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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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Jamaica Performing Arts Center
153-10 Jamaica Avenue
Auditorium
June 12, 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 Alex Schwartz

6 Doug Apple

7 Christina DeRose

8 Robert Ehrlich

9 Christina Smyth

10 Genesis Aquino

11

12

13 **S T A F F:**

14 Andrew McLaughlin

15 Executive Director

16 Brian Hoberman

17 Co-Research Director

18 Danielle Burger

19 Co-Research Director

20 Charmaine Superville

21 Office Manager

22

23

24

25

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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Okay, fine. If we could actually -- we're going to

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get started. Okay. Hello. All right. Is the mic --

5

can you hear -- is the mic live, Brian? Can you

6

hear me? Okay. There we go. Thank you. All right.

7

We're going to get started.

8

Welcome to this public hearing of

9

the New York City Rent Guidelines Board. This is

10

the second of four public hearings to consider

11

comments on proposed rent adjustments for leases

12

for apartments, lofts, hotels and other housing

13

units subject to the Rent Stabilization law of 1969

14

and the Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974.

15

These adjustments will affect leases commencing

16

between October 1st, 2023 and September 30th, 2024.

17

I will now take roll call. Please

18

respond if present.

19

Doug Apple.

20

MR. APPLE: Present.

21

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Genesis

22

Aquino.

23

MS. AQUINO: Present.

24

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Christina

25

DeRose.

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2

MS. DeROSE: Present.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Rob Ehrlich.

4

MR. EHRLICH: Present.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Arpit Gupta.

6

(No response.)

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Alex Schwartz.

8

MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

9

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Christina

10 Smyth.

11

MS. SMYTH: Present.

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Adan Soltren.

13

(No response.)

14

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: And Nestor

15 Davidson. I'm present.

16

Let the record show that we have a

17 quorum. Our next two meetings will be public

18 hearings to comment on the proposed guidelines, as

19 we are hearing tonight. They will be held at the

20 following dates and times.

21

Tomorrow night, June 13th will be

22 a virtual public hearing. And then this Thursday,

23 June 15th, will be at Saint Francis College at 179

24 Livingston Street in Brooklyn. All our public

25 hearings are scheduled from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

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

Pre-registration ends at noon on the business day prior to each hearing. For those who did not pre-register for tonight and for Thursday night's in-person hearings, your registration is also available at the hearings from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. All of our public hearings are live streamed and Spanish interpretation will be provided. Other translation is available upon request.

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

Instructions to submit these

1

2 comments will be available on the board's website
3 at again nyc.gov/rgb or by email at ask@rgb.nyc.gov
4 or again by calling the RGB at (212) 669-7480.

5

6 Before we proceed with this
7 evening's testimony, I'd like to go over our rules
8 and procedures for testifying before the board. If
9 you wish to speak, please confirm your presence
10 with the RGB staff at the registration table
11 located near the entrance of the hall. Speakers
12 will not be called on if they have not checked in
13 at the registration table.

13

14 There are Spanish interpreters
15 here today. When registering to speak, please
16 notify the staff if you would like an interpreter.
17 I will try to call several names in advance in
18 order to let you know that you will soon be called
19 on to speak. I'd really appreciate it if you could
20 come. Thank you. If you could come to the mic when
21 we call you just so that we can keep the evening
22 moving.

22

23 It would really help us hear from
24 everyone. If you have materials to distribute to
25 the board, please give them to the staff sitting at
the sign in table near the entrance. Our tradition

1

2 is to alternate speakers between tenants and
3 owners, and I'll do so as much as we can.

4 In order to accommodate as many
5 speakers as possible. Each speaker will have two
6 minutes to give their testimony with an additional
7 two minutes of speaking time to those speakers
8 utilizing interpretation services. To help speakers
9 keep track of their time, we have a clock which we
10 will start when you begin speaking. The clock will
11 beep once a speaker has 30 seconds left and will
12 continue beeping when the allotted two minutes are
13 completed.

14 If you are still speaking at the
15 end of two minutes, I will ask you to wrap up your
16 testimony so that we again can hear everyone. We
17 expect a number of speakers tonight in the board
18 really wants to hear from as many speakers as
19 possible in the limited time we have.

20 We understand that it can be
21 difficult to say everything you want us to hear in
22 just two minutes, but please understand our
23 responsibility to make sure that everyone who has
24 taken the time to come here will have a fair
25 opportunity to be heard. Really very much

1

2 appreciate your cooperation and the board is
3 looking forward to hearing from you regarding the
4 proposed rent adjustment guidelines. And do we have
5 our first three speakers?

6 Thank you so much. Let me announce
7 our first three speakers and if you could be
8 prepared to come share your testimony with us.
9 We'll hear first from Jacob Schrader, then William
10 Botchway, and then Alex Jacobs. Thank you.

11 Is the mic on? Thank you.

12 MR. SCHRAETER: I'm Jacob
13 Schraeter. I'm a landlord. First thing I'm going to
14 tell you is I have nothing to complain about. I'm
15 doing great. I have a phenomenal cash flow. So
16 instead of talking about me and my troubles, which
17 are none, I'm going to talk about the tenants and
18 the future.

19 First, let's discuss why I'm doing
20 great. Fortunately, my building is in an area where
21 there is a very high turnover and by having a lot
22 of vacancy increases and a great deal of money that
23 I would reinvest into the building.

24 I have a very substantial rent
25 roll. It's about 180,000 a year. What I did do,

1

2 though, is calculate where my rents would be if we
3 were living under the laws of (sic) 2019, 40 years
4 ago. And I went into this business and my rent roll
5 would be under \$75,000. Considering it costs about
6 \$50,000 a year just to run the building on basics,
7 that would leave me with a \$20,000 margin.

8 Extremely dangerous for the building and the
9 tenants. Why? Because when a major capital
10 improvement is necessary, you have to go to a bank
11 to get the money to do it. And no bank would lend
12 me money on my building with a \$20,000 profit
13 margin, which was only \$20,000.

14 If we -- all my tenants are paying rent.
15 Consequently, with the rent increases we are
16 getting now, which we can't subsidize with
17 vacancies. We, all of us with rent stabilized
18 buildings, will be headed for the same picture in
19 30 years, which is the brink of disaster. What does
20 that mean? We'll lose our buildings. And these
21 people will have to be living in a crumbling mess
22 of rats, leaks and basically worn out systems. It's
23 not good for anybody. And many of them will fall
24 into the hands of the same kind of criminal -

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

1

2 MR. SCHRAETER: -- that operated in the South
3 Bronx. And they will come with their cans of
4 gasoline and their matches.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. I really
6 appreciate it. Thank you. William Botchway. Thank
7 you.

8 MR. BOTCHWAY: I'm William Botchway. My family
9 has only ever lived in two places, Ghana and
10 Flushing, Queens. My grandparents came to this
11 country and settled in the neighborhood in 1971
12 where they still lived today. Went off to college,
13 spent five years away from the city. But I found
14 myself right back in Queens, where I belong.
15 Flushing is my home. I cannot imagine living
16 anywhere else. I often tell people that my rent
17 stabilized apartment is the only reason I still
18 live in New York, in my home, in my neighborhood.
19 However, accelerating the rate at which rent
20 increases, threatens to take that reality away from
21 me and million other rent stabilized households
22 throughout the city. That's my personal experience,
23 but allow me to share my professional one as well.
24 I work in Neighborhood Defender
25 Service of Harlem, a public defense office where we

1
2 assist housing and secure New Yorkers daily. For
3 each percentage point that rent goes up. That's
4 another few dozen of my clients and their families
5 who cannot afford it. People are already living on
6 the margins, spending sometimes 70% of their income
7 on their rent. The numbers are not adding up and
8 there's nowhere for these people to go. There are
9 27 apartments listed for under \$1,500 across the
10 entire city, and that number includes unsafe and
11 illegal basement units.

12 And we allow rent stabilized apartments to
13 become unaffordable. Where will the people live?
14 You may want to shrug your shoulders and let that
15 happen. But let me say this. If you're in this room
16 today, chances are you love New York City. You
17 think this place is special? So do I. But those
18 advocating for higher rents clearly disagree with
19 me about what makes this place special. New York is
20 special because of the people and the families who
21 have made it so for centuries. When those people
22 are not able to afford to live here anymore, it
23 will just be a big place with big buildings and a
24 soulless underbelly, a playground for the wealthy,
25 shallow LLCs and their tax shelters. Peter Torres

1
2 New York City is not your playground. There are
3 real people with real communities and real families
4 who are being forced out daily for marginal gains
5 on a balance sheet. How is a reasonable response to
6 the ongoing crisis? The rent -- the largest rent
7 increases in a decade? The board has an obligation
8 to reverse course and provide relief to our
9 neighbors who are struggling. Thank you for your
10 time.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Alex Jacobs. And
12 while we're waiting for Alex, let me announce the
13 next three speakers. Emilia Decaudin, Sebastian
14 Baez and Saleha Sattar. Thank you.

15 MR. JACOBS: Hi, how are you doing? My name is
16 Alex. I'm a tenants rights attorney, but I'm not
17 here speaking as a lawyer. I'm just here speaking
18 as somebody that lives in the city. I think it's
19 important that we define the two different groups
20 that we're talking about today. When we're talking
21 about people who own rent stabilized units, we're
22 talking about people who primarily own units in
23 buildings where there are six or more of these
24 units. Right.

25 We're not talking about people who own 1 or 2

1
2 family homes. And when we're talking about the
3 tenants who live here, we're talking about people
4 who make on average, around 45 to \$50,000 a year,
5 people who will be if they were facing eviction. We
6 should also mention that when we're talking about
7 people who own rent stabilized units, the
8 grievances they have isn't that they don't have a
9 profitable business. It's that it's not as
10 profitable as it used to be ten, 15, 20 years ago
11 when the rent increases were going up and they were
12 at their most profitable.

13 Were the landlords here saying, no, no, we can
14 take a smaller rent increase because our tenants
15 are hurting? No, of course not. The first speaker
16 who said that he lives in an area with high
17 turnover and he was fortunate to own his buildings
18 for 40 or 50 years and make all of the money that
19 he has now to where he can continue to run his
20 profitable business. Was he 20 or 30 years ago
21 saying, hold on one second, we're squeezing my
22 tenants dry? I don't think he said that.
23 I think it's also important to remember that the
24 people who are living in these apartments are
25 people who, without the stability that's afforded

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2 to them, who without the knowledge that they have a
3 safe and clean place to live, who don't have the
4 guarantee otherwise, of knowing that next year,
5 when their leases are coming, that they're entitled
6 to a place to live. If they didn't have this, they
7 wouldn't be there.

8 As the last speaker said, this city is losing
9 its soul. I've only been here about ten years, but
10 I look outside and I can tell you that people are
11 hurting. And if we're looking to raise the rent
12 three, 4 or 5%, it's going to get worse. So I think
13 it's really, really important that we keep in mind
14 that the argument here from the landlords isn't
15 that they're not making money, it's that they're
16 not making enough money. The problem that they have
17 right, isn't that their business is losing money.

18 It's that they want you to
19 subsidize their business in no other industry. Is
20 this allowed to happen. If I had a pizza place that
21 was making 20% income year after year, I don't then
22 go get to go and tell the city that I should be
23 making 25% year after year because I did before.
24 Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Amelia Decaudin.

1

2 Thank you.

3 MS. DECAUDIN: Hello, my name is Emilia Decaudin
4 and I am a rent stabilized tenant in Long Island
5 City, as well as a Democratic district leader
6 representing LIC Sunnyside, Woodside, Maspeth and
7 Ridgewood. My family and my constituents, who also
8 live in rent stabilized housing across this
9 district, are struggling to pay rent in this
10 current climate. I pay over 30% of my income in
11 rent and boy, does it hurt every first of the
12 month. And I have an affordable apartment on top of
13 that with HTC M2 program that I can barely afford.
14 Sunnyside in particular and Ridgewood both have
15 large rent stabilized complexes, for instance,
16 cosmopolitan houses where I also used to live,
17 where families are already being squeezed by MCI
18 increases and the previous rent increases from last
19 year.

20 New York City claims to be a city with open
21 arms, a haven, and a refuge for immigrants, for
22 workers, for queer people. But how can we say that
23 when we're talking about increases of up to 7%,
24 when people can barely afford to stay here, let
25 alone find safe haven here? As a trans woman, this

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2 is especially personal to me when I talk to people
3 in states like Florida and Texas who are facing
4 laws that criminalize their existence. And I want
5 to tell them, move to New York. It's a place that
6 will welcome you. And before I can even get that
7 out of my mouth, they say, Emilia, I know what
8 you're going to say. And no, I can't move to
9 Queens.

10 I can't afford to live there because of the rents.
11 I call on this board not only to consider not
12 implementing these increases of up to 7% on
13 two-year leases, but to consider a rent rollback.
14 The right of New Yorkers and queens and across the
15 city to stay in their homes and to be able to find
16 safe haven here and to find an affordable existence
17 here is more important than the profit margins of
18 people like the friend who just spoke earlier today
19 and other landlords to make just a little bit more
20 money. Please do the right thing. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Sebastian Baez.
22 Thank you.

23 MR. BAEZ: Good afternoon, all. The board is
24 here in Queens today to consider rent adjustments
25 on rent stabilized units in Queens, but also across

1
2 the city. You have a mandate and also a moral
3 obligation to keep that rent stabilized in the rent
4 stabilized laws. And that means for Queens tenants
5 as well as the rest of the city's stabilized
6 tenants. A rent freeze or even better, a rent
7 rollback. A rent reduction. Can we get some support
8 for that? At a time when evictions are sky high. At
9 a time when landlords continue to profit off of
10 their units of not just one building, but multiple
11 buildings where the rent rolls are continually
12 profitable.

13 And we're seeing very, very high rent increases
14 both in the rent stabilized and the non-stabilized
15 market. The non rent regulated market. Now is the
16 time to preserve and rent and stabilize those
17 rents. Okay. Rent stabilized apartments account for
18 almost a million units. That's a huge fraction of
19 the city's population. A rent increase of the
20 proposed amount by the board would be unreasonable
21 for the vast majority of tenants who aren't just
22 barely getting by, but are paying so much of their
23 rent today and will be paying even more of their
24 rent. If not, we'll be moving out of the city
25 tomorrow. So I'm asking the board again on behalf

1

2 of the tenants who make this city great, who'd have
3 a right to live in the city and not be forced out
4 by unreasonable increases, a rent freeze or at or
5 even better, a rent rollback. Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Saleha Sattar.
7 And while we're waiting, I'll announce our next
8 three speakers. Mahmudur Khan, Douglas Ostling and
9 Andrew Sokolof Diaz, please. Thank you.

10 MS. SATTAR: My name is Saleha Sattar. I live in
11 8815 168 Street, Jamaica and 142. My landlord is
12 Zahra Holding Corporation. I live this building
13 since 2017. During COVID 19, I was out of work for
14 three years due to immigration backlog and I have
15 to pay more than 60% of my current income as rent.
16 For this reason, I have to increase the amount of
17 work in this medium. My middle age just for house
18 rent. We came from underdevelopment country, from
19 -- to development country only for peaceful life.

20 But here in our building Just this
21 room is all room is full of rats and cockroaches.
22 So I request to stop continuous harassment of land
23 givers. Tenants, conspiracy in the name of MCI. So
24 I just request to you again this 7% rent increase
25 is too much for us. In this situation, they know --

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2 nobody solve our existing problem now 7% again. So
3 I earnest request to you please solve our -- this
4 problem. Thank you so much.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6

Mahmudur Khan. Thank you.

7

MR. KHAN: Hi. Good afternoon. I am a tenant.

8

I've been living in Queens for the last 15 years.

9

I'm a resident of Elmhurst. And for this year, the

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raise that you guys are proposing, it goes way

11

above for us because we have to look at our

12

expenses. Our incomes don't match the raise in the

13

rent. And another thing is a lot of the buildings

14

that we see around in Queens and in Elmhurst, in

15

Forest Hills, in Jackson Heights, in Astoria, the

16

landlords, they are holding the apartments. They

17

are not letting those apartments go on the market.

18

I don't know the math logic behind it, but there is

19

something going on where the city can step in by

20

simply asking for a list of the apartments that

21

have not been rented out beyond six months.

22

So and then there is two other

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things that's going on at the same time in the

24

city, which is very alarming. Right now the city

25

has the highest number of eviction cases in the

1
2 court. I don't work with the court, but I think
3 there is around 16,000 cases, but I'm not confirmed
4 on the number. But there is about 16,000 eviction
5 cases going on in New York City housing courts that
6 is unprecedented. That has never happened before.
7 So the city needs to step up and see what's going
8 on. Like what is the reason for all those people
9 not being able to pay their rent all of a sudden?
10 People don't necessarily choose to leave their
11 apartment they don't want -- it's not like they
12 want -- they do want to pay their rent and leave
13 and raise their kids in the apartment where they
14 have been living. But something's happening now
15 that where they are not able to cope up with the
16 raise in the rent.

17 And another thing is there is a
18 lot of shell companies, LLCs that are moving in.
19 So when those guys are moving in, they are moving
20 in, they are buying up these apartments, commercial
21 buildings where they are like holding it. They're
22 keeping it for investment purposes or, you know,
23 their whole point is like to raise the rents to
24 jack up the rents. So that justifies their ROI. So
25 the city needs to see what's going on over there.

1

2 Thank you for listening to me.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so much. Thank
4 you. Douglas Ostling. Thank you.

5 MR. OSTLING: Good evening. My name is Douglas
6 Ostling, a retired facilities manager living in his
7 own building in Flushing. This board's proposed 7%
8 increase is unwarranted and excessive, especially
9 on the heels of the hefty hike granted last year.
10 You should demand greater accountability from
11 landlords instead of gifting them an early
12 Christmas every spring at tenant expense. I live on
13 a fixed income. I can't count on political cronies
14 to grant me annual revenue windfalls or avail
15 myself of economies of scale as most landlords can.

16 I don't have access to the financial advantages
17 property owners do, and I can't leverage my buying
18 power to exact kickbacks and concessions from
19 contractors and suppliers. I can't save by pooling
20 personnel between buildings, can't cut operating
21 costs by ignoring repairs and DOB violations and
22 ADA requirements, or pass on the cost of
23 improvements to tenants by way of bloated misses or
24 harass and bleed them with an assortment of illicit
25 charges and fees. Asking people to choose between

1

2 rent and food and medicine is beyond unfair. It's
3 obscene and immoral and driving force in the
4 housing crisis today. I'm being squeezed at the gas
5 pump, at the supermarket and at the pharmacy.

6 And if I get squeezed anymore, I'll be living
7 out of a cardboard box on the street. I urge this
8 board to put a moratorium on rent increases or at
9 bare minimum. Return them to pre-COVID levels in
10 the range of 1 to 2%. Anything more will only
11 reward unscrupulous landlords and poorly run
12 properties and revert and convert them into
13 veritable slot machines. Best regulated not by you
14 but by the State Gaming Commission like other
15 casinos.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17 MR. OSTLING: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. We'll hear from
19 Andrew. Andrew Sokolof Diaz. And then we'll be
20 joined by our public advocate, Jumaane Williams.
21 Andrew Diaz. Is Andrew here? All right. Okay. Well.

22 (No response.)

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: We can make sure to get him.
24 Before we close, let me then introduce our public
25 advocate. We're delighted to be joined by Jumaane

1

2 Williams. Thank.

3 MR. WILLIAMS: Peace and blessings. Love and
4 light, everyone. Thank you, Board for giving me the
5 opportunity. For a decade, the city of New York has
6 been in a perpetual housing crisis, suffering from
7 predatory landlords, skyrocketing rent, and the
8 increase of eviction among particularly communities
9 of more color and communities that are working in
10 middle class. The fact that we don't see the
11 connection between rising rents and homelessness is
12 very strange to me. But the pandemic has had
13 continues to greatly exacerbate our city's
14 homelessness and affordable housing crisis.

15 As you know, the city is now the highest rental
16 market in the nation and some say the entire world.
17 I do know whenever there's issues, I always say
18 that landlords, property owners and utility
19 companies get to go to tenants and customers to
20 help them. I don't know where the tenants and
21 customers go when they need help. Just so we're
22 aware at this time, the over 50% of New Yorkers are
23 currently rent burdened. If New York City rent and
24 wages kept pace with productivity since 1980,
25 minimum wage would be \$61,675 and rents would be

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2 \$1,541 per month. However, the average minimum wage
3 in New York City is \$43,932, which means the
4 average median rent should be \$1,098. The median
5 rent in Manhattan is over 4000. Our city is growing
6 ever more unaffordable and inaccessible to people
7 who call it home. Currently, 2 million New Yorkers
8 live in rent stabilized housing.

9 When we subject these tenants often already on
10 fixed incomes to massive tenant to rent increases,
11 they're not able to get go -- they're not able to
12 go rent on outrageously and affordable apartments.
13 With a vacancy rate under 5% and an average rent
14 through the roof, rent stabilized tenants have
15 nowhere to turn to. We have 92,000 New Yorkers
16 without a home right now.

17 If the board follows through with the proposed
18 increases, they vote to add even more families,
19 children, disabled New Yorkers and lifelong
20 neighbors to that number.

21 And I always want to make sure I'm clear,
22 because I do know that there are property owners
23 who need assistance. Usually we put small home
24 owners, black and brown immigrant homeowners in the
25 front, and they sometimes need assistance, but

1
2 oftentimes they're put in the front to protect very
3 large and corporate owners who are not in the same
4 boat. And I think the small owners should be
5 joining the tenants, saying that they need
6 assistance and trying to get some of assistance
7 from the government because we are in some
8 problems. But rewarding bad actors, rewarding folks
9 in the worst landlord list and trying to get rent
10 from people who simply don't have it only
11 exacerbates our problem.

12 We do know that the state that come back home
13 without any resolution to our housing crisis, it
14 seems that everybody is compartmentalizing
15 themselves and pointing fingers and saying that
16 they can't solve the problem. What I do know now is
17 you cannot get more rent from people who simply do
18 not have it. And so we will have to find a way to
19 assist everyone, particularly those who need
20 assistance. But these tenants do as well. And we've
21 seen time and time again that all we do is add to
22 the homelessness and housing crisis.

23 We have to begin to talk about those things, two
24 things together, and I hope the board will consider
25 that and consider that just because you raise rent

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2 on these folks doesn't mean you're helping the
3 owners who need the assistance because they can't
4 get money from people who don't have it. Thank you
5 so much. Appreciate it.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Thank you so
7 much. Let me just ask again, has Andrew Sokolof
8 Diaz joined us? Okay. Our next three speakers will
9 be Jenny Dubnau. Mitchell Sziklay. Excuse me if I
10 mispronounce, Sziklay and Nahida Begum. Thank you.

11 MS. DUBNAU: My name is Jenny Dubnau and I've
12 lived in Jackson Heights for over 20 years. I grew
13 up in Washington Heights, Manhattan, in a rent
14 stabilized apartment. This affordable rent was key
15 to my parents ability to keep our family of five
16 decently housed. Now, decades later, New York City
17 has lost hundreds of thousands of apartments to
18 deregulation. And for literally millions of people,
19 affordable, stabilized rent is the one thing
20 standing between being housed and becoming
21 homeless.

22 The median income of rent stabilized tenants is
23 \$47,000, and the average New York City tenant is
24 severely rent burdened. People struggle to pay
25 their rent and bills for food, medicine and

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2 electricity. Housing is a human right, despite the
3 fact that these are matters of basic survival made
4 far worse by the pandemic. Last year, rent
5 stabilized tenants were hit with the largest rent
6 increases in a decade. As for landlords, despite
7 their tears, they still make a hefty average profit
8 close to 30%. That's insane.

9 On rent stabilized units. Despite the reported
10 8% increase in operating costs and most of the
11 decreases in profit taking actually happened in
12 relatively wealthy areas in Manhattan, where
13 tenants temporarily vacated their apartments during
14 Covid.

15 According to the CSS, landlords income
16 actually grew in every borough except Manhattan,
17 and people are coming back to their apartments. So
18 the tears don't mean much to me. Landlord net
19 operating income has soared by 50% since 1990, even
20 accounting for inflation. And most landlords in New
21 York with rent stabilized units are not mom and pop
22 landlords. More and more are wealthy corporations
23 with large portfolios of buildings. They're doing
24 just fine.

25 So this brings us to the heart of the matter is

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2 the role of the RGB to guarantee landlords
3 continued astronomical rate of return? Why is such
4 a high profit considered normal when one out of
5 every ten New York City public school students is
6 unhoused? Are you the guarantors of landlords high
7 profit or the guardians of tenants? Basic need for
8 a roof over their heads? No landlord is facing the
9 streets or choosing not to buy medicine or food.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11 MS. DUBNAU: They can take a little less profit.
12 And to the landlord friend who just spoke, you
13 could go get a job.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Mitchell Sziklay. Thank you.

15 MR. SZIKLAY: Thank you. Start with a question.
16 How many of you own a home? Raise your hands. How
17 many actual own? How many people own a home here?
18 Okay, but your home values are published on the
19 Internet. Why aren't the values of these buildings
20 published? Their expenses published so everybody
21 can see right up front? Good or bad what's going
22 on? Because under what basis would you raise rents?
23 I don't see the basis. You're entitled to a raise,
24 but only under certain circumstances which can't be
25 surmised because we don't have any of the figures.

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2 They land -- they are with the landlords. So the
3 point being that they should come clean and at
4 least tell us what their income is, what their
5 assets are and what their rents are. And that's not
6 being done.

7 So the reality is, hey, I can come and say, hey,
8 I need 50% and under what basis would you give me
9 50%? Well, I just need it. Well, that's not going
10 to cut it. The other thing is that they have MCI's.
11 They have other published sources of income and
12 none of them can prove the expenses of which
13 they're claiming. So under what basis would you
14 raise rents? And before I leave for this short
15 message, the US government, the state or the city
16 just gave a population that doesn't live here \$4
17 billion where the average individual that's worked
18 hard all his life, he's asked to squeeze for more.
19 Under what basis? Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Nahida Begum.

21 MS. BEGUM: Thank you for the opportunity to
22 speak here. My name is Nahida Begum and I am a
23 resident of one 4060 Beach Avenue, Flushing,
24 Queens. I have been living here since 2000. I am a
25 cancer survivor and a single mother. My only source

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2 of income in my SSI benefit, which is almost
3 nothing for now. I am using almost 80% of my income
4 only for my rent. My landlord is [Indiscernible] on
5 42 billion. This is their family business. They
6 have a lot of money. They can get help from the
7 government. Not only me, every single tenant has
8 DPR and maintenance issue in our apartment or in
9 the building.

10 On top of it, they are changing us various
11 fields. Other plus rent increase and they are
12 harassing us with their ill intention. They can get
13 help anywhere. So if you increase 7% rent and MCI
14 and increase, we cannot afford it. Please don't try
15 to kill me. Be human and work for helpless tenant
16 for not really wealthy landlord. Thank you. And for
17 your good consideration. We can get help. Thank
18 you.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Next, we will
20 hear from New York City Council Member Julie Won.
21 Is the council member here? Okay. Well, the Borough
22 president, then, Donovan Richard, thank you very
23 much.

24 MR. RICHARDS: Thank you and good evening,
25 everyone. And I am here. I'm Queens Borough

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2 President Donovan Richards. And I'm here to say the
3 rent is too damn high in Queens and certainly in
4 New York City, Queens and all. Don't applaud. Let
5 me get through this testimony. Queens and all of
6 New York City are in the throes of a housing crisis
7 unlike any we've experienced before. The number of
8 families in our homeless shelters in the overall
9 cost of living, from food prices to utility bills
10 to transportation costs and beyond, continues to
11 rise rapidly. We must move with the urgency of now
12 to keep families in their homes, keep the cost of
13 living in check, and ensure our communities remain
14 healthy, affordable places to live.

15 However, the proposed rent hikes before the
16 Rent Guidelines Board couldn't be more misguided
17 and dangerous. Such steep increases are nothing
18 more than a slap in the face to hard working New
19 Yorkers who already are struggling to put food on
20 their tables or keep a roof over their heads. A
21 second straight year dramatic rent hikes is not
22 only untenable, but it will drastically displace
23 more residents from neighborhoods like the very one
24 we're in today. And it is further proof that there
25 is no mission more critical at this moment than

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2 rapidly and dramatically growing our affordable
3 housing stock.

4 I am proud to say Queens produced more housing
5 developments than any other place in the city last
6 year, and there's more work that has to be done to
7 once again increase our housing stock. I'm deeply
8 proud of the work our office is doing to bring more
9 affordable housing to communities from Astoria to
10 Arverne, and we will continue to leave no stone
11 unturned in that effort.

12 But we cannot afford to do -- to undo that
13 progress with proposed rent hikes like the ones you
14 proposed. Queens needs the Rent Guidelines Board to
15 be a partner, not an impediment in keeping our
16 borough affordable for all. So I implore the Rent
17 Guidelines Board to reverse course, stand with the
18 hard working renters of queens and keep our borough
19 affordable. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Has. Council
21 Member Won joined us? Thank you. Please. Thank you.
22 Thank you.

23 MS. WON: Good evening, everybody. It's so good to
24 see you. My name is Julie Won. I'm currently the
25 Council Member representing Long Island City,

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2 Woodside, Sunnyside and Astoria. We got Woodside in
3 the house. Woodside, Power, tenant power. It's so
4 good to see you all. Thank you for making the time
5 to be here to listen as a tenant. My district is
6 80% renters. Growing up, my first memories after
7 arriving to the United States was every single
8 month, we would collect quarters and we would count
9 how many quarters we had so that we could do
10 laundry.

11 And if we had enough, we would either do
12 laundry or we had to do laundry in the bathtub with
13 my mom because we had to make sure that we could
14 make rent for you or anybody in this room who may
15 not feel the rent burden like my district, where
16 more than 50% are rent burdened, whether it's 3%,
17 5% or 6% to you, it may not seem like a lot.
18 Whether it's \$75 more a month, \$50 more a month,
19 \$150 more a month or \$200, that can be a whole
20 entire month of groceries for some families.

21 That could be a whole month of other needs like
22 laundry and other needs for the family that is
23 really going to hurt and cost our families. We are
24 here as a district to say no to rent increases. We
25 want a rent freeze even better if we get rent

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2 rollbacks, but we will continue to fight. We are
3 here in solidarity to say no to rent increases.
4 Thank you so much for listening and come on, please
5 have some mercy.

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so much for being
7 here. Thank you. Our next three speakers will be
8 Jonathan Bloom, Moreom Pervan and Maria Segura.
9 Jonathan.

10 TENANTS: Rent roll back. Rent roll back. Rent
11 roll back. Rent roll back.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13 MR. BLOOM: Hello, everyone. My name is
14 Jonathan. I'm here with Woodside on the move
15 representing tenants in Woodside. I am a recent
16 graduate from Parsons. I had Alex Schwartz, who
17 sits on the board teaching me housing policy last
18 semester. And I'm here to really talk to each and
19 every one of you to ask you, implore you to freeze
20 the rent. We -- I want to put some numbers, put
21 some perspective on it. I signed my lease two years
22 ago. If the proposed increases go through, my rent
23 will be up by almost 10% over those two years.

24 I can tell you my income has not increased a
25 penny. If someone, if a rent stabilized tenant

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2 signed a lease in 2012 and they signed two-year
3 leases each year, their rent would be 21% higher.
4 That's before this year's proposed increases over a
5 decade. I'm telling you, nobody has seen their
6 income rise by 21%. We talk about rent burden. We
7 talk about the numbers. Julie just mentioned the
8 rent burden percentage in our district. I am one of
9 those people. I pay over 50% of my income in rent
10 and my will become more rent burdened. If you raise
11 the rent, that means sacrifices in food, health
12 care bills, clothing, essentials.

13 So really, we're here. I just -- we just want
14 to live. We just want to be able to survive and
15 thrive in New York City. The landlord lobby is
16 going to tell you that they need the money. I'm
17 asking you not to believe them. We tenants, they've
18 had the opportunity to raise the rent by over 15,
19 20% over the last decade. We need the relief right
20 now. There's no relief coming from Albany. There's
21 no relief coming from the federal government. We
22 need the Rent Guidelines Board to step in and do
23 the right thing, protect tenants, keep tenants in
24 their homes, freeze the rent. Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Moreom Perven.

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2 TENANTS: Human rights.

3 MS. PERVEN: Thank you.

4 Thank you for the opportunity. I have been a
5 Queens rent stabilized tenant since 2000. The
6 decision this board makes impact millions of New
7 Yorkers, many of whom are struggling to remain in
8 their home. The most urgent problem facing
9 low-income New Yorkers, including the effect of the
10 city's chronic housing crisis. High rent forces
11 tenants to leave NYC because of their housing
12 costs. According to renters, most tenants are rent
13 burdened in the New York City and paying more than
14 30% of their income in rent, according to OTDA, the
15 Emergency Rental Assistance Program, ERAP has paid
16 out 201.75 million to New York City landlords for
17 missed rent. No data were available on the land
18 rent.

19 Landlord Rental Assistance Program, LRAP, The
20 historical amount of the public money paid to
21 landlord to recoup their Covid related rental
22 shortfall through ERAP and the LORA program.
23 Therefore, no need to repay these landlords once
24 again through a rent increase on all rent
25 established tenants. Eight, 7% rent increase could

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2 push many into nonpayment eviction and homelessness
3 situation. The rent guideline cannot -- the Rent
4 Guideline -- sorry.

5 The Rent Guidelines Board should not make rent
6 substandard and pay rent. They cannot afford in
7 order to repay landlord for all losses they have
8 already recovered. I implore the Rent Guidelines
9 Board to reject call for a rent increase of any
10 kind. At the end of the day, landlord have the
11 tremendously valued assets on their hands. Tenants
12 have no such economic advantage. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Maria Segura.

14 MALE VOICE 2: Maria. Maria.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16 THE INTERPRETER: Can you hear me? Hello. Hello.
17 Good afternoon. My name is Maria Segura. I live at
18 4846, 47th Street, Woodside, Queens for 30 years.
19 My landlord is Cosmopolitan Associates. Although
20 I'm a single mother who has had to, you know, chase
21 opportunities to live with for myself and also my
22 two daughters and I work very hard. Like the
23 majority of the people here, my income as a home
24 attendant is extremely limited and it barely allows
25 me to survive with the high cost of living and just

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2 the general family standard of living.

3 So my landlord in the last few years has gotten,
4 has filled us up with MCI's and lots of rent
5 increases. And he's hiding within that loophole of
6 the law that's called MCI, which is responsible not
7 only for the elimination of affordable housing, but
8 as well as having millions of poor families like
9 mine see themselves basically evicted.

10 And so it has been very impossible for many
11 people to bring food to the table and to pay the
12 exaggerated costs of living. Nowadays, the courts
13 are full of filed cases of thousands of tenants
14 that are being evicted due to impossible debts that
15 they have to pay and also, due to the landlord's
16 greediness, they keep counting minutes, minute by
17 minute in order to process evictions and to leave
18 out in the streets people who one day who thought
19 that they were they would stay in those homes until
20 they passed. Thank you. It's very sad and
21 embarrassing to come here every year in front of
22 you guys and beg for something that's our right,
23 which is a standard of living, which is a basic
24 human right.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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2 THE INTERPRETER: So there's no excuse to steal
3 from our hardworking families who, after the
4 pandemic were not able to stand on their own two
5 feet and redo their lives like actually the
6 opposite way. They formed part of the statistics
7 and they became homeless. So, ladies and gentlemen
8 of the board, the actual. What we're saying over
9 here is and we repeat, it is we're done, We're
10 done. It's enough.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12 THE INTERPRETER: So today, you can make a
13 change. You can make history and sleep with a clean
14 conscience. The landlords have exploited us until
15 we're basically empty and we're -- and they're just
16 filling their pockets of continuously of their
17 riches. Living and housing is a human right for
18 everyone, rich and poor. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our next three
20 speakers. Thank you. Our next three speakers. Thank
21 you. Our next three speakers are Pamela Herrera,
22 Basilio Garcia and Guillermo Zapata. Pamela
23 Herrera. Thank you very much. Thank you.

24 MS. HERRERA: Pamela Herrera and I am the policy
25 and advocacy coordinator with Woodside on the move.

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2 I have been organizing buildings since July of 2022
3 and can give you hundreds of scenarios of families,
4 individuals and homeless people. Tenants not only
5 face an annual increase, but they endure a lack of
6 heat, hot water, kitchen appliances, pest
7 infestations, hazardous conditions, break ins and
8 much more. Some tenants get hit with the major
9 capital improvement, along with the annual
10 increase, an increase that benefits the landlord's
11 wealth, not the tenants.

12 With all of the ongoing condition tenants have
13 to put up with due to the negligence of landlords,
14 they have to prioritize paying rent over nutrition,
15 prioritize rent. That's well over 30% of their
16 annual income for a unit that provides minimal
17 security. Several issues come from overburdening
18 tenants. They can become homeless, lose their job
19 and develop mental health issues. Numerous families
20 live paycheck to paycheck and any Department of
21 Housing and Urban Development, Office of Policy
22 Development and Research on Housing and
23 Neighborhoods role in Shaping Children's Future,
24 which I printed out for you if you'd like to take a
25 look.

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2 States that children are vulnerable to
3 influences from their residential surroundings, the
4 quality of the environment in which young people
5 learn and grow has serious implications for their
6 physical health, behavioral and emotional welfare,
7 school achievement and economic opportunity affect
8 affecting them directly and indirectly through its
9 impact on parents and the significant adults in
10 their lives.

11 You can change the course of history on June
12 21st by rolling back the rent. Landlords will
13 continue to profit and the gap will widen. Take a
14 look at the landlord's assets. What rent stabilized
15 tenants have enough equity to own their own home.
16 Some have been occupying their apartment for 20
17 years without owning their unit. They deserve a
18 secure, affordable and habitable home. Thank you
19 for your time and consideration.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Mr. Garcia.
21 Basilio Garcia. Thank you.

22 MR. GARCIA: My name is Basilio Garcia. You can
23 see behind me people that are retired and also
24 people that are low income. How do you expect or
25 how do we expect? And when I say we, I mean you.

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2 How do you expect to raise the rent for people that
3 are paying regulated rent?

4 THE INTERPRETER: I think this is abuse on the
5 part of the landlords and obviously you as well.
6 And I'd like to see where it is that the gunshots
7 will be coming from because this is something that
8 is not sustainable. I believe we have to we have to
9 be create awareness so that we can do the things
10 that we're supposed to do. And we must remember
11 that we are human beings. And please realize that
12 everyone will have their day. And when we meet our
13 maker, we will have to tell our maker what it is
14 that we've done in our lives. You won't have to
15 tell me. You will have to tell him. This is
16 inconceivable and unacceptable. And we will not
17 tolerate it.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

19 THE INTERPRETER: So I ask you again as the RGB
20 to please create awareness. This is a one-way
21 street to eviction. And you tonight can make the
22 right decision and make sure that what needs to be
23 done is done.

24 (Audience participation.)

25 TENANTS: Yeah.

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2 THE INTERPRETER: I'm sure that you all know
3 what it is that you're doing, and your conscience
4 will dictate that.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6 THE INTERPRETER: I bid farewell. God bless you
7 all.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Guillermo Zapata.

9 THE INTERPRETER: Guillermo Zapata.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Is Guillermo here. Guillermo
11 Zapata.

12 THE INTERPRETER: Guillermo Zapata.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: All right. Let me announce
14 our next three speakers. If you could please
15 prepare to come up and join us. Diva Lima Everardo
16 Aguilar and Adolphe Alcindor. Diva Lima.

17 THE INTERPRETER: Diva Lima.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. Everardo Aguilar.
19 Thank you.

20 THE INTERPRETER: Good evening, ladies and
21 gentlemen of the RGB. Again, I see the same faces I
22 saw last year. Again, I know deep down inside I
23 know that you will raise the rent again. I feel as
24 though I'm losing my time by coming here. Because
25 again, you do what you wish. Anyway, we're not

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2 going to pay you one more rent cent. Not because we
3 don't want to, but because we can't. And that's the
4 difference between being able to and wanting to.

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6 You're throwing us out on the street. We
7 actually go without eating so we can pay for our
8 rent. There's no -- this is unconscionable. You
9 have no conscience. You're throwing us out on the
10 street. You're putting us out on the sidewalk.
11 Because it's not 50%. It's 65% of us that live by
12 check to check. Or whatever is left is to pay for
13 utilities, basic utilities. To pay for our electric
14 bills. We need the internet service for our
15 children. And because we all use cell phones, what
16 is left of the 35%? We can't even pay for
17 groceries. So what are we doing here again before
18 you? Even if we cry before you. You will raise our
19 rent.

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21 It is hypocrisy. Say what you will. You will
22 raise it again without even thinking so much as
23 what we will eat. What we will do tomorrow. Rents
24 go up and salaries go down. And we live like
25 sardines. And we pay landlords. We pay their bank
quota. We pay their bank mortgage. We're paying
their mortgage. But they're not aware. We, our

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2 families, our children will die of hunger. Because
3 you throw us out of our homes. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Sorry. We have a
5 question, please. One moment. We have a question.

6 FEMALE VOICE: Yeah, let's try -- let's take two
7 maybe consecutive interpretation, because
8 simultaneous is hard to hear. And I hear two
9 voices. I know.

10 THE INTERPRETER: So with all due respect, the
11 interpreters are here to do simultaneous, to do
12 consecutive, but people are not giving us the
13 chance to do so.

14 FEMALE VOICE: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very much. Thank
16 you. Everardo Aguilar. Well, Aguilar? Is Andrew
17 Sokolof Diaz here? Andrew. Thank you.

18 MR. DIAZ: Good evening. My name is Andrew
19 Sokolof Diaz. Thank you for the opportunity to
20 speak. I'm a Co-founder with the 89th Street
21 Tenants Unidos Association in Jackson Heights,
22 Queens. Last year, we spoke here about what we've
23 endured when over 500 rent stabilized tenants were
24 displaced in the blink of an eye due to an
25 eight-alarm fire. That was in 2021. Our buildings

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2 were unrepaired before this fire. We don't know
3 exactly how that fire really occurred.

4 Way, we're after the city agencies as well who
5 don't do their job, who are maybe underfunded by
6 design. And it's up to you guys. It's up to y'all
7 sitting here tonight to really deliver for working
8 class New Yorkers. Since then, this board,
9 unfortunately, has approved multiple rent hikes,
10 and those votes and margins matter. Every single
11 vote that y'all take matters on this board. These
12 hikes, you know, always fall on the backs of
13 working families who face so many burdens. The
14 inflation, the insane rent prices. It is criminal.
15 It is truly fucking criminal. Mayor Adams wants to
16 also hike our rents on our backs. And it is in your
17 mission and purpose to sit in your chairs tonight
18 to decide on how to keep rent affordable in the
19 city. You know, well, we're in the midst of an
20 affordability crisis, a housing crisis, so many
21 crises, the air is dirty.

22 And a report recently, just to throw in some
23 statistics by the Fund for New York City, found
24 that half of all city households do not make enough
25 to meet the minimum cost of living. We can barely

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2 eat, we can barely get to work, and then we're
3 criminalized to go to work as well. Nearly 80% of
4 New Yorkers are considered housing burdened.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6 MR. DIAZ: I will finish very quickly. If you
7 approve an additional hike, it is going to harm
8 countless New Yorkers whom you and I know,
9 essential workers who took care of us during Covid
10 and who continue to cook and clean our homes and
11 drive us to and from work. Our most vulnerable
12 seniors, people who are disabled, who cannot be
13 here tonight because they can risk getting sick and
14 die, they will be put on the street because of your
15 vote. Do not condemn us. Do not condemn your
16 neighbors to further displacement. We want to go
17 back to our buildings. We have homeless people from
18 who are our tenants who are here tonight to plead
19 with you to vote No.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21 MR. DIAZ: One more sentence; you can deliver
22 for us when Albany, when the spineless City Council
23 leadership doesn't want to approve housing
24 remedies, when the mayor especially doesn't want to
25 vote for a rent rollback, Queens deserves it. New

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2 York City renters deserve it. We need you to
3 listen. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our next speaker
5 will be Adolphe Alcindor. Is Mr. Alcindor here?
6 Adolphe? Excuse me. Adolphe Alcindor. Is Mr.
7 Alcindor here? Thank you. All right. Our next three
8 speakers, thank you are George Ramos, Doris Gomez
9 and Nick Gulotta. Thank you. Good him. Yes, thank
10 you. Mr. Ramos. I think he's prepared to speak.

11 MS. GOMEZ: He's first. Okay.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes. Thank you very much.
13 And then we'll hear from you, Ms. Gomez. Thank you.

14 MR. RAMOS: Thank you, everyone. My name is
15 George Ramos, and I'm here with Woodside on the
16 move. I live at 4141, 51st Street from 58 in
17 Woodside, Queens. Since 1982, our House household
18 situation is I have a disability and I had to
19 retire in 2017. Covid 19 affected us because my
20 wife was only working four days a week. My wife is
21 in a lot of pain and discomfort due to her job and
22 will retire next year. A rent increase will impact
23 our other needs because we will have to cut back on
24 food, medicine and health and we will be able to do
25 less with our income. Why your landlord doesn't

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2 deserve an increase. Currently, the landlord owns
3 seven buildings in the city, which generates him
4 profit. He has issued two MCI's which increased our
5 rent.

6 I suggest that instead of an annual increase,
7 that will drastically reduce my wife and my quality
8 of life. The mayor should continue to provide tax
9 breaks for repairs like those that qualify for an
10 MCI. A lot of tenants are behind in their rent
11 payment because of Covid 19. And I mean, we can all
12 think what we have -- you know, we cannot pay the
13 rent. But --

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15 MR. RAMOS: If we, the owners, we can still say
16 and say, well, I understand them and we should all
17 be, you know, just thank you, good, you know,
18 people with everybody else and knowing if they
19 can't, you know, they can't really afford it, I'm
20 going to help them out. We need it. And we need you
21 to help us. Please.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23 MR. RAMOS: Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Ms. Gomez. Thank
25 you. Please. Thank you.

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2 MS. GOMEZ: Okay. My name is Doris Gomez, and I
3 live in Lefrak City. And right now I'm going
4 through a lot of things with them. They raised the
5 rent too much, and they have a lot of damage in the
6 apartment. I'm very sick. They have a big mold in
7 my bathroom that they never fix anything and the
8 rates go up. Which one of you sleep right in the
9 night time? All of you, right? You have nothing to
10 worry.

11 You have no things in your mind. You can sleep
12 well, right? And then all the rents go. Increase,
13 increase, increase. And this is not fair. I don't
14 think none of you going through all this, right?
15 You sleep very good and very calm in your house.
16 The woman, the man, everything. All of you. Okay.
17 And then we poor people, we have to pay all this
18 rent for what? They don't fix nothing. They had a
19 big rock going to the right in the laundry. This
20 time I was going to do wash, big rat. I let him go
21 and went back upstairs.

22 I let the big roach go first. And a big roach is
23 not the small one. The big ones. Okay. That's what
24 Lefrak have a whole bunch of roach and a whole
25 bunch of rats. And the rents go up, up and nothing

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2 to do. I'm just don't know what to do. And they
3 want to throw me out for the rent going up. That's
4 not fair. Okay. Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Nick Gulotta.
6 Thank you, Nick.

7 MR. GULOTTA: Good evening. My name is Nick
8 Gulotta and I'm a rent stabilized tenant. My family
9 is facing a daunting \$120 monthly increase this
10 year. I also presently serve as the Chief of Staff
11 to council Julie Won, and in our office I speak
12 with seniors every single day who are on a fixed
13 income, whose Social security checks or Section
14 eight vouchers can no longer cover their rent. Each
15 month, they choose between paying for food and
16 paying their rent, and many are just days from
17 being evicted. Their benefits haven't increased,
18 their vouchers haven't increased.

19 But year after year their rent has and they
20 cannot afford another rent increase. This year, my
21 family requested our rent history from DHCR and it
22 was heartbreaking when I looked at it to see a long
23 history of how our state's laws were exploited to
24 inflate our rents, our legal regulated rent up to
25 \$550 each year for a vacancy increase after a

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2 tenant was forced out. Prior to the passage of the
3 2019 rent laws, our landlord raised preferential
4 rent \$250 on the seniors who lived in our home
5 before us. Ms. Tanya Santos and Mr. Ramon Garcia.

6 Each time they renewed their lease, even during
7 the 2015 and 2016 rent freezes under the previous
8 mayor, they had their rent increase because of the
9 previous preferential rent system.

10 Remember \$250 in a single year when there was a
11 citywide rent freeze. That family was forced out of
12 New York City because it became too expensive. That
13 is the reason why New Yorkers are leaving the city.
14 It is fueling gentrification and the housing
15 crisis. Now, the Rent Guidelines Board is proposing
16 rent increases for units where loopholes were
17 unfairly exploited for decades. Remember, you are
18 proposing increases on units where --

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20 MR. GULOTTA: Loopholes were unfairly exploited
21 for decades.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23 MR. GULOTTA: These proposed increases stand on
24 the shoulders of a rigged system where major
25 capital improvements, preferential rents and

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2 vacancy increases led to astronomically inflated
3 rents.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very much.

5 MR. GULOTTA: The rents that we have now, one
6 more sentence.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8 MR. GULOTTA: All 2 million rent stabilized
9 tenants need a rent rollback. Queens needs a rent
10 rollback. And finally, I just want to say -- I was
11 a mayoral appointee in the previous administration.
12 I know that the mayor is reaching out to you,
13 asking you to vote for a rent increase. Please
14 remember that your decisions will lead to people
15 sleeping on the street. You don't need to listen.
16 Vote for a rent rollback now. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

18 TENANTS: Rent roll back. Rent roll back.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next three speakers.
20 Thank you. Our next three speakers will be Saraya
21 Israel, Rosa Estrada. Or is that miss? Okay, good.
22 Thank you. Please. Thank you.

23 MS. ESTRADA: Good afternoon, ladies and
24 gentlemen. My name is Roseanne and we represent
25 tenants from Elmhurst. We do not agree that rent

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2 controlled apartments should be increased because
3 we are retirement and dependent on Social Security
4 as our income. In most cases, that is our only
5 income. Some people live in their apartment for
6 many years and they do not want to move away from
7 their community. This will cause them many
8 problems. We need your help. Please. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Thank you.

10 Anthony Galvin. It's Anthony here?

11 MALE VOICE: Let him know we're here.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. And while you're
13 coming down, please let me just announce our next
14 three speakers. Yvette Ramirez, Yoshi Carrillo,
15 and Leonardo Ruales. Thank you.

16 MALE VOICE: Raise the roof. You're supposed to
17 protect us. Okay, we talk. Nice to you. All y'all
18 do is listen. You go home, you go to your boats,
19 you go to your maids and everything else, and
20 everything's cool. Okay, but what about us? You
21 look down on us. You're up there on the stage.
22 Okay? We're people, okay? We're live. We're real.
23 We have feelings. And guess what? Raising the rent
24 is criminal, especially when you don't have reasons
25 to do it. Okay. All this game that you got going on

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2 with the city, check the check. People becoming
3 homeless. Okay. It's criminal. Okay? And y'all
4 allow it to happen, okay? It can't happen anymore.
5 You can't squeeze money out of a rock. People have
6 to live.

7 People have to be able to afford food. Okay?
8 While people are fighting, trying to survive. Okay.
9 You're looking over them from your rich mansions.
10 Okay. Do you enjoy watching people fight? Okay. For
11 survival? For their children? For their needs?
12 Okay. It's got to stop. And y'all are supposed to
13 protect us. Don't look down on us. We are people.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15 FEMALE VOICE: We voted you in. We voted you in.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yanette Ramirez. Is Ms.
17 Ramirez here? Just -- do you need a hand with the
18 microphone?

19 MS. ISRAEL: Good evening.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Can we get someone, Sorry to
21 help with the microphone just so we can hear you?
22 One second. Thank you. Oh.

23 MS. ISRAEL: No, I'm not.

24 FEMALE VOICE: What's your name, ma'am?

25 MS. ISRAEL: Sarah Israel.

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2 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Oh, yes. I'm sorry we didn't
3 get you before, but thank you. Apologies. Thank
4 you.

5 MS. ISRAEL: Good evening and thank you for
6 having this forum this evening. It's important to
7 hear from all aspects of city life. As a disabled
8 senior person residing in the boroughs, we are
9 further impeded by the proposed increases. Whether
10 we are disabled, elderly can or cannot. Ever leave
11 our home or have a caregiver kind of be present to
12 speak for us in regard to the financial stresses
13 being placed on us for having to choose between
14 food, medicine so that the rent can be paid first.
15 And if we have Section 8, we are being penalized
16 not to be able to have scree or DRIE eligibility.
17 We are ineligible for these benefits, further
18 eating into our benefits. Our benefits tax,
19 whatever they may be.

20 The sources are leaving us in housing for many
21 that do not have handicap accessibility and no
22 place to move to as our incomes do not meet the
23 guidelines of the minimum requirements of the
24 housing connect line, which today is in many cases,
25 six figures. Therefore, many people are locked away

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2 unseen. No one knows that they're there. Loving
3 home care aides carry the needed food. So too many
4 people that no one ever sees increasing us even 2%
5 is a hardship. We realize the cost increases. But
6 the cost for the buildings are there, but the cost
7 to us, the tenants are also there.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9 MS. ISRAEL: The vacancy that they are able to
10 increase by 30% more than covers their costs. The
11 and they yet they say they have empty coffer. I
12 know of friends who are in other boroughs where
13 they are taking in empty apartments. They're
14 garaging apartments and they're taking apartments.
15 They're turning them to Airbnbs by the day, by the
16 weekend, by the week, by the month. And no
17 background checks, no credit checks.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

19 MS. ISRAEL: Nothing.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21 MS. ISRAEL: And therefore, what they are doing
22 is they're putting people at risk, the tenants at
23 risk for all kinds of things. We don't know if
24 they're sex offenders. They're on the sex offender
25 registry, criminal registry, nothing. So when you

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2 go to vote --

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4 MS. ISRAEL: -- Consider the people that you know
5 and the people that are in this room are all at
6 risk.

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8 MS. ISRAEL: So you have to vote no to an
9 increase.10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Very much. Thank
11 you. Yvette Ramirez.12 MS. RAMIREZ: Hi, everyone. My name is Yvette.
13 I'm here today as a tenant whose parents live
14 nearby. Just a 15-minute walk from here. I'm also
15 here today because I work for a nonprofit that has
16 programs for black trans people. My parents are 67
17 years old. They have worked here for the last 22
18 years of their life. I am not at the moment able to
19 help them with the rent, but I do help them when I
20 can with what I can. We're fortunate enough to be
21 able to be healthy enough to work. But can you
22 imagine still working past your retirement age?
23 They plan to keep working for another ten years,
24 they tell me. But the rent alone takes half of
25 their income.

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2 My parents don't have a rent stabilized
3 apartment. However, I am here so the folks who do
4 have aren't pushed back into a worse situation like
5 my parents are. I'm also thinking about how black
6 trans people are already at risk for homelessness,
7 even if they managed to get a rent stabilized
8 apartment. This rent increase puts vulnerable
9 communities at risk for homelessness and poverty.
10 It doesn't make sense to raise the rent when you
11 could be cutting budget from police, the military,
12 other bloated, obscenely offensive departments.
13 This is undemocratic and cruel.

14 I want you to imagine a world where we don't
15 have to worry about putting people out in the
16 streets, but making sure they're housed healthy and
17 able to contribute to their society under a safe
18 roof over their head. Housing should not be for
19 profit. Housing is a human right. You have to vote
20 no on this. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Yoshi Carillo.
22 Thank you.

23 MS. YOSHI: Do it like this. Okay. Hi, my name
24 is Yoshi. Born and raised in Jamaica, Queens, and a
25 member of the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

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2 This does not add up. What doesn't? The fact that
3 we have to ration our stagnant wages with rising
4 inflation to even afford to exist in New York City
5 while greedy corporations, landlords and
6 politicians squeeze the working class dry as they
7 profit off of our struggle, Workers should not have
8 to prioritize whether they buy groceries or their
9 medication. They should not have to prioritize if
10 they pay their bills or their rent.

11 New Yorkers should not be houseless when there
12 are thousands of empty, rent stabilized apartments
13 that are being hoarded by real estate executives
14 and landlords who lobby corrupt politicians like
15 Mayor Eric Adams to raise rents and in this case,
16 up to 7%. It's clear from everybody that has
17 testified in this building right now that this
18 capitalist system does not work. What we need is
19 radical socialist transformation. We're dignified.
20 Housing is a guaranteed human right.

21 MALE VOICE: That's right.

22 MS. YOSHI: Rent stabilization and rent control
23 was fought for and won by movements led by working
24 class people like us. And we will do it again and
25 put an end to landlordism make the exactly. Put an

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2 end to landlordism. Tax Wall Street to make and
3 fund public housing programs and meant the Rent
4 Guidelines Board a democratically elected body by
5 working class tenants. It's criminal that housing a
6 basic human need for survival is treated as a
7 commodity. 7% may seem minimal to y'all, but it's
8 poor and working-class New Yorkers who will have to
9 face that burden when we're already facing
10 inflation and over 30% of our income already goes
11 towards rent, what we demand is a rent.

12 Rolled back, not a rent hike, because no one
13 deserves to go to bed thinking that this may be
14 their last night in their home. No one should go to
15 bed in their car, in the subway, on a concrete
16 sidewalk because they cannot afford their rents.
17 Where are we supposed to go when you price us out?
18 We're here to say that we will not be silenced. We
19 will not be moved. And we will fight back.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Leonardo Ruales.
21 Mr. Ruales, please.

22 THE INTERPRETER: My name is Leonardo and I'm
23 part of the social -- the party of Socialism and
24 Liberation. And I'm a tenant and a teacher. And
25 we're here for two reasons. The first one is

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2 because we are trying to denounce corruption of of
3 this board. And we are residents of Queens and
4 we're not we haven't elected the people that are
5 participating in this vote. Supposedly you
6 represent us, but you always give carte blanche to
7 landlords so that they can keep increasing the
8 rents. And the second reason is to let the tenants
9 know that we have collective power. We can change
10 this system.

11 The system that's not democratic and the system
12 that's always trying to increase the rent. We can
13 actually have this go the opposite way. We have the
14 right to have a dignified housing and also the
15 right to not have to work two jobs, not have to
16 work eight, ten, 12 hours just to make enough money
17 to pay rent, utilities, food and other things.
18 And the reality is that life in New York is every
19 day getting more and more unlivable. Hot with high
20 inflation and regular salaries that just basically
21 have us in poverty.

22 All the while, landlords keep exploiting their
23 tenants and keep filling up their pockets. There's
24 about 70,000 people that are homeless right now in
25 the city, and about 20,000 of them are children.

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2 And that hurts me as a teacher to see that
3 occurring. 60% of homeless people are African
4 American and 30% are Latinos. And honestly, it
5 breaks my heart to think that we could all
6 potentially be homeless. And we all have loved ones
7 that we all know have been removed from their homes
8 unfairly.

9 And it's -- we're done. It's time to say
10 enough. Ladies and gentlemen, here we have to
11 organize. To change this system that keeps
12 affecting us and oppressing us. We don't need rent
13 increases. We need a rent rollback. Because our
14 salaries are not enough and inflation keeps going
15 up, we need to get together and fight. We need to
16 fight for a fair system for us and for our
17 communities.

18 MR. RUALES: So let's keep fighting and
19 organizing for something better for our communities
20 and so we can get rent, rollback and a better
21 system.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our next three
23 speakers will be Sabah Munawar, Alba Inastrilla and
24 Abigail Jimenez. Is Saba here? Thank you.

25 MS. MUNAWAR: Trying to get through.

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2 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Please. Thank you.

3 MS. MUNAWAR: Good evening. My name is Sabah.

4 Munawar and I have rented majority of my adult
5 life. Two years ago. The only reason my husband and
6 I were able to stay in New York was the opportunity
7 to move into a rent stabilized apartment. With two
8 incomes we still struggle, and I know my neighbors
9 struggle even more as inflation rises and incomes
10 do not. Living in a stabilized apartment in New
11 York lets us live in a city we believe in and
12 invest our time in and cherish.

13 It lets us be closer to our parents and help
14 care for them as they age. Queens has always been
15 home. My father moved to Jamaica, Queens in 1974
16 from Pakistan. Queens has always been home for my
17 family and increase will drive New Yorkers to the
18 edge in a city that's already housing burdened. The
19 RGB was created to ensure housing would stay
20 affordable, not protect landlord profits and push
21 residents out. In my stabilized building, there are
22 ghost apartments that are not rented out. Those
23 eight plus apartments are always empty. At least
24 one on each floor. It's time to make sure landlords
25 bring all their apartments to the market and not

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2 hoard them. There needs to be accountability.

3 They keep getting increases, but do not hold up
4 their end of the deal of putting apartments out
5 there and keeping up with repairs. If rents go up
6 in my community in Queens, it will lose its
7 neighbors who have created a community that cares
8 for one another, a community that saw -- that
9 banded together before the pandemic and even more
10 during the pandemic. Many of my neighbors are on
11 fixed incomes and are and deserve to age in
12 dignity. The residents of New York City are
13 committed to its city. It's time for the city to
14 commit to it to them and not landlords.

15 Tenants have always been squeezed left and
16 right. I hope you will choose everyday New Yorkers
17 over profits and choose not to increase rents after
18 a huge raise last year. I hope you will actually
19 roll back the rent. Housing is a human right. Thank
20 you for your time.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Alba Inastrilla.

22 TENANTS: Housing is a human right. Right.
23 Right. Right.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 DAUGHTER TO MS. INASTRILLA: Hi. Good evening.

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2 I'm speaking on behalf of my mother, Alba
3 Inastrilla. My building burned down. 2021. Prior to
4 that. We had a rent increase 2019. The building had
5 over 200 violations after the fire. There should
6 have not been a reason for our rents to have been
7 increased at that point, especially during the
8 pandemic, which they didn't like restabilize. My
9 parents are seniors. We've been here for 40 years.
10 They've worked.

11 They've never asked or I mean, after our fire,
12 after our apartment burned, we didn't even know
13 where to go to like get -- you know, get like money
14 for food. We didn't have any documents left.
15 Everything stayed in the apartment. I was their
16 essential person. My stepfather is a -- he's in a
17 nursing home now, but I was their essential person
18 during that time during the pandemic due to them,
19 not me not wanting them to get sick. So what I'm
20 trying to say is that.

21 Luckily I was there to be that for them. But
22 most senior citizens do not have that luxury right.
23 For someone to help out with groceries. Their rent,
24 literally their Social Security goes towards the
25 rent. So if I wasn't there to pitch in and to buy

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2 the groceries and to move back home with them, I
3 don't know what they would be eating. They would
4 have to be standing on food lines, you know. It's
5 -- yeah. And also, it's like, I mean, why don't the
6 landlords open up their books. Right. Get an audit
7 for all the landlords.

8 Because there should be no reason why the rent
9 is going up and nothing is getting fixed in our
10 buildings. It's cruel and it's absurd and it's
11 absurd that everything goes towards these people
12 that already have money and want to keep the
13 working-class families -

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15 DAUGHTER TO MS. INASTRILLA: -- with a neck
16 with a foot on their neck struggling. Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Abigail Jimenez
18 is next. And let me announce our next three
19 speakers while Abigail Jimenez is joining us,
20 Mahtab Khan, Jessica Cardenas and Bryan Fortino.
21 Please.

22 MS. JIMENEZ: Thank you. Good evening, all. My
23 name is Abigail Jimenez and I'm a housing
24 specialist and community organizer at Woodside on
25 the move. During my time at Woodside on the move, I

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2 have assisted clients who are on a fixed income and
3 struggle to pay for necessities such as food,
4 clothing, utilities and et. cetera. Continued rent
5 increases are not realistic for many who rely on a
6 fixed income or even most of New Yorkers, according
7 to the Coalition for the Homeless, in 2021, 53% of
8 New York City renters are rent burdened, meaning
9 they paid more than 30% of their incomes towards
10 rent. Furthermore, 32% of New York City renters
11 were severely rent burdened, which meant that they
12 were paying more than half of their incomes for
13 rent.

14 It is sad that the proposed increases are due
15 to landlords facing dramatic increases in insurance
16 rates, property taxes and operating costs. However,
17 tenants have been subjected to the same increases,
18 if not more. New York City renters are faced with
19 increased costs on essential items due to
20 inflation, which have left many families
21 struggling. But their wages still haven't
22 increased.

23 Unlike landlords, tenants do not have the
24 luxury of having their incomes increase 3 to 7%
25 every year or two. Landlords have been able to

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2 increase their profits to the as the housing market
3 has been taken over by corporate landlords.

4 Corporate landlords exist to extract the maximum
5 amount of profits while tenants are left
6 overburdened. It is why I'm here to implore you to
7 support a rent rollback. And it's time we
8 prioritize New York City renters and stop rent
9 hikes. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Mr. Mahtab
11 please. Thank you.

12 MR. KHAN: Good evening.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14 MR. KHAN: Good evening. My name is Mahtab Khan.
15 I'm the son of Bangladeshi immigrants. I come from
16 a working-class family and am a tenant from here in
17 Jamaica, Queens. We're all here tonight to come
18 after work or even here, instead of spending time
19 with family and friends. Why? Because we are here
20 to advocate for working class and low-income
21 families all across the New York City. And because
22 the New York City Rent Guidelines Board won't do
23 their job. The Rent Guidelines Board responsibility
24 is to ensure that rent remains affordable, not to
25 protect the landlord's profits by siding with

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2 landlords instead of tenants. You're all failing to
3 do your job in advocating for tenants who rent,
4 especially those struggling to make ends meet.

5 True New Yorkers who lived here for years and
6 are being priced out and not being able to afford
7 to live here. You know, don't worry about how this
8 will hurt landlords because I promise you the
9 landlords will be fine. They won't be broke. They
10 will not become homeless. All right. What you --
11 what and who you should be worried about is the low
12 income and working-class people, maybe even
13 working-class, middle-class families, New Yorkers
14 being displaced. These are folks having to move out
15 of New York City due to it being unaffordable,
16 having to move to another state or even folks being
17 forced out of their homes to live on the streets
18 because of how rent is increasing.

19 The board members here siding with landlords,
20 would be promoting a culture of gentrification,
21 rent skyrocketing and the exploitation of their
22 tenants and allowing the wealthy to get richer.
23 These are tenants who are trying to survive and
24 make ends meet. You're worried about the wrong
25 people. You should be worried about tenants, not

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2 the mayor's donors or real estate developers.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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5 MR. KHAN: You're okay with wealthy folks
6 outside of New York to come here in New York and
7 move here while your own community members from New
8 York are being forced out of their homes? Some
9 folks are even at the brink of being evicted or
10 becoming homeless because of how landlords and how
11 those beholden to them are being able to manipulate
12 the housing market. New York is unaffordable. There
13 aren't any reasonable rent cap laws preventing
14 landlords from exploiting their tenants.

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16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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18 MR. KHAN: Minimum wage has remained stagnant
19 while the cost of living has increased due to
20 inflation and rent skyrocketing as time passes.
21 This has been an issue ongoing even during the
22 pandemic, and I don't know --

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24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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26 MR. KHAN: -- how many of you on the board
27 actually check websites like Zillow and Trulia
28 because of worrying about not being able to afford
29 to live here in New York. But rent has gone up to
30 unreasonable amounts. When you vote on June 21st, I

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2 ask that you stand with tenants and please have a
3 conscience. Have a heart and don't raise our rents.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5 MR. KHAN: We can't afford it. Your actions on
6 the board impact our lives as community members
7 here, and please vote no to a rent increase. Thank
8 you. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Jessica Cardenas,
10 thank you.

11 MS. CARDENAS: Good evening, everyone. My name
12 is Jessica. I was born and raised in Queens, New
13 York, where I continue to reside as a rent
14 stabilized apartment. For 41 years, I've seen the
15 many changes in my neighborhood, including
16 neighbors that were bribed to leave their homes of
17 30 years for \$20,000 by their landlord. The new
18 management in my building also tried to bribe me
19 with shady methods since they took over three years
20 ago and renovated the entire building except my
21 apartment.

22 During the renovations my mother is 74 years old
23 and myself were exposed to many hazardous particles
24 and mold infestation that spread all over the
25 next-door apartment. It took so much insisting to

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2 tell the new owner to seal the entrance door with
3 zip lock bags, install HEPA filters and place us in
4 a hotel or Airbnb. The owner had the nerve to get
5 upset. Why? Oh, that's easy. They tried to get my
6 mother and I frustrated to the point we left the
7 apartment by making it unsafe and inhabitable and
8 having newly renovated building in my neighbors.

9 My new neighbors on the second floor had a huge
10 leak in their bathroom that leaked all over my
11 mother's bed. Since the bathrooms above are located
12 above my mother's room, the cause of the leak was a
13 nail in the pipe that construction workers
14 carelessly installed within a few months of the
15 renovation, creating mold within the walls. They
16 didn't test for the mold since that leak was
17 sitting within the walls for a few months and it
18 was repaired within the next day without
19 ventilating the walls.

20 There are other violations in my apartment that
21 require attention, such as self-closing door. No
22 smoke detectors lead still not handled since March.
23 Meanwhile, I have a two-year-old that visits more
24 than ten hours a week, and after so much insisting
25 the violations are still not handled. I also -- I

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2 was also overcharged for three months because the
3 landlord did not submit a lease within the 30 days.
4 Now it was forced to involve the DHCR HPD because
5 of the lack of responsibility of the landlord and
6 also the fact that they were intentionally
7 misleading about the submitting a lease renewal
8 when they didn't.

9 Witnessing other neighbors' situation has caused
10 mental, emotional and physical stress, leading to
11 many neighbors moving out, leading to rise of
12 homelessness and mental distress because they can't
13 afford the increased rent, food, MTA hiking the
14 fares and utilities. Do you think that's justice?
15 Do you think that's humane to allow these greedy,
16 selfish capitalist owners to get a 7% of rent when
17 they aren't following protocols?

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

19 MS. CARDENAS: Do you think it's humane to work
20 every day, all day, just to make ends meet? I work
21 every day, Monday through Sunday, 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.
22 Do you think I have a life? I have to survive. I
23 just left work to come here to speak up for the
24 people that couldn't come here. Do you think that's
25 fair?

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2 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for your
3 testimony.

4 MS. CARDENAS: No, I'm not finished. Because you
5 the Rent Guidelines Board, which is you started in
6 1960 to help us and hear us from the tenant. And
7 instead, rent has risen. What are you doing to
8 support us? I implore you to not increase the rent
9 and roll the -- roll back the rent.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11 TENANTS: Rent roll back. Rent roll back. Rent
12 roll back.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Let me announce our next
14 three speakers. We're going to be hearing from --
15 thank you. From Bryan Patino. And then from Ergin
16 Sherpa and Sandra Moran And I just want to say that
17 if anybody still would like to speak and hasn't
18 registered, registration will close, its out in the
19 lobby. We'll close at 8 p.m. Thank you. So, Bryan
20 Patino, thank you.

21 MR. FORTINO: Good evening. My name is Brian
22 Fortino and I am --

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I apologize.

24 MR. FORTINO: No worries.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I'm so sorry. If we could

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2 translate my previous announcement, I apologize. So
3 sorry.

4 MR. FORTINO: No worries.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thanks. And if you've
6 preregistered but haven't checked in, please make
7 sure to do so. We want to make sure we hear from
8 you. Many thanks. Thank you. Please go ahead.

9 MALE VOICE 4: Rent roll back.

10 MR. FORTINO: Thank you. Thank you. So my name
11 is Brian Fortino. I am a tenant organizer at
12 Catholic Migration Services and the Right to
13 Counsel Coalition. I am standing here today
14 representing rent stabilized tenants in Queens who
15 cannot afford another unconscionable rent hike. In
16 particular, I wanted to share the story of the
17 tenants I'm organizing at 4746 40th Street, who are
18 facing a proposed MCI increase in addition to the
19 proposed Rent Guidelines Board increases. They're
20 already being evicted.

21 They don't have the necessary repairs and they
22 cannot afford another increase. It might seem like
23 a small amount, but every dollar counts. My tenant,
24 Christine Hasan, said that my parents immigrated to
25 New York City in the 80s and raised me on a

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2 working-class income as an adult. I've seen the
3 cost of living in NYC soar and over 40% of my
4 paycheck goes toward rent. Annual rent increases
5 are making it harder to live in NYC and I'm afraid
6 I'll be priced out of the neighborhood where I grew
7 up and the statistics back this up.

8 According to a Community Service Society survey,
9 23% of rent stabilized tenants skipped meals or
10 went hungry because there wasn't enough money to
11 afford food. Have any of you skipped meals to pay
12 your rent? 28% cut back on buying school supplies
13 or closed because of a lack of money. Have any of
14 you had to cut back on buying school supplies for
15 your children because your rent was too high? And
16 14% reported that their landlord threatened them
17 with eviction, which is up from 6% last year.

18 Are any of you being evicted? And I want to
19 talk to you all directly for a second. To Robert,
20 Alex, Andrew, Nestor, Christina and Doug, because I
21 want to know, how are you able to sleep at night
22 knowing that you are going to be putting people out
23 onto the streets and into the shelter system if you
24 vote for another high rent increase? I don't think
25 that's okay. I think we need to take a stance

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2 against that. And that's why we are here today.

3 Bite, bite, bite. Housing is a human right. Bite,

4 bite, bite. Housing is a human right.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6 TENANTS: Bite, bite, bite. Housing is a human

7 right.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Urgen Sherpa. Thank you.

9 MR. SHERPA: Hi. Good evening.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11 MR. SHERPA: My name is Urgen Sherpa and I'm a
12 rent stabilized tenant for the last 20 plus years
13 at 4070 Hampton Street in Elmhurst. We are at the
14 end of Covid 19 pandemic. However, New Yorkers have
15 not settled yet. The cost of New York is
16 skyrocketing. Unfortunately, our income is not
17 increasing in the same pattern. Tenants are usually
18 responsible for electricity, cooking gas and
19 internet in their apartments, and these prices all
20 went up in the past year. Like electricity costs,
21 for example, rose 12.55% during 2022.

22 And our experienced to rise another 5.7% this
23 year. Gas bill went up 5% and our expected to rise
24 another 4.6% this year. Also, most tenants are rent
25 burdened in New York City, paying more than 30% of

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2 their income in the rent. Your decision to increase
3 7% rent will impact millions of New Yorkers, many
4 of whom are struggling to remain in their homes,
5 especially low-income New Yorkers.

6 Building owners income growing in every
7 borough. When we as tenants are struggling to
8 financially balance our life in my apartment, I
9 need a new window screen at the moment. I haven't
10 changed it for a long time because there is an
11 extra cost. You know that the rent is already too
12 high. If landlords really need financial help.
13 There are various programs available. Landlords
14 just need to open their books.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so much for your
16 testimony.

17 MR. SHERPA: Rent Guidelines Board. Please don't
18 create any burden on tenants and be realistic.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20 MR. SHERPA: A 7% rent increase will be an
21 insane act. It will create a deep mess in the
22 housing sector. RGB, please don't forget housing is
23 a human right.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Sandra Moran.

25 MALE VOICE: Rent roll back.

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2 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Is Emma Cardoza here? Is
3 Emma Cardoza here? There we go. Thank you.

4 MALE VOICE: Come down here.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6 THE INTERPRETER: Good afternoon. My name is Ms.
7 Cardoza, and I live in 28, 1830 8th Avenue. Thank
8 you. And right now, we're having an issue where
9 we're not able to pay the rent. We're not able to
10 pay the rent right now. Because of the pandemic, my
11 family wasn't working. My husband wasn't working.
12 The problem is that we're in the court. Tomorrow,
13 we have court. The people -- hey instead of
14 supporting us, they give support to the owners
15 instead of supporting us. Also, when we were living
16 in during the time of March, we didn't have gas for
17 around eight months.

18 And we had to buy our food outside because we
19 couldn't cook at home. Because it was because of
20 the situation with no gas. So how were we were
21 going to pay the rent that way? We were spending
22 too much money and paying for food. And now we need
23 you guys to help us. And sometimes the owners also
24 have money to make repairs. We have conditions that
25 are not being fixed. How can they demand that we

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2 pay the rent when they don't want to fix the things
3 that are damaged in our apartments? And we have a
4 right, just like they do. We have a right to have a
5 peaceful home. We're also facing a lot of
6 harassment. And they also harass us. They take
7 pictures of us. They do all kinds of things to us.
8 So what are we for them?

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Thank you very
10 much.

11 THE INTERPRETER: Thank you. This is what I want
12 to say.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our next three
14 speakers. Thank you. Our next three speakers are
15 Zoila Muchisos. Amy Collado and John Buric.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Zuweila Musias's. Okay.
17 Amy Collado. Okay. Oh, Amy.

18 MS. COLLADO: So I started writing down something,
19 and as my community started talking some more, I
20 figured, what's the use? I'm not going to hit you
21 guys with a bunch of statistics that you are very
22 well aware of. Because at the end of the day, you
23 guys know. You know more than we do. What's
24 happening on the ground? You see these numbers?
25 It's your profession to do that. We have to do the

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2 investigations on our own. But you guys know. And
3 so I figured I'd use the next minute and 30 seconds
4 to give you some examples of people on the ground.

5

I actually work with those tenants. They've
6 been on rent strikes since 2020. As soon as the
7 rent strike is over, they're already priced out. So
8 they're terrified of this idea of the rents being
9 raised even higher than what they can afford.

10

Recently, I came across this woman, a friend of a
11 friend who at the young age of 44, suffered a
12 stroke. Being a single mom trying to make ends
13 meet, she was in a coma for two months, and when
14 she woke up, she woke up to an eviction case and
15 lots of rental arrears. So she's now 44 and she has
16 disability that is less than \$500 a month and her
17 rent is already \$1800.

18

This is just an example of the things that
19 are happening on the ground that we see every day.
20 Right. We understand, as everybody said here, we
21 know landlords have money Who don't have money is
22 us. We the people, people who struggle all the time
23 to make ends meet, to pay for the trains. Right.
24 The MTA is proposing another increase. Food is
25 expensive. Mcdonald's is even expensive for some

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2 people. Right. So I think what we're really trying
3 to tell you is to see us understand where we're
4 coming from. We are not in the same boat as
5 landlords.

6 They have money that they can spend to do
7 what's right and they don't. And yet we're
8 promising them more. What about everybody else?
9 Where is our increases? Where is our rollbacks for
10 food? For gas? Right. Where is our jobs aren't
11 increasing. We're not getting more money. And so we
12 just want to -- we want you guys to see us and to
13 hear us because fighting at you doesn't work. Being
14 nice doesn't work. So we're honestly at our wits
15 end. And this is my sixth time testifying here. I'm
16 sick of this process.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

18 MS. COLLADO: I'm sick of it because you guys
19 know what it is. You know what we're experiencing.
20 So do the right thing. Stop being in landlord's
21 pockets and stand by the people. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. John Buric. Is
23 John Buric here? Okay, let me announce the next
24 three speakers we have on our list. Antonia
25 Martinez, Rosa Jimenez and William Jourdain.

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2 MR. BURIC: My name is John Buric. I live at 43,
3 28, 47th Street. It's a Bronstein property owned
4 building. Bronstein happens to be one of the
5 landlords that has a very poor reputation. Uh, the
6 buildings are not maintained. We have a rat
7 problem. I have cloth wiring. The building was
8 built, I guess somewhere around 1900. Nothing has
9 been repaired. When I've asked the landlord to do
10 repairs. What I've been told is, we'll do the
11 repair, but we'll charge you an extra \$300 in rent.
12 The upgrade the electricity.

13 If I turn on an air conditioner and I turn on
14 my microwave oven it blows. Why do I have cloth
15 wiring, which is a hazard in the apartment? Now,
16 you heard these people. What's wrong with you? Do
17 you want to have a housing crisis? Do you want to
18 have people homeless? I'm a New York City police
19 officer who's retired and I've got \$4,000 pension.
20 All of you guys get more money than I do, and
21 you're telling -- and I have to get this increase
22 and I'm going to wind up homeless after 25 years of
23 protecting people like you in the street.

24 How many cops, how many families are you going
25 to just throw on the street? You're causing a

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2 housing crisis. Get out of the pockets of the
3 landlords and start doing what you're supposed to
4 do, which is protect tenants. Wake up and screw
5 Eric Adams. I know he appointed you, but that
6 doesn't mean that you work for him. You should be
7 working for us. What the hell is wrong with you?
8 Don't you look in the mirror? Don't you feel sorry
9 for these people? You should be ashamed.

10 If you vote this fricking increase. I'm going
11 to tell you something. You should all hang your
12 heads in shame. And the other thing that I hate
13 about this process. We can't vote you out because
14 you were appointed. All of you were appointed. And
15 I guarantee you, every one of you have a bank
16 account over 100 grand. Unfortunately, we don't.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Antonia
18 Martinez. Thank you.

19 THE INTERPRETER: Hello. Good evening. My name is
20 Ms. Martinez.

21 MS. MARTINEZ: Okay. I just want to remind
22 you, very important thing. You guys have a moral
23 responsibility, a very important thing. You I want
24 to remind you guys that you have a very important
25 mission. You have a moral responsibility bigger

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2 than what we have, but we still paying taxes. I
3 think you guys have a salary and that comes also
4 part of it from our taxes, too. So we pay taxes. We
5 work so hard. Why do you think this room is not
6 full? Because there is hard working people working.
7 They cannot leave their jobs. We leave our jobs,
8 but we are representing them. One more thing.

9 It's a shame that New York, the capital of the
10 world, have a lot of homeless people. Why don't you
11 guys study? I mean, you guys have the time. We
12 don't have time because we have to work. Why don't
13 you guys study the system in Finland? They have --
14 they finish the people, the homeless people on the
15 streets, they helping. They have a good system. Why
16 don't we study what they did good. We need stop
17 raising the rents for the people who is working
18 hard, High class, working. Because we have kids. We
19 have other responsibilities. It's not your fault.

20 Maybe you're going to say maybe
21 you will forget all this. What we're saying here
22 right now, and you're going to go home and sleep
23 nicely comfortable on your nice house. But we have
24 leaks. We have mice, rats, roaches. And landlords
25 don't care why we should care to pay them more

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2 money. They tell them. Tell them, push them to open
3 the books. We already finished with one pandemic,
4 the Covid. So now we're facing another pandemic.
5 Please, guys, feel this in your soul. Do this for
6 your -- for our people, our good people. Please
7 have this in your soul.

8 Pray to do the right. Choose the right always.
9 Because at the end of the day, we're not going to
10 take anything with us. In this life is just one
11 life. We're going to go fast and we're not going to
12 take anything, not even a paper, not even nothing.
13 So think about it, please.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15 MS. MARTINEZ: Something remind that you have to
16 do the right thing. Always.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Rosa Jimenez.

18 THE INTERPRETER: Good afternoon. Good evening.
19 My name is Rosa Jiménez. I live 2018 38th Avenue.
20 We've suffered a lot of harassment by the owner and
21 his workers. They have taken pictures of us. They
22 take. They note down what time we leave, what time
23 we come back and what we're going. We also suffered
24 eight months with no gas. The owner doesn't want to
25 fix make repairs and he hasn't wanted to make

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2 repairs.

3 We have a lot of damages in the apartment that
4 he hasn't wanted to repair. He says -- he always
5 says that he's going to make repairs and he's going
6 to inspect all the time, and he never fixes
7 anything. We also ask him to discount the amount of
8 time that we didn't have gas, and he only offers a
9 5%, which is nothing because we spent a lot of
10 money buying food.

11 It's not fair what the landlord is doing to
12 us. We want justice. We deserve something better
13 because we've always paid the rent and he's never
14 done anything for us. We want justice because
15 justice he he wants his payments. We also want to
16 live in a better situation and to receive respect.
17 Please listen to us. And if the owner can hear us,
18 it would be even better. I wish I could say it to
19 his face. Maybe in the future I'll be able to.
20 Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. William
22 Jourdain. And while Mr. Jourdain is coming down,
23 our next three speakers will be Sam Lee, Juliane
24 Williams and Allison Dasher. Thank you.

25 MR. JOURDAIN: Good evening, Board. My name is

1
2 William Jourdain and I am the Executive Director
3 for Woodside on the move. Let me start off by
4 saying, first and foremost, you're not the enemy
5 here, in my opinion, because inherently the problem
6 is you're appointed. You're not elected. And so
7 we're talking about an institutional problem within
8 our system where you're all are up there making
9 decisions that drastically affect people that
10 you're probably disconnected with.

11 But I can't say that for every one of you all
12 because I don't know who you are. But here's the
13 reality. Would sign The Move is one community-based
14 organization in New York City with countless other
15 organizations, including Shi'a, Catholic Migration
16 Services that are all here supporting essentially
17 the same folks who are struggling every single day.
18 Last year alone, this organization would sign a
19 move supported over 2100 clients with two working
20 housing case managers.

21 What we're talking about is an
22 issue where over 80% of those individuals are
23 seniors living in a fixed income. I myself grew up
24 right down the block. When I grew up in this
25 community, I had my uncle around the block. I have

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2 my aunt and another uncle in the same building, my
3 grandmother in the same building. And the reality
4 is, right now, none of us are in that building
5 anymore. The rent has gone drastically high.

6 And at this point, we have to find a better
7 solution because increases are not supporting every
8 one of these individuals that are here right now.

9 And so what is the real solution? We know that
10 tenants cannot afford to pay more than 50% of their
11 income on rent. We know, historically speaking,
12 tenants have always paid only about a third of
13 their income on rent. Let's get back to real
14 solutions. Let's not increase the rent. The
15 proposal is astronomical and we have to do better.
16 And I think you all know and understand this.
17 Please do the right thing.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Sam Le. Is Sam
19 Lee here? Sam, please you're next on our queue.
20 Thank you. Okay. And just a reminder and let's get
21 translation on this. Just a reminder that the
22 registration will be closing at 8 p.m. so in about
23 15 minutes. Thank you.

24 MS. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon,
25 everyone. I will be very brief. My name is Juliane

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2 Williams and I'm a tenant. I applaud all of you
3 tenants who are here this afternoon as I also
4 represent the tenants of Lefrak City. I'm the
5 tenant's association president. I have done my
6 research and there are no words to express tonight
7 how I feel as a tenant myself and the atrocities
8 that the tenants are going through. Because it's a
9 fact. The rent is too high.

10 It's really too high. I also understand that
11 everyone is facing increases, including landlords.
12 But tonight, I'm standing here as a human being.
13 I'm standing here as a child of God. You have a
14 conscience. Please, I'm appealing to you. Help the
15 tenants even for one time in your life. The tenants
16 need a rollback. We don't need an increase. The
17 rent is too damn high. Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. It's really.

19 MR. LE: Hello, my name is Sam. I'm with the
20 party for Socialism and Liberation. I grew up in
21 Queens for 29 years, and the state of the city is
22 in crisis. When I came here, when I came to
23 Woodside, lived in Woodside for college. My first
24 apartment had a hole in a wall that I can see the
25 street. At the time, my landlord solution was to

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2 stuff that wall with blankets and insulation during
3 the winter. Every night after sleep with a jacket
4 on and hope I don't freeze to death. My roommate at
5 the time, Samira, was a single mom who emigrated
6 from Venezuela. He has a son.

7 His name is Isaac. He is he was two years old
8 and his first words were mucho frio. His first
9 words was, I am very cold. This year, the New York
10 City comptroller reported that over 1000 buildings
11 with chronic lack of heat over the last five years,
12 the city has failed to report and enforce action on
13 25% of those buildings Every year rent go up,
14 inflation go up. We have to make decisions on
15 whether we can keep a roof over our head, whether
16 we keep warm, whether we can put food on the table
17 for our children.

18 And then the landlords had the audacity to
19 continue to increase rent and to increase their
20 profits while children. Their first words in this
21 city are mucho frio. They are too cold. They are
22 starving. And we have to end this now. The poor and
23 working class here are paying over 52% of their
24 income to their rent. Every year I see students,
25 business owners, nurses, teachers, friends,

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2 domestic workers, restaurant workers. They're all
3 moving out of the city because they cannot afford
4 to live here. They cannot keep their children warm.

5 They cannot keep their children fed here. And it
6 needs to stop and it needs to be fair and just and
7 it needs to be democratic. It needs to be elected
8 people who make these decisions. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Allison Dasher.
10 Thank you. And while the statue is coming up, our
11 next three speakers are Anna Baker-Heans, Anna
12 Garzaro and Jerry Kann. Thank you.

13 MS. DASHER: Hi. Good evening. I am -- I originally
14 didn't plan to speak. I came out of frustration
15 because I moved back to New York City from Maryland
16 and because I just didn't feel like dealing with
17 vermin. I moved into this apartment across here,
18 considered a luxury apartment 15211 89th Avenue,
19 promises of a pool and roof deck and just a lot of
20 promises that have not been kept. Nonetheless, I'm
21 paying \$2700 a month. My income puts me, I guess,
22 in an upper bracket.

23 Nonetheless. By the time I finish buying food,
24 paying taxes, paying \$333 to park, because I don't
25 feel like moving the car from one side of the

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2 street to the other every day on 89th Avenue. There
3 is not a whole lot left. And I hear a lot of talk
4 and righteously so. When your income can't meet the
5 demands of your life. I feel for these people. And
6 that's the only reason I got up. I feel for myself
7 because my rent with the 3.25% increase that you
8 guys voted in last year because of that, my rent
9 has gone up almost \$90 a month.

10

Right? I can't imagine what other
11 people go through when I am looking at the fact
12 that food has gone up. The MTA is looking to go up.
13 Trying to get an Uber is practically doubled. The
14 lifestyle in New York City is tough for you to just
15 continue to raise rents every year rather than
16 trying to keep things stable for folks who can't
17 eat is an abomination. You really do need to do
18 something. Thank you.

19

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Anna Baker-Heans,
20 thank you.

21

MS. BAKER-HEANS: Good afternoon. My name is Anna
22 Baker Haynes. I'm a recent college graduate. I work
23 full time as a tenant organizer. I am a tenant and
24 I can't afford my rent. Professor Schwartz, you are
25 my professor of housing policy at the New School. I

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2 am grateful for your class. It helped me get the
3 job I have today, and it made me an even fiercer
4 advocate of housing justice. You know what you
5 taught me in your class? That any person who pays
6 30% or more of their income towards rent is
7 considered rent burdened.

8 You also taught me that even if a person is paying
9 30% or less, you have to look at their income. A
10 person who makes \$18,000 a year, which many New
11 Yorkers do have a lot less left after 30% of their
12 income than someone making 55K or 100K. You taught
13 me that these financial realities often result in
14 housing insecurity because people are forced to
15 choose between food, health care, clothing, rent
16 and other basic needs.

17 Rent Guidelines Board, Why would you want more
18 New Yorkers to have to make these hard choices?
19 That is the choice you are forcing upon tenants if
20 you raise rent as a tenant organizer let me tell
21 you what I see every day. Apartments that have not
22 been repaired in over five years. Tenants spending
23 hours of their week fighting to get heat and hot
24 water. Buildings infested with rats and roaches
25 full of unaddressed mold that makes tenants sick. I

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2 got a text while I was sitting here from a mother
3 of a five-year-old that had three dead rats on her
4 on her kitchen floor.

5 In what other industry are you allowed to do
6 such a terrible job and get a raise? Even with all
7 of these conditions, the tenants I organize with
8 are working two, three, four jobs to make rent for
9 these unsafe apartments. With the stories you are
10 hearing in this room, how dare you justify asking
11 people to pay more? Respectfully, Professor
12 Schwartz, please practice what you taught me and
13 get us a rent roll back and Rent Guidelines Board.
14 Do not raise the rent. We need a rent rollback.
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17 TENANTS: Rent roll back. Rent roll back. Rent
18 roll back.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Anna. Thank you,
20 Anna Garzaro.

21 TENANTS: Rent roll back. Rent roll back. Rent roll
22 back.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24 MS. GARZARO: Hi. Good evening. My name is Ana
25 Garzaro, and I'm from the move. We're trying to

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2 move. We are here because we need your help. We
3 need you guys to have a heart and help us to
4 survive in this hard situation. I am a single
5 parent. I'm be living here in this country for 45
6 years. I raise my kids, two boys by myself. They
7 couldn't finish college because I wasn't able -- I
8 couldn't afford to pay for them. Of course, I want
9 them to have a different kind of life like you guys
10 who are over there.

11 I want them to be something better than whatever I
12 was. I live by myself now. The landlord is -- I
13 used to live with my kid, but he has to move. He's
14 going to have a baby. So they cannot help me, you
15 know? And the landlord? I paid \$1,800 now. And he
16 said, by July next month, if I don't pay the
17 \$2,500, he's asking me to pay for the apartment.
18 He's going to beat me. He's going to take me out.
19 I'm going to become a homeless. I'd be trying I'd
20 be applying in all different places to seniors for
21 everything to get help. All I am is in at least 4
22 to 5 years to wait.

23 And in the meantime, what am I going to do? I'm
24 disabled. I'm a senior and I can do nothing. And
25 the only help, the only hope that we tenants have

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2 is you guys to help us, please, to make this life a
3 little better for us. Because it's too much.

4 Everything is too high. When we go to the
5 supermarket, we spend \$200 for only two or three
6 bags of food. We can eat only for one week and then
7 we have to get more money for the next week. If we
8 pay -- if I pay electricity, I cannot pay the other
9 utilities because I have no money.

10 I have no big income like you guys do. I wish
11 I had. But we are here because we need that you
12 guys, please be more firm with the landlords and
13 make sure that you are helping us, not them,
14 because they their money, they can pay you more.
15 But we need the help. You guys are there because
16 people put you there. We need your help. Please
17 help us because we need to survive as a decent
18 people that we are. We all work. We are looking for
19 a help. Please do something for us.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Jerry Kann.
21 Thank you. Jerry can. Here's Mr. Kann here. Here we
22 go.

23 MR. KANN: Hi, my name is Jerry Kann, and I live
24 in Astoria, Queens. And thanks to our -- I'm sorry.
25 I'm a little tired and I'm trying to organize my

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2 thoughts. I have so much to say, but I can say it
3 really fast. Folks, what I think you ought to
4 consider. Well, let me tell you really quickly. I
5 once ran for city council. I've never won. I've
6 never come close to winning. But I did run. And
7 what I did was I caught my opponent who was
8 elected, breaking the conflict-of-interest law.

9 Now, this is something that he's
10 supposed to obey. He's supposed to he's not
11 supposed to have special deals with banks or
12 companies inside New York City. He that's just not
13 allowed. That's -- and yet -- I pointed out I filed
14 a complaint with these folks and nothing happened.
15 In fact, I called up a few months later and said,
16 What's the progress with my case, with -- I won't
17 tell you who. But anyway, a man who was the what?
18 They what they did more than cover it up. The law
19 covers it up. The law covers it up. And that's what
20 I'm saying. We I think we have to look right at the
21 law.

22 What we need to do is, is actually
23 imagine instead of a couple hundred folks here in
24 Queens once a year telling the board. This is what
25 we want. Instead of doing that, let's have hundreds

1
2 of thousands of tenants all over this city saying,
3 We've had it. We're not going to come begging you
4 for a rent rollback. We're going to demand a rent
5 rollback from the people who run this town. That's
6 what it's all about. Now, I'm not saying that
7 that's easy, but what I'm saying is what I did was
8 I filed that complaint. Sure, it didn't go
9 anywhere, but it probably shook him up a little
10 bit.

11 And it -- and if this were we were
12 to take this kind of action with people -- with
13 powerful people all over the city, rich, powerful
14 people all over the city, we'd get some results.
15 And so let's aim higher rent rollback right now.
16 But next year, more organizing to make -- to have
17 an end to this business of begging these folks,
18 having them elected, not appointed and having the
19 whole system change the whole system changed to
20 serve you, not to serve the landlords and not to
21 serve these folks. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for that. Our next
23 -- thank you. Our next speaker is Sujoy Krishna
24 Bhowmik Sujoy, Thank you.

25 MR. SUJOY: Hello, everybody. My name is Sujoy,

1
2 as he mentioned. It's my first-time being part of a
3 RGB, and I'm from China. I actually had my very
4 fresh 90-day evaluation of being a tenant
5 councilor. I'm a 25 years old and I sound very
6 young. Just looking at the crowd feels very
7 exciting and at the same time very nervous. But
8 today. I'm not going to talk about myself. I'm
9 going to talk about a tenant that I met literally
10 today, 10:30 a.m. at the [Indiscernible] office in
11 Jackson Heights.

12 She speaks Gregorian. She's a 74
13 years old, elderly, gentle lady. She came to me and
14 she sat on the chair and told me that she does not
15 want to live anymore. And the reason is that she
16 cannot afford to pay her rent. Right. She receives
17 no Social Security income. Stays there by herself.
18 And I really didn't know what to tell her. Right.
19 So I do.

20 See that as soon as all the folks
21 over here, they are very motivated. They want to
22 say, you know, you Rent Guidelines Board, you guys
23 should do this, should do that. But me being a very
24 fresh young blood who wants to make a change in the
25 world, please tell me, how do I do my job? How can

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2 I tell that person who cannot even afford to come
3 to our this meet over here with the \$275 MTA ride
4 can pay extra \$25 every single month. Please tell
5 me how do I do my job?

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our next two
7 speakers are Billy Floyer. Flower? Floyer. Thank
8 you. Billy Floyer and Janet Gutierrez. Mr. Floyer.
9 Thank you.

10 THE INTERPRETER: Hello. How are you? To begin,
11 I'd like to say that I will be speaking in Spanish
12 so that I can select my words carefully. And first,
13 I'd like to thank all of you for taking the time to
14 be here with us tonight. So you already know what
15 you're going to do. And you know what the right
16 thing is that you should do? So there are two
17 questions. Are you idiots or you don't care?

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
19 Thank you. Janet Gutierrez.

20 THE INTERPRETER: Janet Gutierrez.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Right. Thank you.

22 MALE VOICE 5: Everybody's got a right to live.

23 MS. GUTIERREZ: Hi, my name is Janet Gutierrez. I
24 was born and raised in Queens, New York. So I feel
25 that you really shouldn't raise the rent at all. Do

1

2 you really want everyone here in this room to be
3 homeless? I'm asking you that question in your
4 heart. Do you want everyone here to be homeless? In
5 my experience, I've worked for over three years in
6 the shelter system as a security officer, and I
7 have seen just how dangerous it is. The way anyone
8 can actually live in a shelter system.

9 And I would never want to see anyone here to live
10 in those conditions. I've almost gotten killed
11 twice. And let me tell you, I would never want to
12 see anyone here get killed. That's why you see so
13 many homeless people on the street, because either
14 they've been in the shelter system and they never
15 even want to go back. Me when I had my own free
16 time and I'm able to spare a dime to someone or
17 even buy them coffee in the winter time or buy them
18 food, I actually do it.

19 So I do that but I don't want to see anyone go
20 in the shelter system at all. You raising the rent
21 for everyone here in this room is going to cause
22 him a lot of stress, mental stress and a lot of
23 issues for them. Don't raise the rent for everyone
24 here because that's not going to be good. I'm just
25 telling you right now. We need a rental robot, a

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2 rollback. We really do. Please do the right thing.
3 When you go home, you don't even have to think
4 about this.

5

You have to do the right thing.
6 When you go out in Jamaica and you see three
7 homeless people. Think about everybody in this
8 room. You're basically putting everyone homeless,
9 their kids, their family, their parents, everyone.
10 Do the right thing.

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. We have one more
12 speaker signed up. Carlos Ortiz. Is Mr. Ortiz here?
13 Thank you.

14 THE INTERPRETER: Good evening. Good evening,
15 everyone. As all of you know, I work with Catholic
16 Immigration Services. People that live in several
17 areas of Queens, Sunnyside, Woodside, Jamaica,
18 among others. In New York we have more than a
19 million apartments and families living in rent
20 stabilized apartments and nine people who we do not
21 choose. Who for whom we don't vote that are chosen
22 by one single person the Mayor. And those people
23 hold in their hands the destiny of more than 1
24 million people in New York City. Do you believe
25 that that is democratic?

1

2 TENANTS: No.

3 THE INTERPRETER: I can't tell any of you what
4 to do with the system. But I can say that if you
5 believe in democracy and this is not democracy. It
6 is you. It is all of us who have the right and the
7 responsibility of changing all of this. And how do
8 we do that? Because it's not enough to just talk
9 about it. We need to organize to flushing to
10 Jamaica. We need to work in tandem with all of our
11 neighbors all over New York City. We finally have a
12 process that represents all of us fully a system
13 that allows all of us to be represented. I'll
14 interpret myself. Don't run the clock.

15 I've been Amy has been coming here for six
16 years. I've been coming here testifying for five.
17 Many of you have been doing it for many, many
18 years. We're all exhausted from this. We need a
19 system that represents because a 1%. Of course,
20 they have not lived through this we have. I have no
21 idea if any of you have had the experience of
22 having to jump the turnstile to go to work, to go
23 to college. I've had to do that to not have \$3 to
24 get anywhere or to purchase a bag of bread and some
25 peanut butter while I was in college because I

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2 didn't have enough money to buy groceries or any
3 food. These people go home and completely forget.

4 And they've done this for decades. They forget
5 the hundreds of thousands of tenants that come here
6 and testify before them. To finish off, we need a
7 system that doesn't burden millions of people to
8 make them think or to prove that they deserve
9 better, that they deserve a dignified or
10 respectable home. Have the landlords come here and
11 show us how what hardships they're going through,
12 How many of them have come here in the last ten
13 years, five? Rent rolled back in a new system.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. And I want to
15 thank you all. Thank you all for being here. Thank
16 you very much for coming out on Monday night. Do we
17 have a motion to adjourn? I'm sorry. Please.

18 FEMALE VOICE: Yeah. As an RGB tenant who's also
19 rent burdened and lives next to tenants who are --
20 my neighbors have their ceiling falling every three
21 months because of the water leaks, and they're
22 living with mold and a bunch of roaches. So it is
23 disgusting to me. Disturbing to see all of you
24 begging to keep your home. And we know that
25 everything that you are saying is true because the

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2 data is clear. And I think we all seen the data,
3 all the nine of us have seen the data and the
4 tenant reps. We asked for a rent rollback of -1%,
5 which is more than reasonable for the owners and at
6 least a maximum of 1% increase.

7 Again, more than reasonable to the owners based
8 on on records of increases. So I do hope that my
9 fellow members take that into consideration. I'm
10 just taking this space now because I haven't talked
11 to all of you, but I hope you take that into
12 consideration because we are not required to follow
13 the -- we are not supposed -- we don't have to
14 follow the preliminary vote ranges. And I think we
15 can do the right thing. We don't have the power
16 right now. The nine of us don't have the power to
17 change the system to make it more democratic. But
18 we have the power to take these testimonies into
19 consideration. Yeah. Thanks.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very much. Thank
21 you. Do we have a second? Second. Thank you very
22 much.

23 TENANTS: Shame on you. Shame on you. Shame on
24 you.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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2 TENANTS: Shame on you.

3 (Whereupon, the proceedings were concluded.)

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

I, MARC RUSSO, a Shorthand
(Stenotype) Reporter and Notary Public within and
for the State of New York, do hereby certify that
the foregoing pages 1 through 111, 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 27th day of August, 2023.

Marc Russo

MARC RUSSO

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