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THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

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VIRTUAL ZOOM  
PUBLIC MEETING  
OF THE DIRECTORS

-----x

June 13, 2023

B E F O R E :

NESTOR DAVIDSON,  
THE CHAIR

1

2     A P P E A R A N C E S:

3     Board of Directors:

4     Nestor Davidson, Chair

5     Arpit Gupta

6     Alex Schwartz

7     Doug Apple

8     Robert Ehrlich

9     Christina Smyth

10    Genesis Aquino

11    Adan Soltren

12

13

14    **S T A F F:**

15           Andrew McLaughlin

16           Executive Director

17           Brian Hoberman

18           Co-Research Director

19           Danielle Burger

20           Co-Research Director

21           Charmaine Superville

22           Office Manager

23

24

25

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I'd like to  
4 welcome you to this Public Hearing of the New York  
5 City Rent Guidelines Board. This is the third of  
6 four public hearings to consider comments  
7 concerning proposed rent adjustment for leases for  
8 apartments, lofts, hotels and other housing units  
9 subject to the Rent Stabilization law of 1969 and  
10 the Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974. These  
11 adjustments will affect renewal leases commencing  
12 between October 1st, 2023 through September 30th,  
13 2024.

14

15

I will now take rollcall. Please  
respond if present.

16

Doug Apple.

17

MR. APPLE: Present.

18

19

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Genesis  
Aquino. So if you could unmute. Thank you.

20

MS. AQUINO: Present.

21

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.  
Christina DeRose.

23

(No response.)

24

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Robert Ehrlich.

25

(No response.)

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Arpit Gupta.

3

MR. GUPTA: Present.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

Alex Schwartz.

6

MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Christina

8

Smyth.

9

MS. SMYTH: Present.

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Adan Soltren.

11

MR. SOLTREN: Present.

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Nestor

13

Davidson. I'm present. Please let the record show

14

that we have a quorum.

15

The next meeting of this board

16

will be an in-person hearing on June 15th at Saint

17

Francis College, 179 Livingston Street in Brooklyn

18

from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.. Anyone who wants to comment

19

on the proposed rule of this public hearing must

20

sign up to speak. People wishing to speak at the

21

public hearing can pre-register in advance. You can

22

pre-register online through our website

23

[nyc.gov/RGB](http://nyc.gov/RGB), or you can sign up to speak by calling

24

(212) 669-7480 from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Monday

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through Friday.

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Pre-registration ends at noon tomorrow, June 14th. For those who do not pre-register registration is also available at the hearing from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The public hearing will be live streamed. Interpretation will be provided to those testifiers speaking in Spanish. And I'll add that we have other interpretation available upon request.

Our final vote will take place on Wednesday, June 21st, starting at 7 p.m. at Hunter College Assembly Hall, which is on 69th Street between Park and Lexington Avenues in Manhattan, with doors opening at 6 p.m. Please note the change in venue from the Great Hall at Cooper Union.

The public may attend and observe the meeting in person or may watch the vote live, streaming it on the RGB's YouTube channel. To find out how, visit the website and [nyc.gov/rgb](http://nyc.gov/rgb) or call the RGB again at (212) 669-7480 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. We are also taking comments on our proposed guidelines outside of our public hearings.

If you are unable to attend our hearings, you can submit written audio or video comments prior to the hearing, so the board members



1

2 review through June 15th.

3

4 Instructions to submit these  
5 comments are available on the board's website at  
6 nyc.gov/rgb. By email at ask@rgb.nyc.gov or by  
7 calling the RGB again at (212) 669-7480.

8

9 I'd like to thank you all for  
10 attending this public hearing. The board is looking  
11 forward to hearing from many of you regarding the  
12 proposed rent adjustments before we proceed to  
13 testimony.

14

15 I would like to go over the rules  
16 and procedures for those who are testifying before  
17 the board. This year, the board has in-person  
18 hearings in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens.  
19 Therefore, we are providing priority at this  
20 virtual hearing to those participants who either  
21 live in or own a building in Manhattan.

22

23 Once we have heard from our  
24 Manhattan group of registered speakers, we'll take  
25 testimony from registered tenants and owners who  
live in owned properties outside of Manhattan. We  
will alternate between tenants, owners and public  
officials with a speaking limit of two minutes per  
person.

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When it is your turn to speak, a staff member will promote you from an attendee to a panelist, and you will have the ability to speak and display your video if you choose. Please wait for your name to be announced before you can commence your testimony. It is essential that your Zoom name matches that with which you registered.

If you are attending the Zoom hearing with a name or phone number that differs from the name or phone number you registered with, we will not be able to identify you and you may lose your place in the queue. If you were not able to -- if you were not asked to enter your name in Zoom when you signed into this hearing, your Zoom name will be that of the Zoom account you are signed into.

If this name differs from the one you registered with, we suggest you log out of Zoom and re-enter the Zoom hearing, at which time you will be prompted to enter your name. If you are not an attendee of the hearing at the time your name is called, you may lose your place in the queue.

A two minute timer will begin and will be displayed periodically during your

1  
2 testimony. At the conclusion of your testimony, you  
3 will become an attendee again without speaking  
4 privileges and we will move on to our next speaker.  
5 There are Spanish interpreters here today to listen  
6 to testimony in Spanish.

7           Please use the interpretation  
8 button in Zoom to choose the appropriate channel.  
9 For English speakers, select the English Channel to  
10 hear English speakers as well as Spanish speakers  
11 interpreted into English. If you do not choose an  
12 interpretation channel, you will hear all testimony  
13 in the native language of the speaker. If you are  
14 using the Zoom app on a smartphone, you may find  
15 the interpretation button by pressing the more  
16 button.

17           We have many registered speakers  
18 and the board wants to hear from as many speakers  
19 as possible in the limited time we have for this  
20 hearing. We understand that it may be difficult to  
21 say everything you want us to hear in just two  
22 minutes, but please understand that it is our  
23 responsibility to make sure that everyone who has  
24 taken the time to join us here this evening and  
25 testify will have a fair opportunity to be heard.

1

2 We thank you for your cooperation. And we can now  
3 begin.

4

Brian.

5

6 Thank you so much. And before we  
7 begin, I just want to note that we have been joined  
8 by Alex Schwartz and that Rob Ehrlich is here and  
9 was here but was having an audio issue and I think  
10 is resolved now. I think we can begin, Brian.

11 Sorry. Let's translate that. And then let's begin.

12

THE INTERPRETER: I think the

13

interpretation channel is available now.

14

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay, great.

15

16 Thank you. All right. Allow me to recognize New  
17 York State Senator Robert Jackson.

18

MR. JACKSON: So good afternoon,

19

20 Chair and members of the Rent Guidelines Board. I'm  
21 State Senator Robert Jackson, representing the 31st  
22 Senatorial District comprising of Northern

23

Manhattan, which includes Washington Heights,

24

Inwood and Marble Hill and parts of the Northwest

25

Bronx. Approximately 325,000 constituents.

26

The lack of affordable housing is

27

the top priority that I hear in my district.

28

Knowing that of the New York State Senators of -- I

1  
2 have, 88% are renters, and it's the third highest  
3 in the New York State Senate. From the -- from  
4 aging to single parents, large households and  
5 recent graduates, it is evident most people are  
6 struggling. Struggling. Say it twice to get by with  
7 the rising cost of living in New York City. And  
8 this month, the RGB has a crucial opportunity to  
9 stand up and say no to further destabilizing  
10 households amidst this uncertain economic climate  
11 and yes to upending unaffordability crisis,  
12 protecting tenants from oppressive rent and  
13 stopping a massive wave of evictions.

14           New York was already in a housing  
15 crisis pre-pandemic, and we must act now to  
16 mitigate the compounding effects of the systemic  
17 oppression that exacerbates the house -- housing  
18 affordability crisis. I strongly urge the RGB to  
19 roll back the rents. And if you're saying, Are you  
20 crazy? No, I'm not crazy. Or at a minimum, freeze  
21 the rent. So ensure that rent stabilized tenants  
22 can stay in their homes.

23           Every eviction is a policy failure  
24 because housing is a human right. And to consider  
25 increases of 5 to 7% for two year lease when New

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2       Yorkers are still rebuilding their lives instead of  
3       a rent freeze, it is intentionally choosing to  
4       disrupt the livelihoods and perpetuate a cycle of  
5       instability and homelessness that affects the most  
6       vulnerable members of our community. I urge you to  
7       stand up. Don't be afraid and vote no to  
8       detrimental rent. Thank you.

9                       CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
10       much. Appreciate it. Thank you. Let me next  
11       recognize Senator Sepulveda.

12                      MR. SEPULVEDA: Hi. Good evening.  
13       Can you hear me?

14                      CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes. Thank  
15       you.

16                      MR. SEPULVEDA: Thank you. Thank  
17       you for giving me a few minutes to make my  
18       statement. I'm State Senator Luis Sepulveda from  
19       the 32nd District in the Bronx. And I have the  
20       honor and distinction of having the highest total  
21       of constituents that reside in apartments. 93% of  
22       my constituents are tenants, and that is the  
23       highest in the entire city and the entire state.  
24       So, you know, when the Rent Guidelines board made  
25       the decision to increase rent for millions of rent

1  
2 stabilized tenants, it was a matter of concern for  
3 me and all hard working individuals in New York  
4 City because this is potentially the highest  
5 increase the board has had in a decade. Following  
6 what happened last year with the 3.2, two 5%, one  
7 year to lease increases. Now, you know, I should  
8 shed some light on the life impact that these rent  
9 increases have. Stories of my seniors who recently  
10 sought assistance in my office.

11 We had seniors who were disabled,  
12 resides in rent stabilized apartments. They used to  
13 live there with their families and their late  
14 spouse. But over time, the family members moved on  
15 to their lives and unfortunately, the spouse passed  
16 away to cover their rent and expenses. These  
17 seniors rely on programs like Dry. Sometimes their  
18 own Social Security income.

19 Food stamps aren't enough. So the  
20 loss of a spouse, Social Security income makes a  
21 terrible impact. When you have these kinds of rent  
22 hikes on these very same individuals, you know,  
23 their monthly rent has reached such proportions  
24 that they fear falling behind in their apartments  
25 and getting evicted. For two decades, the seniors

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2 person has called the apartment home, and it's very  
3 distressing to them to not live in the fear that  
4 they may lose what they work for. So I stand here  
5 urging the rent guideline boards to reconsider  
6 their decision to please take into consideration  
7 the 93% of the people that I represent who may have  
8 terrible impacts with these increases. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
10 much. Appreciate it. Let me next recognize Assembly  
11 Member Rosenthal.

12 MS. ROSENTHAL: Hi. Thank you. I'm  
13 Assembly Member Linda B. Rosenthal. I'm Chair of  
14 the Assembly Committee on Housing, and I represent  
15 the Upper West Side and parts of Hell's Kitchen in  
16 the 67th Assembly District.

17 I'd like to thank the RGB for the  
18 opportunity to comment on the board's proposal to  
19 increase rents by 2% to 5% on one year leases and  
20 4% to 7% on two year leases for rent stabilized  
21 tenants. Thousands of my constituents and New  
22 Yorkers throughout the city are living on the  
23 precipice of eviction. A little more than three  
24 years ago, COVID upended the world, and my office  
25 heard from people desperately searching for



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2 financial assistance to help pay the rent, put food  
3 on the table, cover medical expenses and other  
4 requirements of daily living.

5 Now, as the RGB data clearly  
6 demonstrates, many tenants are still frantically  
7 applying for one shot deals, food stamps, medical  
8 assistance to stay financially afloat in this ever  
9 increasingly expensive city. The RGB's decision to  
10 recommend substantial rent increases for millions  
11 of rent regulated tenants during an affordability  
12 and homelessness crisis is not acceptable. Most New  
13 York City tenants are rent burdened. Almost 40% of  
14 rent stabilized tenants spend most of their income  
15 on rent, and 35% of rent stabilized tenants pay  
16 more than 30% of their rent on income on rent.

17 With over 92,000 New Yorkers  
18 sleeping on the streets or in the shelter, another  
19 rent increase will make it only more difficult for  
20 people to stay housed. As of April 2023, the median  
21 rent for a one bedroom in Manhattan and Brooklyn  
22 was \$4,200 and \$3,350, respectively. New Yorkers  
23 are financially hanging on by a thread. Large  
24 building owners, especially real estate investment  
25 trusts, are living a far different financial

1  
2 reality than their rent regulated tenants. The data  
3 used by RGB from 2021 should not be used for 2023  
4 because high income residents have returned to the  
5 city market rate. Tenants are meeting soaring  
6 rents. ERAP has paid landlords billions of dollars  
7 in arrears and some landlords would rather take a  
8 tax write off than rent vacant units. We cannot  
9 contribute to the housing emergency and crisis by  
10 raising rents, cannot allow more families to enter  
11 shelter. I urge the RGB to keep people in their  
12 homes by reversing its decision to raise the rents  
13 on the city's most vulnerable. Thank you very much.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
15 much. Let me next recognize Council Member Carlina  
16 Rivera.

17 MS. RIVERA: Hello. Good evening.  
18 Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony  
19 regarding proposed lease adjustments for rent  
20 stabilized apartments in New York City.

21 As Council Member for Council  
22 District 2, I represent neighborhoods including the  
23 East Village, Lower East Side, Flatiron, Gramercy,  
24 Rose Hill, Kips Bay and Murray Hill. And with my  
25 roots in a community that has had to organize to

1  
2 keep people in their homes, I have seen how  
3 affordable housing has become increasingly scarce  
4 and prohibitively expensive for working families. A  
5 2023 report from the Fund for the City of New York  
6 and United Way indicates that 50% of New York  
7 households are struggling to cover their basic  
8 needs and that almost 80% of households below the  
9 true cost of living are considered housing cost  
10 burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their  
11 income on housing. The most recent New York City  
12 Community Health Survey reports that 49% of all  
13 households on the Lower East Side are rent  
14 burdened.

15                   The New York Housing Conference  
16 estimates that 31% of New York renters are in  
17 arrears with each household in arrears, owing more  
18 than \$9500 unpaid rent for a total of more than  
19 \$145 million. The Rent Guidelines Board has the  
20 responsibility to analyze housing market conditions  
21 in their determination of lease adjustments. And at  
22 a time when the city's black population declined by  
23 200,000 people, it would be misguided to increase  
24 prices on rent stabilized apartments.

25                   We really should try to maintain

1  
2 as much diversity as possible, and that includes in  
3 the housing stock. It would be more appropriate to  
4 roll back or freeze rents to ensure working class  
5 and legacy residents can afford to live here. And  
6 at a time of uncertainty, the decisions made by the  
7 Rent Guidelines Board impacts the collective  
8 identity of our city. I understand that property  
9 owners also face difficulties recovering from the  
10 pandemic. Inflation and other factors have worsened  
11 that hardship.

12 But this cannot be resolved by  
13 raising prices on New Yorkers that simply can't  
14 afford higher rent.

15 The New York City and state  
16 government must step up and identify gaps in  
17 services and outreach and ensure that landlords  
18 have the resources needed to operate safe and  
19 healthy buildings. The Rent Guidelines Board has a  
20 significant role to play in setting housing policy  
21 for the city. Urge the board to consider the  
22 significant burden on renters and institute a rent  
23 rollback or at the very least, freeze rents at  
24 current levels. Thank you so much for the time to  
25 testify and I look forward to working with you all

1

2 in the future.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so  
4 much. Really appreciate it. All right, let me  
5 recognize John D'Erriko.

6

MR. D'ERRIKO: Hello and thank you  
7 for the opportunity to speak tonight. My name is  
8 John D'Erriko. I live in a rent stabilized  
9 apartment with my family and Peter Cooper Village.  
10 I'm a Director of the Stuyvesant Town-peter Cooper  
11 Village Tenants Association and a Member of  
12 Community Board Six.

13

I'm also a Class Action Lawyer by  
14 trade, and I have spent hundreds of hours  
15 advocating for housing rights on a pro bono basis  
16 for the past couple of years. Tonight, you will  
17 hear many impassioned pleas for help from tenants  
18 and tenant advocates. These pleas are all well  
19 reasoned and meaningful, but will only speak to you  
20 in plain economic terms and policy terms. Nestor  
21 Davidson From our time together at Fordham Law, I  
22 know and hope you will appreciate this.

23

Nearly 40% of rent stabilized  
24 households spend more than 50% of their income on  
25 rent. Inflation adjusted wages are down by over 2%.

1  
2 In short, people are being paid less, but paying  
3 more for rent. However, over 60,000 rent stabilized  
4 units are kept off the market intentionally so, and  
5 landlords are able to manipulate higher priced  
6 rents, a phenomenon called warehousing. In reality,  
7 this is nothing but fabricated price scarcity. And  
8 moreover, this is fabricated price scarcity during  
9 a time of great struggle for the everyday working  
10 person. Under these circumstances, the only  
11 economically reasonable solution is a rent  
12 rollback, or at a minimum, a rent freeze. Thank you  
13 again for the opportunity to speak tonight.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so  
15 much. Now let me recognize Manhattan Borough  
16 President Mark Levine.

17 MR. LEVINE: Thank you so much,  
18 Mr. Chair, and to the board members for this  
19 opportunity to speak. I'm going to be submitting  
20 testimony in written form that I prepared jointly  
21 with my colleague, Council Member Keith Powers, And  
22 I'll just speak about some of the main points of  
23 our testimony here now in the time I have allotted.  
24 I understand that as a board you have the enormous  
25 responsibility of weighing both the costs faced by

1

2 owners as well as the burdens faced by tenants. But  
3 I want to say very clearly that I believe this is  
4 not the time for a rent increase that we, Council  
5 Member Powers as well believe that there should not  
6 be an increase in rents now for the simple reason  
7 that tenants are facing enormous pain.

8           They're facing rising prices of  
9 all manner of consumer goods, from food to clothing  
10 to transportation, at a time when many are seeing  
11 their wages stagnate. In fact, many live on fixed  
12 incomes amidst these rising prices. And so the  
13 increase in rents is a serious burden. In fact, as  
14 the previous speaker mentioned, the estimate is  
15 that 39.5% of rent stabilized households are now  
16 paying more than half of their income to rent. This  
17 is widely accepted as being a very serious burden  
18 on families that forces them to make difficult  
19 choices about paying for essential needs.

20           We cannot, in this environment,  
21 add extra burden to so many families because if  
22 they can't afford their apartments and lose their  
23 home and are forced to rent on the private market,  
24 they will face what in Manhattan is now an average  
25 rent of over \$5,200. Again, that is the average

1

2 rent in Manhattan for a market rate apartment. And  
3 if that's what tenants are forced into, many will  
4 wind up homeless. We cannot let that happen. We  
5 need to help tenants remain in the homes that they  
6 can currently afford by not increasing rent at this  
7 time. Thank you so much for this opportunity to  
8 testify.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so  
10 much for being here. Really appreciate it. Thank  
11 you. Let me recognize now. Andrew Hoffman.

12 MR. HOFFMAN: Good afternoon and  
13 thank you for the opportunity to testify. We need  
14 reasonable increases because owner expenses  
15 continue to go up. The largest expenses owner pay  
16 right now are to the City of New York. Our real  
17 estate taxes, our water charges and other city  
18 payments that we make in running our buildings  
19 equal over 40% of our building expenses.

20 Property taxes have went up over  
21 75% in the last decade for older rent stabilized  
22 buildings outside the core of Manhattan. The city  
23 has increased property taxes on these buildings  
24 dramatically this year. Many buildings in the Bronx  
25 saw increases of over 10%. Over the years, we've



1  
2 seen huge increases in water and sewer and all the  
3 other fees that we have to pay in New York City.  
4 The biggest single expense in the past decade that  
5 has run up is our insurance. It has more than  
6 doubled and many buildings I manage cannot even get  
7 the proper amount of excess liability I want, and  
8 that's at any price. Our labor costs go up every  
9 year and we have to follow strict contract rules  
10 with local 32 BJ and there's no room for any cost  
11 savings here. And our fuel goes up every year, even  
12 though we have taken extensive advantage of energy  
13 efficiency measures. I can't control my fuel costs  
14 and I cannot control the severity of the winters.  
15 And every year it seems that the RGB only talks  
16 about core Manhattan.

17                   While the pandemic certainly hit  
18 all buildings hard, core Manhattan has been better  
19 positioned to recover over time. In the other 70%  
20 of rent stabilized housing stock, they have no hope  
21 at things getting better unless the Rent Guidelines  
22 Board adjusts rents to keep up with these costs.  
23 And now with the higher interest rates, many small  
24 owners can no longer afford loans to help with  
25 capital improvements, and they'll be forced to pay

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2 for these expenses through slim operating margins.  
3 We need your help.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

Our.

6

MR. HOFFMAN: The fences go up  
7 every year, we have no recourse but to pay our  
8 bills. Please give us our reasonable increases so  
9 we can keep up with our increasing expenses. Thank  
10 you for the opportunity to testify.

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12

Thank you. Appreciate it. Let me next recognize

13

Susan Steinberg.

14

MS. STEINBERG: Thank you. I'm  
15 Susan Steinberg, president of the Stuyvesant  
16 Town-peter Cooper Village Tenants Association. And  
17 I'm speaking for 11,242 rent regulated units. But  
18 I'm going to start with me. I moved into Stuyvesant  
19 Town in January of 1980, into my present one  
20 bedroom at a starting rent of \$325 a month. From  
21 that time until this, nothing has changed. Same  
22 layout, same number of rooms, same square footage,  
23 same 1947 bathroom and kitchen. The only thing that  
24 has changed is the rent goes up and up and up. But  
25 now an equivalent apartment, the same one bedroom

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2 that I have goes for \$4,900.

3

4 And what could possibly merit a 15  
5 fold increase since 1980? Other than the fact that  
6 landlords feel that they need to keep their profits  
7 up, which I understand are now down to a  
8 devastating 33.6%. But who makes that? Do you know  
9 what the titans of industry make? For example, 2022  
10 profits for Google, 10% for Amazon, 2% for Tesla,  
11 15.7%. And the rents here are now so high that I  
12 get into arguments with tenants who don't believe  
13 their rent regulated. Oh, a market rate? No, you're  
14 rent regulated. Well, I'm market rate because of  
15 the rent I pay. No, you're rent regulated pay  
16 market rent. And people here are really concerned  
17 to live here. They double up. They triple up. They  
18 quadruple up. Many are rent burdened. They're  
19 battling inflation and stagnant incomes. So the  
20 tenants association decide to find out exactly what  
21 the impact of the proposed rent increases would be.  
22 And at a very recent community event, we circulated  
23 a petition asking people if they were really going  
24 to be threatened with the proposed rent increases  
25 to sign in under four hours. We had 500 names. We  
need a rollback. Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so much. Very much appreciate it. Thank you. Let me next recognize Ilan Rabinovich.

MR. RABINOVITCH: Thank you for the opportunity to speak and testify here. I'm a small landlord by every definition of the term. I own one four unit building here on the Upper West Side. The vast majority of my tenants are rent stabilized units.

And, you know, at this point, as some of the other folks have testified, I understand that tenants are rent burdened, but us as landlords are also expense burdened primarily by expenses controlled by the city. The combined legal rents that I'm allowed to collect don't even cover my property tax, let alone maintenance of the property or improvements.

To offer a few examples, my property tax increased by 7.2% in 2022 and increased by another 8% in 2023. My insurance costs went up, went up by 50% from 2022 to 2023. The utility costs that I pay to provide electricity for the common areas as well as heat for my apartment went up by 35%. Just things -- mundane things like

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2 fire sprinkler inspections that I have to pay for  
3 every month to to stay legal with my building went  
4 up by 18% in 2023. And I expect utilities to keep  
5 going up this year as well. Just I can only  
6 forecast out based on where we are so far. You  
7 know, at the same time was allowed to raise my  
8 tenants rent by I think it was 3.2% last year. So  
9 not even keeping up with the additional costs the  
10 city is putting on me.

11 I would urge the RGB to raise  
12 rents by the originally recommended 16%. That won't  
13 even allow me to break even, but at least start to  
14 make a defense. And for those elected officials  
15 testifying here about the hard costs that tenants  
16 are facing and asking for us to reduce rent, well,  
17 the best way that you can do that is to change your  
18 policies. You're the ones voting for increased  
19 property taxes. You're the ones voting for, you  
20 know, for allowing our utility companies to  
21 increase the cost that they charge us.

22 There's all kinds of things that  
23 you could be doing policy wise to assist this, to  
24 assist the tenants here, as well as to assist  
25 landlords in maintaining our costs at reasonable

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2 levels. I don't make money on my building. I lose  
3 money every month and every year. And what RGB the  
4 can do here is get me to a point where I can at  
5 least afford to start to continue to maintain my  
6 building and offer roofs to tenants that need it. I  
7 will note that none of my tenants are rent  
8 burdened. They all earn earned hundreds of  
9 thousands of dollars a year and still pay less than  
10 \$1,000 a month in rent for large apartments. Thank  
11 you. And again, I urge you to do the right thing  
12 here and support our housing stock.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
14 much. Let me next recognize Kim Moscaritolo.

15 MS. MOSCARITOLO: Thank you so  
16 much. Hey, everybody. I'm Kim Moscaritolo. I am a  
17 rent stabilized tenant here in Yorkville on the  
18 Upper East Side of Manhattan. For years, my husband  
19 and I lived in market rate housing, and every year  
20 we fretted as we waited for notice from our  
21 management company about our lease renewal and the  
22 inevitable rent increase that would come with it.

23 And while our rent luckily did not  
24 increase during the pandemic last year, we faced a  
25 sudden increase of 10%. So fortunately, at about

1  
2 that same time, after years of sitting on  
3 affordable housing waiting lists, we were finally  
4 selected for a rent stabilized apartment on 86th  
5 Street and Newark Avenue. And we felt so lucky  
6 because we finally have some stability. You know,  
7 we know from year to year how much our rent would  
8 go up and we'd be protected from exorbitant rent  
9 hikes. It was like a weight had been lifted off of  
10 our shoulders. So imagine our dismay upon seeing  
11 the numbers that were put out by this board  
12 recently increases as high as 7% for two year  
13 leases. For us, that could mean an extra \$225 a  
14 month. My husband has his own business. I work at a  
15 nonprofit. I can assure you I will not be receiving  
16 a 7% raise next year.

17                   We all understand inflation. We  
18 know prices have gone up. But tenants living in  
19 this city just trying to get by cannot be expected  
20 to bear the brunt of those increases. The rent  
21 hikes proposed today will force some people to have  
22 to move. And for those who can't afford to move,  
23 because remember, moving is actually really  
24 expensive. They'll fall behind on their rent.  
25 They'll try to cut corners by buying less food or

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2 medicine, and they'll ultimately be evicted and  
3 they'll become yet another family out on the  
4 streets. So you have the opportunity to keep that  
5 from happening by freezing rents and allowing  
6 people the peace and security that comes with  
7 knowing that they can afford to stay in your home.

8 So I just urge all of you to think  
9 about the ramifications of the decisions that you  
10 will be making. And I hope that you will make the  
11 right decision to freeze rents and allow tenants  
12 like myself and hundreds of thousands of others to  
13 remain in their homes. Thank you so much.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so  
15 much. Very much. Appreciate it. Thank you. Brian,  
16 if you could promote our next speaker, please.

17 THE INTERPRETER: I'm working on  
18 it. Hold on one second, please.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20 MS. BURGER: If I could take this  
21 minute to just make a quick announcement. If you  
22 pre-registered, you were told that your Zoom name  
23 has to match the name that you registered with.  
24 There are some people here as attendees with just a  
25 first name. Just an acronym. Unless you have the



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2 same name that we see when you registered, you're  
3 going to have to log out of Zoom, log back in and  
4 enter your name, because if it's just your first  
5 name, we do not know that you're the person who  
6 registered. So please consider logging out, coming  
7 back in. Zoom will ask you for your name. You were  
8 emailed the name that you used to register. Thank  
9 you.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you,  
11 Danielle.

12 Seth Glasser. Let me recognize you  
13 now. Thank you.

14 MR. GLASSER: Thank you. I'm Seth  
15 Glasser, a New York City Multifamily Commercial  
16 Real Estate Broker and Co-host of the New York City  
17 Multifamily Podcast. I am not speaking to you as an  
18 owner, rent stabilized tenant or even a New York  
19 City resident. Think of me as a concerned citizen.  
20 I'd like to highlight a hard truth. Costs are  
21 rising in every area of life, including rents.  
22 Consider rent stabilized tenants who, despite  
23 feeling the financial pinch, enjoy protections that  
24 two thirds of city residents don't.

25 As neighborhoods mature, these

1  
2 tenants reap benefits from safer surroundings and  
3 robust local economies. But let's be clear, rent  
4 regulation while protecting some, drives up costs  
5 for everyone else, especially average earners in  
6 market rate apartments. These are the truly rent  
7 burdened, often priced out of the city due to the  
8 supply constraints that stabilization creates.  
9 Maintaining and upgrading America's oldest housing  
10 stock is expensive.

11           The private sector is ready,  
12 willing and able to shoulder these costs,  
13 benefiting local employment and improving housing  
14 stock. But this requires financial balance, which  
15 rental increases promote. If landlords abandon  
16 these buildings, who will fund our housing? We've  
17 seen the state of nature housing, led, dirty water,  
18 mold, pests and lingering repairs. Surely we don't  
19 want more of that.

20           Bad landlords should be penalized,  
21 just like any bad actor in any profession.

22           However, most landlords are  
23 regular, well-intentioned people deeply involved in  
24 the human elements of property management and get  
25 no joy from enforcing evictions. They too have

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2 families to go home to. They are not villains.  
3 Consider rent stabilization downside, it bars you  
4 from home ownership, mobility and building equity.  
5 The unintended consequence of HSDPA was that it  
6 wiped out ten inequity. No more buyouts. The simple  
7 math goes like this 1 million apartments, averaging  
8 \$100,000 per buyout, is \$100 billion of equity for  
9 the city's most vulnerable inhabitants. \$100  
10 billion gone.

11 We should vote for rental  
12 increases not because it helps landlords, but  
13 because it can vastly improve living conditions for  
14 countless New Yorkers. Rejecting intuition. Let's  
15 support tenants by enabling their landlords to  
16 maintain and enhance their homes for future  
17 generations by voting for reasonable RGB increases,  
18 we can all win at a compassionate capitalist  
19 system. Let's grow the pie, not divide it up. Thank  
20 you for your consideration.

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let  
22 me next recognize Sarah McDaniel Dyer.

23 MS. McDANIEL-DYER: Hello. I'm a  
24 rent stabilized tenant and the front door of my  
25 building has been broken for three months now, and

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2 my landlord will absolutely come up here and tell  
3 you he can't afford to fix it unless you let him  
4 raise the rent. He'll tell you you must raise our  
5 rent because the property tax is too high for him  
6 to fulfill his legal obligation to ensure the  
7 safety of his tenants.

8                   What he won't tell you is that two  
9 of the 20 units in our building covers that tax  
10 bill and our front door is still broken. I still  
11 have to call 311 every year to get the heat and hot  
12 water turned on. Why should I reward this behavior  
13 with more money? It's frustrating and it's  
14 heartbreaking to watch people get pushed out of my  
15 community because someone told their  
16 shareholders.

17                   My neighborhood in Inwood was an  
18 investment opportunity. If you want a city that is  
19 safe and vibrant, you need stable and affordable  
20 housing for everyone. The minimum wage in New York  
21 hasn't gone up since 2019, but landlords need a  
22 raise. Can we stop acting like the main driver of  
23 homelessness in our city isn't greed? We lost  
24 congressional seats, not because people don't want  
25 to live here, but because they literally can't

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2 afford it. I'm sick of having to come here every  
3 year and act like we don't all know these facts. We  
4 lost political power in our nation because of  
5 landlord greeds. We care more about landlord  
6 profits than the actual people who run the city.  
7 That's the price of landlord greed. And if you're  
8 not good with that reality, then you'll roll the  
9 rents back. Thank you for your time.

10 MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay. I'm sorry.  
11 I'm working on the next one.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.  
13 Appreciate it, Andrew. Thank you. Let me recognize  
14 Jacqueline Wong.

15 MS. WONG: Good evening, members  
16 of the board. My name is Jacqueline Wong and my  
17 husband David and I are landlords with the rent  
18 stabilized building in Chinatown. Our property was  
19 passed down to us from David's father, who  
20 immigrated to the United States. Soon after his  
21 arrival to the US, he enlisted in the Army during  
22 World War One, serving as a flying as a mechanic  
23 for the Flying Tigers.

24 After the war, due to his  
25 immigration status, he was unable to get a job in

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2 his field and settled for a job in the restaurant  
3 business. Little by little, he saved money until he  
4 was able to purchase a building and became a  
5 landlord. Many of our tenants are extended family  
6 members of those who signed leases with us with my  
7 father in law, we have known our tenants for 25  
8 years. We work diligently to provide them safe and  
9 comfortable housing. However, in recent years, we  
10 have witnessed a significant increase in operating  
11 expenses due to rising property taxes. As well as  
12 increases in insurance premiums and maintenance  
13 costs. These costs escalations are impacting our  
14 ability to continue to provide the type of services  
15 that our tenants have come to rely on. Often we are  
16 unable to make necessary improvements.

17                   The need for repairs to aging  
18 building equipment such as boilers could be  
19 financially devastating to an owner. Our property  
20 is a 20 unit building. The average unit monthly  
21 rent is \$1,000 per month. We have eight tenants who  
22 pay well below that average, four who pay less than  
23 \$750 per month, with one paying less than \$300 per  
24 month. Last year, after years of expensive repairs  
25 to the boiler system, we decided to replace it.

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The cost of the new boiler was \$95,000. Labor to install the new boiler was \$30,000. As you can see, the numbers don't work. It's crucial for the board to strike a balance that considers the needs of both tenants and landlords. Consider options in assisting tenants without hurting the landlords. We respectfully ask for an appropriate increase to allow us to properly maintain our buildings and provide the services that our tenants have grown to rely on. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let me next recognize Emily Genetta.

MS. GENETTA: Thank you for having me. I'm calling from my office in the Lower East Side, where I work as a Clinical Social Worker. Many of the young people I see as clients are living in poverty and some of them are navigating homelessness. When they tell me they want to go to college so that they can get a job like mine, I don't know how to say that they will still be struggling because even with a master's degree and a professional license, I can barely afford my rent stabilized studio in a sixth floor walk up in Yorkville. Half the money I take home goes to rent

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2 and utilities, which in social services we refer to  
3 as being rent burdened. Much of the rest of my  
4 income goes toward paying down the debt I acquired  
5 from getting sick with COVID. Despite being young  
6 and fully vaccinated and having no pre-existing  
7 conditions, COVID left me bedbound for most of the  
8 last year.

9 I lost my previous job doing  
10 crisis work with unhoused people and had to  
11 crowdfund to stay housed myself. And like many  
12 people in that position, it wasn't my first time  
13 narrowly avoiding a shelter. I'm also a survivor of  
14 domestic violence who has had to couch surf to stay  
15 safe, who has moved from sublet to sublet and been  
16 illegally evicted in gentrifying neighborhoods.

17 When I graduated with my MSW in  
18 2021 and found a rent stabilized apartment, I  
19 thought that I would finally have stability and I  
20 don't. Obviously, our housing issues are caused by  
21 a whole constellation of policy failures, but the  
22 very least that the city can do is ensure that rent  
23 stabilized apartments remain barely within reach of  
24 essential workers so that we can stay here and  
25 continue to work.



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2                   Every time you approve a rent  
3 increase, you not only make the homelessness  
4 problem worse, but you push out the people who are  
5 working to resolve it. If my landlord truly cannot  
6 afford to replace the boiler in my building that  
7 goes out for a whole day every month, or the  
8 refrigerator that is died three times, or the  
9 dumpsters without lids that are crawling with rats.  
10 An extra \$120 per month for me is not going to be  
11 enough for him to fix it. And that hints at a  
12 problem much larger than this board can address.  
13 But an extra \$120 a month for me will push me out  
14 of this city along with so many others. And that's  
15 something you can stop by freezing the rents or  
16 issuing a rollback. Thank you.

17                   CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Me  
18 next. Recognize Leon Goldenberg.

19                   MR. GOLDENBERG: Good evening. The  
20 job of the RGB is to review the increased costs in  
21 the operations of buildings. This should be the  
22 sole function of the RGB. Whether a tenant can or  
23 cannot afford an increase is really not the job of  
24 the RGB. That should be borne by the public as a  
25 whole. When people can't afford to buy milk or

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2 eggs, the government gives out food stamps. They  
3 don't tell grocers to lower their prices. I've  
4 recommended for years, ad nauseam to many members  
5 of the legislatures, both city and state, that  
6 discrete program that was enacted for seniors  
7 should be introduced on a much larger scale for low  
8 income people. The city and the state should be  
9 picking up the increases in rent that the landlord  
10 is duly entitled to. Over the past ten years,  
11 landlords have received a total of about 9% in  
12 increase. That's it. My taxes alone have increased  
13 more than 9% of my total rent roll. Not over prior  
14 years taxes. My taxes have increased from as little  
15 as 25 to 50% in some places, close to 100% on  
16 individual buildings over the past nine years. Next  
17 month, my taxes are going up 4.1% on average, and  
18 all my buildings with my income down 8%.

19 My insurance have increased more  
20 than 9%. Again, of my rent roll insurance has  
21 almost tripled in the last eight nine years. I am  
22 not even talking about the increase in minimum  
23 wage, fuel, water using basic math. How do you  
24 expect us to maintain our buildings? There is no  
25 increase outside of what you give us. There are no

1  
2 increases on vacant lands, are sitting on £35,000  
3 that require major capital improvements with a  
4 minimal increase. The \$15,000 allotted on the new  
5 IAI program is not sufficient to do the renovation,  
6 nor does it make any financial sense. I would be  
7 happy to show you any of these apartments that I am  
8 holding and see if we are exaggerating to the  
9 conditions and renovations of some of these  
10 apartments years ago RGB gave additional increase  
11 on extremely low rents. Yes, I have tenants who pay  
12 as little as \$403. Even a 4.5% increase is only  
13 \$18. And the buildings we manage, we have 55  
14 apartments and \$700 give us an increase based on  
15 actual costs and have the city and state subsidize  
16 the tenants. I'm happy to answer any questions.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
18 much. Very much appreciate it. Let me next  
19 recognize Ren Ping Chen.

20 THE INTERPRETER: Hello, my name  
21 is Ren Ping Chen. I am a member of CAAAV's  
22 Chinatown Tenants Union. I am a rent stabilized  
23 tenant. I've lived in Manhattan's Chinatown for 32  
24 years now.

25 MR. SCHWARTZ: I don't hear him.

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THE INTERPRETER: Excuse me. Can  
you hear us?

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes. Thank  
you.

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MR. HOBERMAN: Yes.

7

THE INTERPRETER: Yes. Okay.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9

THE INTERPRETER: Okay. So he just  
said I'm here to demand a rent rollback. My rent is  
currently \$1,552.36. My retirement is only \$794.  
This is not enough to pay my rent. I'm 65 years old  
now and cannot continue to work in the construction  
industry. But because I need to pay my rent, I'm  
currently working part time to be able to afford to  
live. I did construction work my whole life. It  
took a toll. And I've had to have back surgery  
twice. I'm 65 and I deserve to retire. But now,  
because I need to pay my rent, I have to continue  
working. Chinatown has many tenants who experience  
harassment and eviction. If we don't pay the rent,  
we will be evicted. If we are evicted, we become  
homeless.

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When you raise the rent, you are  
raising the rent on elderly retirees like me. Do

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2 you want us to be on the streets and homeless? What  
3 do you want us to do? The Rent Guidelines board  
4 needs to consider retired tenants like me. We are  
5 demanding a rent rollback. Thank you.

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7

[Indiscernible] Let me next recognize Harvey

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Epstein.

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MR. EPSTEIN: All right. Thank you

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for letting me join. I want to really want to

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appreciate the work for the members of the Rent

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Guidelines Board. Some of you may know, I sat on

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the Rent guidelines board for five years as one of

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the tenant representatives, first under Mayor

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Bloomberg and then Mayor de Blasio. And so this is

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something that I'm very familiar with. It's

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something that I have worked on in my professional

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life.

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And along with 25 of my colleagues

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in the state assembly, we really took a position of

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looking at all the data, knowing what we've seen in

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Albany, knowing what the tenants and landlords have

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experienced in the last year, looking at the price

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index of operating costs, looking at tenant and

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affordability.

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2                   And we really believe that we need  
3 a rent freeze this year. And I understand there are  
4 concerns from the landlord side and there's  
5 concerns the tenant side. But the reality is every  
6 1% rent increase will result in additional  
7 evictions. And we've seen that and we're in the  
8 city with 90,000 homeless people, 45,000 new New  
9 Yorkers. We're busting at the seams and all our  
10 shelter system because we're we put 40,000 people  
11 in New Yorkers with migrants into our into our  
12 system.

13                   We've used every facility in my  
14 district and abandoned school and abandoned a  
15 police academy. You know, we're using a pool. I  
16 mean, every facility, because we have a crisis of  
17 that exists here in New York. And we as people who  
18 are public officials appointed to the rent guide  
19 board or people like me as a State Assembly Member,  
20 have to look at the entire picture and know the  
21 hardship that New Yorkers are facing. The reality  
22 is now is not the time for a rent increase. Now is  
23 not the time to have that experience. This is not  
24 something new. This is something that we see every  
25 day in our city. We have a responsibility to deal

1  
2 with the crisis of affordability. You have a  
3 responsibility to the Rent Guidelines board to make  
4 the best decision possible. And I know I've been  
5 there. I know you have the opportunity to do a rent  
6 freeze, and I encourage you to do that now. Thank  
7 you.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so  
9 much for joining us, Assembly member Epstein. Thank  
10 you.

11 MR. EPSTEIN: Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Let me next  
13 recognize Helen Greenberg.

14 MS. GREENBERG: Hi. Hi, everyone.  
15 Hi, my name is Helen Greenberg and I'm a third  
16 generation small property owner. In 1954, my  
17 grandfather, David Greenberg, and his brother Sam  
18 purchased our family building. After many decades  
19 of hard work, the hard work was painting  
20 apartments, collecting metal scraps, and finally  
21 running a hardware store.

22 They were the lucky ones out of  
23 their family, who fled Poland. My grandfather was  
24 born in 1896. In Poland, he was a victim of many  
25 forms of anti-Semitism and safety, worship and home

1  
2 ownership. Our building that we have is in the East  
3 Village. My kids went to the neighborhood schools,  
4 East Village Community School. Tompkins Square and  
5 Essex Street Academy and Ice. I'm trying to  
6 understand, like, how math became so political.  
7 Here are a few examples of math that I deal with.  
8 For now, property taxes increased by \$9,029. I left  
9 out since they just rounded up insurance increased  
10 by \$3,737 and the mortgage was raised an additional  
11 \$2,737 a month. That's a lot for us. I disagree  
12 with the current socialist officials who want to  
13 just really destroy private property ownership, but  
14 no private ownership and no property taxes.

15                   That pretty much equals no funding  
16 for schools, local governments or services. That's  
17 just the sentiment we feel as small property  
18 owners. And it's horrifying and scary and just  
19 disheartening. Okay, back to math. So we have many  
20 stabilized tenants that have been with us for  
21 decades and it's reflected in their rents. So let's  
22 say \$710, \$569, \$734. That doesn't cover anything  
23 like nothing, nothing, nothing. And the 2019 rent  
24 guidelines continues to so-called small property  
25 owners, rent freezes and Your increases will do the



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2 same. Thank you so much for your time and I wish  
3 there was housing for everyone. It's disheartening  
4 also hearing all these stories. I wish everyone  
5 well.

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so  
7 much. Thank you for joining us. Let me next  
8 recognize John Qui Li. We have translator.

9

THE INTERPRETER: Yes. Sorry we  
10 couldn't hear you. You could repeat. Thank you.  
11 Member of the Chinatown Tenants Union. I hope that  
12 [Indiscernible].

13

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Sorry. If you  
14 could try one more time. We heard the beginning,  
15 but if you could.

16

THE INTERPRETER: Okay. Can you  
17 hear me now?

18

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes, now I can  
19 hear you. Thank you.

20

THE INTERPRETER: Okay. Yeah. I'm  
21 a member of the Chinatown Tenants [Indiscernible]  
22 He said the vulnerable groups at the bottom of the  
23 [Indiscernible] I currently rely on my retirement  
24 of \$676 to live my life. This year. I'm 70 years.  
25 [Indiscernible].

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Apologies if you could try. Try one more time and move just a little bit closer to the center. Appreciate it. Thank you.

THE INTERPRETER: Yeah. Sorry.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Much better.

THE INTERPRETER: Okay. This year, he's 70 years old, and because of health reasons, he had to retire at 62. Mr. Li's current rent is \$1,320, and it's only going up along with the cost of living. Life is very difficult. The only way to live is to have roommates. But even this solution is not enough for the rent because his roommates are also retirees.

I currently pay 90% of my income to rent, and that's not counting gas, electric and bills. If my rent were to go up, I would have a really [Indiscernible] a hard time paying and be evicted and there will be one -- there are many retirees in Chinatown in similar situations as me. I demand the mayor and the Rent Guidelines Board us live a peaceful rest of our lives. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

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MR. MCLAUGHLIN: Sorry for the

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delay.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you,

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Andrew. And let me please recognize Jonathan Early.

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MR. EARLY: Hi there. How are you?

7

Good evening to everyone on the board and those

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watching at home. My name is Jonathan Early and I

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first moved to my current residence nine years ago

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as an incredibly poor paraprofessional in New York

11

City schools, and I'm have -- been happy to stay

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here as I grew into an older, less poor elementary

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school teacher teaching in the South Bronx. I owe

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this building a lot. I met my girlfriend, soon to

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be fiance here. I've made friends and recently been

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president of my building's tenant association. I've

17

been blessed to stay and turn this apartment into a

18

home solely based on the reasonable rent

19

stabilization laws. Otherwise, I would have had to

20

hop from building to building every year or two,

21

trying to find a place to stay afloat, a task

22

that's harder and harder every day.

23

Today, the Adams administration

24

proposed a 3% raise for all teachers. Inflation

25

last year was 7.5%, and proposed rent increases

1  
2 include potential raises of 5% and 7% respectively.  
3 It seems that this passes. I'll be going back to  
4 being once again to an incredibly poor teacher. The  
5 main problem I have with this proposal is that  
6 we're already paying for work that is not done. My  
7 current building has had multiple apartments that  
8 have already had their rent illegally raised,  
9 something we've only just realized digging through  
10 rent histories.

11 My current apartment has had rent  
12 jump of 160% just a few years before my girlfriend  
13 moved in, and soon they'll be allowed to increase  
14 it another 7% legally, you would think with the  
15 money we were paying, we wouldn't have to have fake  
16 cameras throughout the building. That's true.  
17 Broken security doors on the roof causing teenagers  
18 to play games where there's no protection.

19 Also, true, people able to break  
20 in and sleep in our basement, not to mention the  
21 multitude of apartments that have rats, leaks,  
22 roaches and more. But that's reality. By the way.  
23 This building is not an anomaly. We are a norm for  
24 most rent stabilized buildings right now. It's the  
25 equivalent of going to Peter Lugers ordering a full

1

2 steak dinner and only receiving a baked potato  
3 month after month. If there were efforts to improve  
4 our building, this would not be a problem. But  
5 instead we have to sue our management company that  
6 owns over 100 buildings.

7 Just yesterday I received a  
8 settlement check after four years of waiting and  
9 fighting, forcing me to put a lien on the building.  
10 Thank you very much. And please give teachers like  
11 me and other locals a chance to continue to live in  
12 our buildings. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.  
14 Thank you very much. Let me next recognize Peter  
15 Vekiarellis. Mr. Vekiarellis, if you are here.  
16 Please unmute and join us.

17 MR. VEKIARELLIS: Oh, can you  
18 hear me?

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes. Thank  
20 you.

21 MR. VEKIARELLIS: Yes, thank  
22 you. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name  
23 is Peter Vekiarellis and am a small property  
24 manager for a few buildings in New York City. As a  
25 property manager that doesn't own any rent

1

2 stabilized buildings, I feel I can be impartial to  
3 both the landlords and the tenants. I see the daily  
4 struggles of the tenants and the landlords.

5 I see how hard it is for tenants  
6 to get the resources and help they need because  
7 housing court is not operating at 100%. It's very  
8 hard for tenants to get the help they need. I hear  
9 them week after week going to court, seeking help  
10 and getting turned away as a result of not getting  
11 the rent paid. The landlords are having a hard time  
12 getting a mortgage or an equity line or turned down  
13 from the banks as the rental income can't support  
14 the mortgage at the current interest rates of about  
15 six and a half to 7% on commercial loans.

16 It's never been as hard to pay our  
17 bills. Property taxes are very high. Fuel is very  
18 high. Insurance premiums have gone up 10%.  
19 Construction costs is 30% higher. Rent hasn't kept  
20 up with the cost and it's many cases, landlords in  
21 many cases -- landlords are not getting rent for  
22 years. I have tenants that have not paid since  
23 February of 2019. The landlords, even though are  
24 not looking to evict them, they want to get their  
25 money paid.

1  
2                   They're not looking to evict  
3 anybody. They just want to continue getting their  
4 rent. None of my landlords -- I'm sorry, tenants  
5 have had issues connecting with support programs.  
6 This must change. But my landlords house many young  
7 families and seniors. We as landlords look out for  
8 both. Tenant activists decry when publicly traded  
9 real estate companies or corporate owners of  
10 private equity scoop up buildings and neighborhoods  
11 where we should have local ownership. But then when  
12 the same people are the ones supporting legislators  
13 who create policies that make it impossible for  
14 local owners to keep their buildings. There is an  
15 inconsistency. You can't have both. Landlords are  
16 providing affordable housing without a safety net.  
17 Government programs can help the tenants, but  
18 nothing for the landlords.

19                   CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20                   MR. VEKIARELLIS: Thank you.

21                   CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for  
22 your testimony.

23                   MR. VEKIARELLIS: Thank you.

24                   CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 Really appreciate it. Let me next recognize Yun

1

2 Chen.

3

THE INTERPRETER: Okay. Sorry. We  
4 need a second to configure.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: That's fine.  
6 Please take a moment.

7

THE INTERPRETER: Sorry. Lots of  
8 technical difficulties. And we will also be  
9 interpreting this one. Okay. It's not working. Hi,  
10 my name is Tanya. I'm a member of Organizing Asian  
11 Communities in Chinatown. Before I worked at a  
12 restaurant. Since the pandemic, there's been no  
13 work, and now I'm retired. For 26 years, I've lived  
14 in Chinatown. In the past, my rent was 640 a month.  
15 Now rent is \$1158. Now retired. If they hike up  
16 rents, how are we going to find the money to pay  
17 rent? If rent increases to \$1300, I don't have  
18 enough for rent. Electricity bills, phone bills  
19 added up. Don't have enough. Where am I going to  
20 find this money?

21

In New York. Tenants live  
22 difficult lives. Our living conditions are unsafe.  
23 So many people have lost their livelihoods. So many  
24 people share my experience. Mayor Adams, You need  
25 to account for working class people and roll back



1

2 the rent. Rent hikes are also a form of eviction.  
3 We as tenants have lived in New York for so long,  
4 we see our doctors here, we buy our groceries here.  
5 Our relatives, our friends are all here. Tenant's  
6 we must fight. We must unite to fight evictions.  
7 Rent rollback now. Thank you, everyone.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9

Thank you. Let me next recognize Carolyn Meckler.

10

MS. MECKLER: Can you hear me?

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes.

12

MS. MECKLER: Great. Thank you for

13

allowing me to speak today. I'm a small property

14

owner on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. I own

15

and manage a five unit building with my husband. We

16

live in the building and we don't take a salary for

17

maintaining the building. I raised two children in

18

the building who also helped me take care of the

19

building. So we run a lean and mean shop in.

20

In the 22 years I've managed this

21

building, I have never evicted a single tenant. I

22

know all my tenants and I work with them through

23

their struggling times. I sympathize with the

24

struggling tenants, but there are plenty of

25

programs available for truly struggling tenants. No

1  
2 fixed income senior should be forced to leave their  
3 home because they no longer can afford their  
4 apartments. This is why we have scire programs and  
5 I even had a tenant for 20 years. But there isn't  
6 an equivalent for landlords to scire in the 22  
7 years I've managed my building. I've started to say  
8 I'm sorry. In 2022, my building lost \$40,000 on a  
9 cash flow basis, primarily driven by facade work  
10 that could no longer be deferred.

11 Over the last five years, I've had  
12 to replace the sidewalk, exterior stairs and the  
13 boiler. This is the constant struggle of  
14 maintaining a building that was built in 1885. It  
15 must be done. It can't be left. Property taxes  
16 represent 32% of 2022 revenue and roughly 38% of my  
17 operating costs. Over the past ten years, my taxes  
18 have gone up 160% versus my revenue that's only  
19 gone up 137%. The gap between income and revenue  
20 isn't sustainable. Rent hikes is the only source of  
21 income and it's vital to small property owners. So  
22 that we can maintain our buildings and provide  
23 housing. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
25 much. Let me next recognize Council Member Gale

1

2 Brewer. Thank you.

3

MS. BREWER: Thank you very much.

4

I'm Gale Brewer. I represent the Upper West Side

5

and want to thank you for giving me this

6

opportunity. I know that and I just heard from the

7

previous speaker for whom I work because I

8

represent her area. I do own a building, so I do

9

know how the expenses go up. But I want to be very

10

clear. I support a rent freeze or rent reduction.

11

We know about inflation. We know that it's hard to

12

afford housing and to still have food and utilities

13

for so many tenants.

14

It's a choice and I really support

15

the tenants. The New York eviction moratorium

16

expired last year. My understanding is that there

17

are 260,000 eviction filings in court as of March

18

2023. And in the past, not really recently, but in

19

the past, this board has voted for large rent

20

hikes. They cannot do so this year. According to

21

the Community Services Society, a higher proportion

22

of tenants were threatened with eviction last year

23

than in the past 11 years. And I'm sure it has

24

something to do with the pandemic.

25

And of course, we also have, you

1  
2 know, challenging in our city the wonderful asylum  
3 seekers. But it doesn't help with the rent  
4 situation. We know that the New York State  
5 Emergency Rental Assistance Program, known as ERAP,  
6 did help some New Yorkers meet their rent payments,  
7 and the pandemic has subsided since then. But the  
8 hardships are long lasting and there are, you know,  
9 at least 450 -- 405,000 applications and \$3 billion  
10 in assistance obligated or paid out to the owners  
11 on behalf of tenants. Again, I know that it's never  
12 enough, but that those are the facts.

13 We got an increase in the cost of  
14 living. So guess what? I'm trying to say is my  
15 office is swamped with calls from people who cannot  
16 make the rent. We also have many seniors who  
17 understandably can get scried. And are she, in this  
18 case, scried if they make \$50,000 or less, but they  
19 are also swamped. So please do not increase the  
20 rent guidelines for amount the tenants have to pay.  
21 Thank you so much.

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so  
23 much. Let me next recognize Jeannie Dubnau.

24 MS. DUBNAU: Okay. Okay. Hi,  
25 everybody. So I'd like to answer some of the small

1

2 landlords points that they made. One is to Ms.  
3 Greenberg, who spoke before. Does she know or I  
4 think she does, that any owner who can establish  
5 that they're making less than 5% profit can get a  
6 rent increase if they open their books. But she  
7 doesn't do it. I've never heard of any small  
8 landlord who does it. And you on the RGB board all  
9 know this. You've known it for years.

10

To Carolyn Meckler, who has very  
11 -- go get a job. If you get a job, maybe you would  
12 work for a living and you'd get an income. If  
13 you're so worried about the low rents now we are in  
14 a public emergency. Homelessness in New York City  
15 has reached the highest levels since the Great  
16 Depression of the 1930's. There were nearly 70,000  
17 homeless people in December of 22, including 22,000  
18 children sleeping each night in the shelter system.  
19 Roughly one third of families in shelters are still  
20 working but are homeless. I'm not even talking  
21 about people on the street. So the rising rents,  
22 which we saw, Mayor Adams had an increase last year  
23 of 5%, is causing poverty. But you guys on the Rent  
24 Guidelines Board, you all know this. You all know  
25 this. We're not telling you anything new for

1

2 Christ's sake, if you increase rents, you're going  
3 to cause more homelessness, okay? You're going to  
4 put more people into shelters.

5

I'm a volunteer for a RENA  
6 Community Organization in Washington Heights. Our  
7 median household income is and this is new. This is  
8 what it is now, \$55,000 for a family of four. How  
9 much can such a family afford? One third of their  
10 income would be \$1529 Rent Guidelines Board. Help  
11 me find a two bedroom apartment in northern  
12 Manhattan for that amount. Okay. Can you do it? No,  
13 you can't. Housing is a human right, Like food and  
14 health care. The rents are too damn high. RGB  
15 rollback rents.

16

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
17 much. Let me next recognize Julie Hamlin, I believe  
18 is joining us by phone. And if you're speaking, Ms.  
19 Hamlin, if you could please unmute.

20

MS. BURGER: You might have to  
21 press star six to unmute yourself. Star six to  
22 unmute yourself.

23

MR. SOLTREN: And the host also  
24 just unmute them.

25

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I've just

1

2       tried to and I don't seem to have that capacity. I  
3       can ask to unmute but don't seem to be able to.  
4       There we go.

5

                  MS. HAMLIN:   Okay. Sorry about  
6       that. Thank you. I didn't know I had the power to  
7       change that. Can everyone hear?

8

                  CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:   Yes. Thank  
9       you.

10

                  MS. HAMLIN:   Okay. Well, I wanted  
11       to thank RGB for this opportunity to speak. I feel  
12       that you have the power to teach neglectful or  
13       abusive landlords to obey laws by not allowing rent  
14       increases. My brother and I live on the Upper West  
15       Side. We share an apartment in a building where  
16       management of the SRO have been dispersing unlawful  
17       chemicals, not limited to pesticides in our home  
18       and public access areas. They use unlicensed  
19       strangers, ex-convicts and other tenants. Despite  
20       inspections by air quality inspectors.

21

                  Six years of housing court in a  
22       lawsuit I didn't give up on and eight violations  
23       from city and state air quality agencies. They  
24       persist in doing this. They were found using mostly  
25       for not residential use. 15 illegal chemicals, 1 in

1

2 2020 was so lethal it could cause death if inhaled.  
3 New York State issued a violation with the warning  
4 they will face criminal prosecution in jail when  
5 court again in 2016.

6 I started this case to get it  
7 stopped and I learned that housing court judges  
8 power is limited. So without enforcement, it really  
9 hasn't stopped. I've reported every year since 2013  
10 with 311 complaints. Every effort I've ever made  
11 has led to no change. What's problematic right now  
12 is that I don't want the harassment and retaliation  
13 that has been happening just because I call 311 or  
14 filed, you know, again, in housing court and  
15 because of that, I live with a death threat and  
16 other other [Indiscernible] Hello? Hello?

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes, we can  
18 hear you. If you could please wrap up your stuff.  
19 Thank you.

20 MS. HAMLIN: I was just. I was  
21 going to say that nothing's changed, and we just  
22 ask that you not grant SRO hotels rent increases  
23 given their abuse of tenants. There's no escape  
24 from the air we breathe. It's like breathing an  
25 invisible fire, which everyone can relate to right



1

2 now because of what's going on in the city. And  
3 that is something that is not -- to me, not an  
4 acceptable. I pay my rent. I pay. I haven't been  
5 late.

6 I've been paying in advance. But  
7 not giving rent increases is one way the RGB can  
8 influence change. The EPA Toxicologists warned that  
9 what we inhale we cannot take back and that as we  
10 age, disease comes. So please, I urge this board to  
11 not allow Dexter House to have rent increase or any  
12 SRO in this city where people are on very low  
13 income and, you know, have affordable housing, rent  
14 stabilized, protected apartments. Please consider  
15 that. Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
17 much. Appreciate it. Let me next recognize Jesse  
18 Sutton.

19 MR. SUTTON: Okay. Thank you so  
20 much for giving me this opportunity to speak. My  
21 name is Jesse Sutton. The definition of insanity is  
22 doing the same thing over and over again and  
23 expecting a different result. And I say that  
24 because since 1969, rent stabilization laws have  
25 been in effect. That's what we mentioned before.

1

2 And there's been a rent crisis since 1969 as we've  
3 been taking supply off of the market. The rents  
4 have been going up on every free market unit. I  
5 really, I own one building in Brooklyn Heights. 16  
6 units stabilized. I've been losing money for the  
7 last three years.

8 I appreciate Ms. Dubnau giving us  
9 some advice on how to collect that 5%, how to  
10 collect the increase on buildings that don't make  
11 5%. We're averaging 40 to 50% of collections a  
12 month. That's -- it's impossible to survive as a  
13 building owner. It's impossible to keep a building  
14 alive.

15 So there's two aspects here. I've  
16 been coming out of pocket every single year since  
17 we bought this building, taking food off my table  
18 to support this property. If we don't get the  
19 necessary rent increases, tenants will be living in  
20 much more dire situations. It comes down to our  
21 ability to afford it, and if we can afford it, we  
22 will do it. And I think I can speak on behalf of  
23 all landlords here. If we can do it, if we can  
24 afford it, we will spend it. I think that's what it  
25 comes down to. But when it comes down to. Not

1  
2 getting rent increases. Not getting rent increases  
3 over the last ten years. It's been very challenging  
4 for us. We need help and we're relying on the RGB  
5 to help us and wish we can all work together and  
6 figure out a proper platform to solve the rent  
7 crisis in New York City. I don't think it's rent  
8 stabilization, but we do need an increase. Thank  
9 you.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
11 much. Let me recognize Jeremy Kaplan.

12 MR. KAPLAN: Yeah. Yes. Hi. I'm a  
13 rent stabilized tenant in Sunset Park for the last  
14 12 years, and I just wanted to say that my building  
15 that I'm in is a prime example. We've been hearing  
16 a lot about small landlords, and I know that this  
17 board is saying that they're dealing with data.  
18 Small landlords do not own the majority of the rent  
19 regulated apartments. Just fix it. Had it at least,  
20 you know, only 9% were owned by one person. So a  
21 lot of these landlords who are speaking don't  
22 really speak for the majority of the landlords. I  
23 actually unfortunately, my building is a prime  
24 example of what we're seeing is corporate landlords  
25 benefiting from rent increases, pushing out

1

2 tenants.

3

4 And I think that it's  
5 unconscionable to put these sort of numbers and  
6 data people's profits over the fact that people  
7 need stable housing. And that's what rent  
8 stabilization is for. I think it's incredible to  
9 sort of hear that. Rent stabilized apartments. The  
10 whole point is stability for people who cannot  
11 afford market rents. And what we're seeing  
12 basically is that corporate landlords like people  
13 who own my building, the majority of the buildings  
14 are owned by big corporate landlords.

15

16 That basically a 5% rent increase  
17 is nothing to them, but it is evictions to so many  
18 tenants. And we're talking already you've heard  
19 260,000 eviction cases. You cannot do this to  
20 people. And the question is, why would you side  
21 with that when you're supposed to be dealing with  
22 data? That's what we've been hearing from Eric  
23 Adams. I know who Eric Adams is and I know that he  
24 deals and parties with landlords. That's his  
25 prerogative. I think you as a rent guidelines board  
need to be dealing with data and information. What  
is the best way to keep people housed? It's to keep

1

2       them in rent stabilized apartments that are  
3       affordable for them. We know how expensive it is to  
4       force people out of their homes to try to find  
5       housing. And then also on top of it --

6                       CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:   Thank you.

7                       MR. KAPLAN:   -- how expensive the  
8       shelter systems are that is evicted, people are  
9       forced into. So right now, to me, it's  
10      unconscionable to have this sort of false  
11      equivalency. Small landlords are a very, very minor  
12      part of this equation and their profits do not  
13      matter. It's really about corporate landlords and  
14      you're just providing slush funds for them. Those  
15      are the corporate landlords that got plenty of  
16      money during ERAP and --

17                      CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:   Thank you for  
18      your testimony.

19                      MR. KAPLAN:   -- it's  
20      unconscionable to me to be sitting here talking  
21      about how we have to justify not keeping people in  
22      their homes --

23                      CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:   Thank you.

24                      MR. KAPLAN:   -- in the middle of a  
25      pandemic when people have not got the relief that

1

2 they needed, when people have not rebounded from  
3 the pandemic. So I think right now the real  
4 question is, are you going to continue to keep  
5 greasing a system that works for landlords or are  
6 you say --

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: We have a  
8 number of speakers we'd love to hear from. Thank  
9 you.

10

MR. KAPLAN: Okay. Well, I think  
11 rent, rollback, rent rollback.

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
13 much. Let me next recognize Robert Lee.

14

MR. LEE: All right. Thank you so  
15 much for giving me this opportunity to speak to the  
16 last gentleman that just spoke. There's there's  
17 fewer smaller landlords because the bigger  
18 landlords are buying us up like hotcakes. We are  
19 not able to sustain through all this. And first,  
20 let me give a complaint to the panel. Don't know  
21 why the politicians get to speak first, but we all  
22 have to wait. They make their own schedules, but  
23 the tenants and landlords here have to take time  
24 out from their day for this meeting. Several of  
25 these politicians have spoke today rent. So that is

1

2 called a conflict.

3

4 That is a conflict of interest. We  
5 don't have these meetings for the price of eggs  
6 that have skyrocketed. The cost of eggs go up, the  
7 groceries have to raise it. It's -- that's the end  
8 of it. Our expenses go up 10 to 30% each year on  
9 top of that. We have more regulation. We have lead  
10 abatement, among other things, that lead abatement  
11 in some of these buildings are a fortune. Heat in  
12 the 2021 to 2022 season increased about 35 to 40%.  
13 I just want to -- Assembly Member Rosenfeld speaks  
14 of large owners making all this money, but she  
15 doesn't speak about the small owners.

16

17 Councilmember Brewer says that,  
18 you know, she she sides with the increases that  
19 we've absorbed over the past few years. But what  
20 have any of these politicians done about capping  
21 our expenses? They just took the largest salary  
22 increases of any politicians in the country. I  
23 don't know. Tenants here should be calling their  
24 offices and ask why they accepted these increases.  
25 We are a private industry and we should not have to  
subsidize because of policy failures in this state.  
The tenants have the 2001 nine HSDPA. We have a 2

1

2 to 3 backlog in courts. Thanks. Thank you very  
3 much.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
5 much. Let me next recognize Virginia Crawford.

6

MS. CRAWFORD: Okay. How are we  
7 doing? Oh, we better do it vertical. Okay. There we  
8 go. Hi there. My name is Virginia. That on? Okay.  
9 Hi there. My name is Virginia Crawford. And I just  
10 want to say that what I see happening in my  
11 building in the West Village is that dozens of rent  
12 stabilized tenants have been forced out as a result  
13 of conditions created by a predatory investor. The  
14 inhumane conditions. These inhumane conditions are  
15 intentionally created by the investors in order to  
16 ensure that tenants surrender their apartments or  
17 that we stop paying rent and land in housing court.

18

This is an investor playbook that  
19 threatens our health, safety, financial security  
20 and our ability to save our homes of our own. I am  
21 continually shocked at what we have tolerated in  
22 this city. None of this is simply the old landlord  
23 tenant dispute. The city and state have been  
24 complicit in undermining rent stabilization when  
25 enforcement only results in fines that pale in



1  
2 comparison to the profits to be made. Tenants will  
3 never be safe. What we should be talking about are  
4 good cause eviction protections and massive buyout  
5 programs for tenants in highly stressed properties,  
6 not a rent increase that will result in increasing  
7 the value of these properties at the cost of  
8 vulnerable tenants, not a rent increase for the  
9 investors who ignore the human suffering in their  
10 properties.

11 According to the United Nations,  
12 the definition of forced evictions can be broadly  
13 defined as the permanent or temporary removal  
14 against their will of individuals, families or  
15 communities from the homes or land which they  
16 occupy without the provision and access to  
17 appropriate forms of legal and other protections.

18 This is not just a housing crisis.  
19 This is a humanitarian crisis. Harassment can be  
20 considered a violation of human rights and treated  
21 as such by law. Please consider a rent freeze or  
22 rollback until the human rights of tenants have  
23 been secured in New York City. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 Next, recognize Shu Zhen Liu. Let me try that

1

2 again. Let me recognize Shu Zhen Liu.

3

THE INTERPRETER: Hi. We were  
4 going to interpretation for this as well.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Of course.  
6 We'll wait.

7

THE INTERPRETER: Hello, My name  
8 is Liu Shu Zhen. I have lived in Manhattan's  
9 Chinatown for 25 years and am a member of the  
10 Chinatown Tenants Union. My rent is \$1675. My  
11 retirement income is only \$630. I can't afford my  
12 rent. It's more than my income. I think that the  
13 mayor, Mayor Adams, is increasing the rent because  
14 he is a landlord. I can't afford my rent, and I  
15 have to prepare to sublease. I don't want to be  
16 homeless. I don't want to leave Chinatown. This is  
17 my neighborhood, my community's neighborhood.

18

This is where I go to the doctors  
19 and do my groceries. Before Mayor Adams got  
20 elected, he said he would help poor people. He said  
21 he was poor, working class people, but once he got  
22 elected, he turned sour. He doesn't care about us.  
23 He only cares about being a landlord and making his  
24 money. So us poor people, if you continues like  
25 this, we will kick him out of office. He keeps

1

2 increasing the rent before Adams, the rent has  
3 never missed months before. So us poor people, we  
4 don't know what else to do.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6

Thank you very much. Let me next recognize Ann

7

Korchak.

8

MS. KORCHAK: Hi. Good evening.

9

I'm the Korchak and Stegen family has been

10

operating 210 unit buildings on the Upper West Side

11

for decades. The first building was purchased in

12

1941 and the second was purchased in the early 60s.

13

I mentioned this to make the point that we are

14

dedicated operators and committed to New York City.

15

My mother in law and her brother

16

attended Blessed Sacrament School there in the

17

neighborhood, and my niece and nephew were also

18

baptized at that parish. So we have deep roots in

19

the Upper West Side. Members of the fourth

20

generation of our family are now living in the

21

building. We have tenants that knew their great

22

grandparents, but these children, you know, of

23

ours, never knew them.

24

Each year I come to speak at a

25

hearing so that you will get to hear firsthand the

1  
2 challenges families like ours face as small  
3 building operators in New York City. Our largest  
4 expense by far is property tax. It's a hidden tax  
5 on every New York City renter, whether regulated or  
6 fair market. When the pandemic began, the tax bill  
7 for our ten unit building was \$77,000. This year,  
8 it's \$93,000. That's a 20% increase. I need to  
9 collect \$775 per month per apartment just to cover  
10 the property taxes. Several of our regulated units  
11 have rent below that number. Add on utilities and  
12 insurance and need an additional \$275 per month per  
13 apartment to cover those base operating expenses.

14           Again, have units with rents below  
15 that amount. Utilities is another expense that is  
16 largely beyond our control. Con Ed recently  
17 announced yet another rent increase in February of  
18 2020. It cost \$1,800 to provide heat and hot water  
19 at a cost of about \$1.50 per therm. This February  
20 that monthly bill was \$2,300, at nearly \$2.66 per  
21 therm. I'm here as a reminder to you all that  
22 housing has costs and those rents must rise to  
23 cover those costs. This realistic position is not  
24 popular, but that doesn't change the truth that as  
25 operating expenses rise, so must rent. Thank you

1

2 for your attention.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
4 much. Let me next recognize Christopher Athneos.

5

MR. ATHNEOS: Thank you for giving  
6 me the opportunity to testify. I must say I was  
7 disappointed after testifying for decades in the  
8 past that I wasn't granted a safe space to testify  
9 as other property owners because of the events that  
10 happened at the initial meeting. And I hope that in  
11 the future we can all have a safe space to debate  
12 respectfully with decorum so that we give the RGB  
13 and all the members of the RGB, tenant members,  
14 owner members and public members the respect that  
15 they deserve.

16

My family and I have owned and  
17 operated apartment buildings in Brooklyn for over  
18 50 years. My parents still live in and operate the  
19 building in which they live, and we're good owners.  
20 Our buildings are like a small community, a little  
21 small city. We all look out for each other. The  
22 tenants are our friends. We look to provide good  
23 and safe, affordable housing.

24

And we -- this is not just this  
25 board's responsibility, but on all the prior boards

1  
2 before you, especially in the last ten years, we've  
3 been neglecting and underfunding and defunding our  
4 housing. And we are at the breaking point. The  
5 board does not look at the PIOC, does not consider  
6 a lead paint abatement. It's not in the policy.  
7 There's nothing in the policy that says about lead  
8 paint abatement yet. We have to abide by these  
9 mandates. It takes over a month or two months to  
10 get the apartment abated on vacancy tested,  
11 retested and re rented. This is lost income for  
12 property owners.

13                   And if any of the tenants on the  
14 testified here actually came into these apartments,  
15 they would see there's nothing wrong. There's no  
16 reason that had to be abated yet we have to comply  
17 with the law and this costs money. And this board  
18 needs to recognize those mandates, energy  
19 efficiencies. We are getting fined if we don't  
20 abide by the renting -- and rent mandates, you  
21 know, for energy efficiencies. So I would ask that  
22 the board recognize those costs.

23                   CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
24 much.

25                   MR. ATHNEOS: Thank you.

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let me next recognize Brenda Irizary.

3

4

MS. IRIZARY: Yes, good evening.

5

My name is Brenda Irizary and I'm a member of

6

Tenants and Neighbors and also a member of the

7

Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition. I

8

have lived at 3215 Bainbridge Avenue for 41 years

9

as a rent stabilized tenant. My landlord is Brandon

10

Yasgur. I am urging the board to consider no rent

11

increases and a rent rollback for the following

12

reasons. Many tenants are paying more than 30% of

13

their income towards rent. Many tenants are facing

14

evictions in court without right to counsel.

15

There's food insecurity due to inflation and cuts

16

to extra SNAP benefits. A health care crisis caused

17

by medical debt and drug prices.

18

Currently, I pay 30.8% of my

19

monthly fixed income towards rent. I also pay more

20

for my con ed bill because of inadequate heat

21

during the winter. A rent increase based on paying

22

more and getting less services is unacceptable. In

23

closing, rent increases will cause more evictions,

24

homelessness and families doubling up in

25

apartments. I urge this board to give tenants

1

2 relief, not grief. Thank you.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4

Next, recognize Anna Maria Parlanti.

5

MS. PARLANTI: Good evening to

6

all. The small company I represent has owned and

7

operated rent stabilized apartment buildings for

8

over 50 years. The past few years have been

9

extremely difficult for the business, which is why

10

we stand before you today asking for a fair annual

11

increase.

12

The recent passage of various

13

local laws, such as 31 and 97, require landlords to

14

spend hundreds and thousands of dollars on top of

15

regular maintenance costs in order to make the

16

necessary changes to remain code compliant. While

17

we fully agree with the passage of the

18

aforementioned laws, we also desperately need more

19

funds to abide by them. Funds which can only be

20

obtained through the passage of a fair annual

21

increase by the Rent Guidelines Board. Property

22

owners are not only struggling to fund changes

23

stipulated by new local laws, but are also having a

24

hard time staying afloat in the face of rising

25

everyday maintenance costs.



1  
2                   The costs of everything that is  
3 required to maintain a building, including property  
4 taxes, water insurance, labor and materials has  
5 skyrocketed in recent years, which has largely been  
6 caused by inflation. The rent law passed in 2019  
7 caps individual apartment improvement costs at  
8 \$15,000 for an \$83.33 cent increase for landlords.  
9 It was difficult to renovate a vacant apartment to  
10 code with \$15,000 then, but it is absolutely  
11 impossible to do so now given the rise of material  
12 and labor costs.

13                   This is why warehousing apartments  
14 has unfortunately become a huge problem in our  
15 city. It's also imperative to note that the average  
16 age of the properties under our jurisdiction is 90  
17 years old, and the amount of money needed to  
18 maintain them increases every year, even without  
19 growing inflation. This is why we ask the board to  
20 vote in favor of a 5% increase for one year leases.  
21 In the absence of other forms of assistance for  
22 property owners, the only way to keep affordable  
23 housing safe is through passage of a fair annual  
24 increase. Thank you so much.

25                   CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let

1

2 me next recognize Liang Ming Xue.

3

4 THE INTERPRETER: My name is  
5 Shirley Young. And am a Chinatown tenant leader  
6 with organizing Asian communities. This year I am  
7 over 70 years old. I've lived in Chinatown for over  
8 20 years right now. My rent is more than 1000 over  
9 200% of my retirement savings each month. In order  
10 to afford rent, I need to rely on friends and  
11 relatives. I don't understand why the Rent  
12 Guidelines Board has been proposing such high rent  
13 increases just to afford each year's rent hikes.

13

14 Us tenants face tremendous  
15 difficulties in our everyday lives. Now, we not  
16 only face skyrocketing cost of living increases,  
17 but we also face these rent hikes. We are poor and  
18 working class people. How are we supposed to live?  
19 If we can't afford rent, then we're at risk of  
20 evictions. We don't want this. We refuse this.  
21 That's right. Mayor Adams, members of the Rent  
22 Guidelines Board, you only think of how the  
23 pandemic has impacted landlords.

23

24 Let me remind you, tenants, too,  
25 have been impacted by the pandemic. Pay close  
attention. Right now, inflation is skyrocketing,

1

2 yet our incomes remain fixed. The mayor and the  
3 board need to account for working class people.  
4 Have they thought about what we must face, how  
5 difficult our lives are? Our living conditions are  
6 deteriorating. We are struggling on the poverty  
7 line. We must demand rollback, rollback, rollback,  
8 the rent. Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let  
10 me next recognize Marcelino Lake.

11 MR. LAKE: Thank you, sir. We  
12 start the video here. Ah, yes. I'm so sorry. Yes.  
13 Good evening, all. My name is Marcelino Lake. Born  
14 and raised in Brooklyn, New York. My family has  
15 owned a property in Brooklyn since the 1960s.  
16 Immigrated here from the Caribbean, raised four  
17 children here and in Brooklyn and had family  
18 members live in our buildings myriad. We we  
19 supported. We start rent control, rent,  
20 stabilization.

21 And what I want to speak on  
22 tonight is I manage my buildings very well. I  
23 maintain my buildings very well. I'm sorry for the  
24 myriad of of landlords who have abused the system,  
25 take advantage of tenants and don't provide the

1  
2 services that tenants deserve. I'm not one of them.  
3 I try and provide the best services for my tenants.  
4 I was raised that way. I worked in these buildings  
5 growing up. I have the sweat equity in these  
6 properties.

7                   It was able -- it afforded us to  
8 go to college and afford a nice lifestyle  
9 Immigrating here from from the islands but to be  
10 honest, there's to -- and speaking for the tenants,  
11 there are myriad of programs in the city. City  
12 folks I'm advised through my building manager,  
13 through my brokers and myriad of programs in the  
14 city that can help tenants in arrears. Help tenants  
15 keep up with their rents and actually help tenants  
16 with rent increases.

17                   These programs do not exist for  
18 for for property owners and the expenses. It's  
19 expensive to own a building. That's just the bottom  
20 line. That's just -- that's -- we signed up for  
21 that. I have no problem with that. But it's  
22 expensive to own a building. The fees, the  
23 utilities expenses, the maintenance. So I have to  
24 advocate for a rent increase so I can provide  
25 quality services for my tenants and for my -- and

1

2 quality employment for my building staff. Thank  
3 you.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so  
5 much. Really appreciate it. We are going to now  
6 take a brief break and we will return and continue  
7 with the testimony in ten minutes. Thank you.

8

(Recess taken.)

9

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Welcome back.  
10 Thank you. Why don't we begin? Thank you. Let me  
11 recognize Kaylee Farrish.

12

MS. FARRISH: Yeah. Hi, everyone.  
13 Good evening. My name is Kaylee Farrish. Give us a  
14 second here. We're going to get the feedback off.  
15 Okay. Hi, everybody. Good evening. My name is  
16 Kaylee Farrish. I'm a tenant here joining from a  
17 very packed tenant party here. I'm a tenant in  
18 Manhattan.

19

Though noted, a number of  
20 landlords from Brooklyn have already spoken. I'm  
21 not lucky enough to be in a rent stabilized  
22 building, but am a renter. I've been a renter the  
23 entire time that I've lived in New York City. Last  
24 year, my rent went up 50%, five zero. It went up  
25 again this year.

1  
2 My rent increase from 2021 to  
3 2023. The increase alone is more than I have ever  
4 spent on rent in my entire life. We are in a  
5 specific housing crisis and I have to tell you,  
6 it's something else to sit here in community in  
7 solidarity with people here who are living paycheck  
8 to paycheck and see landlords get on here who have  
9 inherited their buildings, living on  
10 intergenerational wealth with complaints about  
11 \$10,000 increases in property taxes.

12 We know from the Assembly members  
13 submitted testimony, that nearly 90% of rent  
14 stabilized units in New York City come from  
15 landlords that own over 100 units. And we have  
16 landlords here today who are saying that they are  
17 small property owners.

18 And I can Google and see that you  
19 own five buildings in Brooklyn, you own 16 units.  
20 It's a level of wealth that is unimaginable to  
21 renters. So I'm sorry that some of you are feeling  
22 a little bit of a squeeze. We are trying to figure  
23 out how we are going to pay rent and stay in our  
24 homes. Housing is a human right and the fixed  
25 incomes that many of us are living on right now are

1  
2 insufficient. And it's really difficult to get in  
3 here and see folks speaking about this like it's an  
4 abstract thing. Okay, property taxes are  
5 increasing. Great. We are not here to subsidize  
6 your investment decisions or the way you manage  
7 your generational wealth. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Me  
9 next. Recognize Ricky Baker Kush.

10 MS. KEUSCH: My name is Ricky  
11 Baker Keusch and I'm a Queens tenant. Thank you for  
12 allowing us to testify virtually. My dad spent his  
13 childhood in Mitchell-lama housing, and I grew up  
14 in a rent stabilized apartment in Forest Hills  
15 where my parents and brothers still live. After  
16 graduating with my master's degree, I couldn't  
17 afford a market rate apartment in the neighborhoods  
18 where I grew up, but was lucky enough to get into a  
19 rent stabilized apartment elsewhere in Queens.

20 I thought this would be simply my  
21 first New York apartment. It's a one bedroom  
22 without much natural light. All the windows face  
23 the building next door. That's so close I can watch  
24 my neighbor's TV. There's no breeze or a laundry  
25 room, but it's a great community and a great first

1

2 apartment in New York City.

3

4 It's just not where I can raise  
5 the next generation of Queens kids. But looking at  
6 my neighbor's rent, I feel trapped. My partner and  
7 I already spend over 30% of our income on rent,  
8 like the 80% of New Yorkers who are housing  
9 burdened. But we can't afford to move. New rent  
10 stabilized units proposed in our neighborhood are  
11 more expensive and rare to get, even though we only  
12 moved into our apartment in 2019. Many market rate  
13 apartments are double what we pay, and the costs  
14 keep increasing. Like most rent stabilized tenants.

14

15 Our landlord is an LLC that owns  
16 dozens of buildings across the city. The  
17 corporations are doing fine, but even when I have  
18 been a city and state government employee working  
19 my hardest to make New York work for New Yorkers, I  
20 have struggled to make rent.

20

21 My sister just moved out of our  
22 parents apartment and pays more than I do for a  
23 small studio farther from public transit. My family  
24 is being priced out of Queens, of New York and of  
25 our home. The rent has been too damn high in New  
26 York my entire life. My parents are unlikely to



1  
2 ever retire. I don't know how my brother will be  
3 able to move out of their place when he graduates  
4 Queens College in 2025. I'm nearly 30 and don't  
5 know if my partner and I will be -- will ever be  
6 able to afford a two bedroom and don't know how  
7 we're supposed to even consider having kids. A  
8 report by the Fund for New York City found half of  
9 all city households do not make enough to meet the  
10 minimum cost of living. When the economic situation  
11 across our city, state, country and globally is so  
12 dire for my generation and the generations to come,  
13 how can we pay rent and pay back our student loans?

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15 MS. KEUSCH: How can we afford  
16 healthy food and medical care for chronic  
17 illnesses? We develop from novel viruses like Covid  
18 19 or unsafe polluted air when we're spending 30 to  
19 50% or more on rent. The Rent Guidelines Board  
20 original charge is to ensure that rent remains  
21 affordable and not to protect landlords profits.  
22 Please don't raise our rent when we can't afford  
23 it.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
25 much. Let me next recognize Adrian Crystal.

1

2

MS. GERSTEL: Thank you very much.

3

I always find these meetings extremely

4

illuminating. I have -- I bought this building. My

5

husband and I bought this building in 1980, so

6

that's 43 years ago. It's a -- was a six unit rent

7

stabilized apartment. We brought our children up in

8

this building, and it was extremely important that

9

we had and have a relationship with the people who

10

live in this building. Three of the tenants have --

11

two of the tenants have lived here over 40 years,

12

one of them about 39 years. During the time one of

13

the tenants I want to give you another view of a

14

landlord. Okay. A small property owner. And so he

15

was having a financial difficulties for three

16

years.

17

I worked with him for three years

18

so that he could pay what he could. There was a

19

point where he said, I can either pay my health

20

insurance, my credit cards or my rent. And I said,

21

there is no way you're going to mess around with

22

your health insurance. I am lending you the money

23

for your health insurance that I did for a friend

24

of his was rather upset about that and really

25

started helping out pay the rent. This is somebody

1

2 who's been here for more than 40 years at this  
3 point is fully solvent.

4

I want to say that I am not  
5 retired because I own a building. My husband is not  
6 retired and he is going to be 80. There is a limit  
7 to how long we can sustain the amounts that we are.  
8 There's a lot to the story, but thank you very,  
9 very much.

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.  
11 Thank you. Let me next recognize let me next  
12 recognize Stephanie Paer.

13

MS. PAER: Hello? Can everyone  
14 hear me?

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes, thank  
16 you.

17

MS. PAER: Good evening. My name  
18 is Stephanie and I am born and raised in Brooklyn  
19 and I am a Case Manager. I have been working in  
20 nonprofit for about seven years. And the rent  
21 increases are just insane. If they are approved, my  
22 rent will go up almost \$100 and I cannot afford  
23 that. That means that I might have to go into  
24 shelter, with my clients. So I just don't  
25 understand.

1

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25

You know, last year we had an increase during the pandemic. You know, you landlords, the managements were doing all these deals, so you were able to decrease the rent. So what is -- what's the difference now? Because everyone came back, all the gentrifiers, all the money came back and now you see an opportunity.

But for us New Yorkers, us people living, it's not sustainable. And I understand you have costs, but owning a building is a luxury. Get another job like you tell us. I work two jobs and I could still barely to -- I could barely afford my rent. I have had mice in my apartment that I had to go fight to get a repairs. I had to fight to get a rent reduction because of all the repairs that were not done.

And then to sit there and say, we have to now increase your rent \$100 and I know my rent is cheaper than a lot of people. So some people are going 2, \$300 and I just can't I cannot sit here and listen to landlords complain that you have no money when for years before gentrification happened, everything was okay. So do you know I get it. But unfortunately, the people are going to be

1

2 homeless and you are always going to have tenants.  
3 You're always going to have people coming in. Thank  
4 you.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let  
6 me next recognize Gabriela Murillo. Thank you very  
7 much. If you could please hold on for a moment. We  
8 are trying to identify an interpreter.

9

THE INTERPRETER: Can I? I can  
10 interpret for her.

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I would  
12 greatly appreciate that we had a little bit of a  
13 glitch with the simultaneous translation. I greatly  
14 appreciate it.

15

THE INTERPRETER: Yes, of course.  
16 Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Gabriela  
17 Murillo and I'm a member of Make the Road, New  
18 York. I live in Queens. And as a rent stabilized  
19 apartment, I have lived there for 12 years with my  
20 four children. I pay more than 30% of my income in  
21 rent, and these contemplated increases will help my  
22 landlord evict us, something that he has already  
23 been trying to do through constructions and  
24 intimidation.

25

The building where I live has 44

1

2 open violations. It seems unfair to me that  
3 although my rent continues to increase year after  
4 year, the conditions are still not as good and it  
5 is unfair. In the spring of 2022, a new owner  
6 bought the property. After this, the landlord  
7 refused to give me my lease, even though it is my  
8 right.

9                   Soon after, Mr. Mola, the owner of  
10 the property, began demolishing the empty  
11 apartments in the building without prior notice to  
12 the tenants who were living there. It was a very  
13 harmful situation for my family because my children  
14 have asthma and the place was full of dust and in  
15 the middle of construction, when I asked the  
16 landlord to please do something to control the  
17 construction areas, he refused.

18                   And then as if nothing had  
19 happened, so I had to file a complaint and it  
20 turned out that he did not even have the permits to  
21 do the construction. As I have defended myself, the  
22 landlord continues to harass me to leave. They  
23 don't claim the building.

24                   We have rats and cockroaches and  
25 they still want to raise our rent. It's unfair. The

1

2 rents are already excessively high, and if there  
3 are landlords who continue to buy buildings, it is  
4 because the current rents already give them a  
5 substantial profit. Where are we going to get more  
6 money every year to stay afloat? I ask you, as  
7 board members who support tenants to stop helping  
8 destroy communities, we can't keep sustaining these  
9 huge increases.

10 Where is my family and I going to  
11 go? And thousands of families who can't afford  
12 these proposed increases. No more increments,  
13 please. Enough of all this abuse. And as my little  
14 sister said, please, we want to -- let's not lose  
15 our home, please. We don't want to become another  
16 member. Like another number in the statistics for  
17 homelessness in New York City. Thank you for all  
18 your attention.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you so  
20 much. Thank you. We're going to pause for a moment.  
21 We're just we want to make sure we have the Spanish  
22 to English translation. Andrew, if you could let me  
23 know when we're ready to continue.

24 MR. HOBERMAN: Okay. I've been  
25 speaking to the interpreters. They apologize. It

1

2 was an issue. I think it's everything should be  
3 working now.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay, great.  
5 Thank you, Brian. Let me then recognize Delsenia  
6 Glover. And discover if you could please unmute.

7

MS. GLOVER: Oh, so sorry. Oh, so  
8 sorry. I'm Delsenia Glover live at the Lenox  
9 Terrace complex in Harlem and I'm a member and  
10 leader of the tenants Association at Lenox Terrace.  
11 First, we are deeply disappointed that this Rent  
12 Guidelines Board did not see fit this year to hold  
13 an in-person meeting where tenant testimony in  
14 Manhattan when previous to the pandemic there were  
15 two one downtown and one in central Harlem where  
16 our tenants could come and look the board in the  
17 eye.

18

There are six buildings at Lenox  
19 Terrace and were erected in the 50s and 60s. It has  
20 722 units in the complex, housing more than 3000  
21 people. The owners of Lenox Terrace and rent  
22 regulated landlords across the city do not deserve  
23 a rent increase because most make a great deal of  
24 profit, and they do so with nominal maintenance to  
25 rent stabilized apartments.



1  
2                   The tenant association here  
3 receives complaints constantly about the amount of  
4 time it takes to receive the most basic repairs.  
5 Longtime rent stabilized tenants are living in  
6 apartments that have the same white painted metal  
7 kitchen cabinets on the walls, same medicine  
8 cabinets and fixtures and bathrooms and flooring  
9 from when the buildings were first built more than  
10 60 years ago.

11                   It can take two years or more to  
12 get a refrigerator or stove replacement. There's a  
13 significant senior population in Lenox Terrace, so  
14 much so that it should be in. Many of most, if not  
15 most seniors are living on fixed incomes but may  
16 not be eligible for Scrie because their income may  
17 be slightly more than 50k -- \$50,000. The kinds of  
18 increases that you are proposing this year or any  
19 increase after last year's increases.

20                   Maybe what will finally put them  
21 out on the street and escalate the already existing  
22 and devastating homeless crisis. Landlords are not  
23 suffering. We tenants, are. We tenants asked for a  
24 rent freeze. We believe that that is the only just  
25 and equitable thing to do. Thank you for the

1

2 opportunity to testify here today.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let  
4 me next recognize Angel Bowers. Who's joining us by  
5 phone. And if you're speaking, if you could please  
6 unmute. Thank you.

7

MS. BOWERS: Hello.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Here we go. We  
9 can hear you now.

10

MS. BOWERS: I'm sorry. I need one  
11 second because I'm cooking, but I'm sorry.

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: That's okay.

13

MS. BOWERS: Okay. Hi, everyone.  
14 Good evening. My name is Angel Bowers, and I'm a  
15 tenant at Claredon Gardens. There should not be an  
16 increase in rent because my children and I have  
17 been sick from long term mold exposure, something  
18 that should never have happened. And instead of  
19 addressing the issues of leaks and floods from  
20 above me leading to mold growth, growing inside the  
21 walls, ceilings of my apartment, they chose to  
22 ignore it.

23

Instead, we were left to we were  
24 left to breathe and mold spores and Michael toxins  
25 that are detrimental to our health. They refused to

1

2 remove the damaged walls and ceilings. It took me  
3 three and a half years to finally get the work done  
4 by taking them to court and finding an  
5 environmentalist to inspect my home. We had to live  
6 under hazardous conditions and still are to this  
7 day.

8 I have more growth that keeps  
9 coming back inside my toilet tank as well as sewage  
10 odors and and gardens refuse to address this issue.  
11 I also have mold underneath my kitchen sink and  
12 they refuse to address it or they continued to do  
13 is cover up the problem and say HPD goes by what  
14 they what they see, not what they smell. We live  
15 without heat for three years with the D placed on  
16 the front door of our building, and they supposedly  
17 put in a new boiler and received an MCI increase in  
18 rent for that improvement. And the front door lock  
19 is always broken.

20 Not to mention my Con Edison bill  
21 almost doubled each year we have to use because we  
22 have to use heaters. I have not been able to pay my  
23 rent due to medical bills, expenses and losses for  
24 me and my children due to becoming sick from mold.  
25 And my income is social security disability.

1

2 Instead of taking me to court, they continue to  
3 harass me for the rent, knowing that because of  
4 their negligence, my children and I are sick and we  
5 are in a bad situation that they put us in instead  
6 of raising the rent should law should be changed  
7 concerning the air we breathe inside our home  
8 leaks, floods and mold to ensure the safety and  
9 well being of our families.

10

A much more diligent inspection by  
11 HPD is needed as well as mental health and hygiene.  
12 I should not have to go back and forth calling HPD.  
13 I don't smoke, drink or do recreational drugs, and  
14 now I have asthma along with other health issues as  
15 well as my children. Because of long term mold  
16 exposure, rent is becoming increasingly high and  
17 unaffordable. So when you have issues such as this  
18 more that are being ignored but still want to raise  
19 the rent, this is very unfair to tenants that have  
20 the right to live and livable, safe and affordable  
21 apartments. Please freeze the rent. No increase.  
22 Thank you.

23

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
24 much. Appreciate it. At this juncture, we have  
25 heard from everyone who pre-registered. If there

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2 are participants who would like to speak in the  
3 remainder of the time we have available, if you  
4 could please raise your hand and we can elevate you  
5 to a participant. Thank you.

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THE INTERPRETER: Give us a  
second.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Of course.

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MS. WALKER: Hello. Good evening,  
everyone. My name is Simone Walker. And I'm the  
Tenant Association President of terrific tenements,  
located right here in Manhattan, 4 to 5 West 48th  
Street, 5 to 7 West 47th Street. And I'm here today  
on behalf of our 88 tenants in our building  
complex.

We want you to know that there is  
power in agreement. We agree that tenants are  
overlooked, overcharged and overwhelmed. The  
tenants are being overlooked. Many of the repairs,  
extermination and sanitation and preservation of  
the buildings, they're not being kept. But yet we  
are expected to pay more rent, more money for  
services that we don't get, especially our  
differently abled tenants who need special  
accommodations, but yet they are also discriminated

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2 against. The tenants are being overcharged for  
3 rent.

4 They do not owe all these  
5 documents and all these falsification of records  
6 and without submitting any proof to the tenants of  
7 what they owe, they are expected to pay money that  
8 they never signed up for. But yet we are expected  
9 to pay rent increases when we need a rent rollback.  
10 Rent rollback. Tenants are also being harmed by  
11 conditions, rules and regulations that are not  
12 included in their lease yet. Illegal lock outs,  
13 illegal evictions are taking place right under our  
14 noses. But [Indiscernible]. You need rent  
15 rollbacks. This is the reality. This is what we  
16 need. And we're not against you. We're just against  
17 the policy and the proposal. Thank you very much.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let  
19 me net recognize Jerry Matejka.

20 MR. MATEJKA: Good evening. Can  
21 you hear me?

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes, thank  
23 you.

24 MR. MATEJKA: Hi, my name is Jerry  
25 and I'm a small owner of a six family rent

1  
2 stabilized building in Queens. About eight years  
3 ago, I purchased my first and only six family  
4 house. That was in the prior owner's family since  
5 it was built in the late 20s. For some reason they  
6 did never raise any of the rents in the prior 25  
7 years and in return did no improvements. Now that  
8 the individual apartment improvements have been  
9 greatly diminished by DHCR, I'm making all needed  
10 repairs with my own money and rents are  
11 astoundingly low. The rents I'm providing are  
12 totally affordable.

13 As a matter of fact, all  
14 apartments are stabilized and five of the six  
15 tenants are paying me \$1,300 or less each month for  
16 their two bedroom apartments. The rents I'm  
17 receiving are far less than a two bedroom in public  
18 housing. Meanwhile, my costs have been spiking  
19 incredibly. Examples, insurance. My current  
20 provider is giving me a renewal increase of 22%  
21 right now. When I try to shop for another insurance  
22 provider, I was given two quotes that were double  
23 property taxes.

24 Okay, They've gone up over 7% on  
25 bills, 15% and fix up costs are averaging about 15%

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2 a year. I'm providing local ownership and getting  
3 calls constantly from big real estate guys who want  
4 to buy my property. And I honestly don't know how  
5 much longer I can hold out. I have a good  
6 relationship with my tenants, but what do you think  
7 the big guys will do? They'll get rid of these  
8 tenants and some of which have lived there their  
9 entire lives.

10 The last few years, the measly and  
11 non-existent increases are catching up to me. And I  
12 need your rent increases to be at the top end of  
13 the proposed rent range. All my tenants renew this  
14 year for the first time in two years. So if you  
15 don't give me at least last year's RGB guidelines,  
16 it will be a disaster. Also, you cannot allow zero  
17 or rollbacks. Please do the right thing. Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.  
19 Thank you for joining us. Let me next recognize  
20 Denisa Rodriguez.

21 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Hello. My name is  
22 Denisa Rodriguez and I live in Queens. I've lived  
23 here for approximately three years and I've made  
24 more than 50% by fixed income, rent and established  
25 person in my neighborhood. Based on the plenary



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2 vote, my rent would go up for one year from 30 to  
3 \$75. For two years, 60 to \$105 is paid \$1.8 billion  
4 to New York City landlords and is expected to pay a  
5 total of \$2.3 billion. My landlord received \$9,000  
6 from my application, therefore there's no need to  
7 give landlords her rent increase at the sacrifice  
8 of rent stabilized tenants can.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: My apologies,  
10 if you could speak closer to the microphone so we  
11 could hear you. I apologize.

12 MS. RODRIGUES: If I can't afford  
13 my rent in the future, I will become homeless and  
14 die. Do you hear me, Rent Guidelines Board?  
15 Homelessness equals death. Landlords claim they  
16 need higher rents, but they do not use these monies  
17 to maintain their buildings despite years of rent  
18 increases. My landlord has not done any repairs and  
19 always uses the excuse that tenants don't give him  
20 access. That is a bald faced lie. My building  
21 converted to condos in 2008 and my apartment was  
22 more than 70 open violations. The entire building,  
23 which is a condominium, has 201 HPD violations. My  
24 landlord owns owes the New York City a grand total  
25 of \$21,716 for repairs that he refused to make.

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2                   That's just in my one building. He  
3 owns multiple buildings with a large real estate  
4 corporation, and he's not the only landlord who  
5 takes advantage of HPD. The kicker is that my  
6 landlord is a multi-million millionaire, and in the  
7 height of the pandemic, purchased a building in  
8 Manhattan for \$8.5 million. So Rent Guidelines  
9 Board please tell me. Please tell me why my  
10 landlord needs a rent increase. I say no,  
11 absolutely not. We need a rent rollback.

12                   CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.  
13 Thank you. I mean, recognized Chaplain Ready?

14                   MS. READY: Good evening. I am  
15 Chaplain Ready and am here with housing  
16 conservatory coordinators. I just want to say  
17 something. I'm going to probably date myself. But  
18 there was a show on television. It may still be on,  
19 Candid Camera, and they would do little pranks and  
20 make jokes.

21                   What we're having happening right  
22 now is not funny. This is not a joke. These are  
23 people's lives that are going on to all kinds of  
24 situations and chaos because of mismanagement in  
25 the city. I don't think landlords are bad. I don't

1  
2 think the rent guideline boards are evil. I just  
3 think we have mismanagement in the city that people  
4 are putting their own self-interest ahead of the  
5 well-being of other people, and that is inhumane.  
6 You cannot have people bleeding and trying to stick  
7 a band aid on them when they are bleeding and  
8 hemorrhaging to death. So I want to say this. You  
9 have the power, you have the decisions. I think you  
10 are smart people and I believe you want to do the  
11 right thing for people. But you are being pressured  
12 and put in the middle of this mess.

13           So I'm going to help you and try  
14 to see about giving you a solution that if you want  
15 to help the people, help the tenants, help the  
16 landlords, that they do not have to lose money and  
17 that the tenants do not have to be overcharged and  
18 put out and evicted. This city is well known for  
19 having some of the doggone poorest of all poorest  
20 of every day, every decade, every century, every  
21 night coming into the city. Take that tourist money  
22 and put it to good use and help the people who are  
23 tenants who are landlords. You do not have to raise  
24 this rent. There is a lottery that has been going  
25 on for years. Take that lottery money and put that

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2 lottery money to good use for it. They have parades  
3 going on here. They have all kinds of sports  
4 activities going on here. Tell the Yankees and the  
5 Knicks and the Mets put a game together and raise  
6 some money to keep people from being put out of  
7 their homes. That's all I have to say. Do the right  
8 thing.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you very  
10 much. Thank you. Let me recognize Spencer Garcia.

11 MS. SPENCER: Hi, my name is  
12 Spencer Garcia. I'm a lifelong New Yorker and I  
13 live in a rent stabilized apartment in Queens. I'm  
14 asking the Rent Guidelines Board to vote for a rent  
15 freeze or a rent rollback.

16 I'm asking for a rent freeze or  
17 rollback because any rent increase will force tens  
18 of thousands of new workers out of their homes and  
19 force hundreds of thousands more to forgo paying  
20 for food, medical care and other necessities in  
21 order to pay for their rent. Over half of rent  
22 stabilized tenants pay them more than 30% of their  
23 income in rent.

24 This leads to nearly 25% of rent  
25 regulated tenants skipping medical care and meals,

1  
2 according to a recent 2022 survey. Any rent  
3 increases will directly lead to evictions,  
4 homelessness and death. People will die if they can  
5 no longer afford the food, medication or health  
6 care they need to survive. Or if they freeze or  
7 sweat to death from living on the streets. This  
8 death is completely avoidable. Over half of New  
9 Yorkers are rent burdened. And amidst the ongoing  
10 pandemic and ever increasing inflation, the number  
11 of rent burdened New Yorkers continues to increase.  
12 Personally, my rent is over 40% of my monthly  
13 income.

14 I spent over two and a half months  
15 looking for my current apartment because I could  
16 only afford to pay so much on rent without getting  
17 into a situation where I would become financially  
18 unstable or housing insecure.

19 If I was not living in a rent  
20 stabilized apartment, I would not have been able to  
21 afford a studio in most areas of Queens or in New  
22 York City as a whole, and especially in where the  
23 rental market is now. I cannot afford to move out  
24 of this apartment, but I may be forced to and I  
25 don't know what to do. We have gotten to a point

1

2 where people from New York can barely afford to  
3 stay here, and freezing rent will help keep New  
4 Yorkers in their homes.

5                   Lastly, hundreds of thousands, if  
6 not millions of New York City households are still  
7 dealing with the ramifications of the ongoing  
8 pandemic. People have experienced unemployment,  
9 loss of income, permanent disability and inability  
10 to work due to long Covid and many more extremely  
11 difficult financial situations. With no end in  
12 sight of the pandemic, New Yorkers will continue to  
13 struggle to pay rent and afford their basic needs.

14                   We've already seen the negative  
15 impact of last year's rent increases. 15% of all  
16 tenants had been threatened with eviction in 2022,  
17 a record high in the past 11 years. Following the  
18 end of the eviction moratorium, non-payment  
19 eviction cases rose 167% in 2022, and the homeless  
20 shelter population rose by 8%, the first increase  
21 after four years of decline. Please freeze the  
22 rent. Do a rent rollback, please. I am begging you.  
23 Thank you.

24                   CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let  
25 me recognize now Fred Newton.

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2 MR. NEWTON: One thing I cannot  
3 help wondering, Is the president of the United  
4 States, when he wants to appoint people that have  
5 to be ratified by the Senate. I believe that the  
6 Rent Guidelines Board and many other city jobs and  
7 appointments, the mayor picked them confirmed by  
8 the city council because of the mayor appoints you,  
9 you're beholden to them. But if they have to be  
10 confirmed by the city council, you're much less  
11 likely to have what's known as rubber stamps. And  
12 I'll leave it at that. Thank you very much.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. At  
14 this point, we don't have anyone else who's raised  
15 their hand, but we're happy to wait. The meeting  
16 has been noticed to go through. Right? So anybody  
17 else would like to join us. We certainly have a few  
18 more minutes.

19 Genesis, please.

20 MS. AQUINO: Yeah, Today I'm  
21 joining the hearing. I'm joining the hearing from  
22 midtown in Manhattan. And most of the people here  
23 are senior citizens. If you can see a lot of them  
24 testify. About 50% of the people who testified  
25 today are from Manhattan. And the reason they came

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2 in person is because they don't have access to  
3 Internet.

4

A lot of them don't have access to  
5 their phones and simply because they are poor.

6

Right. And it is super important for us as the Rent  
7 Guidelines Board to make sure that Manhattan

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tenants have access to a hearing, if you like --

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you heard we used to have two hearings, one in

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downtown, one in Harlem, and I think we need to

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commit to doing that again. Tenants here are

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excited to be here and they only came here because

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they really depend on the decisions that we are

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going to be making today, them next weekend. So

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just wanted to say thank you.

16

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. But

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let me recognize Ari Santiago. Please go ahead.

18

MS. SANTIAGO: Hi there. I just

19

wanted to ask a question for everyone in

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attendance. A lot of the conversation has been

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around tenants versus landlord. And I'm just

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curious, in all of the conversations I've seen in

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the Bronx and here now in Brooklyn, why are

24

corporate landlords not really in attendance? And

25

then my second question is, this is a blanket



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2 policy for all landlords.

3

4 Just curious, there are small  
5 property owners that are suffering, but corporate  
6 landlords should not be profiting off of any rent  
7 increases. I don't understand why we're having sort  
8 of a blanket policy. Why are we not considering a  
9 tiered system? This just seems unreasonable given  
10 the economic differences in both of these groups.  
11 Small property owners do not make anywhere near the  
12 amount of profit as corporate landlords. If this  
13 could be a consideration for this board and for the  
14 Chair. Nestor Davidson that would be awesome.

14

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15

16 MS. BURGER: Hi. Just FYI, we only  
17 allow people to speak once per Public Hearing. We  
18 are having another Public Hearing on Thursday in  
19 Brooklyn, and anybody who wishes to speak again can  
20 come in person to that hearing. If there's anybody  
21 else in our last four minutes that wants to speak,  
22 please raise your hand. Who hasn't spoken already?

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Let me

23

recognize DeJesus.

24

25 MS. DEJESUS: Hi, Good evening. My  
name is Paula DeJesus and I am a tenant advocate at

1  
2 Take Root Justice. But I am a born Latina born and  
3 raised in El Barrio. I'm a very passionate human  
4 being who truly believes that. And forgive me with  
5 the noise I am in commute to my house. I just  
6 wanted to say and to really just uplift all the  
7 tenants who were out here talking about why a rent  
8 rollback or and a rent freeze is a must. As it was  
9 mentioned, we have over 26,000 homeless kids in the  
10 shelter. That's not including the kids that are  
11 about to be born into homelessness or that are  
12 currently living in the streets.

13                   What are we doing about the  
14 future? The youth think, you know, there's many  
15 songs. The children are the future and we're not  
16 protecting that. We are protecting people who are  
17 using capitalism to make a living, to make a living  
18 off of the, you know, the inhumane thing that  
19 happened, the inhumane ness of being homeless, the  
20 inhumanness of not having enough money to pay for  
21 food while these landlords are here, like, oh my  
22 God, I'm so broke again, think it was mentioned.  
23 That's a very small number of small landlords and  
24 you do actually have resources to get help. There's  
25 more help for you than there are for the tenants.

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2 And I know this because I've been working very  
3 closely with tenants for ten years and for ten  
4 years. I've only seen people like the the Colemans  
5 of the world commit criminal violent crimes to  
6 tenants.

7 I've only seen the the landlord  
8 like the one where the tenants died at 333 East  
9 181st Street because of the lack of resources that  
10 Rick Grouper was providing to his tenants and that  
11 man had had at the time a 150 bills things. So he  
12 wasn't broke.

13 Also, one of your reps is a  
14 lawyer. How much does do the lawyer the landlords  
15 pay for him? My last note and I'll end here because  
16 I've said it numbers numerous times and I don't  
17 know why you guys don't look at that. Have the  
18 landlords open their books. Let's see how they're  
19 spending their money. Because maybe instead of  
20 accusing us for not paying our rent and because I  
21 hear a lot of it, Oh, they're being irresponsible,  
22 maybe you're being they're being irresponsible with  
23 how they manage and they use their money, maybe  
24 spending too much money on lawyers for frivolous  
25 cases or to burn more buildings to keep tenants,

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2 especially marginalized tenants, in the violent --  
3 and violent harm and violating the housing law.

4 And also because y'all taking a  
5 lot of subsidies and committing fraud, in my  
6 opinion. And then let's not talk about all the  
7 money they're taking in cannabis by violating the  
8 law there. So I just want to say they're not  
9 they're not broke. And if they are, they should  
10 show you how broke they are. We all asked Trump to  
11 open his books, so why can't the landlords open  
12 their books?

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Let  
14 me next recognize Sylvia. And if you could, before  
15 we get on, I want to make sure that we have  
16 translation available.

17 THE INTERPRETER: Yes. Hello.  
18 Interpreting.

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay, great.  
20 We also have it on. But thank you.

21 THE INTERPRETER: Oh, wait. Sorry.  
22 Give me a second. Are you going to say it all in  
23 Spanish or. Oh, okay.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 THE INTERPRETER: Do you guys have

1  
2 interpretation? Okay, perfect. Thank you. I've  
3 tried in one way or another to leave my community.  
4 Choose whether to buy food or pay our rent or our  
5 needs or medications. I myself personally I've been  
6 -- being charged to rent. I've always trusted in  
7 the God that I believe in knowing that what is  
8 impossible for us is possible.

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.  
10 Thank you very much. I want to thank everyone for  
11 joining us tonight. And can I get a motion to  
12 adjourn?

13 MR. ERLRICH: Motion to adjourn.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I'm going to  
15 second.

16 MR. AQUINO: Second.

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you  
18 again. And thank you to all of our board members  
19 and to our staff. And we will see you in Brooklyn  
20 on.

21 (Whereupon, the proceedings were  
22 concluded.)

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25 STATE OF NEW YORK )

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SS.  
COUNTY OF NEW YORK )

I, MARC RUSSO, a Shorthand  
(Stenotype) Reporter and Notary Public within and  
for the State of New York, do hereby certify that  
the foregoing pages 1 through 118, taken at the  
time and place aforesaid, is a true and correct  
transcription of my shorthand notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have  
hereunto set my name this 7th day of August, 2023.



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MARC RUSSO

## Concordance

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