINEZ: We need to get into
the books.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6

7

MR. MARTINEZ: I'm sorry. One
second. So go back to the drawing board. No.

8

Freeze. I'm sorry. Freeze. Sorry. Freeze the rent.

9

Okay. We need counsel. Major repairs are not being

10

tendered to my building in the Bronx needs capital

11

improvements like the floors and washers and

12

dryers. Machines? Right now we don't have a working

13

laundromat in the building. I'm sorry. Wait,

14

affordable housing is not working. It works for

15

higher salaries of White Plains, Connecticut. Mount

16

Vernon, New Rochelle. They use the income from

17

those areas. We don't have that here. Why are you

18

using affordable housing income from up there

19

compared to here?

20

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21

MR. MARTINEZ: Wait a minute.

22

Sorry.

23

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Many people

24

who need to speak.

25

MR. MARTINEZ: I know some of our

1

2 salaries are low. Again, I'm single. Another thing
3 I'm sorry. With the problem with New York City and
4 I face this every day since I graduated from Hunter
5 College. Okay? There's still discrimination.
6 There's still prejudice with certain jobs. I
7 haven't made more than \$35,000 as a single person.
8 Okay. So that's that's an intersectional thing that
9 needs to be addressed. Speak to employers, work
10 together with the landlords and the employers. Find
11 something else because this is not working.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13 MR. MARTINEZ: Wait, I'm sorry.

14 One more thing.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Many people
16 need to speak. Thank you.

17 MR. MARTINEZ: So, unfortunately,
18 you know, if this doesn't work out, you're going to
19 have the city go into a spiral of decline and the
20 city is going to burn again. So according to the
21 First Amendment, we have a right to protest
22 peacefully. Right. And as someone else said
23 earlier, we know. Right. We know that Nestor
24 Davidson works at Fordham University. We know that
25 Arpit Gupta works at NYU. We know Alex Schwartz

1

2 works at the New School and Christina Smyth, Smyth
3 Low and PC. You will see us around. Thank you.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening. My
6 name is Rosa Jaquez and I feel more comfortable
7 speaking in Spanish because I'd like to speak with
8 my heart because of course, the hope of the working
9 class and the middle class rests with you. I live
10 at 132 Seaman Avenue. And I've been there for more
11 than 30 years now. That is the community that I
12 live in. I am a president of a Block Association.
13 President and vice President of the Community --
14 North Community Monitoring Group.

15

Two years ago because of course I
16 offer workshops for my representatives, workshops
17 in conjunction with the police to prevent crimes in
18 the area. And what I've seen in the last few years
19 is a city filled with trash and crime ridden or
20 police.

21

Its basic services in our favor.
22 Because, of course, criminals must have more rights
23 than we do. And I'd like to know if the system that
24 of course is directed by the city of New York has a
25 plan in place where the working class because of

1

2 course the middle class is slowly disappearing for
3 some time now and three years ago someone in power
4 told me Rosa, in ten years or less you will no
5 longer be able to live at (inaudible) And what do I
6 do with this information? This is why I couple of
7 years ago I started as the president of that block
8 (inaudible).

9 Because my entire life all I've
10 done is serve. What is it that we're going to do we
11 the tenants? If we don't even have any protection?
12 Because (inaudible) really don't want
13 (inaudible).

14 What is the politicians plan?
15 Who's going to vote for them? The rats? The
16 roaches? Who? Where are you headed in this
17 situation? I'm here today because I've been in
18 Manhattan public hearing in the north part of
19 Manhattan and I'd like to ask all of you that next
20 year if we're still here. We can have a public
21 hearing in Washington Heights and Inwood. Because
22 it's not fair that I have to come all the way down
23 here tonight. It's not fair. Furthermore why pay
24 rent increments to landlords that are not doing
25 their job.

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And believe me that I don't want the landlords to fail or to lose money. That's not my intention. I don't want them to go back to that. I want them to work with us so they can make the repairs for which we paying. We have 20 of the worst. We have one of the worst landlords. 20 worst ones in the state. It doesn't do any repairs. Ceiling is caving in and they still want to raise our rent? But why? Because they're not doing their job. We need better landlord, better laws. And that the RGB Board, really represents the working class.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

Will next hear from Cesar Martinez. But before we do, let me just announce our next three speakers, Mrs. Henry Ravanello, Ernestina Vasquez. And sorry. Rochelle Gomez.

THE INTERPRETER: Hello. Good

evening. My name is Cesar Martinez. I live at 2304 Amsterdam Avenue. For about 26 years, I've been living in this at this address. I am the president of communal -- I'm the president of Unidad Communal or communal Unity a community organization. Led by the very -- in people that live in the area. The -- all of the people that live in the building with

1

2 the support of Northern Manhattan. We all fight to
3 approach all of the issues in our community. And to
4 improve of course, tenants lives in Northern
5 Manhattan, specifically Washington Heights. I'm
6 here tonight representing the tenants that were not
7 able to come all the way to the Bronx in order to
8 testify in person.

9 We chose -- we demand that next
10 year the RGB hold a public hearing in Manhattan.
11 The leaders of (inaudible) are very much
12 disappointed knowing that the RGB would not hold a
13 public hearing in Manhattan this year after we
14 worked for the last two months in order to develop
15 or what? We were going to testify today. Our
16 statements. Many of the tenants at Unidad Communal
17 are people in charge of rents, many of them that
18 are retired. An increase in the rent would suppose
19 taking away what they make as their sustenance and
20 food on the table. I'm here tonight to make me
21 aware. That we deserve this space so that we can
22 testify in person. Durante la pandemia.

23 During the pandemic we had to go
24 from having monthly meetings in person to meeting
25 virtually by way of Zoom. Because of reprisals and

1

2 because people were nervous organization. The
3 members of this organization. Never ever ended our
4 organization. We always met.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6 THE INTERPRETER: The change
7 virtually, of course, has affected the
8 participation and participation in our meetings
9 since you were to hold a public hearing in
10 Manhattan we can bring channels to express how
11 these rent increases will affect them. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very
13 much. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you.

14 THE INTERPRETER: Lastly, we ask
15 you to please be aware and go back on these rent
16 increases. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very
18 much. Mrs. Avenelo. We have Mrs. Henry Avenelo.
19 Ernestina Vazquez. Thank you.

20 THE INTERPRETER: Good evening to
21 the public firstly. Why are we here? We want
22 justice now. Not right now. Thank you. (inaudible)
23 University. I live at 2260 University (inaudible).
24 I'm very embarrassed. And I'm very about what's
25 happening about -- to all the people that are here.

1
2 I wish for you to put yourselves in my place. I
3 have a letter to be to leave to your story. I'm out
4 in the hallway and ask for help my working papers.
5 I'm not working. I have three children. My
6 daughter's eight years old. I have a four year old
7 child. And she tells me, Mom, why are they evicting
8 us? I'm very sad for you guys. You're seated is
9 very comfortably in your home. while we -- all the
10 people in CASA are suffering. In welfare they asked
11 me for working papers.

12 But I don't have a letter from
13 work because I don't know how I'm going to pay my
14 rent. The landlord is throwing me out into the
15 street and to the hallway. Is that fair? Ladies and
16 gentlemen. What I'm telling you not to me, many,
17 many people (inaudible) and they ma'am, you have to
18 pay your rent. And I said, I'm not going to pay my
19 rent. Because I don't have gas. Besides that, I'm
20 not going to be a year now that I don't have gas.

21 You're spending more than \$100 to
22 buy gas for my children's food. What do I have to
23 do? What am I going to do? Tell me. Moving while
24 you're in -- put yourselves in our place. You don't
25 think a little bit about us? About what we're going

1
2 through. Is it the case before (inaudible) I'm
3 coming to -- the court asking for more time. So
4 that I won't be evicted. No. The landlord wants --
5 I want the mayor wants us to increase the rent
6 knowing that we can't pay while the rich live in
7 their luxurious. He doesn't pay rent, but we do.
8 The landlord wants to evict me. But you know what?
9 There's a God who sees everything. And only through
10 him and through CASA. I haven't been evicted.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay.

12 THE INTERPRETER: I want you to be
13 aware that I'm a single mother of three. What we're
14 living -- what we're going through. I see my
15 children they're very sad because we're in the
16 hallway. Sleeping in the hallway. Is that fair? No.
17 No, it's not fair. That's why we're here fighting.
18 CASA, we're fighting. No, we're not going to give
19 up. Where we have to get. And be aware that we're
20 not going to pay more rent.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

22 MALE VOICE: Interpreter, if you
23 can, please. Just put --

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Put your mic
25 down. Yeah. Sorry.

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MALE VOICE: I don't think they all heard what she said. So difficult to hear. This person is actually sleeping in the hallway because she just got a bite. I don't think everybody understood that.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. And let me just before you begin, let me just announce -- let me announce our next three speakers, if you could be, please, if you could please come up. Xavier Powell, Carolina Sanchez and George Sotirov, please. Thank you.

MS. GOMEZ: Good evening, everyone. My name is Rochelle Gomez, and I'm speaking on behalf of myself and many other CASA tenants. Those of you who are standing here before you and many of who have signed in solidarity because they cannot make it here today. After looking a closer into your own data, we found that nearly a third of New Yorkers are paying more than half of their income in rent.

Now, I have a question. Do you think it's logical to increase this rent already knowing that many of them are living off of fixed income such as pensions, Social Security benefits

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2 and other programs alike, and those who don't have
3 fixed incomes are working jobs where they're raised
4 fails to increase at the rate of inflation, forcing
5 them to work two or more jobs.

6 Have you had to work more than one
7 job just to have food on your table and a roof over
8 your head? As a result of these absurd increases,
9 people are now resorting to having four or 5 or 6
10 roommates just to make ends meet, which is
11 increasing their health risk. Let's not mention the
12 issue of gentrification, because let us not be
13 blind to the removal of socioeconomic disadvantage.
14 Minorities in the communities that used to be
15 deemed affordable and are now being replaced by
16 richer individuals. Because let's be honest, that's
17 what's happening. You're kicking us out of our
18 homes and you think that's okay? That's all I have
19 to say for today. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Mr.
21 Powell.

22 MR. POWELL: Thank you. My name is
23 Xavier Powell. And like every other tenant on this
24 side of the aisle, I'm appealing to this board to
25 stop the incessant increases of annual hikes. And

1

2 instead. Consider a reduction or at least a freeze
3 and the cost of the rents. The city of New York is
4 a corporate amalgamation and a business owners make
5 up the lion's share of that conglomerate.

6 Collecting taxes in the form of revenue to pay the
7 city. Therefore, our grievances with the property
8 owners. That the city lauds the land too, in return
9 for taxes from the rents paid at the tenant's
10 expense. Why do I say at the tenant's expense
11 instead of the expense of the tenants? Because the
12 services rendered are never up to par with the
13 rents extracted and that's unpardonable.

14 On another note. This board has to
15 take into account this post Covid era that we are
16 living in and how it has affected our city and the
17 world around us. New York City has been a beacon.
18 That every group has fled to and come to in a time
19 of need. Making New York City the most populated
20 city in America since the forming of the census.
21 New York has been a beacon. At the present,
22 immigrants are coming into our great city and
23 groves and we are providing them with food, shelter
24 and medicine free of charge. Like we've always done
25 and we should do with New York. But if we're taking

1

2 care of the world. We have to take care of home,
3 too.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5 MR. POWELL: However, the
6 majority of renters feel the city has dropped the
7 ball horribly when it comes to tenants. And what
8 has been done for tenants dwarfs in comparison to
9 what's been done for the people of the world that
10 come to this city.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12 MR. POWELL: Therefore, we are
13 appealing to this board to stop the systematic
14 onslaught of rent increases that are keeping us
15 impoverished and causing the mass gentrification of
16 our people.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

18 MR. POWELL: People who have been
19 rooted here for generations and make up the tile of
20 this big mosaic apple.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
22 your testimony.

23 MR. POWELL: Again, I am Xavier
24 Powell and we are demanding this board. Thank you.
25 To stop the incessant increase and consider a

1

2 reduction or freeze in the course of rents.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4 MR. POWELL: May your minds be
5 blessed and your hearts be at peace with the
6 decision that you have to make in the coming days.
7 Thank you all. Thank you. We'd like to hear from
8 our witness. Thank you.

9 MS. SANCHEZ: Yes. My name is
10 Carolina. I am really nervous, but I'm here
11 supporting everyone else and myself. I am a
12 registered voter. I am a Bronx resident. And with
13 all due respect, do not make that terrible mistake.
14 The terrible choice. The terrible decision to
15 increase the 5% and the 7%. I am really asking you.
16 To view and review and to be honest within
17 yourselves, because this is a powerful protest.
18 This is one of the many others that will come for
19 this formal demand. Right now. My landlord is
20 overcharging me from \$2000 to \$2271 for one-year
21 renewable lease to -- for a three-bedroom apartment
22 and the two year lease for \$2,315 for a lease
23 renewal. But to top it all off, I have roach
24 infestation, lack of hot water for over four years.
25 The lack of maintenance and the entire building, it

1

2 has to come out of my pocket to clean the areas at
3 all times. I'm asking for rent rollback. Yes, we
4 all are.

5 Until these landlords can really
6 start competing with other tenants necessities and
7 complying with all repairs in their apartment and
8 in their properties. Okay. Because when I rent the
9 apartment, I had to pay a broker's fee and I had to
10 pay security deposit to the amount, the total of
11 \$6000 and \$700. And I'm still demanding that tenant
12 interest that he's trying to hide. He wants me to
13 sign lease riders but with zero amount of dollars
14 and I protest on that. I will not sign the lease
15 writers. And my recommendation for everyone that is
16 here tonight is to freeze the rent and report
17 everything about the landlord with HCR and ask for
18 the rent history payments to sue the landlord for
19 rent, overcharge and so on if they fail to comply.
20 Thank you.

21

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

22

Well, Mr. Sotirov is coming down. Let me announce.

23

No. Okay. Our next speaker is George Sotirov. Our

24

next three speakers. Let me just announce our next

25

three speakers, if you could please be prepared.

1

2 Michael Okay. Eva Santos Veloz and Derveni Samuel.

3 Thank you.

4

MR. SOTIROV: Thank you. My name is
5 George Sotirov. I'm an anchor baby, and I'm very
6 proud of that. Live in the Bronx. Ladies and
7 gentlemen of the Rent Guidelines Board, you're here
8 this evening under great suspicion. A cloud. And
9 why do I say that? Well, to start, the Supreme
10 Court of the land has proven itself corrupt by the
11 reneging of the majority on its promise to continue
12 to recognize Roe versus Wade as a settled question.

13

Justice Clarence Thomas, it is
14 revealed, has been on the tape for the past 20
15 years, maybe and probably longer. The wife of Chief
16 Justice John Roberts, enjoys an income of \$10
17 million per year to provide access to her husband.
18 So, ladies and gentlemen, you can understand that
19 you as a group are also under suspicion because of
20 him who has appointed you? Mayor Eric Adams, a
21 landlord himself, who has announced publicly that
22 he would like to see the rents raised.

23

Now, I am neither an economist nor
24 a sociologist, but I read in the history books that
25 one of the conditions that all collapsed societies

1

2 share is too much money in too few hands. Okay. It
3 is a matter of public record that starting with
4 Ronald Reagan, the Republicans have been steadily
5 degrading the housing authority, which had from its
6 inception in 1934, successfully lifted citizens out
7 of slum conditions and into the middle class. Why
8 would anyone seek to degrade such a successful
9 program?

10

Well, the answer that presents
11 itself is that through such degradation, the
12 private sector can more easily return to profiting
13 from slum conditions of the 1920s, shredding the
14 fabric of society by visiting the violence of
15 eviction on the rent burdened thus leading to
16 slums, tent cities and Hoovervilles is only sowing
17 the seeds of the next French Revolution. I am not a
18 religious man, but I do pray that your crop will
19 fail. Of course, if you would like to do the right
20 thing, by all means vote for a rent rollback.

21

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Ms.
22 Kay.

23

MS. SAMUEL: Thank you. Oh, good
24 evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Jovan
25 Samuel. I live at 1230 Woodycrest Avenue. And are

1
2 you listening or are you hearing what everybody's
3 saying here? We have the slum landlords that don't
4 -- when they do repairs, they break back. The
5 repairs have to be done all over again. Within two
6 months, the repair has to be done again. They don't
7 give us heat. We have roaches and mice in
8 apartments. They don't do anything.

9 And they want a rent increase.
10 Shame on you. Shame on you over there. You are
11 supposed to help the tenants and you have been
12 helping the landlords. I'm not the only tenant that
13 has problems. A lot of all the tenants in my
14 building are not getting the repairs and not
15 getting their service. But the landlords want their
16 rent.

17 MS. SAMUEL: And this is
18 ridiculous how this is going. Are you listening?
19 Are you hearing. I'm tired of this. And all these
20 tenants are tired of this going through this year
21 after year. These landlords need their slum
22 landlords. They don't care about the tenants, but
23 they want their rent. But you want to give them an
24 increase? Shame on you. Shame on you. This is
25 ridiculous. I work hard every day for my money.

1
2 And you want to you want money to
3 put in more money to put in your pocket when you're
4 not even doing the repairs. And the building is
5 falling down. This land is not doing what he's
6 supposed to do. And I'm not the only one in the
7 building that has to say that. This is ridiculous.
8 Yeah. There's no heat in the winter time. But he
9 wants to increase -- but you want to increase the
10 rent?

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12 MS. SAMUEL: This is ridiculous.
13 Okay. Thank you, everybody.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Do
15 we have, Michael Okay. Eva Santos fellows. I
16 thought that was Eva.

17 MR. ALYSIA: I'm going for my
18 friend Eva. My name is William Alysia. I go by any
19 and all pronouns. I'm a member of the Bronx chapter
20 of the New York Working Family Party and a proud
21 member of Local three IBEW Apprentice fourth year.
22 I have lived in the Bronx all 28 years of my life.
23 My mother is disabled and has Section 8 and still
24 the rent is too damn high. My mom has and I have
25 lived in our apartment by Parkchester for over 25

1

2 years, but we are being forced to move because we
3 cannot afford over \$2,000 a month in rent. We
4 turned over affordable housing units to find a
5 home, and after a two year long search, we finally
6 found a place for \$1500 hundred a month.

7 But the only catch is it's a one
8 bedroom apartment and we were able to get the
9 apartment because of my mom's disability status. So
10 we were able to be higher on the list. And me, an
11 adult person has to share a one bedroom apartment
12 with my 59 year old mom. We're both adults and we
13 deserve to have our own bedrooms. The unit is
14 reserved for disabled people. Are all one bedrooms
15 or studios. We can't afford to delay moving any
16 longer. And so this is so we are forced to live for
17 the foreseeable future.

18 Affordable housing is in high
19 demand because of the exact rent increases for
20 which you, the Rent Guidelines Board, are
21 responsible for. Increases in rent stabilized units
22 exacerbates New York City's growing housing crisis.
23 It should not be a two year endeavor for any New
24 York City resident to move to a new apartment, and
25 Bronx residents should not have to spend half their

1
2 income on rent. I'm a proud union electrician, but
3 why does it cost half of what I make for me to live
4 in an apartment with my mom and that's what's
5 already subsidized rent? The rent is already
6 subsidized and it's still too expensive. I'm forced
7 to squeeze in a one room bedroom apartment with my
8 mom until I have enough savings to move out and get
9 a place of my own. Which is, by the way, what any
10 adult does that still lives with their mom living
11 paycheck to paycheck. Yet because of these rent
12 increases.

13 This is a lifestyle many New
14 Yorkers can resonate with living paycheck to
15 paycheck. And New York's cannot take another rent
16 increase. The Bronx cannot take another rent
17 increase. And my message to Mayor Eric Adams and
18 his rent guidelines board is this Don't raise our
19 rents.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our
21 next three speakers will be Gloria Villatoro.
22 Vincent Tsai. And Regits. Do we have Gloria? Thank
23 you.

24 MS. VILLATORO: What do we want?
25 What do we want? Good evening.

1
2 Good evening. Now. Good evening,
3 everyone. My name is Gloria Villatoro and I am a
4 proud to call myself a bronxite residing in the
5 vibrant Highbridge area. Over the years, I have
6 witnessed transformation of our Borough with new
7 schools and apartments being built. At first
8 glance, it may seem like a progress, but
9 unfortunately it does not seem to have a well mind
10 being for all of us. The issue we -- sorry. The
11 issue that we face is that we are being priced out
12 of our own neighborhood.

13 Affordable housing options are not
14 reflective of the true cost of living in the city.
15 Many of us are living paycheck to paycheck,
16 struggling to make ends meet. As a result, we are
17 forced to make sacrifices, compromising the
18 educational opportunities for our children, proper
19 nutrition for our family, and ultimately diverting
20 our hard earned money into the pockets of the
21 wealthy. No landlord will go homeless if a tenant
22 misses a payment. My family will be. evicted if I
23 miss a payment.

24 Housing is a fundamental human
25 right and we should not be subjected to excessive

1
2 price that pushes us out our community for the sake
3 of profit. It is this heartening to see that this
4 disparity between the rising cost of the living and
5 the limited affordability of our housing options.
6 We, the real New Yorkers, are the bearing in the
7 most of this disparity. I would also like to bring
8 attention to the challenges I have personally faced
9 as a tenant under the management of Jonathan Weiner
10 of Chestnut Holding.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12 MS. VILLATORO: Located in 56 --

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
14 your testimony.

15 MS. VILLATORO: -- 77 Riverdale
16 Avenue. He has repeatedly appeared on the slumlord
17 list due to numerous violations. A simple Google
18 search will reveal the numerous lawsuits filed
19 against Chestnut Holding for their pathetic House
20 lord abuses. Unfortunately, Chestnut Holdings
21 purchases --purchased the building I am living in
22 currently. And since then, my experiences with
23 management have been filled with difficulties.
24 Despite of the challenges, I have been taking it
25 upon myself to advocate for my -- for both myself

1

2 and my fellow tenants within the building.

3

4 Together, we have organized and
5 demand the repairs and improvement that we
6 rightfully deserve. However, we cannot do this
7 alone. We need the support and attention of the
8 Rent Guidelines Board to listen to our concerns and
9 take necessary steps to to put our interests in the
10 forefront in the decision making. I implore you
11 guys, the Rent Guidelines Board to consider the
12 voices of the Bronx resident.

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
13 your testimony. Thank you.

14

MS. VILLATORO: Like myself who
15 are facing the third effort effects and
16 unaffordable housing, we need fair reasonable rent
17 guide that considers the real struggles we face
18 daily. Our neighborhoods should not become
19 inaccessible to us due to escalating prices. Please
20 listen to us and act in our best interests. Stand
21 up for the right to afford for affordable housing
22 and to help us preserve the vibrant, diverse
23 community we all call home. Thank you.

24

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25

MS. VILLATORO: Thank you.

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Mr. Tsai.

3

Thank you.

4

MR. TSAI: Good evening. I know we're all tired. I know we're all hungry and we're broke. But I'm really feeling. I'm really feeling the love and the power of everyone here. Even though it's 9:08, we're all still here for each other. And I'm really, really feeling this energy. There's nothing I can say that hasn't already been said and felt this evening. The sham of democracy that we are experiencing right now with an unelected board of members who do not represent tenants in a city where there are more tenants than landlords.

16

There's only two representatives on the board. We are living under a multitude of crises a housing crisis, an inflation crisis. The lies that they keep telling us about the housing is that we're in -- where we have a housing shortage. But the truth is, there are more empty homes than there are homeless people. We could house every single homeless person and more. We could house all the migrants who have been coming to New York City. And in this inflation crisis, we can't afford

25

1

2 groceries. We can't afford to pay for the things
3 that we need and we have to pay for rent increase.
4 But even though during the Covid pandemic,
5 corporations made more money than they ever have,
6 they made the most profits they've ever had in
7 decades. Meanwhile, our wages have staggered.

8 They haven't gone up. The minimum
9 wage has stayed the same, and we are struggling to
10 make ends meet. Landlords get the help and the
11 sympathy. But what do we get when we do something
12 and we get in trouble? We go to jail. But when
13 landlords neglect their buildings, let their
14 tenants die in fires, they collect insurance
15 checks. We cannot have a rent increase. We need a
16 rent rollback. And I want everyone here to imagine
17 the future for ourselves. What if we had control of
18 our housing? What if we had public control of our
19 utilities? Public control of our education of the
20 MTA? Instead of having the courage to tackle these
21 issues head on?

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23 MR. TSAI: Our cowardly
24 politicians are doing nothing except lining up the
25 pockets of their corporate donors and real estate

1

2 friends. We can have housing for everyone tomorrow.
3 We can have everything we need tomorrow, but there
4 is no political will and we need to take power into
5 our own hands to demand what we need to survive.
6 Again, my name is Vince. I'm with the Party for
7 Socialism and Liberation. I'm a tenant in
8 Washington Heights. I'm a proud member of my tenant
9 association. We want a rollback and we demand
10 tenant control of the Rent Guidelines Board and we
11 demand a rent controlled city. Thank you.

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13

We'll next hear from Ray Deets. Thank you.

14

MR. DEETS: Thank you. My name is
15 Ray. I'm a member of the Party for Socialism and
16 Liberation, and I don't want to talk to any
17 landlords or their accomplices today. I want us
18 instead to reflect on the power that we have as
19 tenants. You see all these cops here and out front,
20 you see the metal detectors that we all had to come
21 in through when we walked in. You saw that they
22 were only letting people in two, four, eight at a
23 time. It's because we have power.

24

They took away our signs. They

25

took away our bullhorns. They tried to shut us up.

1

2 And it wasn't like that last year. The fear is
3 growing among the capitalists in this city, among
4 the politicians who are in their pockets. They
5 moved the Manhattan hearing online because they
6 don't want us to show up and shut it down. We know
7 that this unelected board will never represent the
8 needs of the tenants, the needs of us.

9 This board should be run by the
10 tenants and for the tenants. Our apartment
11 buildings should be run by us for us, not some
12 unaccountable slumlord whose only interest is in
13 making as much money as possible. We need a new
14 system where housing is not hoarded for profit, but
15 provided as a human right. We need a rent
16 controlled city with people like us in power
17 because we know how to run things. We know how to
18 fix things. When I say people, you say power
19 people. People.

20 TENANTS: Power.

21 MR. DEETS: When I say we want you
22 say justice. We want.

23 TENANTS: Justice.

24 MR. DEETS: We want.

25 TENANTS: Justice.

1

2

MR. DEETS: Thank you.

3

4

5

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our next three speakers will be Lina Rojas. Stevenson Nurse and Lucille Herrera. Thank you. Lina Rojas. Thank you.

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MS. ROJAS: Hi. Good evening. So I can't help but think that lots of you guys look smug, complacent. You got this look on your face that says, Let them eat cake. You're looking at us like we're unhinged. Like we're doing too much. Like we're being extra. But honestly, I want to ask you, show of hands, how many of you in the last ten years have had to choose between paying rent or feeding your children, let's say the hands? Let's see. It is wild to me that our futures, our families, futures, well-being is being decided by people that have no idea what we live, what it means to make these decisions. That is outrageous. And for what?

21

22

23

24

25

So that my millionaire landlord who owns dozens of buildings in New York City can keep growing her bank account. So that she can keep living in her \$7 million apartment because I've protested right outside her door. So I know. So

1
2 that this same woman who keeps illegally taking
3 apartments off rent stabilization can keep just
4 becoming richer and richer. Is that what this is
5 all for? I don't think so. I ask you to put
6 yourselves in our shoes for every one of us that's
7 here. There is hundreds more that couldn't come
8 because they have to work. Because they have to
9 watch your kids, because it's a long way here from
10 wherever they live. So please put yourselves in our
11 shoes. We are the people that have kept this city
12 running. We were out there working while you were
13 probably hiding at home behind your laptop on Zoom
14 calls.

15 We were the communities that were
16 most affected by Covid. We died in droves. While I
17 bet you not the same for your communities. So
18 please put yourselves in our shoes. Have some
19 empathy. See the humanity in each of us, in our
20 families. Because where are we supposed to go?
21 Thank you. We have communities that are beautiful
22 that are rich. You might think we're poor. Who
23 cares? They don't have a say. They don't donate to
24 me. But we have beautiful lives in our communities.
25 Please put yourselves in our shoes and freeze

1

2 rents.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4

5 MS. ROJAS: Oh, and please don't
6 forget what happened to the last people that said
7 let them eat cake. What happened to them?

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Mr. Nurse.

8

9 MR. NURSE: Good evening. I think
10 they want me to speak when the time comes or. Would
11 you like me to start or.

11

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Please. Please
13 start. Thank you.

13

14 MR. NURSE: Yeah. Good evening.
15 I'm a witness to this madness. Slumlords madness.
16 In the -- in the in the late 60s, 70s I was there
17 present. When landlords was paying dopefiends a
18 nickel bag of heroin to burn the buildings down. I
19 live right there. Bathgate. Monterey. Belmont. Fort
20 Apache. The Bronx is burning. I see it all. I see
21 the slumlords at work. That's why I'm so offended
22 when people decide to call them landlords. They're
23 not. They're criminals.

23

24 They're robber barons. And we got
25 to deal with this. This is the fact we can't allow
this to continue giving people props that don't

1

2 deserve it and. Laughing in our faces. So this is
3 my little profile here. Work for manpower early the
4 70s were built. Fremont Commonwealth Council. I
5 personally built the methadone clinic, the million
6 dollar project here in the Bronx called VIP.
7 Studied as an apprentice carpenter. District
8 Council Local 157.

9 After the buildings was burnt. We
10 as community people here in America, we come back
11 and give back to the community. I came back and
12 rebuilt the South Bronx and other five boroughs.
13 When the slumlords burnt them out? Yes. I worked in
14 some of the most dangerous buildings that you can
15 imagine because. One morning I was on my way to
16 work. Before I got there, we was told one of the
17 buildings fell on our foam killed him the whole
18 entire building, because half of those buildings
19 did not have a structure after the fires. Burned
20 them out. So we're back to the same drawing board.
21 We're the same. Landlords are doing the same thing.
22 They're burning buildings down for a profit.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24 MR. NURSE: My present situation
25 is the building I live in. We have a slumlord who

1

2 refused to do repairs since 2001. Completely
3 refused to do repairs. They gave the apartments as
4 is.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
6 your testimony.

7

MR. NURSE: And they asked people
8 to pay them. If you don't pay the landlord or the
9 super to have your apartment fixed. You never get
10 it fixed. I have numerous amounts of violations.

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12

MR. NURSE: So what I'm trying to
13 convey is that, you know, there's very little
14 respect even from you as I don't know if your
15 landlords. I don't know what you are, who you are,
16 but I'm saying you have very little respect for the
17 people that is suffering and we can't tolerate it.
18 We will march, we will demonstrate. We will go to
19 jail, but we will stop this rent increase. And
20 that's a fact. That's not a promise. Going to tell
21 you like it is. That's it. Thank you. Thank you for
22 your testimony. Thank you. And we're going to make
23 sure we get rid of the other slumlord landlord,
24 which is Mayor Eric Adams, your buddy. He's not our
25 buddy, okay? He's a slumlord, Period. Thank you.

1

2 Have a nice day. And thank you.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4

Sochi Herrera. Thank you. And let me announce our

5

next three speakers. Eddie Salas, Orlando Cato and

6

Linda Peterson. Thank you.

7

MS. SOCHI: Hello, my name is Sochi

8

and I am a DACA recipient, resident and organizer

9

from Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy

10

Coalition. I've lived in New York City for 20 years

11

in many different buildings owned by different

12

landlords. Meyer Kaufman, Morty Asher, Arthur Green

13

and Teddy Kill. Some of these landlords have the

14

honor to be on the list of 100 worst landlords. No

15

matter the amount of rent location, the service

16

these landlords give is lousy. As an organizer, I

17

constantly see tenants having to step in to make

18

their living situation less unpleasant by fixing

19

holes on the walls, fixing ceilings, replacing

20

floors, having to see asthmatic tenants constantly

21

in the hospital due to the condition they live in.

22

As an undocumented DACA young adult with no kids,

23

it's much harder for me to get assistance for

24

housing.

25

Most of us have to work full time,

1

2 have side hustles to save, pay rent and still spend
3 time with their family. This is unacceptable. By
4 raising the rent, we are congratulating the
5 landlords for the shitty job that they do and
6 giving your backs to the communities. Our community
7 is still recovering from the pandemic and is
8 currently going through a recession. Inflation
9 crisis.

10 The housing the housing court is
11 still full of tenants and active eviction with no
12 representation. If NYC can't support the current
13 tenants, how are they going to support the new
14 ones? After this rent increase? NYC won't be able
15 to support these tenants. This seems like an attack
16 on low income folks. We are demanding a rent
17 rollback. We are demanding a rollback. We are
18 asking. I am demanding those shitty landlords do
19 not deserve any more money from us. Those sitting
20 on the panel representing us. You have to speak up.
21 You have to talk for us because this is
22 unacceptable. Thanks.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Mr.
24 Seius.

25 MR. COTTO: Hello, everyone. My

1
2 name is Orlando Cotto. I'm here to testify on cause
3 and effect. You know, if you raise the rents here
4 in the Bronx. I'm a Bronx resident. I live on 161st
5 Street and Third Avenue. And if you raise the rent,
6 what you think is going to happen? Don't you watch
7 TV? Don't you see the crime that's going on here in
8 the Bronx? What you think is going to happen if
9 people don't eat if they're not going to if they
10 can't pay the rent and they can't eat, what you
11 think is going to happen, crime is going to go up.
12 Who's going to suffer? The police department.

13 They're the ones who got to deal
14 with it is going to be shootings. I'm on probation.
15 I can say I'm the only one here that's on
16 probation. And speaking to you guys, I was offered
17 a job at 161 at Neon Works to bridge the gap
18 between equity and poverty. And you guys raised the
19 rent. This is a state program that gave me the
20 chance. They gave me a foot at the table, a chance
21 of bridging the gap between equity and property.
22 But you guys are raising the rent and you're going
23 to knock me back down.

24 Why? The state made the program to
25 help us to lift us up out of poverty. So why are

1

2 you going to take it away from us? It don't make no
3 sense. What am I going to do? I'm on probation. I'm
4 supposed to abide by the law and report to the
5 courts. What am I going to tell them? Crime is
6 gone. What am I to do? What is -- what are the
7 people to do? There's not too many programs for
8 people that are on probation or places of housing
9 that are welcoming us.

10 Don't you watch TV? Don't you see
11 everybody that's committing the crime is a
12 convicted felon. They're on probation. They're
13 going to the programs. They're doing what they got
14 to do. But the rents are going up. What are we to
15 do? You're making it harder. Crime is going to go
16 up. When are you going to recognize it? When it
17 comes to your community.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

19 MR. COTTO: Help us freeze the
20 rents cause and effect. You vote to increase the
21 rents. Crime is going to go up. The only tool we
22 have left is crime.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24 MR. COTTO: And please don't let
25 them use it.

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3

Linda Peterson. Let me announce our next three

4

speakers, if you could please come forward. Destiny

5

Cruz. William Alasara and Stephen Greenwood. Thank

6

you.

7

MS. PETERSON: Okay. Good evening,

8

everyone. Thank you for hearing us. And thank

9

everybody for being here. Tennis United will never

10

be defeated. Tennis United will never be defeated.

11

And that's all we have to stick together. We have

12

to be in this.

13

Okay. So my name is Linda

14

Peterson. I'm with the North Bronx Community Clergy

15

Coalition. I got with stuff. Okay. And the thing --

16

the reason why I'm here is, I'm fighting. You know,

17

I thank God for CASA and I thank God that I'm a

18

part of north West Bronx because that's what got my

19

building together. My building has 110 apartments.

20

And, you know, everybody there, they don't realize

21

that they have rights.

22

So each time I come to these

23

meetings, I let them know I'm not just fighting

24

just for me. I'm fighting for them also. So but I

25

have to fight for my son and my -- and his wife and

1

2 my granddaughters. The rent is so high, thank God.
3 I mean, I don't thank God. I always say the hat, my
4 husband, the elephant, my mommy and the heart. I
5 still love them. They're in glory. I mean, I'm
6 getting widowed. Social Security, just to let y'all
7 know. And I mean, I'm not sharing my business, but
8 I'm getting widowed. Social Security, they move my
9 retirement age up to 67 before I can get mine.

10 So I'm getting that now. That's
11 what I'm living off of. But see, thank God that,
12 you know, I'm but my son and his wife and my
13 grandchildren, they will be, I don't want them to
14 sleeping on the park bench or outside because they
15 can't afford the rent.

16 And I mean, I'm doing the
17 most I can to help them. And -- you know, that's
18 what mothers are supposed to do and grandmothers
19 are supposed to do. So I'm helping them also. But
20 the thing is -- I'm -- we our landlord is David and
21 we with Chestnut Holdings and Chestnut Holdings is
22 it's a piece of --yes. But a lot of tenants don't
23 realize that you have rights. We have rights. You
24 call 311.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

1

2

MS. PETERSON: If something is not

3

done.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

MS. PETERSON: Call 311 and they

6

will help you.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8

MS. PETERSON: But I want y'all to

9

help us. Please bring the rent down because. Thank

10

you. I mean, you know, listen, it's only been so

11

much that I can do for them --

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very

13

much.

14

MS. PETERSON: -- for that.

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16

MS. PETERSON: All right. And

17

thank you. And please help us. Please be there for

18

us. Thank you.

19

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20

Destiny Cruise.

21

MS. CRUZ: Hi, my name is Destiny

22

Cruz. She, her pronouns and I'm an organizer with

23

the New York Working Families Party. At five years

24

old, my family and I lived on a shelter on Foch

25

Street in the South Bronx. For a year we lived with

1

2 the uncertainty of when we'd find a home with my
3 mother's Section eight. We found an apartment on
4 Southern Boulevard and lived there for less than
5 five years. Why? Because the owner of our home sold
6 the property and the buyer wanted the units empty.

7 You see, in the Bronx, if you are
8 a tenant, you are taught to believe that you are
9 disposable and an inconvenience, that a life with
10 dignity is not owed to you. My single mother worked
11 15 hour days in an effort to feed her children,
12 secure us an education, and most importantly, to
13 her, to pay her damn rent. So you tell me. Members
14 of the Rent Guidelines board. Did my mother deserve
15 not to see her children? To not get a full seven
16 hours of sleep. To live with the deep anxiety of
17 not knowing where her next meal was going to come
18 from.

19 This was ten years ago. My mom
20 worked so hard to ensure that my siblings and I had
21 a future and a chance. There are single mothers
22 here today who are facing the same pressures and
23 anxieties that my mother did a decade ago. Your
24 vote will dictate if their children have a future.
25 To Eric Adams and his Rent Guidelines Board vote

1

2 not to increase our rent. Our people will not
3 survive if you do.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
5 William Alasara. Sorry.

6

MS. HERNANDEZ: Good evening. My
7 name is Judith Ann Hernandez and I am a Bronx
8 Working Families chapter member.

9

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Sorry, I don't
10 believe (inaudible).

11

MS. HERNANDEZ: I'm speaking on
12 behalf of William Alasara.

13

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay.

14

MS. HERNANDEZ: Thank you. I came
15 here from work to testify of how the proposed rent
16 increase will further impact not only the
17 livelihoods of those facing further economic
18 strife, but will also prove to be detrimental to an
19 individual's mental health. The relationship
20 between poverty, socio economic changes and mental
21 health is not a new phenomenon. Mental health is a
22 public health crisis, and the current homelessness
23 rate in New York City is rising.

24

Research has shown that poverty
25 imposes a psychological burden so great that the

1

2 poor are left with little mental bandwidth with
3 which to perform everyday tasks, consequently
4 leading to severe stressful strain on the
5 individual's mental and emotional health.

6 Furthermore, as someone who works in the health
7 care field and has witnessed how poverty, in
8 addition to deprivation, has affected many patients
9 and individuals lives, there have been several
10 occasions where I have been faced with challenges
11 due to financial hardships, especially after having
12 recovered from long Covid. While the pandemic
13 itself caused families in New York to experience
14 significant level of trauma directly correlated to
15 illness, loss of loved ones, financial distress and
16 housing and food security. As a lifelong resident
17 family in the Bronx have I'm sorry, as a lifelong
18 Bronx resident, families in the Bronx are faced
19 with some of the biggest threats compared to other
20 counties in the state. More than 40% of children in
21 the Bronx are living in poverty, which clearly
22 indicates the impact of the well-being versus those
23 living in affluent areas.

24 In conclusion, although the health
25 impact of poverty, stigma is now emerging as an

1

2 important issue in mental health, we need to
3 understand the highlighted risks and triggers
4 between poverty, social, economic changes and
5 mental health. My message to Mayor Adams and his
6 Rent Guidelines board is to not raise our rents.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8 MS. HERNANDEZ: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: And invite
10 Stephen Greenwood next. Stephen Greenwood. And
11 while we're waiting for the next three speakers
12 will be Karen Baez, Wanda Sweeney and Bruce Hicks.
13 If you could please come down and be prepared to
14 testify. Thank you. Please start.

15 MR. GREENWOOD: Good evening,
16 people on the dais. And good evening to the people
17 in the body over here. Good evening. 21 years ago.
18 21.5 years ago, I was applauded serving this
19 country as the 9/11 first responder. And now I'm
20 being evicted by my landlord on the false
21 properties. My rent is paid up to date, but my
22 lawyer, my landlord, he's a criminal. Jonathan
23 Weiner and David Tannenbaum, they are collecting
24 money they brought to court, said they collected
25 \$5,000 in court on my behalf, which I don't owe any

1

2 money. But they tried to evict me already. Since
3 2017, I've been in and out of court.

4

I'm very, very aware of everybody
5 in court. I see them every day as if they're my
6 neighbors. Now, that's how much I've been in the
7 court. When are you all going to hold these
8 landlords accountable? What penalties do they face
9 when you go there and you're doing the right thing?

10

I want to understand this. Okay. That's just a
11 little testimony. Now, what are we going to get to
12 the negotiation part? You know, we just heard about
13 the debt ceiling. Okay. Congress had to make deals.
14 What deals do y'all got on the table for us?

15

Y'all talking about making whether
16 the rent going to go up and down? What else is on
17 the table? How about them going to jail? How about
18 them going to jail? Y'all worried about the mental
19 history? Y'all making people crazy out here because
20 people got to struggle with their life trying to
21 figure out how to stay alive and keep a roof over
22 their head. Do you know how it feels when you got
23 to wake up and you got to say, how am I going to
24 lose this roof over my head? That's the worst
25 feeling in the world. And I've been dealing with

1

2 this for years. Y'all should be ashamed of
3 yourself. And you know what this isn't a kingdom.
4 All right. This is democracy. They don't need to be
5 appointed. They need to be voted in.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
7 your testimony. Thank you.

8 MR. GREENWOOD: Make them feel
9 voted in.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
11 Karen Baez, thank you.

12 MS. BAEZ: Hello, RGB. My name is
13 Karen. I lived in the Bronx my whole life where I
14 thought collapsing ceilings and bathroom molds were
15 normal. Just an everyday occurrence. Something we
16 all have to deal with. I've watched the rents go up
17 in aggravation because my salary wasn't going up.
18 I've moved twice in the last few years and it's
19 been the same story in the Bronx. No heat -- no
20 heat in the winter in each apartment that I go to
21 and lots of rodent infestations.

22 I became a tenant organizer after
23 that and after I found out that we have rights as
24 tenants and as an organizer, every day I learn a
25 new story. I'm acquainted with the hardships of

1
2 others, and I've become disillusioned every day as
3 I hear the stories of my fellow tenants, as I hear
4 the agencies like HPD Code Enforcement are
5 overburdened. Housing courts are overburdened,
6 housing organizers are overburdened. And we don't
7 have enough people to share that. We have rights
8 and we have to exercise them. This morning, I
9 started my day in housing court advocating for
10 another nonpayment case, a mother that has had to
11 go back to doctor for her dying mother. People here
12 are supporting people back in their home countries
13 and we are all overburdened. I skipped lunch today
14 and this is such an important fight for us and I
15 can't believe we're still here trying to just be
16 housed. Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
18 Wanda Sweeney. Bruce Hicks. Okay. Thank you. And
19 while we're waiting for Mr. Hicks, our next three
20 -- I'm sorry. Let me just announce then, while we
21 have a moment. Daniel Reynolds, Germont Washington
22 and Savannah Miles will be our next three speakers
23 after Mr. Hicks.

24 MR. HICKS: Thank you. I would
25 like to just talk as attendant, as someone who

1

2 lives in a building that's a disabled person. All
3 my life. I used to live in Brooklyn. I was living
4 in a disabled building and it was very great until
5 we were pushed out into the Bronx, into a bad
6 neighborhood. But I've worked for 30 years in
7 health care and I retired and I'm on a fixed come
8 -- income.

9 And now I'm playing my rent is --
10 I spent maybe almost 50% of my rent on my for my
11 rent to live somewhere in a building that is
12 roaches and roaches and elevators that don't work.
13 I'm a person that works, walk with two canes and I
14 use a screw to get around. And when the elevators
15 broken, I have to go over the roof to get in and to
16 go into my building and to my apartment. And it
17 just shouldn't be -- I had to ask the landlord, go
18 to court to get leaks out of my apartment.

19 And it's just not the way we need
20 to live. Someone who's didn't have to pay taxes,
21 which I paid taxes all life. All my life. So please
22 excuse my talking because I had a stroke recently
23 and -- but I just want everybody to know that, you
24 know. To have your rent to keep going up and going
25 up and nothing fixed. And I have such a -- my rent

1

2 is only up to a point where I can only carry you.

3 Thank you.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5 Daniel Reynolds. He left. Okay, Germont Washington.

6 Okay. Savannah, Miles. Okay. So I'm going to read

7 the next five names and if you could please come

8 forward. Emmanuel Martinez. Karina Popovich. Sean

9 Connolly. Virginia Crawford and Muhammad Sayed. You

10 could please come and be prepared to testify. I'd

11 appreciate it. Thank you, Emmanuel. And if we could

12 -- if you could just explain. We're going to be

13 reading number in a row, and if you could please

14 come forward. Thank you. Many thanks, Mr. Martinez.

15 Thank you.

16

MR. MARTINEZ: Good afternoon and

17 thank you. Could we stop the clock? Because I would

18 like to introduce myself before we begin. My name

19 is Emmanuel Martinez. I'm a representative of New

20 York City, New York State Assembly Member Eudokia

21 Tapia's office. I'm here to read a statement that

22 she wanted to provide, so I will begin now. As an

23 Assembly member, Eudokia Tapia from the 86th New

24 York State Assembly District, which represents over

25 135 residents.

1
2 This is a critical point to
3 protect the process of fairness and equality for
4 stable home affordability. Rent stabilized -- rent
5 stabilization must be to protect it. It is what is
6 allowed us to continue to forge better outcomes for
7 families, schools and enrich our diverse community.
8 It is what provides an opportunity to seek better
9 for more affordable homes. It is imperative that we
10 continue to protect the community's best interests
11 first.

12 Based on the reports from an
13 organization called Just Fix It NYC, explains the
14 larger corporation. Landlords evict far more
15 tenants at higher rates compared to small local
16 landlords. This trend of corporatization of New
17 York City's real estate. It is an occurrence that
18 happens. It's not an occurrence that just happened
19 after Covid 19 pandemic. It is an effect that has
20 been brought -- is in effect of buildings that have
21 been bought by corporations for over the past 20
22 years and now we are feeling the effects of it now.

23 Tens of thousands of New Yorkers
24 still struggling to uplift themselves as our city
25 continues to experience the economic downfall of

1
2 inflation. In addition, this report, this report
3 reflects landlords with 1000 or more units
4 possessed the bulk of rent stabilization. We kindly
5 and I'm speaking of the Assembly member, we kindly
6 request that the rents of the one and two year
7 lease remains the same due to the economic climate
8 and scarcity of affordable housing.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10 MR. MARTINEZ: And I want to --
11 and I just want to include since I have one second
12 on the clock, I want to thank every single person
13 here, especially who are advocating, because this
14 is not -- this does not affect just me. This does
15 not just affect the community, but it affects every
16 single person in this room today. And I want to
17 make sure that our RGB is very clear on the
18 decision that they're making. And just ask yourself
19 this one question. And I want to be very clear. Ask
20 yourself if you can go to sleep tonight knowing
21 that the decision that is going to be made is going
22 to affect every single person in the city. Thank
23 you very much.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 Karina Popovich.

1
2 MS. POPVICH: Good evening,
3 everyone. I'm the tenant advocate with Met Council
4 on Housing. I currently live in the Highbridge area
5 of the Bronx and I've been living there for 20
6 years. Based on preliminary vote, my rent would go
7 up for one year of \$50 to 125 and a two year lease,
8 101 to 175. No, it's not right. Over half of rent
9 stabilized tenants pay more than 30% of their
10 income in rent. This leads to nearly a quarter of
11 rent regulated tenants skipping medical care and
12 meals, according to the Community Service Society
13 2022 unheard third survey.

14 The city's housing vacancy survey
15 shows that low cost apartments are disappearing,
16 while more high priced units are being created.
17 Between 2017 and 2021, the city lost 96,000 units,
18 with rents less than 1500. Median rent stabilized
19 household income was 47,000 compared to 60 to
20 62,960 for market rate tenants.

21 Community Service Society data
22 shows that 50% of all tenants, including 17% of low
23 income tenants and 23% with children under the age
24 of 18 have been threatened with eviction in 2022.
25 This was the highest level in the past 11 years.

1
2 Following the end of Covid eviction moratorium,
3 Nonpaying eviction cases rose once 1600. Well, what
4 I'm trying to say is, is that please don't raise
5 the rent because it's expensive. Now I'm having a
6 hard time buying food and I live alone with my dog.
7 And it's disgusting how y'all treating us and
8 throwing us out of our apartments for basically
9 raising the rent too high. So I'm here to represent
10 everyone and to say that we need a rent rollback.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very
12 much.

13 MS. POPVICH: As soon as possible.
14 Now don't forget us because we are the majority of
15 the Bronx and of this city. And this is disgusting.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17 MS. POPVICH: Thank you. Mr.
18 Connolly. Thank you.

19 R. CONNOLLY: Good evening. I'm
20 with that party for socialism and liberation, but
21 I'm also I happen to have worked in a variety of
22 legal services organizations representing tenants
23 who are facing eviction. And I want to talk about a
24 little bit because I hope we can all agree, even
25 the landlord representatives maybe will agree that

1

2 there's an eviction crisis right now in the city.
3 It's been something like \$120,000 eviction cases
4 filed in a year. And those cases represent units.
5 There's families in those units.

6 There's hundreds of thousands of
7 people every year facing eviction. And, you know, I
8 think most people would say that's a problem. I
9 think it's also a problem that, as we've been
10 talking about all night, ask anyone who's worked in
11 this area, the vast majority of these tenants just
12 don't have the money to pay rent. That's why
13 they're being evicted. That's just the reality.

14 So we understand these things are
15 problems. We also understand that as a problem,
16 that we have massive problems with conditions.
17 There's not repairs, there's roaches, mold. And I
18 think a lot of people look to the city government
19 and they say, well, why do we have all these
20 problems? And the only solution that they are
21 responding to us with is they want to increase our
22 rents.

23 It doesn't really make a lot of
24 sense to a lot of people. And I think, you know,
25 landlords like to say, oh, we can't afford to make

1
2 repairs. This is kind of a silly argument. At first
3 off, I think if you want to make that argument, you
4 should open your books to the public. I mean, it
5 should be verified but even if that's true, which I
6 don't think it is, but even if it were true, you're
7 not going to solve that problem by raising rent on
8 tenants. You literally can't afford to pay my rent.
9 You're not going to get the money to make these
10 repairs.

11 So I think in the end, really
12 we're faced with a choice. The current system of
13 housing we have isn't working. This private
14 ownership model. Maybe it works for some of you up
15 there. It doesn't work for most New Yorkers. We
16 need a social solution, a public solution. There's
17 money in this country, a lot of money that the
18 tenants in these apartments aren't the ones with
19 the money. We need to totally change our tax
20 system. We need to be taking the money from the
21 rich people who have this money.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: And thank you
23 for your testimony.

24 MR. CONNOLLY: Using it to build
25 public housing for everyone.

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3

Virginia Crawford. And while Virginia is coming up,

4

let me announce the next five speakers. Paulette

5

New, Madeleine Mendez, Nadia Matsui. Nanya Dubate

6

and Mariatu Diallo, if you could, please be

7

prepared to speak. Thank you.

8

MS. CRAWFORD: Please go ahead.

9

Thank you. My name is Virginia and I am not safe.

10

Many of the people in this room are not safe. I'm a

11

rent stabilized tenant in a building purchased by a

12

large predatory real estate investor. I've had a

13

target on my back for ten years, and I'm on a

14

nationwide tenant blacklist because I have fought

15

in court for my safety and the safety of my

16

neighbors. A few months ago, I mentioned to my

17

landlord's organization name at a Harlem tenant

18

event. A few days later, the super broke into my

19

apartment window from the fire escape with a

20

crowbar and a camera.

21

He spent 25 minutes in my home

22

without explanation. So now I am literally not safe

23

since our building was purchased. Our we've lost 30

24

out of 40 rent stabilized units, Rents were doubled

25

and studio apartments are now renting for \$3,000.

1

2 Several empty apartments are regularly rented out
3 by the landlord on Airbnb. We lived through
4 dangerous, unannounced construction projects and
5 have been exposed to friable asbestos multiple
6 times. Despite the hundreds of violations issues --
7 issued, tenants are still not safe.

8 There is a slow motion bullet
9 being shot through our multifamily properties. The
10 trigger was pulled after the 2008 mortgage crisis
11 and tenants are the victims. The city makes revenue
12 when property values increase, investors leverage
13 the increased value to buy more buildings. Tenants
14 continue to be unsafe. How will this cycle end?
15 Predatory real estate have the guns. Please don't
16 provide them with more bullets. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Is
18 Mohamed Said here. All right. Paulette New.

19 MALE VOICE: Paulette.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21 MS. NEW: Hi, my name is Paulette
22 New. I'm a Council Member and I'm also a tenant
23 leader for over 40 years. And the purpose of me
24 being a tenant leader at the time for 40 years is
25 to work with the landlord. We were very friendly,

1

2 the Tenants Association, along with the landlord.
3 We would get together and discuss what needs to be
4 repaired and they will follow through with it. That
5 time has changed. When I volunteer to be a tenant
6 leader 40 years ago, today is a job, okay? And I
7 don't get paid for it. But I want to say with all
8 this that everybody is talking about repairs and
9 stuff, the landlord getting their money.

10 My building was -- was my landlord
11 received \$7 million to renovate the complex and
12 they brought it down. They were supposed to upgrade
13 it instead of -- instead they downgraded. But I
14 want to say something about the fact that. New York
15 City do not have a cost of living increase. New
16 Jersey do. Today, the CPI inflation is 4.9. Our
17 wages is 4.3, which is not keeping up with
18 inflation.

19 So when you talk about -- when
20 people talk about they don't have it. They don't
21 have it because because the fact is we used to get
22 raises every year. We used to get bonuses every
23 year. We used to get the cost of living every year.
24 Those things don't exist in New York, is exist in
25 New Jersey, but not here in New York. So when

1

2 people say they don't have it, they don't have it.

3

They're not saying it for the sake
4 of just saying it because the money is not there.

5

We don't get annual raises anymore. And not only

6

that, do you guys take -- I want you guys to ask I

7

want to know when y'all make a decision to increase

8

rent. Do you know how many MCIs was granted among

9

the landlords? Do you know how many E.R.A.

10

Applications that the landlord submitted in order

11

to maintain their property?

12

There's so much funding that the
13 landlord gets to maintain their property that they

14

do not have to raise the rent. Not only that, the

15

landlord is always talking about raising the rent.

16

Oh, screw course, 25%. Now it's 50 percent, but

17

they don't want they don't want to show their

18

books. Now, when I used to -- when I first started

19

as a landlord, you're saying, thank you. I got to

20

go. All right. But I'm just --

21

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I'm sorry.

22

Please cut.

23

MS. NEW: No.

24

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25

MS. NEW: But thank you. But what

1

2 I want to say to you guys is that we are not asking
3 for the impossible. We're asking you guys to really
4 think hard about what is going on today. And that
5 is okay. I just do not raise our rent. I'm going to
6 remember you don't raise our rent. Thank you.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Madeline

8

Mendez.

9

MS. MENDEZ: Good evening,

10 tenants. Good evening, citizens. I'm not really
11 addressing this to you guys because you guys
12 represent the landlords. I can easily come here and
13 say all this data, but this data has been spoken by
14 our citizens. So I'm going to give you facts, my
15 facts. I live in a very famous building of 1515
16 Selwyn Avenue that for a very long time they didn't
17 have gas. They didn't have gas for 16 months. Those
18 months were during Covid.

19

So we didn't have heat. We didn't

20

have hot water, but the landlords still wanted

21

rent. Explain that to me. So I'm going to ask you

22

this. Please answer me since you guys believe in

23

and applauding bad service. So the next time when

24

you guys go to dinner, I hope you get a rat on your

25

plate. And please give that waiter a tip because

1

2 you believe in bad service when you get your hair
3 done and they cut off your hair, please give that
4 beautician a tip because you believe in bad
5 service. When you go to an airport and they lose
6 your luggage, please give them more money because
7 you believe in bad service.

8 Explain to me how the hell can you
9 have a landlord that's on the list of New York
10 City's worst landlords? Our landlord was from eight
11 to 6 to 2. Right now, I don't even know what number
12 he is, but we have another one now on the worst
13 landlords list. But I guarantee you, you guys won't
14 put your kids in a school that's run by predators,
15 but you are okay with landlords running predatory
16 actions towards tenants. Explain that to me. Like
17 if I was a child because you guys are despicable.
18 If you believe in these landlords, they have money,
19 they can do whatever they want, but they want to
20 keep their social clubs, they want to keep their
21 golf memberships.

22 So you guys, to me, I'm not
23 addressing you guys because you guys are pitiful.
24 How dare you raise the rent on tenants and do not
25 make an attempt to shush me? I am not done. Don't

1

2 do it because these tenants work hard. I don't care
3 what jobs they have, but they're working hard for
4 their families. But yet all you guys want to do is
5 worry about your little stipend that you're
6 getting. I dare you to come to where I live. 1515
7 Selwyn Avenue.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9

MS. MENDEZ: I'm not done. I will
10 dare you. And you will not last 10 seconds where I
11 last over 40 years.

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13

Nana Matsui. Is Nadia here? Thank you. Let me read
14 three more names if you could be prepared to
15 testify. Victoria Hernandez, Afrend Gonzales and
16 Van Miles. Thank you.

17

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening,
18 everyone. My name is Nana Matsui. I live on Sylvan
19 Avenue. I've been living there for 29 years. I've
20 been living there for that long. But now I'm sick.
21 I'm ill. So I have to pay \$20,000 in back rent. I
22 live with my 19 year old nephew. I live with the 19
23 year old nephew. So I'm looking for someone to help
24 me. I belong to CASA as well. I was given \$500. My
25 sister in law helped me with this \$500.

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So I've been able to make do with that amount. I'm able to pay for food and groceries. So I'd like to congratulate CASA because of everything that it's done since I arrived. But please, if there's anything that you can do to help me. One else to help me. Thank you so very much.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very much. Nana Diallo. Thank you.

MS. DIALLO: Good evening, everyone. I'm here tonight standing because of CASA gave me the comfortable to -- I can't speak my -- speak up my mind. Speak -- let my voice be heard. But if you allow me to speak my broken English. I will. I'm here tonight to testify because of rent increase.

I want the rent to be decreased, but I have a few questions to ask of you guys. How many of you? Have been in court without a legal representative. And facing an eviction and do you have a kid? Who wake up in the morning and ask you, Mom where are we -- we are going to sleep when we be evicted. S o for that reason. I'm sorry for that reason. And -- sorry. For that reason, I'm asking you if you care about your citizens and take a look

1

2 for everyone in all audience here and try to -- oh,
3 my time up. Can I --

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Proceed.

5

MS. DIALLO: Okay. Yeah. If you
6 care about your citizen, the citizen people take
7 care of -- look for these people here, all people
8 here, and they all are seeking. We all are seeking
9 for your help.

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11

MS. DIALLO: Because we cannot do
12 without you guys. And please bring the smile to all
13 of us when you go home by the time you are making
14 decision. And I thank you for all of us.

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Is
16 Victoria Hernandez here? Afrend Gonzalez. Van
17 Miles. And while Van's coming down, let me announce
18 our next set of speakers. Valerie Stephen. Yeah.
19 Announce them all. Okay. Well, it's about this big
20 please go ahead.

21

MR. MILES: Thank you. Hey, Good
22 evening. My name is Van Miles. I have an economics
23 degree, a master's degree, and the vast majority of
24 my career has been getting people to work anywhere
25 from a sanitation worker, a kid who's never had a

1
2 job before, and no resume to now C-suite people.
3 Right. And I think the common denominator amongst
4 all of them is that they really just want to be
5 able to provide for their families. And so, you
6 know, I know a lot of people didn't come here
7 tonight. I know a lot of people probably don't know
8 what's going on right now, but I feel -- you know,
9 privilege to be able to come here and listen to
10 people so that they everyone knows to advocate for
11 themselves.

12 And I know that only 21% of voters
13 voted in the last election. Right. So it doesn't
14 make up the full voice of the city. And I know that
15 you guys aren't necessarily elected, and that's
16 neither here nor there. But I want you guys to know
17 that you have a lot of -- with privilege comes
18 power or power comes privilege, right? So you guys
19 are a really important place to make a true impact
20 across the city. And that it's without saying that
21 if these rent stabilized increases go into effect,
22 it's going to change a lot of people, a lot of
23 lives across the city.

24 And it's probably going to change
25 the fabric of the city because the fabric of the

1

2 city really depends upon the people. It's not the
3 buildings. It's the people that's in those
4 buildings. And not just the Bronx, but all five
5 boroughs. Right. You're going to change the fabric
6 of the communities, the streets and the city as a
7 whole.

8 So I really want this board to
9 take everything that everyone has said into account
10 for those people who are here and likely the people
11 who aren't here. It's probably going to mirror the
12 same thing, right? So when you go home and decide
13 on this, you know, definitely vote no on the
14 increases to make sure that New York City stays.
15 New York City. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. So
17 let me announce the next group. Valerie Steven.
18 Julia Colon. Sylvia Sanchez. Judith Ann Hernandez.
19 Alan Guzman. And Nkosi Abraham. To the last batch.
20 So, Valerie. Thank you.

21 MS. STEVEN: Good evening. Good
22 evening to everyone all of you because God makes us
23 all in his image and we're all the same. The
24 majority of us have felt the effects of inflation.
25 After Covid 19 we've seen ourselves so affected by

1

2 the rent increase and the high unemployment rates
3 that many of us have had to face this cause with
4 lots with lots of despair. indirectly affecting
5 families directly or indirectly. Feeling being the
6 subject of threats and harassment by the city.

7 Lots of anxiety and also fear of
8 eviction. We've had to feel the effects of all of
9 this. Stress for feeling, for losing our resources,
10 our income. The money that we make at the moment is
11 not enough to make ends meet. And having to choose
12 between paying or put a roof over our heads
13 essentials and to buy basic groceries.

14 I myself was the victim of
15 eviction. (inaudible) feeling desperate and not
16 having the resources to be able to do what I had
17 to. Losing the case actually several times and also
18 the eviction notices I received. Even so I was
19 still evicted. My issue goes to money management
20 and no idea how many other tenants find themselves
21 in the same situation that I found myself. To CASA,
22 I was able to seek and find an attorney. As well as
23 other charitable organizations. To get a one shot
24 deal that even though I did have to supply at least
25 a small amount of money. So that I wouldn't be

1

2 evicted.

3

4 It's very difficult to understand
5 these landlords. That have not been jailed
6 throughout the process. Since the earnings. Cannot
7 that they were able to accumulate because of real
8 estate. It's very unlikely that they won't continue
9 to generate income. These Increments or rent
10 increases. Excuse me. That are so exorbitant has to
11 be the biggest one since 2013. These landlords
12 don't listen to us and are not interested in how
13 this could and is currently affecting us thinking
14 only in their well-being.

14

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15

MS. STEVEN: And that this

16

contribute to their earnings.

17

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

18

MS. STEVEN: The City of New York

19

is the most expensive city to pay rent in.

20

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21

MS. STEVEN: You have to make more

22

than \$120,000 a year which is a very huge task for

23

all of us.

24

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25

MS. STEVEN: The majority of us

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2 don't even make half of that.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4

5 MS. STEVEN: There are
6 approximately a million units of rent stabilized in
7 the city.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8

9 MS. STEVEN: Home of more than 2
10 million people that are in fear of being evicted.

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11

12 MS. STEVEN: It is unacceptable.
13 It's so embarrassing. Please put a stop to this.

13

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14

15 MS. STEVEN: This injustice
16 against us --

16

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17

MS. STEVEN: -- has to stop.

18

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
20 your testimony.

20

21 MS. STEVEN: It's a huge burden
22 for all of us.

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23

24 MS. STEVEN: Emotionally, this are
25 causing depression and anxiety we feel completely
overwhelmed. And this uncertainty that we'll be

1

2 facing eventually.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4

5 MS. STEVEN: To those wonderful
6 words I have to say that the RGB administration can
7 (inaudible) with all the operations (inaudible)
8 without having to increase rent to these levels for
9 a year or two. We are going to fight for solutions.
10 We're going to fight for solutions. It's time for
11 (inaudible) It's those that are providing them with
12 (inaudible) we continue to demand to this process
13 in peace and organized making sure we have to go
14 where we have to go.

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16

17 MS. STEVEN: Make sure that rent is
18 accessible in Ciudad and everywhere else. Together
19 we are more. We are more. And we --

20

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21

MS. STEVEN: Thank you.

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23 Julia Cohen. Yeah, we have a number of people left
24 to speak. If I could have a translator, please. And
25 I think it's very important that have to be able to
hear from everyone. And we would appreciate it if
you could please stick to the two-minute deadline.

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MS. COHEN: Don't start the clock yet. I'm giving up my spot to the bishop here, who, for some reason you guys skipped his name and so he can speak.

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7

BISHOP: First and foremost to the board, I'd like to say good evening to the tenants assembled here today. I did have a lot to say. I'm not a bishop, but I am a minister. I belong to the 52nd Precinct Clergy Coalition. I do things in the community. I live on Gun Hill Road, and conditions in my building are very sad, deplorable. For the last 22 months I've had no gas and I have some health issues. I'm losing weight and by not being able to eat properly, the landlord, I'm not on a campaign against landlords or you, the board just do the right thing. We live in beneath our privileges and one of the richest countries in the world. No heat for the whole winter. Coldest days of my life. I've never experienced that before.

22

23

24

25

We've had infestation of rats in the basement. You got to punch the elevator door before you could open it to go out and take the garbage. And I haven't even looked at the rent

1
2 because it's astronomical. My Con Edison bill has
3 skyrocketed. When I called Con Edison, they
4 informed me that they gave a \$2,000 deduction for
5 seniors because I just turned a senior citizen in
6 2020. There's a lot of complications financially
7 right now. You've heard all the testimonies. You've
8 heard the people. I had a lot of things that I want
9 to say. But in light of time, because there's other
10 people. I just implore you, do the right thing if
11 you can.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13 BISHOP: God bless you.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very
15 much. Thank you. Sylvia Sanchez, is Sylvia Sanchez
16 here?

17 MALE VOICE: Valerie got skipped
18 by Sylvia.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Judith Ann
20 Hernandez. Is Judith in here? Helen Guzman. Sorry.
21 Who got skipped?

22 MALE VOICE: Valerie got skipped.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Go back. Okay.

24 MS. GUZMAN: Hello. My name is
25 Helen, and I'm a proud Bronx resident. I grew up in

1
2 the Bronx shelter system. So the housing crisis
3 right now and everything that tenants are saying,
4 everything that I've learned about tenants
5 experiences is literally boils my blood. So I have
6 dedicated my entire career to advocacy work because
7 I know from personal experience what families like
8 mine needed. We needed safe housing vouchers. We
9 needed books, quality schools and healthy food. Now
10 I work at an organization that needs to send
11 temperature sensors to tenants because their
12 landlords do not give them adequate heat in their
13 homes. Why? Because of landlord greed. I live
14 blocks away from Twin Parks, where 17 lives were
15 taken because of a lack of heat.

16 In one year at my job, I've
17 learned how lenient the city is on landlords. Both
18 landlords and the city will let tenants live with
19 rats, leak, mold, lead and no heat and face fines
20 so meaningless they won't bother to collect them. I
21 know this because my nieces and nephews live in one
22 such rent stabilized apartment here in the Bronx.
23 This is an economic and psychological warfare that
24 landlords and the real estate industry has waged on
25 my family, my neighbors. And it will not stand for

1

2 long. There will be a reckoning to landlord greed
3 and Bronx tenants demand a rollback and tenants
4 need justice.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6

Lugosi Ebum.

7

MS. VALARIE: Hello. Good

8 afternoon. Good evening. My name is Valerie. I live
9 at 735 Watson Avenue, and I want you to remember
10 that, right? Because for the simple fact. That last
11 weekend in Iowa, a building collapsed. I want you
12 all to remember that. Then one the other day up in
13 New Haven, Connecticut, another building collapsed.
14 I've been in my apartment for three years. It'll be
15 three years in November. I moved there. There was
16 mold. Led and they found lead, I called 311 they
17 found lead. They covered up the mold with paint.
18 That's all they did. I've recently been
19 experiencing headaches.

20

I have a 42 year old daughter.

21

22 That's right. I was waiting for her sister girl
23 right there to come back out because I want her to
24 sit and listen to me because she been sitting there
25 texting and it's rude. And I watched her the whole
night, the whole evening texting homeboy over

1

2 there. He was sleeping. Didn't I -- mean, the
3 frustration that we're feeling y'all should feel
4 y'all feeling. I'm glad you're feeling it, too.

5 It's not fair the people -- that
6 people should have to live this way. Right? My
7 thing is, I told Lydia Liz. I suggested that we not
8 the whole building. The entire building, not pay
9 the landlord the rent. What are we paying for? I
10 didn't hear y'all coming and talking about raising
11 the rent. I mean, come on, people. The living
12 conditions that I'm living under, I shouldn't be
13 living. I took doctor's notes and gave them to him.
14 I have asthma, emphysema and COPD. They want to
15 come in here and tear out walls this Thursday,
16 which I'm not going to allow them to do again.
17 Because for the simple fact, all I asked for him to
18 do was to move me somewhere else. I don't want that
19 dust flying all over my shit that I purchased.

20 I purchased it during the pandemic
21 when my stove stopped working. I called Connie.
22 They came out and they told me that and I don't
23 smoke either. They told me that had I lit a lighter
24 or turned on a light in my kitchen would have blew
25 the whole goddamn kitchen up.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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MS. VALARIE: I had no, not thank me. I had to purchase my own goddamn stove because he was kept sending refurbished. So right now I'm waiting for a refrigerator that I'm purchasing to come there. And I want to know which one of you up there would allow me to come spend a goddamn weekend with you because I can't even sleep in my apartment.

You sitting there like you're frustrated, like you really don't want to hear what we got to say. And you keep thanking people. I hope that when you roll back these rents seekers like -- and another thing, I paid my rent throughout the pandemic. I didn't skip a rent. I don't --I've been out of my mother's apartment since 1985. I'm 63 years old. I pay my rent every month. My mother told me when I left, she said, make sure you pay the rent. If you got to feel your way around the apartment in the dark. And I. And I live by that. And all I want to do is have adequate, decent housing like you guys do.

I lived in another apartment for 29 years. Right. So when I took the landlord to

1

2 court because he wouldn't fix the leak in the roof,
3 he called me a troublemaker. After I left there I
4 lost my Section 8, lost the apartment, and then I
5 was blacklisted. And how I know that. And like when
6 you leave here, tenants, what I want you to do is
7 go home and look up at your ceilings. You see
8 anything?

9 Bats in dark or dark spots. That's
10 mold. And it kills. You have children in your
11 apartment that might not realize it. They may touch
12 it and put their hands in their mouths or touch
13 their skin. And it's dangerous. So when you
14 consider turning up, I mean, when you consider
15 elevating the rents, I want you to remember that,
16 that you all probably live decent. And none of
17 y'all up there on that goddamn panel would take me
18 home with you. I'm not a thief. I wouldn't -- all I
19 want is a decent place to stay. I told my daughter
20 in case that goddamn building falls, I want her to
21 sue the goddamn landlord, the city and the whole
22 thing. Because it's possible that it can happen.

23 I had cracks in the wall on both
24 ends of my living room not knowing. I thank you
25 because I'm still not finished. I understand y'all

1
2 getting frustrated, but I've been frustrated too,
3 for a long time because it's a damn shame when you
4 sit and you pay your rent and you can't live in an
5 adequate apartment and it's ridiculous. I have
6 grandchildren. One of them is crawling around on
7 the floor and I don't even want his mom to bring
8 him to my house because I don't want him to leave
9 out any of be sick. The asthma that's hanging us.
10 It comes from roach infestations, mice, droppings.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I understand.
12 Thank you.

13 MS. VALARIE: No, you don't. You
14 don't understand. Because you wouldn't live -- you
15 wouldn't live where I live in. You know, and it's
16 really sad. I hope to God that when you make your
17 decision and you take your votes and I mean,
18 consider what people are telling you, this shit is
19 no joke. It's real life. Just say nothing about no
20 damn reality. This is real life.

21 She's sitting over there. She
22 still don't want to be here. You are frustrated
23 with God damn it, so am I. I didn't eat all day.
24 I've been running around. I went home and then I
25 came back. My neighbor, Mr. Hicks, he was on his

1

2 way here, so I was waiting for a cab. So he decided
3 to bring me. This ain't no joke. You sat there and
4 I watched the I'm a very good observer. You sat
5 there and you whispered to him, you homeboy, you
6 sat there and went to sleep. You put on your shades
7 or you put them back on again. You know what I'm
8 saying? Come on, y'all don't want to be here. And
9 neither the hell do we.

10 And if you -- and if allowed I
11 could stand here all goddamn night. Because it's a
12 whole lot, I got to say. It's not fair. It's not
13 fair. It's not fair and it's not right. You
14 consider that. You none of you up there. That and
15 some of you up there grandparents. You wouldn't let
16 your grandchildren come and stay in my apartment
17 with me.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

19 MS. VALARIE: You wouldn't? No,
20 thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: We are
22 (inaudible).

23 MS. VALARIE: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 MS. VALARIE: Thank you. You

1
2 literally telling me to go sit down and be quiet
3 and I'm not going to do it. You've been telling
4 people all night. Thank you. That's what you're
5 really saying? You're telling them to go have a
6 seat and be quiet. But, like, don't nobody shut me
7 up. And right is right and wrong is always going to
8 be wrong. I want you to remember that I'm going to
9 sit down. But you know what? I want you to remember
10 that right is right and wrong is wrong. Every
11 goddamn day. Every day, every day.

12 FEMALE VOICE: How do y'all sleep
13 at night.

14 MS. VALARIE: You got people in
15 here that seniors. Some people couldn't even come
16 down these goddamn stairs. And I watched them. And
17 also and I'm going to say this and I'm going to
18 shut up, but I remember in 1973, when I was 13,
19 when my mom sat on her couch. Right. She sat there
20 every night because she couldn't go to sleep
21 because the landlords in the Bronx were setting
22 fires in the buildings. But guess what they did?
23 They taught their children that have these
24 properties now how to do the same goddamn thing, be
25 neglectful, take the rent and let them live in the

1

2 slums. They burned down the Bronx and came back and
3 rebuilt it up with them houses over there on
4 Charlotte Street. That's some bullshit.

5

Who would want to live over there?

6

I know I wouldn't want to. The young man stood up

7

here and told you all what they did to the Bronx.

8

Y'all know you can Google it. Google 1970s. When

9

the fire -- chief stood there himself and said that

10

the landlords were paying the dope fiends \$10 or

11

whatever to set fires where people lost their lives

12

and hear this shit go again and don't say thank you

13

again. But like I said, 735 Walton Avenue, remember

14

that if that building collapsed, that shit is on

15

y'all.

16

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: That's the

17

translator. We have nine speakers left and the

18

building is going to close in 33 minutes. So I'd be

19

great if we could get through. We really do

20

honestly want to hear everyone really appreciate

21

your cooperation. If we could have a translator for

22

that. Thank you. Thank you. Ingozi Ebernum. Thank

23

you.

24

MS. EBURNEUM: CASA.

25

TENANTS: Power.

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2

MS. EBURNEUM: CASA.

3

TENANTS: Power.

4

MS. DINGWALL: Good evening.

5

MS. EBURNEUM: Good evening. My

6

name is Eustace Dingwall. My mother's name is

7

Ingozi Eburneum and she is a rent stabilized tenant

8

in the Bronx. She lived in her building for 16

9

years. She paid more than 30% of her income and

10

rent. She has five children, and any rent increase

11

is a big burden for me, for her. Her landlord

12

doesn't always make repairs while she continues --

13

while he continues to collect my rent. Any rent

14

increase is too high for me and my family. It means

15

nothing decisions on what bills to pay and

16

potentially losing my home. We need a rent

17

rollback.

18

Rent roll back. Rent roll back.

19

Rent roll back. I tell my son to stay to do this

20

because you don't understand what parents are

21

passing through in the buildings. He said it's

22

supposed to be in bed right now because of school

23

tomorrow, but I want him to stay. So you can feel

24

what other parents are feeling about this lady

25

talking about her apartment. People that have

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2 asthma can live where the roach and mouse is and
3 mold. But we suffering for all this.

4 But we see telling the landlord,
5 fix our apartment, do this, but nobody wants to do
6 it for us. So now if we want to increase the rent
7 every time we increase the rent, when you go buy
8 something today for \$1. Tomorrow, you go back. That
9 thing is \$5. I don't know if everybody experiencing
10 it. Because if you can't like your budget \$5 today
11 for food. But before you go back, the budget is
12 almost \$20. What are you going to do and you want
13 to pay your rent is a problem for all of us.
14 Please, my brothers and sisters there, please try
15 to help us and roll back. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17 MS. EBURNEUM: CASA. CASA.

18 TENANTS: Rent roll back. Rent
19 roll back. Rent roll back.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Cheryl
21 Williams Murray -- is Cheryl Williams Murray here?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, she's
23 coming.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. And then
25 after that, we'll hear from Maricela Granada,

1

2 Victor Alvarez, Beverly Lawrence, Patricia Parker,
3 Christian Curtis. Althea Matthews and Maria Suero.
4 Mr. William Murray.

5 MS. MURRAY: Good evening to
6 everyone. Good evening. I just want to start out by
7 saying that truth is the absolute standard by which
8 reality is based. We're here because of the rent.
9 I've been in my apartment for over 40 years. I'm
10 literally a tenant at this point. I've been in
11 court for 15 years. I'm in court now. My building
12 has put cameras on doors of rent stabilized.
13 Section 8. And people like me, they wrote letters
14 to me about what I was doing outside of my door.
15 They cut my telephone wires.

16 Every time we go to court,
17 whatever legal fees were added on to my rent. I was
18 at a meeting when Honorable Sotomayor, whenever
19 she's a keynote speaker, she walks around. And she
20 said, if you ever have problems, go to your elected
21 officials. That's what they're there for. But when
22 you go there, they say, oh, you're not in our
23 district, but we elected you anyway.

24 I don't know how many people on
25 the dais are elected officials, but I do know that

1
2 I have mold. I have open flaws. I have numb fingers
3 for from a window slamming down. My apartment has
4 open walls. They renovated upstairs and downstairs.
5 The former manager is now back. He accused me of
6 breaking the pole. I'm sorry. The hot water pole --
7 pipe in the wall. I'm a super's daughter. I also
8 went back to school and studied plumbing under Mr.
9 Edward Lloyd, who's out of the 39 licensed plumbers
10 in New York. He's number nine. He actually came to
11 my home.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13 MS. MURRAY: This is -- my rent is
14 being raised. I spent all of my income on rent.
15 Thank you. We have to remember Eleanor Bumpers. We
16 have to remember that all of this is about
17 redlining. Gentrification is redlining. We're going
18 back to the same thing.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20 MS. MURRAY: I used to vote at
21 hostels. Now I vote at the court building on 61st
22 Street because of the gentrification and everyone
23 by the Constitution. And there's laws all over the
24 country and in other --

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for

1

2 your testimony.

3

MS. MURRAY: Around the world that
4 you have to look up these laws for discrimination
5 against women, discrimination against older people,
6 discrimination against anything that you have. You
7 have a right to live where you want. And I'm not
8 blaming anybody for anything that happened to me.

9

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10

MS. MURRAY: Because God did it so
11 that I could be stronger because I thought they
12 were going to take my life. And a lot of us in here
13 are afraid to. But I have no fear because I know
14 who my father is.

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16

MS. MURRAY: And I pray for
17 everybody in here. I don't hold any grudges, but we
18 need to know where we are in this reality. This
19 reality is temporary, subject to change at any
20 time.

21

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

22

MS. MURRAY: That's how God made
23 it. From the eternal, invisible world to the
24 physical, temporary subject to change.

25

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

1

2

MS. MURRAY: In Jesus name. Amen.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4

Marcella Granado.

5

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening my

6

name is Maricela. I came to this country 29 years

7

ago. I wanted to become a citizen (inaudible) And

8

the people are going through so much. I just want

9

you to control me stay in this home and I can

10

continue taking care of him in this country. I have

11

a very good evening.

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very

13

much. Thank you. Victor Alvarez. Is Victor here?

14

Beverly Lawrence.

15

MS. LAWRENCE: Good evening. My

16

name is Beverly Lawrence. The only thing I want to

17

talk about and ask you guys is please don't raise

18

the rent. Please give us a rollback. I've been in

19

my apartment. I live in the Bronx. I've been in my

20

apartment for 23 years. I'm 60 years old. I'm on a

21

fixed income. And if you guys do decide to raise

22

the rent, I can guarantee you probably a week after

23

you do that, I will be homeless. So I'm just asking

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that you please don't raise the rent. Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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MS. PARKER: My name is Patricia Parker. I live at 1532 in Townsend. I have had a lot of problems in my apartment. I had -- we have which we still have now as rats in the walls, mice. I have my during a pandemic. I had like in the back of my sink. I have a whole around a pipe and holes in the floor. The problem consisted for so many years. I cannot get it fixed for some reason. I don't know if they know.

They don't know what to do or how to do the problem, but the problem still exists. I wrote a letter to the property manager in 2021. The problem still exists. And I just want to know, if you live in an apartment, would you like to come and stay with me and live in that apartment? Under this conditions. You all need to think about the rent. Roll back really seriously because God is watching all of you.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Christian. Curtis. I'm Parker right here. Althea matthews.

MS. MATHEWS: Good evening, everybody. Good evening, everybody. I was just compelled again because I just signed up late to

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2 speak and everything that has been said, y'all
3 already heard. My problem is this is already set up
4 to increase the rent and I don't really think I
5 believe that y'all take people's testimony
6 seriously when you're going to negotiate. Like the
7 mayor already said, it's going up 7%. When we had
8 the preliminary hearing in Cooper Union last month.

9 So y'all sitting here, just
10 sitting here listening to these starving, I don't
11 know whether y'all have compassion or empathy or
12 really going to negotiate the stories when y'all
13 negotiate to really consider the people who just
14 pour out their personal business to y'all. We have
15 a housing crisis, and y'all know this. We have an
16 issue in housing court. I don't know if I told you
17 your name out there, Matthew. I'm a CASA leader.
18 I'm also an advocate for homeless injustice that's
19 going on, the criminal justice and all so much a
20 lot of injustice that's going on in the city.

21 That if you go and increase this
22 rent, knowing all these problems, you're going to
23 be part of the problem. You're going to be probably
24 have a -- in housing court people already being
25 evicted. We don't have the right to council funding

1

2 to -- so they can be represented correctly. We have
3 to sell them sneakers here. We got people in the
4 shelter that been there for a long time. I just got
5 out the shelter. I've been in there for three
6 years. I'm 65 this year. I'm a senior citizen and
7 there's other people in the system just like me
8 that I don't know. Y'all really need to go and
9 negotiate the right thing.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11 MS. MATHEWS: We need a rent
12 rollback. Thank you. We really need a rent
13 rollback. And I know all of y'all was appointed by
14 the mayor, so it's already set in stone. So I
15 remember like in 2018, I believe we was at Baruch
16 College and one of the panelists that supposed to
17 be listening to the tenants come and pour out their
18 heart why the rent should be a rent freeze.

19 She had the audacity to say, y'all
20 come up here and tell all of these sorry stories.
21 Your story don't have no bearing on my decision. So
22 why are we here If our story do not compel y'all to
23 do the right thing? Why are we here? How dare her
24 to say something like that. So that's the same with
25 y'all, right? Y'all just there sitting there to go

1

2 through the process like it's nothing. I know the
3 two that represent the tennis.

4

I'm not including y'all. But
5 there's no written 'crease. Furthermore, there's no
6 landlord. No landlord coming here to speak on their
7 behalf. Why is that? There's not one landlord came
8 and speak on their behalf. Because they have you.
9 They have you to do what they need to be done. It's
10 already written in stone.

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12

MS. MATHEWS: And that's sad.

13

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14

MS. MATHEWS: That's sad. We
15 don't need no Rent Guidelines Board if you're not
16 going to do the right thing. Thank you. Thank you.
17 Maria.

18

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Sarah. Thank

19

you, Maria.

20

THE INTERPRETER: Good evening.

21

My name is Maria Suero and I'm here to testify not

22

in agreement with the rent increase. I would say

23

that it's alarming. We can't pay this. I retired

24

four years ago. And what I get for my retirement.

25

It's not enough to pay the rent. I'm actually

1

2 working 4.5 hours enabled -- in order to be able to
3 pay the rent and make ends meet. Look at what
4 you're seeing on all levels.

5 People are bringing clothes out of
6 their closets in order to in order to sell them and
7 be able to have enough money to pay for groceries
8 and feed their families. Many people are not
9 eligible for health insurance because of course
10 people think that if you're making between \$13 and
11 \$1600, you're rich. I really hope that you will
12 access Justice. Because again, who will be with the
13 same amount of generosity that you give others. I
14 hope that God will touch your hearts. Thank you so
15 much.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17 TENANTS: Rent roll back.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you all.

19 I want to thank you all for being here. I believe
20 we need a motion. We have a motion to adjourn.

21 Motion to adjourn. Do we have a second?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Sorry. Sorry.

24 You -- what was your name? Okay. Please come.

25 Speak. Please. Come on up. And then we'll adjourn.

1

2 All right. Thank you for waiting. Okay. Thank you.

3

MS. METALIOS: Thank you,

4

everyone. I'm Marina Metalios. I'm a rent

5

stabilized tenant. I live in Stuyvesant Town on

6

East 14th Street. I appreciate the in person. This

7

is the meeting I could make. I have been in my

8

apartment 33 years, so my apartment was never

9

illegally deregulated by former owner Tishman

10

Speyer and then dragged through the mud of market

11

pricing and then reregulated but at a much higher

12

rent than was affordable.

13

Now I have worked all my life. I

14

have no college debt. I had very little grad school

15

debt. I've always had health insurance, no

16

catastrophic medical bills, and I have no kids. So

17

my rent is affordable for me. Being in my apartment

18

for 33 years, you might ask, Why am I here? I'm

19

here because of everyone else. I'm here because of

20

my neighbors.

21

We are all rent stabilized in

22

State Town-peter Cooper because of the Roberts

23

decision. But the rents in my line are thousands of

24

dollars different. And my apartment floor has been

25

very, very vacant. Before the pandemic, it was

1

2 vacant, 40% vacant for years. And I think to
3 myself, how can my landlord let 40% of the units on
4 my floor be vacant either?

5 It's because the rents have always
6 been too high, even the reregulated Roberts rents.
7 Or because the landlord was doing okay. This is
8 where you come in. Because what you decide, along
9 with what Albany allows, makes prices that most New
10 Yorkers can't afford. I am an anomaly, but it
11 shouldn't be my luck that one gets to live
12 affordably in New York City. You've heard what
13 people say. Your projected increases are too high
14 and the landlords don't need them. Even with the
15 paycheck, they're getting 33% on the dollar. They
16 don't need the increases and we don't need the
17 increases. No increases are necessary with the
18 profitability of rent stabilized housing. Thank
19 you.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. So
21 I want to thank you all again for being here.

22 We have a motion to adjourn. Do I
23 have a second?

24 MALE VOICE: Second.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: And we have a

1

2 motion. And a second. We are adjourned. Thank you
3 all very much.

4

5

(Whereupon, the proceedings were
concluded.)

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STATE OF NEW YORK)

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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 211, 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 7th day of August 2023.



MARC RUSSO

Concordance

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