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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

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PUBLIC MEETING
OF
THE DIRECTORS

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St. Francis College
Auditorium
179 Livingston Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201

June 15, 2023
5:00 p.m.

B e f o r e :

NESTOR DAVIDSON,
THE CHAIR

1

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

3 Board of Directors:

4 Nestor Davidson, Chair

5 Arpit Gupta

6 Alex Schwartz

7 Doug Apple

8 Christina DeRose

9 Robert Ehrlich

10 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

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Welcome to

this public hearing of the New York City Rent

Guidelines Board. This is the last of four public

hearings to consider comments on proposed rent

adjustments or leases for apartments, lofts and

other housing units, subject to the rent

stabilization law of 1969 and the Emergency Tenant

Protection Act of 1974.

These adjustments will affect

leases commencing between October 23 and September

30th, 2024.

I'll now take roll call. Please

respond if present.

Doug Apple?

MR. APPLE: Present.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Genesis

Aquino?

MS. AQUINO: Present.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Christina

DeRose?

MS. DEROSE: Present.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Robert

Ehrlich?

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2

MR. EHRLICH: Present.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Arpit Gupta?

4

MR. GUPTA: Present.

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Alex Schwartz?

6

MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Christina

8

Smyth?

9

MS. SMYTH: (No response.)

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Adam Soltren?

11

MR. SOLTREN: Present.

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Mr. Davidson,

13

I'm present.

14

Let the record show that we have a

15

quorum.

16

The next meeting of this Board

17

will be for our final vote. The meeting will take

18

place on Wednesday, June 21st, starting at 7:00

19

p.m., at Hunter College Assembly Hall, 69th Street,

20

between Park and Lexington Avenues in Manhattan

21

Okay. As I was saying, the

22

meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 21st,

23

starting at 7:00 p.m. at Hunter College Assembly

24

Hall, 69th Street, between Park and Lexington

25

Avenues in Manhattan with doors opening at 6:00

1

2 p.m. Please note the change in venue from the
3 Great Hall at Cooper Union.

4

5 The public may attend and observe
6 the meeting in person or may watch the vote live by
7 streaming it on the RGBs YouTube channel. To find
8 out how, visit the RGB website nyc.gov/rgb or call
9 the RGB at (212) 669-7480 between 9:00 a.m. and
5:00 p.m.

10

11 Before we proceed with testimony,
12 I'd like to briefly go over the rules and
13 procedures for testifying before the Board.

14

15 FEMALE VOICE: May we put the
16 volume up, please?

17

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Sure. Brian,
19 is there some way to turn the volume off?

20

21 MR. HOBERMAN: I don't know where
22 the sound person is.

23

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. Sorry.
25 I apologize for that; I'll try to speak more
clearly into the mic. Is that better?

26

27 FEMALE VOICE: Yes. Yes.

28

29 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay, good.

30

31 FEMALE VOICE: If you heighten the
32 higher frequency, maybe it'll be better.

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. My students tell me I could be heard in the back of a room, but I'll try.

CROWD: We can't hear you.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. Give us a moment. Apologies. Can anybody hear me back there? Still welcome. Apologies, it's a little bit loud but I think it's better then everybody will be able to hear me.

Okay. Before we proceed with testimony, I would like to go over the rules and procedures for testifying before the Board. If you wish to speak, please confirm your presence with the Rugby staff at the registration table located near the entrance of the hall. Speakers will not be called if they have not checked in at the registration table.

There are Spanish interpreters here today. When registering to speak, please notify the staff if you would like an interpreter. I will try to call several names in advance in order to let you know that you will soon be called on to speak. Please come to the mic when I call you. It will help us hear from everyone.

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If you have materials to distribute to the Board, please give them to the Rugby staff sitting at the sign-in table near the entrance.

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12

I will alternate speakers between tenants and others as much as possible. In order to accommodate as many speakers as possible, each speaker will have two minutes to give their testimony with an additional two minutes of speaking time to those speakers utilizing interpretation services.

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We give speakers -- to help keep speakers keep track of time, we have a clock right over there which we will start when you begin speaking. The clock will beep once you have 30 seconds left and will continue beeping when the allotted two minutes are up. If you are still speaking at the end of two minutes, I will ask you to quickly wrap up your testimony out of respect for other speakers here tonight. It is great that we are expecting 90 speakers tonight. The board very much wants to hear from as many speakers as possible in the limited time we have.

This venue closes at 10:00 p.m. so

1

2 please keep that in mind as an hour limit, we all
3 need to keep it in mind together. We'll also take
4 a break at about the two-hour mark, but we will
5 keep it brief.

6 I understand that it could be
7 challenging to say everything you want us to hear
8 in just two minutes, but please understand we would
9 like to hear everyone who has taken the time to
10 come here to testify. We gave them a fair
11 opportunity to be heard.

12 Thank you so much for your
13 cooperation and the Board is looking forward to
14 hearing from you regarding the proposed rent
15 adjustment guidelines.

16 Our first speaker will be assembly
17 member Deborah Glick. Thank you.

18 MS. GLICK: (Unintelligible). In
19 fact, let me just say that according to the most
20 recent income and affordability report by the Rent
21 Guidelines Board, rent-stabilized tenants have a
22 median gross rent-to-income ratio of 36 percent
23 meaning the majority of rent-stabilized tenants are
24 not able to afford their apartments already and yet
25 this year the Rent Guidelines Board is proposing

1

2 they pay more.

3

4 In 2022, we saw an increase of
5 3.25 percent for one-year leases and 5 percent for
6 two-year leases. This was the biggest jump in rent
7 since 2013, and this year you are proposing further
8 increases between 2 and 5 percent for one year and
9 between 4 and 7 for two-year leases.

10

11 New York's rent-stabilized housing
12 stock decreased by 66,000 units at -- that we have
13 not recovered and another 60,000 to 80,000 units
14 have been artificially held off the market,
15 escalating rents and adding to the housing prices.
16 And median rents in Manhattan have increased by 12
17 percent in this last year across the Board. People
18 cannot afford the apartments they have, they can't
19 afford these increases, and we already have people
20 facing evictions. I'm going to take 10 seconds
21 more because I couldn't adjust my screaming voice.

22

23 Anyway, let me just say that
24 people are going to face evictions, people cannot
25 afford the apartments they have and while we are
sympathetic to some of the smaller owners, private
equity firms are buying up and forcing people out
of their apartments using unscrupulous means of

1

2 harassment. We cannot allow more --

3 (Audience participation.)

4 MS. GLICK: -- housing because we
5 cannot add to the homelessness problem that is
6 already choking our city. Please, please think
7 about the quality of life that people see eroding
8 before them. I believe my real testimony with your
9 votes.

10 (Audience participation.)

11 MS. AVILES: Can you hear me at
12 the back? I'm going to try my best to --

13 MALE VOICE: Put the mic up.

14 MS. AVILES: -- be as loud as
15 possible. So good evening, members of the Board.
16 I am council member Alexa Aviles representing
17 District 38 South Brooklyn Sunset Park, Redhook.

18 (Audience participation.)

19 MS. AVILES: The community that I
20 represent is largely working class and while so
21 many of my neighbors could not be here tonight,
22 although we do roll deep and we have quite a number
23 here to offer testimony, please know that my
24 testimony represents the views of thousands of
25 rent-stabilized tenants across my district and as

1

2 you -- I know you have heard across the city.

3

4 After a year where our community
5 saw unprecedented increases to the cost of living
6 across the Board, including food utilities with no
7 corresponding wage increases for the rent
8 guidelines board to consider rent hikes ranging as
9 high as 7 percent is egregious and worse.

9

10 Landlords across this city are in
11 the business of renting precisely because of their
12 ability to make a profit. So I have no sympathy
13 when the specter of thinning profit margin is
14 raised, especially when compared to the tenants who
15 have faced double-digit increases in evictions and
16 just last year sure to rise with yet another rent
17 hike from the Rugby. I especially shed no tears
18 for landlords when it is my office that hundreds of
19 tenants from our district and other districts have
20 sought help when landlords, despite rent increases,
21 have not made the necessary repairs or provided
22 basic maintenance.

22

23 With a board that is quite
24 transparently stacked by City Hall with appointees,
25 let me be clear that destabilizing nearly 1 million
household is contrary to any supposed plan on

1
2 behalf of this administration to tackle the housing
3 crisis in this city and to alleviate the current
4 burden on our shelter system. I urge this Board to
5 keep our neighbors housed, to not find -- fan the
6 flames of income inequity simply to maintain profit
7 margins to the decimal and to give New Yorkers a
8 moment to breathe after a year of staggering
9 increases. Please reject these increases. Keep 1
10 million New Yorkers in stable and secure housing,
11 if there ever was a time for a rent rollback, this
12 is it. Landlords have access --

13 (Audience participation.)

14 MS. AVILES: -- no supplemental
15 assets, no food, and other basic necessities. We
16 have to make hard choices every day in this city,
17 we need this Board to not only make a hard choice
18 but to do the right thing.

19 (Audience participation.)

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Council member
21 Tiffany Caban.

22 MS. CABAN: Can you all hear me?
23 Hello, my name is Tiffany Caban, my pronouns are
24 she, her. I'm the council member in the 22nd
25 district in Queens Astoria, Rikers Island, parts of

1

2 East Elmhurst, Woodside, and Jackson Heights and I
3 want to begin looking at the housing system as a
4 whole and be clear about where I stand on the
5 issue.

6 Housing is a human right. A
7 reliable home is the essential pillar of a
8 dignified life and a key foundation of true public
9 safety, not to mention the public health.
10 Community health, and dignity cannot be fully
11 achieved under our current model of profit-driven
12 housing one that is towards community vitality and
13 prosperity. Since housing is a basic human need,
14 we should support a housing system that guarantees
15 housing rather than one that boosts the profits for
16 --

17 (Audience participation.)

18 MS. CABAN: Since housing is a
19 basic human need, we should guarantee it as a basic
20 human right. Period. We should not have a system
21 that welcomes real estate speculators into our
22 (unintelligible) from everyday families to cover
23 the loan that they took out a cycle that leads to
24 tax write-offs for the rich rapid turnover of
25 building ownership and lower housing quality for

1

2 everyday New Yorkers.

3

(Audience participation.)

4

MS. CABAN: In a global pandemic
5 and the ensuing economic downturn, New Yorkers
6 cannot afford more rent. The economy builds up,
7 grocery builds up, it is unconscionable to raise
8 New Yorkers' rent as well. And as the
9 affordability crisis surges, many New Yorkers
10 struggle to provide for their families and make
11 ends meet. A recent report found that half of all
12 city households do not make enough to meet the
13 minimum cost of living. Nearly 80 percent of
14 households are housing burden, which means more
15 than 30 percent of household income is going
16 towards rent.

17

Our housing stock should be only
18 controlled democratically not used as a commodity
19 to be traded and this is the future we're fighting
20 for. One where our housing system serves this
21 primary purpose to provide dignified shelter for
22 all who -- for all for as long as they live here, a
23 city where no one has to go unhoused because of
24 lack of resources or lack of access. And so the
25 rent guidelines for -- are to pass a rent increase

1

2 of no more than zero percent and that is a moderate
3 compromise.

4

(Audience participation.)

5

MS. CABAN: -- our housing system
6 so that our housing stock is controlled on a
7 democratic basis.

8

(Audience participation.)

9

MS. CABAN: And really -- we
10 should (unintelligible) their homes guarantee. So
11 that treats housing as human right it is. And so,
12 members of the Rent Guidelines Board freeze the
13 rent. Better yet issue a rent rollback.

14

(Audience participation.)

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: The next
16 speaker will be Council Member Shahana Hanif.

17

MS. HANIF: Good evening.

18

AUDIENCE: Evening.

19

MS. HANIF: I think folks can hear
20 me. I'm council member Shahan Hanif and I think
21 you can imagine what my remarks will look like.
22 And I appreciate the colleagues who came before me
23 because I echo the same sentiments in demanding a
24 rent rollback.

25

I was among council members of the

1

2 progressive caucus in the New York City Council at
3 last month's meeting, hand in hand with
4 rent-stabilized tenants with our leading advocates
5 in the housing rights movement, taking on the stage
6 to remind you that this is a city of renters.

7

(Audience participation.)

8

MS. HANIF: Last month we had to
9 take the stage to remind you that in this moment,
10 New Yorkers are struggling. It shouldn't take us
11 occupying the stage to show you what they are
12 experiencing, what their living conditions have
13 been. It is unconscionable, I'm befuddled,
14 perplexed that you all have the audacity -- the
15 audacity to say these New Yorkers don't belong,
16 that these New Yorkers we'll abandon them, that
17 these New Yorkers don't deserve care from New York
18 City. So I want to vocalize that you all have been
19 disrespectful to us.

20

(Audience participation.)

21

MS. HANIF: Thank you, residents,
22 leaders from the (unintelligible) committee in my
23 district. I'm going to order all the organizing
24 that is happening and that will continue to happen
25 irrespective of what you all decide, but just know

1

2 this is just the beginning. New Yorkers will
3 continue to organize, renters will continue to
4 organize and legislators will be on our side.

5 (Audience participation.)

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next
7 speaker will be Council member Chie Osse.

8 (Audience participation.)

9 MR. OSSE: Hello again to the
10 Rugby. Can you guys hear me? I am New York City
11 Council member Chi Osse, representing Bed-Stuy at
12 Crown Heights --

13 (Audience participation.)

14 MR. OSSE: -- which is a massively
15 gentrifying neighborhood here in Brooklyn. I stand
16 before you to testify against increasing the cost
17 of tenants -- of remaining in their homes. Before
18 I start, I want to ask you -- what -- is 7 percent
19 stabilizing? Who is that stabilizing for? As
20 countless tenants will tell you this evening that
21 we New Yorkers are suffocating under skyrocketing
22 living costs.

23 The proposed increases could be a
24 breaking point and let's be clear about the
25 severity of what this means. Increasing rent will

1

2 break homes, it'll shatter stability for working
3 families, it will drive New Yorkers out of the
4 neighborhoods they have called home for
5 generations, it will make people homeless. Let's
6 not take that lightly. Driving families into
7 homelessness is an act of violence that will
8 permanently traumatize children.

9

(Audience participation.)

10

MR. OSSE: It'll ruin lives and
11 lead to early death and it's a choice. This board
12 has a unique power to throw millions of New
13 Yorkers, a lifeline. Families in the city make
14 agonizing choices between food and healthcare
15 because our last dollar each month is swallowed by
16 rent. This board can make an easy choice and say
17 increased homelessness is too high a price to just
18 pay to make corporate landlords a little bit
19 richer.

20

(Audience participation.)

21

MR. OSSE: The landlords here are
22 speaking in bad faith. We know this is bad faith
23 because even in years of historically low
24 inflation, even in years in which costs were
25 remaining flat, even in years where increased rents

1

2 may only increase profits each and every year, they
3 come before the Board, insisting they need maximum
4 increases. This isn't about inflation, it's about
5 greed. Just as we do every single year, landlords
6 arrive before this Board looking to squeeze tenants
7 to the last drop. The renters testifying here
8 today are committing an act of self-defense.

9 And the question between enriching
10 corporate landlords and keeping children and
11 families in their own homes, let's understand that
12 one option is violence and the other is survival.
13 Now I ask this Board to spare your families from
14 the threat of homelessness, I ask you to recognize
15 the desperation of the people in this room
16 struggling to keep their heads above water. The
17 consequences of this decision are dire. We need
18 you to make the right one and keep the rent down.
19 Not only that, but we need rent rollbacks in the
20 city of New York. Thank you.

21 (Audience participation.)

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
23 Our next three speakers -- our next three speakers
24 are Elena Tate, Hans Tate and Dutch DeCarvalho.

25 MS. TATE: Thank You. Good

1
2 evening? Hello? I (unintelligible) for 20 years.
3 It's where I brought my son home from the hospital.
4 He's going to testify next. Okay, sorry. We urge
5 you not to raise the rent. A few percentage points
6 may not seem like a lot to some people. In fact,
7 for the owners of our building, it would be
8 negligible --

9 (Audience participation.)

10 MS. TATE: -- buildings. They
11 have a long history of violations also for unsafe
12 conditions. In our apartment, they disconnected
13 our heat, padlocked our emergency exit, and
14 installed the (unintelligible) in our air shaft.
15 I'm fighting them in housing court for safe and
16 affordable housing for my family and my neighbor's
17 family who lived in our buildings for 40 years. So
18 a few percentage points for us is a big deal.

19 My husband works in a hospital.
20 He was on the sidelines in the COVID war through
21 the whole pandemic. He gets two checks a month and
22 one of them goes to rent. If you raise even a few
23 percentage points, it would force many essential
24 workers like my husband, who risk their own lives,
25 to get our city through the pandemic, to move out

1

2 of New York or into the shelters that are already
3 (unintelligible).

4 Many of the members of my
5 community (unintelligible), would have to leave
6 behind the rose bushes we planted and tended all
7 these years. After all the neighborhood cleanups
8 and block parties reorganized, we would have to say
9 goodbye to the (unintelligible) tree we watered,
10 and watched grow tall. And children like my son
11 would have to leave their schools, say goodbye to
12 their friends and teachers, pack up their toys and
13 clean their room one last time. Thank you.

14 (Audience participation.)

15 MR. TATE: (Unintelligible). So
16 the reason we do not raise the rent is because I
17 love my house. Do you love your house?

18 AUDIENCE: Yes!

19 MR. TATE: Good. Do we like to
20 stay homeless people?

21 AUDIENCE: No!

22 MR. TATE: Okay. Do you love
23 (unintelligible). All I want to do is give a
24 shout-out to three of my friends. All right.
25 Apollo and (unintelligible).

1

2

(Audience participation.)

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you,
thank you so much.

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8

MS. AQUINO: There's lot of people
standing up. Maybe if we have space next to you,
just sit in the middle so that people can sit
because there are a lot of people standing

9

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Here are some
seats in front.

11

12

MS. AQUINO: And there is space
here in the front line.

13

(Audience participation.)

14

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Dutch
DeCarvalho.

16

17

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19

20

MR. DECARVALHO: Good evening. My
name is Dutch -- my name is Dutch DeCarvalho and
I'm a lifelong New Yorker, a proud New York City
public school teacher and I live in rent-stabilized
affordable housing.

21

22

23

24

25

I'm here to ask the Board to vote
no on the increases and instead rollback the rent.
New Yorkers say that to preserve our
rent-stabilized housing, we must balance the needs
of the landlords and the tenants. You have done an

1

2 incredible job of creating an illusion of hardship
3 and challenge for these landlords. The landlords
4 are suffering you say, I'm wondering, is it the
5 same rent-stabilized landlords who according to
6 your own data, have seen a 50 percent profit
7 increase in the past 30 years that are suffering?

8

What's going on for 60,000
9 apartments or perhaps as the ones who get countless
10 tax breaks and are now processing evictions at the
11 highest rate in years? I don't know what landlord
12 you're talking about, but I do know as tenants, we
13 don't need to create any illusions of hardships.

14

The majority of rent-stabilized
15 tenants are rent burdens, most of my childhood
16 friends have not moved out of their homes and still
17 live at home. The only way I was able to move out
18 is because I got affordable housing, as Mitchell
19 Lama has privatized Nitro falls into further
20 disrepair and the so-called affordable
21 (unintelligible) apartments continue to rise in
22 costs. Rent stabilization is one of the few
23 programs which can still help tenants, or at least
24 it's supposed to. I'm not so sure when we've got a
25 board appointed by a landlord mayor.

1

2

(Audience participation.)

3

MR. DECARVALHO: Convince yourself

4

that the landlords are struggling and that that

5

struggle is somehow our responsibility. It's

6

embarrassing that you believe that the people who

7

check out your groceries and serve you in

8

restaurants and teach your children, you think are

9

responsible for the struggles of landlords and

10

shameful that you bought into that rhetoric. As

11

you make your choice, because it is a choice, will

12

you choose to protect the hundreds of thousands of

13

New Yorkers who make this city run? Or will you

14

choose to be cowards and protect the greedy

15

landlords whose projects will never be enough?

16

(Audience participation.)

17

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:

18

(Unintelligible).

19

MS. JOSEPH: Good evening,

20

everyone. My name is Rita Joseph and I'm the

21

council for the 40th district rep. Probably

22

representing Flatbush, PLG, Kensington Park, and

23

Southern Crown Heights. Now as you can hear, I'm

24

here with my advocates, my colleagues, they are

25

everyday New Yorkers and the rent is too damn high

1

2 already. And something needs to be done about
3 that.

4 This is a beautiful city, however
5 the cost of living has skyrocketed. 10 percent of
6 our students when I was a teacher were living in
7 shelters. That should tell you something. That's
8 114,000 students living in shelters that means they
9 could not live in affordable homes and here you are
10 today, wanting to raise the rent on these families.
11 Shame on you.

12 New Yorkers that live on the
13 margins are being squeezed out of our homes and we
14 saw that last year, 200,000 of our black neighbors
15 left New York City because they could not afford to
16 live here. That's a shame.

17 Earlier this year, again, in fact,
18 more than 75 percent of our rent-stabilized tenants
19 identified as Blacks, Latinas, Asians and this is
20 why I'm deeply troubled to learn that the
21 Guidelines is considering raising the rent again.
22 And many of my colleagues, my neighbors, and my
23 friends and families are here today to say, no, we
24 don't want this, no way should you raise the rent
25 on us. We are just getting out of a pandemic and

1

2 we're moving people out of their homes and this is
3 unacceptable.

4 Today I'm here to raise my voice
5 for my neighbors, the kids that I taught today that
6 are living in shelters they could not speak today,
7 do not raise the rent or else more of our children
8 in our families. A hundred thousand families are
9 being evicted every single day. We have no space
10 in our shelters. So we must make sure that we do
11 everything in our power to keep our families in
12 their homes. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you our
14 next (unintelligible). Jenny Laurie, please.

15 MS. LAURIE: Hi. My name is Jenny
16 Laurie, I'm the Executive Director of Housing Court
17 Answers, a nonprofit, that provides assistance to
18 tenants facing eviction and housing court. We run
19 information tables and we find a hotline. We're
20 getting over 300 calls a day now because we're
21 facing an eviction crisis from tenants who are
22 facing eviction for nonpayment of rent.

23 The situation is more serious than
24 it was prior to the pandemic. Obviously, the
25 moratorium slowed things down, but today more

1
2 tenants are calling our hotline who are
3 rent-stabilized, who could get rent arrears
4 assistance if they could afford the ongoing rent,
5 but more and more of them are paying over 30, 40,
6 and 50 percent of their income for rent. We screen
7 over 1400 tenants, rent-stabilized tenants over the
8 past year who basically needed rent arrears
9 assistance because they're facing eviction by the
10 rent-stabilized department. So they have a promise
11 of a lease renewal but they can barely afford their
12 rent.

13 So I would urge you to consider
14 that in your guideline decisions and think of all
15 the tenants who are facing -- over a hundred
16 thousand tenants now facing eviction in New York
17 City.

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

19 (Applause.)

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Catherine
21 Salazar?

22 MS. SALAZAR: Hi, my name is
23 Catherine Salazar and I live at 74 Gatling Place.
24 This is my first apartment with my husband and we
25 are approaching our first year of living in that

1
2 apartment, we pay more than 30 percent of my
3 household income on rent alone. I want to be able
4 to stay in my current apartment because I want to
5 grow my family. I want to create a home with my
6 husband. Based on the preliminary vote, my rent
7 would go up for a one-year lease between 30 dollars
8 to 75 dollars and a two-year lease between 60
9 dollars to 105 dollars. This would mean that my
10 husband and I won't be able to afford my rent.

11 My husband works in his family
12 business in a local pizzeria and I'm a religious
13 coordinator at my local church. Even with two
14 incomes, I will not be able to afford my rent.
15 Over half of rent-stabilized two-year tenants pay
16 more than 30 percent of their income. Low-cost
17 apartments are disappearing while more high-price
18 units are being created.

19 Between 2017 and 2021, the city
20 lost 96,000 units with rents less than 1,500 medium
21 rent-stabilized household income was 47,000
22 compared to 62,960 for the market-grade tenants.

23 While landlords complain about
24 hard times, they're mostly talking about a couple
25 of years ago, and even then, the data is mixed

1
2 between 2021 and 2022, landlords mostly saw the
3 rate of rent collection rise, particularly in the
4 Bronx Central Harlem. The average net operating
5 income is 576 dollars per unit per month for a lot
6 -- for the cost-to-income ratio of 62.2 percent.
7 This produces a hypothetical average stabilizing
8 building annual of an NOI of 322,300. Several
9 neighborhoods saw the NOI increase, including North
10 Shore, Staten Island, East Flatbush, and Fresh
11 Meadows, Queens. (unintelligible) paid the tenants
12 1.8 billion to NYC landlords.

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you for
14 your testimony.

15 MS. SALAZAR: I'm here to demand
16 that this Board take the side of justice. We are
17 all people of faith and non-faith. Tenants are
18 hardworking New Yorkers. We deserve fairness.

19 (Applause.)

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you, Ms.
21 Salazar. David Speranza. Well, David's coming
22 down. Our next three speakers will be Fabian
23 Bravo, Zachary Hale, and Natalia Marquez.

24 MR. SALAZAR: I live in a
25 rent-stabilized housing. I make a modest living as

1
2 a musician, my wife is a public servant and as
3 artists and city workers, I like to think that we,
4 along with all the other working people of New York
5 City, the teachers, the nurses, the
6 (unintelligible) cooks, and the cashiers, the
7 (unintelligible) the cab drivers, and the countless
8 millions who put in their time to serve other New
9 Yorkers, these are the people that make this a
10 great place to live.

11 In a city known for having the
12 best of everything, we must acknowledge that none
13 of that is built from the bedrock. The world-class
14 public amenities of New York are a product of
15 labor. So when the working people of New York,
16 most of whom already struggle with the high cost of
17 housing, face becoming increasingly rent burdened,
18 we risk pushing out and losing the very people who
19 are the source of all value in these five boroughs.

20 (Audience participation.)

21 MR. SALAZAR: So, if you are a
22 landlord and you've decided that you can't turn
23 enough surplus profit from your buildings to make
24 it worthwhile, and my advice to you is to do what
25 so many of us here tonight have already done, get a

1

2 real job.

3

(Audience participation.)

4

MR. BRAVO: Good afternoon,

5

everyone. My name is Fabian Bravo I live in

6

(unintelligible) and I'm a member of

7

(unintelligible) Neighbors.

8

(Applause.)

9

MR. BRAVO: It is not just an

10

apartment in the building, it's an apartment filled

11

with happy memories. My kids have grown up in this

12

apartment, we've sung to them happy birthday on

13

their birthdays, and we've planned our future goals

14

at night. They are effective ties within that

15

apartment. However, gentrification is causing

16

displacement and eviction in the community. The

17

rent increase is being justified with false reports

18

and the worst of this is that this is already known

19

and it is still being supported.

20

(Audience participation.)

21

MR. BRAVO: I ask the Rugby to

22

please implement justice, solidarity, and goodness

23

about this unfair increased proposal. The right to

24

live must be put into practice from this very

25

moment supporting the voice of the community, the

1

2 same community that every day has raised this city
3 of New York.

4

(Applause.)

5

6 MR. BRAVO: The Community lifted
7 up and kept this city moving in times of difficulty
8 as of during the pandemic. My children and their
9 children deserve the right and the privilege of
affordable housing.

10

(Applause.)

11

12 MR. BRAVO: What we are asking for
13 is just we ask for a zero percent increase. Thank
14 you for your attention.

14

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Zachary Hale?

15

(Audience participation.)

16

17 MR. HALE: Good evening. Thank
18 you for the opportunity to speak. My name is
19 Zachary Hale. I'm (unintelligible) rights lawyer
20 with the Corporate Legal Services Corporation. I
21 want to say first I know the Rent Guideline Board
22 has a hardworking staff that has put together
23 hundreds of pages of research ahead of these
24 hearings. But respectfully, the experts on housing
25 in New York City are in this room right now.

25

The tenants that speak at these

1
2 hearings, can tell you how a rent-stabilized
3 apartment is the cornerstone of so many families
4 stability and how a rent increase lays the
5 groundwork for eviction, for displacement. Those
6 are policy choices that are made by this Guideline
7 Board and will be made by vote next week and so I
8 hope that you're taking this opportunity to listen
9 to all of the tenants who have told you the stories
10 about a city that's still in recovery.

11 But we know that the Rent
12 Guideline Board research shows the same thing. We
13 have unemployment that's above COVID levels. We
14 have rent burdens that are at the highest they've
15 been in years since 2014, we have surging sheltered
16 homelessness for the first time in four years. I
17 mean, those things are connected and at the same
18 time, owning a rent-stabilized apartment remains
19 highly profitable.

20 You've heard people say 50 percent
21 increase in income over the last 30 years here in
22 Brooklyn, it's a 171 percent increase and that's
23 according to the Rent Guideline Board research.
24 However, as I've said, the best research that you
25 can do and that I appreciate you are doing is to

1

2 listen to the tenants that are here and they're
3 clear on what the rent increase should be and what
4 we as a city can take and so we are asking you to
5 consider as you make the policy choice that will be
6 made, whether you put more of a burden on those who
7 are just recovering from a crisis or take a little
8 bit out of the profit margin of a handful of
9 investors. Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank You.

11 Natalia Marques?

12 MS. MARQUES: Hi, everyone. My
13 name's Natalia Marques, I'm a New York State
14 tenant, I live at 1834 (unintelligible) Association
15 at (unintelligible), and I with a few quick
16 questions. Who here is a tenant? Who here got a 7
17 percent raise this year? Who here is facing a
18 potential 7 percent rent increase this year? It's
19 clear that we're all affected by inflation. Why
20 should our landlords get a raise, while we get
21 nothing? Landlords (unintelligible). Landlords
22 are already rich.

23 They get money from our paychecks
24 every single month. But we as rent stabilized
25 tenants know we're not getting repairs that we

1

2 need. Who here (unintelligible). I had to take a
3 cold shower before work this morning. Several
4 nights this year, I woke up in the middle of the
5 night because there were cockroaches between my
6 sheets. One of my neighbors only gets hot water in
7 her bathroom. That's right. Not cold water, just
8 hot water. That means that every time she tries to
9 shower, she burns herself.

10 It's unfair. And yet we're seeing
11 these 7 percent increases anyway, like they need
12 more money and I just want to ask, who here voted
13 for a 7 percent increase? Who here voted for any
14 of these nine people standing in front of us?
15 That's right. So we're 2.4 million rent-stabilized
16 tenants in this city and only single one of us gets
17 to vote on rent increases (unintelligible) that can
18 be life or death for us. Only single one of us
19 even gets to vote for the nine people that decide
20 on these rent increases (unintelligible). Rent
21 Guidelines Board that decide 2 million times needs
22 to be represented by tenants made up of
23 (unintelligible).

24

(Audience participation.)

25

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

1

2 The next three speakers would be Gufran Salma,
3 Brianna Soleyn and Whitney Hu.

4

Gufran Salma?

5

MS. SALMA: Hello, my name is
6 Gufran and I'm a tenant at 1834 Caton Avenue, along
7 with my friends Natalia and Brianna. I live with
8 my three roommates and I pay 991 dollars a month to
9 rent a room in our apartment. I should not be
10 paying 991 dollars a month with three roommates in
11 a rent-stabilized apartment. And for God's sake,
12 that sounds like decent rent in Brooklyn. You
13 don't understand that my rent is not financially
14 possible for the majority of New Yorkers. I make
15 more than almost 50 percent of New Yorkers and I do
16 not support anyone on my salary.

17

Imagine if I had children or
18 elderly family members to take care of, I would
19 never be able to afford that rent. I can buy now,
20 but I can still live paycheck to paycheck. And now
21 the Rent Guideline Board plans on increasing the
22 rent of all rent-stabilized buildings. Is the
23 assumption that all of us get yearly raises? How
24 are you raising our rent prices to match inflation
25 when our salaries don't even do that. Not only do

1

2 we have to worry about the increasing prices of
3 groceries, about feeding ourselves, now we have to
4 worry about whether we'll have a roof over our
5 heads the next round of rent increases because of a
6 decision made by a board that isn't even
7 democratically elected.

8

(Audience participation.)

9

MS. SALMA: You're elected by the
10 mayor; you do not serve us. The majority of New
11 Yorkers are renters, so how come we only have two
12 representatives for the tenants?

13

And how come (unintelligible) to
14 represent us, the public, never actually do so?
15 The public showed up at the last hearing, the
16 public demanded a rollback, and yet somehow, we're
17 here discussing the 7 percent increase?

18

(unintelligible) afford that. The inflation to the
19 slashing of social service budget, everything that
20 is supposed to provide us a safe net is being cut.
21 How is it rent controlled if it goes up every year?
22 There are plenty of empty vacant units in the city,
23 and yet we have a homeless crisis. We get caught
24 up in fake conversations around needing to build
25 more affordable housing that isn't actually

1

2 affordable. We don't need more housing; we just
3 need to use the already existing housing to house
4 people instead of holding empty vacant units'
5 hostage to create a myth of scarcity to allow the
6 (unintelligible). What's being done to us is
7 unjust and we're not going to stand for it.

8

(Audience participation.)

9

MS. SOLEYN: Hi, everyone. My
10 name's Brianna. I'm testifying in solidarity with
11 my neighbors at 1834 Caton Avenue and some of my
12 (unintelligible) neighbors and tenant across New
13 York City because we need a rent rollback.

14

We all had to endure a significant
15 and historic rent increase in the last year and it
16 hasn't been easy. New Yorkers are still reeling
17 and matching this on top of increases in our food
18 and our healthcare and basic necessities. I go to
19 housing court every week and we see every week how
20 housing court is run as a tool for eviction and
21 displacement. Landlords have every institutional
22 suit tool on their side to make a profit and
23 displace longtime New Yorkers. People are
24 overwhelmed and they're struggling to stay in their
25 homes. We should not hold a struggle equal to

1

2 landlord profits.

3

4 Our priority as the city needs to
5 be keeping tenants in their homes, our
6 neighborhoods stable and not lining the pockets of
7 landlords. Why should they be guaranteed profit
8 year over year as tenants suffer underside, wages,
9 and rising inflation? We should not be okay with
10 the status quo anymore and we need a rent rollback.
11 And we also need the Rugby to reflect the working
12 class or working-class tenants in New York.

12

(Audience participation.)

13

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14

Whitney Hu?

15

16 Well, as she's coming down, I'll
17 announce the next three speakers. Ross Levin, Eric
18 Szkarlat, and Nicholas Goldbach. Thank you.

18

19 MS. HU: My name is Whitney Hu,
20 and I am the director of Civic Engagement and
21 Research at Churches United for Fair Housing,
22 otherwise known as CUFFH and I'm also
23 (unintelligible).

23

24 We provide rental housing services
25 and we work with a church network across Brooklyn
Queens. The members and congregations we serve in

1

2 Brooklyn are primarily black, brown immigrant, and
3 working class. I'm actually here with some of our
4 members, but they're still in line outside. We
5 have 20 folks including families and the line is
6 still wrapped around the block.

7 It's just the state of Brooklyn
8 and when I look around this room, I've cried like
9 three times already and I wish some of you showed
10 some more emotions and the testimonies that we're
11 hearing. But then it's intergenerational, it is
12 diverse and I'm so proud of the many young people
13 that are here because we're fighting for our
14 futures to stay in the communities that we love.

15 I'm here today asking for a
16 miracle that you have the power to help me achieve
17 and I say that knowing that I'm not the only one
18 praying for that miracle. Right now, most New
19 Yorkers are in survival mode and I know that you
20 can feel it and see it, it's like (unintelligible)
21 are here, it's like security out of the wazoo.
22 They know. Now I'm not here because they know that
23 their neighbors and communities are hurting, but
24 they're prioritizing their profits over the
25 humanity of their tenants.

1
2 CUFFH service sites are packed
3 every day and we have more members receiving
4 eviction notices than at any other time in our
5 decade-long history. Raising the rent again would
6 mean more evictions, more people who are homeless
7 and it might mean the trade-off of their ability to
8 buy groceries, pay their utilities, buy new clothes
9 for their kids for the school year, whatever it
10 takes to survive.

11 I'm urging the Board today to do
12 the right thing and to use their power to protect
13 tenants, families, children, seniors, and our
14 communities. The moral; (unintelligible) would be
15 to issue a rent rollback because rents should have
16 never been raised last year.

17 (Unintelligible) Genesis, I know
18 you guys are back there fighting for us. We see
19 you; we hear you, we're with you. Thank you.

20 (Audience participation.)

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Ross Levin?

22 MR. LEVIN: Hi, my name is Ross
23 Levin. I live in a rent-stabilized department in
24 South Slope and we need to freeze or rollback
25 rents. Last year I left my apartment when the

1
2 landlord said it wasn't rent-stabilized and to
3 avoid going to housing court and being blacklisted,
4 which does still exist, I had to move. I was lucky
5 enough to find a rent-stabilized apartment but I
6 lost my neighborhood where I had lived for many
7 years, I pay more in rent now and until you've been
8 forced to move, you don't understand how traumatic
9 and disruptive that could be, and every percentage
10 point that you raise the rent it will be disrupting
11 and traumatizing more New Yorkers like that,
12 families, working people, the people who got us
13 through the pandemic.

14 A 5 or 7 percent increase will
15 displace thousands of families. I'm a law student
16 and about half of my cost-of-living loans go to my
17 rent and I'm here to stand in solidarity with
18 people who have a lot less as well. And Professor
19 Davidson, you were my professor, you taught me that
20 you know, you have to look at what is the statutory
21 authority of an administrative board and that's
22 what you said when I asked you about this in a more
23 private setting and it is in your power to freeze
24 the rents. It was done by this Board before and
25 it's in your power to rollback to this.

1

2

(Audience participation.)

3

MR. LEVIN: -- the supposed

4

neutrality of the law. This is a political choice

5

that will affect billions of people and -- but the

6

last that point (unintelligible) I know, there were

7

some public concerns about violence from tenants

8

who were threats from tenants. The only threat of

9

violence here tonight is the threat of eviction.

10

(Audience participation.)

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you,

12

Ross.

13

Eric Szkarlat?

14

MR. SZKARLAT: Thank you. So my

15

name is Eric. I'm living as a tenant in a

16

rent-stabilized unit at 10 unit building in Fort

17

(unintelligible). I just want to put, you know, the

18

real crux of the issue at the forefront, which is

19

what my rent would be different under these

20

increases in the next couple of years.

21

So the range that you proposed, my

22

rent would increase from what I'm paying today by

23

-- in our apartment 355 to 442 dollars per month.

24

I am -- I just graduated law school, I am working

25

as a lawyer, I am a rent tenant. I'm paying more

1

2 than 50 percent of my take-home pay to rent and I
3 know that there are certain things that you have to
4 consider. Things like landlords, property taxes in
5 my building from public information, I know that my
6 landlord pays about 2,200 dollars a year in taxes
7 and you -- that's less than half of my monthly rent
8 because he gets the J51 tax abatement.

9 He doesn't maintain very much of
10 anything. We have to fight him for everything, he
11 didn't remediate the mold, he just painted over it.
12 He fought tooth and nail against fixing his
13 appliances, he asked me to pay him to fix his
14 appliances. We know that there's a lot of talk
15 about interest rates right now and inflation. Most
16 economists this year are expecting a recession and
17 they're expecting -- usually in a recession there's
18 deflation but that never seems to be talked about
19 when we talk about rent increases and decreases.

20 And the last point that I'll make
21 is that Albany has failed us, they said that they
22 were going to pass a housing compact. They failed.
23 This board, is the last line of defense for tenants
24 in New York City. You cannot raise rent, you must
25 freeze it, roll it back or go at the absolute

1

2 minimum that you proposed. Thank you.

3 (Audience participation.)

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Nicholas

5 Goldbach?

6 MR. GOLDBACH: Thank you. My name
7 is Nick, I live in a rent-stabilized tenant in
8 Washington Heights for seven years with my partner
9 Jack. He can't be here today because he's a
10 teacher; a public-school teacher in
11 (unintelligible) to your children. There are over
12 a hundred families living in my building alone,
13 mostly Hispanic, many multi-generational.

14 A lot of people don't feel
15 comfortable showing up and talking here today.
16 They built their life here around the security and
17 rent stabilization that you promised them the
18 ability to renew their leases year after year at
19 affordable rent but today, that promise is in peril
20 because landlords have put profits over people.

21 Landlords claim to be financially
22 distressed; they claim they're struggling and they
23 need a rent increase to keep up with maintenance or
24 utility costs or something else. But we know
25 that's a lie because it isn't landlords we see

1

2 filling the public shelters across New York. It
3 isn't the landlords who struggle to put food on the
4 table and pay their bills on time, and we don't see
5 landlords working two to three jobs to support
6 their family and send their kids to college. So,
7 landlords, our homes are just another piece in
8 their portfolios.

9 And despite their financial
10 distress, landlords like mine own over 150
11 buildings in New York City and have spent billions,
12 millions in the past few years acquiring new
13 properties and expanding their portfolios at
14 unprecedented rates a detail I'm sure they omitted
15 to this Board. Landlords like mine are
16 sophisticated actors in a regulated market. If
17 they fail to diversify their portfolios
18 accordingly, that sounds like the investor's
19 problem, not ours.

20 (Audience participation.)

21 MR. GOLDBACH: I urge this Board
22 to reject these landlords' false claims of
23 financial distress and pass a rent rollback to
24 ensure that over a million rent-stabilized
25 households and continue to afford living, working,

1

2 and raising families in this great city. Thank
3 you.

4

(Audience participation.)

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I will call
6 the next three speakers. Katelin Penner, Samantha
7 Bravo and Angie Langdon.

8

Katelin Penner?

9

MS. PENNER: I'll start off the
10 quote from board member Alex Schwartz in his 2010
11 book. "In 2008, federal expenditures were direct
12 housing assistance totaled less than 40.2 billion,
13 while homeowner assistance, which includes
14 landlords by the way, exceeded 171 billion
15 dollars."

16

My name is Katelin Penner and I'm
17 a rent-stabilized tenant living in a J51 building
18 in Bushwick, Brooklyn. I work for (unintelligible)
19 and Graduate School for urban planning at Hunter,
20 preparing for a lifelong career in city service
21 where I'll never make more than 80, 70,000 dollars
22 a year. But even though I have three roommates who
23 live in a rent-stabilized building, I still pay
24 more than 40 percent of my income towards rent in a
25 month. And my experience is not uncommon.

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25

According to the most recent New York City Rent Guideline Board study, 32.2 percent of tenants taking out any form of rental assistance are still paying -- sorry, tenants are paying on an average, taking out any level of rental assistance, paying 32.2 percent of their income towards rent.

In what way is it acceptable for tenants to be paying more than 100 cents an acceptable amount of money towards rental income? It's unacceptable.

I also pay for utilities and 18 percent of your studies that determine rental costs are fuel and utilities. Why hasn't the Board done more to separate out those costs when a large portion of rent-stabilized tenants, I'm sure are covering those costs on their own? You're using this study to re-double down on the amount of money that someone like myself has to pay in utility costs, which if you add those by the way, into my rent costs, I would be paying more than 50 percent of my income as rent --

(Audience participation.)

MS. PENNER: -- I -- completing a selection from the Rent Guidelines Board's explanation to the Rent Guidelines Board. On page

1
2 58, "the Rent Guideline Board notes, regardless of
3 who's better view of this argument, there is an
4 independent and quite plausible reason for
5 continuing to review and factor affordability into
6 the guidelines." You have millions of
7 rent-stabilized tenants in this city and millions
8 of people here today in spirit or in person telling
9 you to lower rent; to put a rent rollback. If you
10 are standing in the interests of the landlords, can
11 I ask you who do you stand with? Which side are
12 you on?

13 (Audience participation.)

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Samantha
15 Bravo?

16 MS. BRAVO: Can you hear me? My
17 name is Samantha Bravo and I'm a member of Davis
18 Healthy Neighbors and I work for the Office of
19 Assemblymember Mark Sullivan (unintelligible).
20 Last month I finished my first year of college.
21 While my college experience has been enriching,
22 empowering, and filled with moments of growth and
23 connection, it did not come for free. My parents
24 pay for food, clothes essentials, and most
25 importantly, rent.

1
2 My tuition would have been a
3 financial burden to my parents. As a result, when
4 I was offered employment, I embraced the
5 opportunity and accepted offered employment with
6 without hesitation. Taking on a part-time job
7 while being a full-time commuter student became a
8 necessity rather than a choice due to financial
9 circumstances. I was able to pay my tuition and
10 also develop financial responsibility but I know
11 that I'm not the only college student in NYC to
12 once take the sacrifices the same way that their
13 parents did because the rent is too damn high.

14 The increase in the rent isn't
15 needed at all. You see it right here. No one
16 agrees with it. How can students like myself learn
17 about independence, responsibility, and adulting if
18 this city implements rent increases that make it
19 nearly impossible to afford rent? You all should
20 listen to us because clearly, we don't want a raise
21 in rent. Raise your hand if you want to increase
22 in rent. Raise your hand if you want rent
23 rollback.

24 (Audience participation.)

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. I

1

2 will call the next three speakers. Angie Langdon,
3 Jose Garza and Esteban Giron. Please go ahead.
4 Thank you.

5 MS. LANGDON: Hi, my name's Angie
6 Langdon, and I'm here with the party for Socialism
7 and Liberation. (unintelligible) for us for showing
8 up. Yeah. All of us to be here, right?
9 (unintelligible) should be in our hands, it's our
10 families, it's our friends that built these
11 structures, that built these apartments, and year
12 after year they push us out of and tell us that we
13 have to move to the next block, right? They keep
14 raising the rent every year the people on this
15 floor get into the back room with the politicians
16 and then they make these deals and create a housing
17 crisis. I'm not even sure if it's called a housing
18 crisis because it's not a housing crisis. We know
19 it's not a housing crisis because in 2021 there
20 were 80000 rent --

21 (Audience participation.)

22 MS. LANGDON: -- that's exactly
23 right, we're going to get there, right? But in
24 2021, 88,000 apartments were vacant, stabilized
25 rent housing was vacant, right? That's 90,000

1

2 families that were denied access to housing.
3 That's 90,000 families that were pushed to the
4 streets, they were pushed to the shelters, they
5 were pushed to unstable living conditions. We have
6 to fix it, right? Because it takes all of us
7 together showing up, showing up --

8

(Audience participation.)

9 MS. LANGDON: -- so they then turn
10 around tell us the housing crisis, tell us that
11 it's the economy and we know that it's their deals.
12 And we know that it's this Board that raises rent
13 every year. Nine people we did not elect. Who
14 voted? None of us. So nine people we did not
15 elect like determine our stability, to determine
16 your livelihood, determine if you can sleep at
17 night. And it's not up to them, it's up to us.
18 It's up to us --

19

(Audience participation.)

20

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21

(Unintelligible).

22

23 MR. CLARK: How are you all
24 doing? My name is Eden Clark. I'm a member of the
25 New York City Party for Socialism and Liberation.
On behalf of myself and my organization, a rent

1

2 hike cannot happen. We're in the midst of a
3 profound crisis as many other speakers have
4 addressed. With this increase, you are throwing
5 fuel on a conflagration. How many of us are
6 already facing hard or impossible choices. As of
7 2022, this city has the highest cost of living in
8 the world. We've had an inflation rate that is
9 double or triple than what it normally is.

10 We have seen the cost of groceries
11 grow almost as much as 8 percent per month this
12 year. And the Public Service Commission just
13 approved a 20 percent hike for Con Edison customers
14 over three years, and now they want to raise the
15 rent up to 7 percent on top of that. Can anyone
16 afford that? When is enough, enough?

17 These problems are not caused by
18 mysterious unknowable forces. 54 percent of every
19 dollar of inflation goes to corporate profits. It
20 goes to our landlords, it goes to our utility
21 companies, and it goes to these major corporations.
22 It goes to these entities which are controlled by a
23 tiny minority of wealthy people and they're
24 profiting off of our misery and our agony. It's
25 just capitalism. It earns every last dollar

1

2 possible and squeezes us until we bleed. We say no
3 more, we say that we need a new system that puts
4 human needs over profit.

5

6 There are 2.4 million
7 rent-stabilized tenants in the city and there are 6
8 million tenants in this city. We know who our
9 allies are and we know who is trying to raise our
10 rents. We have to get organized. We have to build
11 our forces regardless of what happens with this
12 vote and we have to (unintelligible) for each other
13 and we have to fight back and then demand more than
14 just a rent rollback. We have demand to a new
15 system that puts our needs over profit. Thank you.

16

(Audience participation.)

17

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

18

Next, we have Jose Garza. Thank you.

19

MR. GARZA: My name is Jose Garza.

20

I'm a market lieutenant and I'm here today to

21

support rent-stabilized tenants on the

22

(unintelligible). As tenants, it seems like you

23

only have two choices today, either live under the

24

(unintelligible) negligent landlord in a

25

rent-stabilized apartment or pay sky-high rate

26

rent. It doesn't need to be this way. We tenants

1

2 don't need the Rugby; an unelected board appointed
3 by a mayor who is in the pockets of housing
4 developers to tell us what housing should cost. We
5 need the people who live in our housing and pay for
6 it -- that should make these decisions.

7 From Vienna to Vietnam, many
8 governments are experimenting with new ways to
9 provide their citizens with land and housing. I
10 want to invite the audience here to imagine for a
11 moment, what community control of our land and
12 housing will look like. Instead of another
13 electric tower, we could build housing that working
14 families cannot only afford but enjoy. Instead of
15 a run-down --

16 (Audience participation.)

17 MR. GARZA -- we model and we build
18 and build every vacant apartment in New York City,
19 buildings built for our needs that cater to our
20 day-to-day lives. We need great schools --

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: One second,
22 sorry.

23 (Audience participation.)

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:

25 (Unintelligible).

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MR. GARZA: -- buildings built for our needs. We cater to our day-to-day lives, great schools, daycare, and a place within them. Our families would slowly get to the park as people are pushed further and further away in search of affordable housing.

Here, in New York City, more than half the tenants in stabilized apartments without housing assistance subsidies spend at least 32 percent of their income on rent. I know our community would never ask its residents to pay these prices. So what could you do if that ratio dropped to 20 percent? 10 percent? Dare I say 5 percent? Why can't we as a community make decisions on what and where to bill? What do landlords do for us? Nothing. We all know.

(Audience participation.)

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Esteban Giron?

MR. GIRON: Good evening. My name is Esteban Giron. I'm a member of the (unintelligible). I'm a rent-stabilized tenant and have lived at (unintelligible) Street for 10 years. One of the more frustrating elements of this very charade is the narrative that landlords and tenants

1
2 come into this process on equal footing. And that
3 making a profit is as important of an outcome as
4 not getting evicted. Yes, landlords are facing the
5 prospect of defaulting on mortgages and they're
6 telling me it's because of the 2019 HSTPA, but
7 let's be real here. These landlords overleverage
8 their buildings based on the expectation that they
9 would be able to evict us. Now they want you to
10 reward their risky investment on the backs of
11 tenants. No landlord is going to become homeless
12 because you didn't give them a high enough
13 increase, the worst outcome that they face is
14 possibly having to sell their building and the
15 average sale price of a rent-stabilized building is
16 higher than it's been in the three years before the
17 2019 (unintelligible). So that we are clear,
18 tenants face homelessness landlords face the
19 prospect of a big chunk of cash coming their way if
20 they have to sell. We're not the same.

21 Now I want to recognize the
22 tenants that took the stage --

23 (Audience participation)

24 MR. GIRON: -- and those handful
25 council members and a group of tenants that

1

2 included folks in their eighties presented with a
3 credible threat of violence, it's is a shameful
4 lie. You should be ashamed of yourself. We don't
5 like being forced to be unaccountable for decisions
6 you make, but there are hundreds of landlords and
7 there are millions of us and we will hold you
8 accountable.

9

(Audience participation.)

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Than you. Our
11 next three speakers are Roberto Rodriguez, Ana
12 Reyes and Nora Rodriguez.

13

(Audience participation.)

14

MR. RODRIGUEZ: My name is Roberto
15 Rodriguez (unintelligible), and every time I come
16 to this hearing, I say thank you, but this time I'm
17 not going to say thank you (unintelligible) 100
18 percent that you're going to increase my rent and
19 you don't realize that I'm already
20 (unintelligible).

21

The people in my community are
22 already on a fixed income. We have no way to pay
23 for our rent today, and yet these landlords that
24 are claiming a deficit that they have no NOI while
25 I live in a building and around my community, there

1

2 are buildings being warehoused, there are
3 apartments being warehoused, there are apartments
4 being (unintelligible) at this moment and yet shame
5 on this panel that is going to increase the rent --

6 (Audience participation.)

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: -- this morning
8 when I went to throw out my garbages at the
9 courtyard, I had to walk downstairs with a bat
10 because there are 20 rodents around me. There is
11 no landlord in that building. It's a 20-apartment
12 building and where is our mayor is micromanaging
13 this panel here today and if nothing gets done, I
14 say shame on you and (unintelligible), and roll
15 back the rent.

16 (Audience participation.)

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
18 Ana Reyes?

19 MS. REYES: Hello. Good
20 afternoon to all. I live in the area of Bay Ridge
21 helping neighbors and ranchers united to Brooklyn.
22 I'm here to ask the panel of Rugby to -- that we
23 need be to be more conscious about the percentage
24 that you're asking to have increased. This affects
25 me so much; this increase affects me so much in

1

2 such a way that it makes every day I feel more
3 tired of going to work to be able to pay the rent
4 the same way I've always done. I am on time of my
5 payments we are not a burden for the public. Since
6 we're not asking to live free for free, we are
7 asking to be able to pay for a just and fair rent
8 and something that is -- we're able to pay.

9 We do pay our taxes at every
10 expense that is part of having a home. How can we
11 pay such a high rent when you say that it's to make
12 repairs and they're still not solved? We don't
13 refuse to pay our rent for our homes, we ask to pay
14 a fair and dignified rent for all of us, which
15 every day we have to go out every morning to work
16 to be able to keep our homes the same way that you
17 could do it if you were in our situation. We have
18 a right to be able to pay for our homes without so
19 many difficulties. Thank you for your attention.
20 I ask you to please not increase the rent.

21 (Audience participation.)

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next
23 speakers are Nora Rodriguez, Fabiola Avelino, and
24 Jared Watson. Nora Rodriguez?

25 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Hello. My name is

1
2 Nora Rodriguez and I'm here to tell you, all of you
3 that (unintelligible) HPD, and all of you are
4 making the greedy landlords to become billionaires
5 because they make the rent whatever they please and
6 nobody stops them. Right now they're saying that
7 they don't have profit when they have the luxury of
8 having empty apartments, thousands of empty
9 apartments in the building. And that means that
10 they don't need the money because they make enough
11 money from the one that they're renting because of
12 the higher rent that they make every -- and every
13 year it's the same thing, they squeezing our
14 pockets when they are growing the bank accounts and
15 they don't care about the people that they are
16 making suffering, making them homeless every day
17 because of the higher rent that we have to pay. So
18 please, think about that you are doing a favor to
19 these people every day it is more of a race between
20 (unintelligible) above the people that have only
21 earned the minimum wage. Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Fabiola
24 Avelino.

25 MS. AVELINO: Hello. Good

1
2 afternoon. My name is Fabiola Avelino and I reside
3 in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, New York. I'm a member
4 of Neighbors Helping Neighbors at the United
5 Tenants of Brooklyn. My situation is complicated.
6 I live in a rent-stabilized apartment. According
7 to the rent history, I should be paying 985
8 dollars, but I'm actually paying 1,500 dollars in
9 rent. I am a victim of a scam because the person
10 who is renting me the apartment is not the actual
11 landlord of the building.

12 Now I am facing eviction by the
13 true landlord of the building, I work two jobs to
14 be able to afford the rent. I have always been
15 consistent and punctual with my rent payments
16 however; the landlord refuses to renew my lease or
17 provide me with a new lease. On top of everything,
18 the person who rented me the apartment has been
19 harassing and threatening me, they even tried to
20 forcefully enter my apartment.

21 I have a 12-year-old daughter who
22 is very scared and nervous, she asks me, Mom, what
23 are we going to do if they kick us out of the
24 apartment? Will we be homeless? Where will we
25 live? That is why I am here. I please request the

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2 members of the Rent Guidelines Board not to
3 increase the rent. I am a single mother and I will
4 not be able to afford another rent increase. Thank
5 you very much.

6

(Applause.)

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8

FEMALE VOICE: There is a line
9 around the corner and there are quite a number of
10 empty seats could we ask our friends here to raise
11 their hands so we can get moving members who are
12 waiting outside? They're not letting anyone else
13 in but there are a number of empty seats. So right
14 here you all help us out, raise your hand. We'll
15 people in. Thank you so much chair.

16

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17

We're going to get more (unintelligible). Thank
18 you.

19

Mr. Watson?

20

MR. WATSON: All right. I'll be
21 brief. My name's Jared Watson and I am a tenant
22 organizer with Fifth Avenue Committee of Neighbors
23 Helping Neighbors and I'm also a rent-stabilized
24 tenant in Sunset Park. That's what's up and we're
25 here and without my very modest rent-stabilized

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2 studio apartment, I don't know what I would do.
3 Our city's rent-stabilized housing stock is a
4 lifeline for the city's working class, but it's not
5 worth anything if the Rent Guidelines Board
6 approves absurd rent increases like what has been
7 suggested.

8 Our community and our members
9 cannot afford these increases as we heard plenty of
10 times tonight because we (unintelligible). Yeah,
11 our community members cannot afford these
12 increases, so on behalf of myself and my
13 organization, I ask for no increase this year.
14 Thank you.

15 (Audience participation.)

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next
17 speaker is Assembly member Mitayes.

18 (Audience participation.)

19 MS. MITAYES: Good evening to the
20 Board. I am Assembly member Marcela Mitayes I am
21 the first immigrant indigenous Caribbean in the
22 State legislature. I have been coming before this
23 Board since 2008 asking for a rent freeze.

24 I was displaced from a
25 rent-stabilized apartment that I shared with my

1
2 family for over 30 years when we got a new landlord
3 in 2006 and within six months was able to displace
4 half of the 35-unit rent-stabilized building in my
5 district. I have been fighting these landlords,
6 the Rent Guidelines Board increases and the
7 (unintelligible) the stronger tenant protection
8 since then. You are going to hear a lot of reasons
9 why you should not raise the rent; you're going to
10 hear personal experiences. You guys have access to
11 all the data, but I'm going to share some stuff
12 that not a lot of tenants share.

13 When you are evicted from your
14 home, then the trauma that you carry with you. I
15 had to tell my eight-year-old daughter, we were
16 being evicted and she learned two vocabulary words
17 that year, eviction and gentrification. I have
18 been fighting in my community to try and preserve
19 what's left of the gentrification wave that is
20 hitting us. So you need to understand that there's
21 a lot of stuff that's happening, there's a lot of
22 rapid harassment that is being done on the tenants
23 because of the imbalance of power.

24 When it comes to the end of the
25 workday and you're starting to get ready to go

1
2 home, there's an anxiety that overcomes you,
3 because you are not sure what you're going to have
4 to witness when you get home today. Things from
5 turning off the power into your entire apartment to
6 things like telling you blatantly they're not going
7 to make it in repair since you're not paying enough
8 rent for it. Telling tenants, when the governor
9 issued a Statewide eviction moratorium, they said,
10 I don't care, use your credit card.

11 (unintelligible) and bang the door, that is such a
12 distinct knock that it's scaring and traumatizing
13 our children because the ones that recognize it are
14 starting to run and hide under their bed because
15 they're seeing these landlords storm into what they
16 think is their property even though it's your home
17 and belittle you, talk down to you.

18 Tenants want to be able to pay
19 their rent, but they can't afford it, they're
20 starting to come out of a pandemic. Most of them
21 aren't working full-time, some of them businesses
22 are gone forever. You are in a unique opportunity
23 not just as the city, but in history to make sure
24 that we right this wrong. The State and the
25 governor has failed us. You're the last line of

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2 defense.

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(Applause.)

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5 MS. MITAYES: You have the
6 power to fix this and so what I'm asking you is to
7 not increase the rent because that is an eviction
8 and that is violence and particularly in the
9 community of Sunset Park predominantly monolingual
10 Spanish speakers and immigrants have no defense
11 going into this pandemic because they don't have
12 access to basic healthcare. So they lost a lot,
13 like a lot of people here have and so we're asking
14 you to do the right thing and be on the right side
15 of history. What we need is a rollback
16 (unintelligible) zero increase. Any increase no
17 matter how small you think it is it's just going to
18 be too much --

18

(Audience participation.)

19

20 MS. MITAYES: -- desperate,
21 they're hanging on with bloody fingers for you to
22 act and so I'm asking you, I'm pleading for my
23 neighbors, you can do something, you can act and
24 you can be on the right side of history. Do not
25 move forward on the rent increase. The bedrock of
New York City is not going to be able to take it.

1

2 Thank you.

3

(Audience participation.)

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

(Unintelligible).

6

MS. BREASE: Alex Schwartz, try to

7

stay awake this time. My name is Emily Brease.

8

I'm a rent-stabilized tenant and a member of the

9

Party for Socialism and Liberation. I want to

10

first talk to you all the Board here. So please go

11

ahead and raise your hand if this applies to you.

12

How many of you are rent-stabilized? Okay. And

13

how many of you are rent burdened? Meaning that

14

over 30 percent of your income goes to your rent

15

each month? Go ahead at the end, I know you're not

16

going to raise your hand. Just like Christina

17

Smyth, who apparently this wasn't important enough

18

for her to show up to. 20 out of 50 New Yorkers,

19

including 10 families face eviction in March.

20

Next question is who voted for

21

you? You voted for them? That's right because you

22

were appointed by the mayor the mayor that received

23

the most funding for real estate lobby than any

24

other candidate in the 2021 Mayoral race. You

25

pretend like you're protecting small landlords,

1

2 right? That's your thing. Well, you know what the
3 real numbers are, you know that only 1 percent of
4 rent-stabilized units are owned by landlords with
5 10 units or fewer. Meanwhile, the rest of us --
6 the majority of our landlords own a hundred units
7 or more. So we know you're a rubber stamp for the
8 landlord. So that's why I want to talk to my
9 tenants here.

10 My fellow tenant, it doesn't have
11 to be like this, the pandemic showed us who is
12 essential for society and (unintelligible) just
13 calling us back and wasting our time. Do landlords
14 make this city run? No, we make this city run. We
15 make this city run and then the landlords want to
16 tell us, oh, we provide the housing. What they
17 really do is they take our money from our labor
18 evict us through the housing, and then they want to
19 cry about their profit (unintelligible)-

20 (Audience participation.)

21 MS. BREASE: -- they don't control
22 this; we control this city.

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24 Mustafa Alnomani?

25 (Audience participation.)

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2 MR. ALNOMANI: I'm not willing to
3 speak to this Board. They don't even exist anymore
4 because they shouldn't exist. Undemocratic
5 unelected board. Because in an ideal system, in a
6 future that hopefully we will soon go together,
7 we'll have nine tenants up there. People who are
8 sitting here, those barriers do not exist because
9 they'll do nothing to keep -- something apart
10 between us. What a shame. You call yourselves a
11 fellow human being yet you divide us like this.

12 Another reason I have no interest
13 in speaking to them is because they have lost their
14 (unintelligible) the two at the end.
15 (Unintelligible). Their goal is to protect people
16 who have to grind us down until we are dust because
17 they don't care if we end up on the streets, they
18 don't care if we have to work on another full-time
19 job to make sure our kid's food, to make sure our
20 children don't end up in shelters. To make sure
21 they have notebooks and pencils for their school to
22 make sure they have a chance of going college.
23 They have an interest in it and because -- again
24 they do not -- they no longer have their hearts.
25 They have replaced their hearts with something

1

2 called profit.

3

4 They're machines, they're not
5 people. They're machines. Your only interest is
6 to make more of that weird brain paper. I want to
7 see a future where we're we are the ones
8 (unintelligible). This is our building we built
9 it. This is our building we're going to feed and
10 care our children. That's not going to happen the
11 way things are right now and there's a name for the
12 way things are right now and that thing is called
13 capitalism. Oh, oh, you need a system? Can you
14 keep their hearts? They're victims, they're
15 victims, the truth is they're victims too. We want
16 a system where we all get to keep our hearts and we
17 all get to keep each other together in community.
18 Thank you.

18

(Applause.)

19

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Amy Clark

20

(Audience participation.)

21

22 MS. CLARK: Hi. I'm a stabilized
23 tenant in Park Slope, so I think I'm neighbors with
24 some of you. And I'm here to speak in solidarity
25 with my fellow tenants. You've heard a lot about
the numbers in New York City about housing and

1

2 about how the choices you make next week are going
3 to be -- you know, further the homelessness crisis,
4 lead to more evictions. It's June and I want to
5 speak specifically to how the housing crisis and
6 the high cost of living affects the community, my
7 community among the chosen --

8

(Applause.)

9

MS. CLARK: -- we'll also
10 stabilize tenants if they're working, so they ask
11 you to speak. New York City is a place where we
12 can find community, relative safety, build a
13 thriving life. One of the things I love about my
14 home is that I'm built close to Ginger's, which is
15 one of the like 19 lesbian bars, there's not a lot
16 of them. They're -- it's really uncommon in the
17 whole country and I don't know if you've been
18 following the news across this country about the
19 laws in Florida that are prohibiting trans people
20 -- trans adults from getting the prescriptions
21 (unintelligible).

22

I don't know if you're following
23 any of the news about let's say gay or any of these
24 things, but we don't have a lot of places that are
25 safe for our community and it's not just red

1
2 states, it's upstate, I have friends who -- a house
3 that they -- really friends who were going to buy a
4 house, you know had brought out from under them
5 because one of the people in the homeless
6 association decided he didn't want to be a
7 community with a lesbian couple and that was
8 upstate.

9 So I just want to think about --
10 like what the choices you make, how we impact all
11 of us in this room, and specifically also how we
12 impact the community and the trans community
13 because this is our home and we want to stay here.

14 (Audience participation.)

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
16 We're going to hear next from we have from Miya
17 Tada, Sonia Perez, and from Yonit Friedman and then
18 we'll take a brief break and we'll be back.

19 MS. TADA: Hi everybody. So I
20 heard that there were some landlords and landlord
21 representatives who did not bother to come to this
22 meeting today because of public safety concerns. I
23 don't know about you but what about the public
24 safety concern for the 70,000 plus homeless people
25 that live in New York City right now? What about

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2 the concern for 100,000 plus families that eviction
3 just last year alone?

4

5 You Guys are worried about
6 physical intimidation, but what about the physical
7 intimidation of placing people out of their homes?
8 You guys are afraid of our testimonies of us
9 meeting here, but this is beautiful. This is the
10 people coming together and we're here because it's
11 -- housing is a human right and it is our right as
12 workers and as people to defend that right however
13 we see fit.

14

15 My name is Miya Tada and I'm with
16 the Party for Socialism and Liberation and I'm a
17 tenant in New York and I'm just here and I know
18 that the landlord cowards on this Board are going
19 to vote for rent increases. I didn't -- I didn't
20 call this meeting, I didn't put you on that table
21 up there, I didn't ask for my rent to go up this
22 year because my wage definitely did not go up this
23 year or last year or the year before.

24

25 But to all of my tenants and
workers in this room right here, I want you to
understand that housing is a human right and
working-class New Yorkers spend over 55 percent of

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2 the money that they make to go to rent. Over half
3 of your income to pay to live. How dare they make
4 us pay to survive and live. It's inhumane and it's
5 irrational and that's why a radical transformation
6 of housing in this system so that they can't take
7 our housing away.

8 We need a system where housing is
9 totally based on (unintelligible). You should not
10 make a certain enough money to just to afford to
11 live in New York City and that's why we demand no
12 landlord. We are taking control of the Rent
13 Guideline Board and putting safe houses for all
14 people.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
16 Sonia Perez?

17 MS. PEREZ: Good evening,
18 everyone. My name is Perez. I'm a member of Make
19 the Road New York and I'm a resident of Bushwick
20 and I live in 203 Knickerbocker Avenue and I've
21 been living there for more than 20 years.

22 The conditions in my apartment are
23 not good. There are currently 24 open violations
24 in my building and the majority of those are in my
25 apartment. I need repairs in the bathroom, the

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2 floor in the kitchen is damaged, it's been about
3 three years since we removed the kitchen cabinet
4 and it has not been replaced, the doors to the
5 closet do not open. The walls are cracked and I
6 myself have tried to remove them.

7 My neighborhood in general in the
8 city of New York is very expensive and we are still
9 feeling the effects of the pandemic. We, the
10 tenants are very -- there are no resource tenants.
11 An increase, even if it is 2 to 4 percent would be
12 too much. At the moment I live with my two
13 daughters and my income is not stable. I do not
14 have stable employment at the moment and currently,
15 perhaps 70 percent of what I earn goes to paying
16 rent while the owner of the building -- of the
17 corporation fund group is the owner of my building
18 and has other properties in the city.

19 We all know that real estate
20 agencies continue to make a fortune here in the
21 city of New York. This is why I make a plea to the
22 Board that you please at least rollback the rent or
23 have some sort of reduction and that would be
24 obviously a breath of fresh air for both me and for
25 thousands of my neighbors that are living in these

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2 similar conditions. And of course, we haven't been
3 as fortunate enough to be able to find suitable
4 employment and to be able to live like dignified
5 human beings without undue stress of having to deal
6 with paying the rent at the end of the month. That
7 was all. Thank you very much.

8

(Applause.)

9

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10

Yonit Friedman?

11

MS. FREIDMAN: Hello, my name is

12

Yonit Friedman. I live in a rent-stabilized

13

apartment in Crown Heights. Things are still

14

pretty tight, but rent stabilization has given me

15

some calm throughout the chaos of the past few

16

years. I've been able to stay in one place

17

throughout the pandemic, I've been able to deal

18

with and recover from my own health crises, I've

19

been able to provide care to ill family members

20

without having to worry about moving every year,

21

I've been able to get to know my community well

22

enough to be involved in it through regular

23

volunteer work. Rent stabilization has given me a

24

calmer present and allowed me to start planning for

25

the future, including children of my own one day.

1
2 These proposed increases are at
3 odds with the very definition of stability. My
4 salary is not increasing by 7 percent every year,
5 except for the landlords, yeah right. What is
6 increasing is the cost of groceries, of utilities,
7 of people's expenses with student bulk payments, I
8 could go on. We need a rent rollback or at minimum
9 a rent freeze. We've done it before we can and
10 must do it again. Housing is a human right. We
11 have all seen apartments stay empty for months
12 after rent increases that are high enough to
13 function as evictions.

14 Don't insult us by claiming that
15 this is about the landlord's operating costs,
16 they're trying to profit it by making it impossible
17 for everyday working people in this city to live
18 safely and with dignity. That is completely
19 immoral. How dare you.

20 (Audience participation.)

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: We will be back
22 shortly.

23 (A brief recess taken.)

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: We're ready to
25 get started now. Just a brief reminder that in

1

2 order to accommodate as many speakers as possible,
3 each speaker will have two minutes to give their
4 testimony and additional two minutes for
5 translation. We really want to hear from as many
6 as you as we can and we need to be done at 10, but
7 we'll hopefully we will be done by then.

8

And I would just say that if there
9 are people still standing, we have some seats up
10 front. If you have an empty, empty seat near you,
11 you could raise your hand. Thank you.

12

Our next three speakers will be
13 Cheryl Sandiford, J Ferretti, and Camila Uruaga.
14 Thank you.

15

(Applause.)

16

MS. SANDIFORD: Good afternoon,
17 everyone. My name is Cheryl Sandiford, and I live
18 at 18 (unintelligible) Avenue, Apartment 60. I
19 lived here for 25 years. I just lost my husband
20 four years ago and I worked to the department
21 (unintelligible) in recreation. Now, my rent is
22 already passed. I cannot see myself paying an
23 extra dime on my rent, so I'm here to beg you the
24 panel, please consider us who's been living in
25 stabilized apartment and living there for a long

1

2 time. Save us from this rent increase.

3

(Audience participation.)

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: J Ferretti?

5

MS. FERRETTI: My name is J

6

Ferretti.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8

MS. FERRETTI: All right. Hi, my

9

name is J Ferretti. I'm a relatively recent

10

resident of Brooklyn. And I'm here in general

11

because, well, I don't benefit from the rent

12

stabilized apartment. I don't personally need to

13

because I have some generational wealth in my

14

family. But that doesn't mean like, just because

15

there are people like me who have that does not

16

mean that we should not be taking care of everybody

17

else who does not --

18

MALE VOICE: That's right.

19

(Audience participation)

20

MS. FERRETTI: -- got us through

21

the pandemic. But --

22

(Audience participation.)

23

MS. FERRETTI: All right. So

24

also, I am a member of the community and like

25

someone else who's a member of community came up

1
2 here and spoke. This is one of the only places we
3 can still feel safe for the foreseeable future.
4 And I don't want, like, like I said, I'm a
5 privileged economically person, but I don't want
6 people in my community who are, who don't have
7 that, which is the vast majority of every community
8 to be priced out of New York and be at risk of
9 beyond like, and be at risk outside of New York.
10 Even just Upstate or in New Jersey where I come
11 from. Like, it's unacceptable. It's unethical to
12 be evict people out of their homes. Thank you.

13 (Audience participation)

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you,
15 Camila Uruaga? As she's coming up let me announce
16 the next three speakers. Nora Huertero, Nathan
17 Bravo and Lacey Tauber.

18 FEMALE VOICE: No, I'm sorry.
19 What's the name that you guys called?

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Camila Uruaga.

21 FEMALE VOICE: Huh!

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Camila Uruaga.

23 MS. UARAGA: It's Camille, but
24 thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Sorry. I

1

2 apologize. Thank you.

3

MS. UARAGA: Hello ladies and
4 gentlemen, members of the Board. Today I stand
5 before you as a 16-year-old of representation of
6 all teams in the city of New York. I came to you
7 --

8

(Applause.)

9

MS. UARAGA: I came to you to not
10 only ask but demand a no rent increase this year.
11 First and foremost, I want us all to acknowledge
12 that housing is a fundamental rate. It is a basic
13 necessity that everyone should have access to and
14 be able to afford. With a rent increase, we
15 jeopardize this fundamental human right pushing
16 people towards homelessness or even forcing them to
17 live in inadequate conditions. Is the homeless
18 rate not enough?

19

Not all of us have the privilege
20 to pay for a rent increase, especially during this
21 time of inflation that we're living in. It has
22 gone up, bills have gone up, basic at home
23 necessities have gone up. And what now, rent might
24 be going up too. We have to stop this. I have to
25 stop seeing my parents argue about whether or not

1

2 there's enough money on the table. I have to stop
3 draining myself with a thought that I might not be
4 able to finish my high school years. Because even
5 though this is one of my biggest dreams, I might
6 have to give it up in order to be able to work and
7 help out my parents with the financial problems
8 going on --

9

(Applause.)

10

MS. GWARAGA: -- worry about
11 having to get money hurts not only them but me
12 because even that the teen that I am, I am willing
13 to give up anything in order to see my parents not
14 struggle. No teens should be going through this,
15 but the reality is many are. I met friends who
16 have quit school to turn their lives into a 9:00 to
17 5:00 jobs just to be able to support their parents
18 with money. Just imagine how many more teens would
19 have to go through this exact path with a rent
20 increase. Teens shouldn't have to go through this.
21 They shouldn't have to change their lives in order
22 to help out their parents. They belong in school
23 and should be only worried about their education.
24 And that's the financial problems that would be
25 caused by a rent increase.

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Therefore, I as a teen implore you that there should be a no rent increase this year. Think about us teens and the effects this will bring to not only us as an individual, but our mental health as well as our parents. Thank you.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
Nora Huertero? Thank you.

(Audience participation.).

MS. HUERTERO: Good afternoon. My name is Nora Gwantero and I'm a member of Neighbors Helping Neighbors.

Rent increase affects me because everything is expensive like food and transportation. Even though we're not in a pandemic. They want to get a rent increase even though many people do not have the basics such as heat and hot water. Our children turn -- I'm sorry, New York City is a city of opportunities. Before our children turn 18, they wish for their own apartment to live independently, but many still continue living with their parents.

My children, for example, do not want to leave because they know that they won't be

1
2 able to pay for their rent in college. We need a
3 bigger apartment, but we cannot move because the
4 rent is super high. Now a three-bedroom apartment
5 is \$2,500 a month or more. We are still in the
6 same housing crisis. There are families living
7 with other families to be able to save money. I
8 have missed my son's soccer games because I need to
9 work. Landlords want an increase, when they do not
10 make repairs to the apartments.

11 (Audience participation).

12 MS. HUERTERO: Us parents, we are
13 missing out all these wonderful years with our
14 children because we need to work to pay the rent
15 that you guys want to increase.

16 (Audience participation)

17 MS. HUERTERO: I would like to say
18 thank you too. But I won't because I really wanted
19 to (unintelligible) even if you ask me not to.

20 (Audience participation.)

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
22 All right, thank you.

23 MS. BRAVO: Hi, my name is Nathan
24 Bravo and I am here to talk about why you should
25 not raise a rent. I'm a member of Neighbors Helping

1
2 Neighbors in Tennessee, United of Brooklyn. I
3 started middle school this year and I started to
4 play football. I love football and I enjoy going
5 to the park to play, but my dad works a lot, so he
6 doesn't take me to the park as much as I want to
7 go. I don't spend a lot of time with his friends
8 and family. If you're raised around, then families
9 want to have enough time for their kids. The kids
10 will do great things in life, but the parents won't
11 be there to see it because they need to make money
12 to pay the rent. I don't.

13 (Audience participation.)

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
15 Lacey?

16 MS. TAUBER: My name's Lacey
17 Tauber. I'm here to testify on behalf of Brooklyn
18 Borough President Antonio Reynoso, an intern on
19 behalf of the Brooklyn tenants.

20 Members of the Board, I don't have
21 to tell you that times are hard and Brooklyns are
22 struggling. You're hearing it here tonight.
23 Almost 30 percent of Brooklyn tenants are severely
24 rent burden paying 50 percent of their income or
25 more on rent. We're talking hundreds of thousands

1

2 of people including rent-regulated tenant's right
3 here in this borough who are choosing between
4 paying their rent and affording essentials. And
5 now you're proposing an additional rent increase on
6 top of last year's, which was already the largest
7 in a decade.

8 Meanwhile, the situation isn't
9 improving. Inflation is increasing the cost of
10 everything else, making it harder to make ends
11 meet. Rents are going up when there's warehousing
12 thousands of rent-regulated units and housing
13 construction is basically stalled, meaning that
14 tenants are displaced or evicted. It's very hard
15 for them to find somewhere else to live in their
16 community, this borough, or even in this city.

17 Tenants who will face eviction
18 because they can't afford these increased rents are
19 also unlikely to receive the representation in
20 housing court to which they are entitled. And the
21 eviction unfortunately happens. So find a shelter
22 system that has been stretched through by the
23 migrant crisis and the city's inability to
24 successfully connect long-term shelter residents to
25 permanent housing.

1
2 That is not the time to add more
3 burden on the facts of our city's renters. We need
4 smart policies that add truly affordable housing in
5 our communities and keep people in their homes.
6 Instead, leadership in Albany and locally
7 continually fails to act to address the housing
8 crisis. So I'm here to ask you to act to protect
9 the proposed rent increases and protect tenants
10 across the city.

11 And I also just want to add
12 that today you should have also received a letter
13 from the borough presidents of Brooklyn, Manhattan
14 Queens, and the Bronx expressing their collective
15 opposition to the --

16 (Audience participation.)

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
18 Our next three speakers will be Sharik Purkar,
19 Melvin Rivera and Lincoln Restler.

20 (Audience participation.)

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

22 MR. PURKAR: (Unintelligible)
23 right now?

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Purkar?

25 MR. PARVAR: Yes.

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Yes,

3

please go ahead. Thank you.

4

MR. PURKAR: A lot of us were

5

out there for three hours waiting out there. A lot

6

of you were there, weren't you?

7

(Audience participation.)

8

MR. PURKAR: You have made us

9

come here wait in line for three hours to come up

10

here because they were expecting for us to be too

11

tired after a work day to show up here.

12

(Audience participation).

13

MR. PURKAR: But we're not

14

tired.

15

FEMALE VOICE: We're not.

16

MR. PURKAR: They're expecting

17

our voices to be silent when we got here, our

18

voices to be broken, but our voices are not broken.

19

And our (unintelligible). They told us that they

20

need to increase the rent to do repairs because of

21

inflation. What exactly is inflation? But they

22

themselves and their friends who have increased

23

prices of groceries upon us, that they have already

24

made more and more profits than they have ever made

25

before. And now they have the audacity to ask us

1

2 to pay for their more profits --

3 (Audience participation.)

4

5 MR. PURKAR: -- to sit here time
6 and time again supposedly public members, I mean of
7 course the landlord beaches, we know who they are.

7

(Audience participation.)

8

9 MR. PURKAR: Fight, supposedly
10 permanent members. You're sitting here and people
11 come here and blow their hearts out. And year
12 after year, year after year, you still decide to
13 vote on an increase. You keep your stoic faces and
14 behind them you like your corruptness.

14

(Audience participation).

15

16 MR. PURKAR: So it's up to you
17 corrupt but for traitors that we speak to our
18 people. We speak more people who have waited here
19 and who are here in strength. There were hundreds
20 of us out there today. There are thousands of us
21 already mobilized, but we know damn well that we
22 are not hundreds. We're not even thousands. We're
23 the millions. (Unintelligible). The landlords
24 have already said to each other, you don't show up
25 here because they're scared of us. Let's give them
something to be scared of. Because the people

1

2 united.

3

(Audience participation).

4

MR. PURKAR: The people united.

5

(Audience participation.)

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Melvin Rivera?

7

(Audience participation).

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9

10 MR. RIVERA: All right. My name
11 is Melvin Rivera. I'm a longtime resident of
12 Bushwick Brooklyn. Born and raised. And we
13 accepted a lot of certifications. I'm here today,
14 I witness a lot of testimonies from different
15 populations, right? And it's beautiful to see you
16 all here today. What we witness here today is
17 people who are young say they earn 70,000 and with
18 three roommates can't afford the rents. We witness
19 working families who are working two, three
20 multiple jobs to pay the rents, suffering, quality
21 of life issues because they cannot raise their
22 children. And they are a rent burden and we're
23 suffering. Here we are faced with another rent
24 restructuring of an increase of seven percent, but
25 we can't afford to pay what we're paying now. What
we need is actual rollback. We don't need to

1

2 (unintelligible).

3

4 When I look at New York City, I
5 don't see a city of equity. We have HPFCs that are
6 failing, right? I don't see home ownership
7 opportunities.

7

(Audience participation).

8

9 MR. RIVERA: We have senior
10 programs that are telling people, referee programs
11 that are telling seniors if they make over \$50,000,
12 they can't qualify. The minimum wage should be
13 \$550,000.

13

(Audience participation.)

14

15 MR. RIVERA: There are so many
16 programs that we have to address. (Unintelligible)
17 income guidelines is 8,000 for what, a single
18 person. It has not been moved in decades.

18

FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

19

MR. RIVERA: Right?

20

FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

21

22 MR. RIVERA: There's so many
23 issues that we have to address in the public
24 sector. And the person who (unintelligible) y'all
25 doesn't know how to lead. We have a -- we have a
homeless crisis. And there's no shelters for these

1

2 people who are bound to go into shelters because of
3 eviction, because we have asylum seekers right now.
4 So where are we going to put these people.

5

FEMALE VOICE: In their home.

6

MR. RIVERA: Exactly. So
7 (unintelligible) states that you're the last
8 sergeant of defense. You're not the last sergeant
9 of defense. We are. And what we need to do is
10 take back this week, I would love to see sergeant
11 out the city for the city of New York, right? I
12 would love to see that when we go into these
13 motherfuckers' houses and fucking crack them out.

14

(Applause.)

15

MR. RIVERA: Fight, fight, fight.
16 Housing is a human right.

17

(Audience participation)

18

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
19 We're moving on our next speaker. Next speaker
20 will hear from council member Lincoln Restler.
21 Thank you.

22

(Applause.)

23

MR. RESTLER: Thank you very much.
24 I first want just thank you all for coming, making
25 your voices heard. (Unintelligible). And I want to

1

2 thank Rent Guidelines for listening us tonight.

3

FEMALE VOICE: They are not
4 (unintelligible).

5

MR. RESTLER: She said, they are
6 not listening. Well, I'm the council member of
7 this neighborhood, so I also want to welcome in
8 33rd Council District. It's good to have you in
9 St. Francis. Good to have you (unintelligible)
10 background. (Unintelligible) district one out of
11 four tenants based the majority of American rent
12 every single month.

13

Around the city it's a
14 (unintelligible) tenants but if you go up to
15 low-income communities in the West Bronx, like here
16 in the Sanchez district, our council's housing
17 chair, a majority of tenants pay a majority of
18 their income in rent each and every month. It is
19 shameful, it's unsustainable. And to add a seven
20 percent rent increase over the next two years --

21

FEMALE VOICE: To your income.

22

MR. RESTLER: -- is just
23 absolutely unacceptable. There are too many
24 tenants right now who are holding on by a threat.
25 And to add seven percent rent increase, we

1

2 literally push them out of their homes to a shelter
3 system dispersing of deceased. We cannot afford
4 for that to happen.

5

FEMALE VOICE: They don't care.

6

MR. RESTLER: It barely listen, it
7 don't care. This is Mayor Adams Rent Guidelines
8 Board. And we sending a message to each and every
9 one of you that you (unintelligible).

10

(Applause.)

11

MR. RESTLER: It breaks my heart
12 to show up at tenants' homes who are struggling to
13 get by, to talk to them at their doorstep. And
14 they're choosing every month. These are folks who
15 regulate, who are choosing every month between
16 affording their healthcare, paying for food, and
17 getting by on them. And you are going to tell me
18 that you need to increase the rent somewhat for two
19 reasons; because of inflation, and because the
20 landlords are suffering.

21

But I want you to rethink it for
22 two different reasons. One, this Rent Guidelines
23 Board made the wrong decision last year by
24 increasing rents to 5 percent of two years, the
25 largest money increase we experienced in nearly a

1

2 decade. That rent increase that you've already
3 pushed onto tenants should more than sustain
4 keeping rent flat through this year
5 (unintelligible).

6

(Applause.)

7

MR. RESTLER: Second,

8 (unintelligible) to consider each and every time is
9 the ability of tenants to pay. It is not part of
10 the calculation. It is not part of your process.
11 And should be because the working people of New
12 York City are struggling and struggling hard. We
13 do not have the resources to afford a massive rent
14 increase like we all are considering. It has to be
15 stopped. The tales of New York City have to stay
16 in their -- deserve to stay in their homes. We
17 cannot -- we cannot allow for this eviction crisis
18 to worsen. We cannot allow for our shelters to
19 grow. People deserve to stay in their homes. Keep
20 them in their homes, freeze rents. Thank you very
21 much.

22

(Applause.)

23

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24

Our next speakers will be Zenayda Bonilla, Omar

25

Kabbaj, and Chinue Foreman.

1

2

(Audience participation).

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Zenayda

4

Bonilla.

5

(Audience participation).

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Just go ahead.

7

Thank you.

8

MS. BONILLA: My name is Zenayda

9

Bonilla, I am an immigrant. I am Latin. I am a

10

mother. I'm a member of this community. I'm an

11

activist and I'm also somebody who's trying to help

12

the people who are affected in this community. I

13

have two children. I've been residing here two

14

decade -- decades, I'm sorry, living in Brooklyn.

15

I have two children.

16

My eldest son has been living the

17

majority of his life here. So I am currently in my

18

third year in university studying to become a work

19

-- studying human resources because I want to make

20

a difference in my community. I know the people

21

who are working day to day and I understand the how

22

hard it is, how difficult it's for these people

23

that have to work every day. They have to get up

24

very early in the morning and go to bed late at

25

night to be able to afford to live in the city.

1

2 And also, I myself have to work three times as hard
3 to be able to get what my other universities -- the
4 other people at my university have already.

5 So I'm here today because I want
6 to be the voice of the mothers and the fathers and
7 the young people who don't have the privilege to be
8 able to lose a day of work, to lose hours of work
9 to come here. Mothers who didn't have anybody to
10 take care of their children, young people who
11 couldn't leave their homes. I want to be their
12 voice, the voice of a community, community that's
13 asking for help. So I did full time and also go to
14 school because of a scholarship full-time because
15 of the scholarship that I received. And so I wish
16 I had time to take off my shoes, to lay down on the
17 sofa, to, you know, get straight, to be able to get
18 up and prepare my food and make dinner and sit down
19 with my family and spend time with my children and
20 ask them how they're doing in school. But that
21 time that I'm spending with my children is very
22 limited. And it's also difficult because you are
23 thinking about what about this next payment that
24 you have to make.

25

There's many mother -- single

1

2 mothers that are the only people that are
3 supporting their family. These are very -- it is
4 very emotional because there's -- they're not able
5 to spend time with their children time that is
6 important. Not because they don't want to, but
7 because they can.

8 So I'm asking the police to be
9 conscious not allow a child to go to bed without
10 food, to deprive a child to spend time with their
11 family. And this is impacting their education,
12 their mental health and our mental health as well.
13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15 Omar Kabbaj?

16 MR. KABBAJ: My name is -- my name
17 is Omar Kabbaj. I've lived in New York my entire
18 life. Born and raised on the Upper West Side.
19 I've been living there until 2020 when I started
20 renting. And just this last spring I moved for the
21 third time in four years. Like everyone else here,
22 we understand that the rental market in the city
23 has absolutely spiraled out of control over the
24 last two years. It's become fucking absurd. I want
25 to remind you that the decisions that this Board

1

2 makes on rent stabilized units has a ripple effect
3 on the entire market and affects all of us. A
4 reminder that New York is great not for its
5 buildings, but for the people who fill them.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. KABBAJ: For landlords -- for
8 the landlord, we represent these rent increases are
9 chance to grow an investment. They're just --
10 they're just a way to ensure the numbers on a
11 spreadsheet grow. For us people, for everybody in
12 here, these are life changing decisions you're
13 handing us. Whether or not we can continue to live
14 in our home, whether or not we can save money at
15 all and be forced to spend our savings early.
16 Whether or not someone needs to go back to work and
17 increase their hours, like you've heard countless
18 times tonight for families, these choices only
19 become more difficult. So I would for you to
20 remember your humanity and to vote against rent
21 increases and for a rent rollback,

22 (Audience participation.)

23 MR. KABBAJ: Please vote in the
24 interest of the people that made this city great.
25 Thank you.

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3

Thank you. Next speaker will be Chinue Foreman.

4

FEMALE VOICE: Have a heart.

5

FEMALE VOICE: Which one?

6

FEMALE VOICE: Buy one.

7

MS. FOREMAN: Good evening. My

8

name is Chinue Foreman, and I've been a resident of

9

New York City for well over a decade. In March,

10

2020, the weekend before the first COVID 19

11

lockdown, I moved into a rent-stabilized unit in

12

the Harlem area. And I've been there ever since.

13

Over time, as things have opened

14

up, I've gotten to know more about my neighbors and

15

their stories. I notice that time and time again,

16

I'm losing more and more of my fellow New Yorkers,

17

especially the elderly ones, as they can no longer

18

afford to live here.

19

I'm not here to testify as a

20

tenant who cannot afford these rent changes. I'm

21

here because I know there are people in this room

22

right now and in our communities who can't afford

23

rent increase of two, four, or the unconscionable

24

seven percent. I'm fighting for them and I'm

25

pleading with the Rent Guidelines Board, hear me as

1

2 I speak. If these rent increase happen, the
3 culture that makes the city unique will continue to
4 dissipate as we displace thousands and thousands of
5 people out of the city.

6 MALE VOICE: That's right.

7 MS. FOREMAN: New York, a cultural
8 juggernaut for music and art and theater and
9 fashion much more will no longer be recognizable in
10 the coming years. The landlords not the bedrock of
11 the culture. It's the tenants in this room that
12 make this city.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. FOREMAN: The City proposed
15 rent hikes, a rationale of increased maintenance
16 costs, mortgage interest rates and inflation.
17 However, renters are also feeling the burn of this
18 increased inflation are nearly nine -- oh sorry, 55
19 percent surveyed full time workers said that even
20 with a pay raise or a higher paying job, their
21 income does not keep up with inflation.

22 (Audience participation.)

23 MS. FOREMAN: Your own data says
24 that between 2021 and 2022, evictions went up 3000
25 percent.

1

2

(Audience participation).

3

MS. FOREMAN: The Rent Guidelines

4

Board believes that wages will go up 2.3 percent,

5

but how does that work if rents are possibly 4

6

percent, but even 7 percent. Who will cover that

7

gap? So renters in this imagined world are not

8

keeping up with inflation. Who is going to help

9

pay these rents? Will the city provide some kind

10

of (unintelligible) system. Will the city provide

11

any form of support for New Yorkers who may have

12

choose to rent or food or medical care and any

13

other expenses that come up? If the rent hikes go

14

into place, how will the city for rent state wise

15

landlord and management companies accountable for

16

delay in often inadequate repairs and maintenance?

17

(Applause.)

18

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

19

Thank you.

20

MS. FOREMAN: A neighbor of mine

21

have lose her home for 25 years for this exact

22

reason, the intercom system of her section eight

23

housing requirement didn't work for the entire line

24

of the building. After three to four months of

25

official complaints, the power was not fixed in

1

2 time. She lost her housing that she had lived
3 after 25 years --

4

(Audience participation).

5

MS. FOREMAN: -- let me finish. I
6 used to believe that both sides of the negotiations
7 walk away to something. But in this situation,
8 landlords have so much power over tenants as we've
9 heard all night. I cannot of good faith ask for a
10 minimum increase. I demand a no rent increase and
11 they get a rent rollback.

12

(Audience participation).

13

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
14 Our next three speakers will be Leah Bowers --
15 thank you. Thank you.

16

(Audience participation).

17

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next three
18 speakers will be Leah Bowers, and Amyleth Vargas
19 and, Maria Meneses.

20

MALE VOICE: You got to stay awake
21 this time.

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23

FEMALE VOICE: Stay off your
24 phone.

25

(Audience participation.)

1

2

MS. BOWERS: My name is Leah

3

Bowers, and I live in a rent-stabilized apartment

4

in bedside. It took me forever to get to the city,

5

and I don't want to leave because of how at home I

6

feel now. I can be my full non-binary self here.

7

(Applause.).

8

MS. BOWERS: People know what a

9

biracial black fem looks like here. I am accepted

10

and loved by my friends. It took me about forever

11

also to figure out that my apartment was

12

rent-stabilized. I have a whole PhD and it took me

13

about half a day in total to figure that out. I

14

started searching because when I was finally

15

feeling settled, the lease was coming due. That

16

anxiety is a lot. Do you ever feel that anxiety

17

over if you're going to be able to afford your

18

rent?

19

FEMALE VOICE: No.

20

MS. BOWERS: No?

21

(Audience participation)

22

MS. BOWERS: So why are you making

23

these decisions on behalf of other tenants who do

24

feel that anxiety?

25

(Applause.)

1
2 MS. BOWERS: My rent went up from
3 30 to 31 percent of my income. Search results
4 revealed that my rent was rent-stabilized but it
5 feels like it's anything. But I thought 3.5
6 percent would've been enough for you all. It's a
7 wild concept that people who don't experience
8 economic anxiety even needed that. And then I
9 heard that you all want even more. It's a shame.
10 I'm putting together what my life will look like
11 years from now, and rent increases makes that look
12 pretty unstable. I started a new job where I will
13 be able to afford this, but so many in this -- in
14 this crowd, my fellow tenants won't be.

15 Will I be able to own a home or
16 even an apartment here in the city that I finally
17 made it to? I have no idea. We've heard from
18 countless others before, questions and decisions
19 they'll have to make if the -- if these increases
20 go into effect. So I urge you to please do not
21 raise the rent. Hold it back.

22 (Audience participation.)

23 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
24 Please, go ahead.

25 MS. VARGAS: Good night. My name

1

2 is Ette Vargas. I'm a little nervous. Can you
3 hear me out?

4

(Audience participation)

5

MS. VARGAS: So my name is Ette
6 Vargas. I've been in Brooklyn all my life.

7

FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

8

MS. VARGAS: I'm a kid that grew
9 up with horrible housing stability. I've lived in
10 small apartments before I even graduated high
11 school. I grew in the shelter system. I know what
12 eviction looks like. I know the sleep on the floor
13 looks like. I know what sleeping on the floor with
14 mices and roaches look like. And within the past
15 couple of years, you know, I've been able to
16 maintain housing stability. So I'm here on behalf
17 of not only my story going out of a tenant here, my
18 sister who I adore so much, she only makes 40,000 a
19 year. After taxes she brings home \$900 biweekly.
20 Her rent is \$2,000. That's all I wanted to say.

21

(Audience participation)

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:

23

(Unintelligible) that side.

24

THE INTERPRETER: Sure.

25

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

1

2 Thank you. I appreciate it.

3

THE INTERPRETER: No worries.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

MS. MENESES: Good evening. My

6

name is Maria Meneses. I'm an immigrant and I have

7

lived in Brooklyn more than 27 -- 23 years. I'm a

8

mother of three children, grandmother of three

9

grandchildren. I live in a very small apartment.

10

Until recently it was five of us living in this

11

very small apartment? I have never -- I've never

12

known what it is to have a private room.

13

Right now what should be the

14

living room is one of my sons living there with me.

15

Now that my family has grown and I'm very happy to

16

have my grandchildren and to have them come visit

17

me, this I cannot provide them a big space for them

18

to play. The space is very limited.

19

I'm a healthcare worker and I'm

20

also a community worker. I have a full-time job.

21

That supposedly for the Human Resources

22

Administration system, what I heard is a lot. I

23

can't -- cannot apply for any public benefit. I

24

would like to have a bigger apartment so that I can

25

have my entire family, at least for one weekend in

1

2 my house. The Latino family and in more particular
3 the Latino community, we're full of very
4 hardworking individuals.

5

(Applause.)

6

MS. MENESES: Many of us we miss
7 school events. We miss birthdays. We miss school
8 trips because we're always working.

9

We also leave our children alone
10 for long periods of time and that affects them. I
11 don't think I'm the only one. I'm sure everyone
12 here has had a moment where their child has asked
13 them, don't you love me? Don't you care about me?
14 Why are you always at work? When I see the signs
15 and -- the signs for like affordable housing and I
16 go into the website to apply when I look into it,
17 it is only for people who earn \$80,000.

18

I'm also a domestic violence
19 survivor. And just like other people that are like
20 me who have gone through similar difficult
21 situations, currently, they need to be in shelters
22 because they don't have the means to pay the rents
23 that are -- you know, current.

24

Please put a hand on your heart
25 and think about our families, our children, their

1

2 mental health, and how all of this affects them and
3 us. I know I'm going a little bit over time, but
4 that's because I need an interpreter because I want
5 to speak in Spanish.

6 So I just want you to think about
7 somebody like me who even though I have a full-time
8 job and I have a stable income, my situation with
9 rent is very difficult. But now please think of
10 people in my community, like the person that sells,
11 like the fruit vendor or the person that sells
12 stuff out on the street whose only one day of work
13 is only -- most times are not only able to bring
14 enough home to have one plate of food.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16 (Applause.).

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next three
18 speakers will be Keaton Lora, Kayla S and Rebecca
19 Meldman.

20 Keaton Lora?

21 Kayla S?

22 FEMALE VOICE: I told you about
23 it.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Oh sure.

25 FEMALE VOICE: Yeah, yeah, you

1

2 can.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. And
4 Rebecca Meldman? Yes. Thank you. Let me --
5 please. Rebecca? Thank you. Thank you.

6

MS. MELDMAN: Just a quick
7 announcement that they're allowing online
8 testimony. If you go to nyc.gov/rgb.

9

VOICE: And then -- and then if
10 you go to quick links, it's the sixth quick link.
11 It says submit testimony. So if you can do it, you
12 have to do it tonight though, before midnight. So
13 do it.

14

FEMALE VOICE: What is it?

15

VOICE: nyc.gov/rgb. It is in the
16 quick link section. It says submit testimony to
17 the Rugby. So I'm going to submit, because I don't
18 think my name's going to get called, but --

19

(Audience participation)

20

VOICE: RG -- nyc.gov/rgb.

21

FEMALE VOICE: Thank you.

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our
23 (unintelligible) speakers. We'd love to hear from
24 everyone. Thank you.

25

MS. MELDMANN: Right. My name is

1
2 Becca and I'm a middle school teacher living in
3 Brooklyn. While I myself do not live in a
4 rent-stabilized apartment, I am here to advocate
5 for the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who
6 do. New Yorkers pay the country's highest rental
7 rates. Despite this, we often have to face pests,
8 both leaks and other impediments to our health and
9 safety. In my experience, many of these issues
10 take weeks or months to be addressed and some are
11 never fixed at all. For the over 900,000 New
12 Yorkers who are living in rent-stabilized
13 apartments, you are here to consider a rent
14 increase of up to 7 percent.

15 According to the May, 2022 census,
16 a third of these units have rodents. This is
17 almost twice the rate of unregulated apartments.
18 These units also have twice as many leaks as three
19 times as many heating breakdowns. It is
20 unfathomable to me that you would even consider
21 allowing a rent hike without first addressing these
22 issues. It is absurd to expect tenants to pay up
23 to 7 percent more for apartments that have had no
24 substantial verifiable improvements made to them.
25 It is even more absurd in a city where a high cost

1

2 of living makes it increasingly difficult for
3 middle- and lower-class citizens to simply survive.

4

5 Some might say that these rent
6 hikes would allow landlords to make these repairs,
7 but the fact is that landlords already make
8 substantial profits on these units and these
9 profits continue to rise, as we've heard in other
10 testimonies that cited your own data.

10

(Audience participation)

11

12 MS. MELDMAN: Furthermore, you are
13 proposing a 7 percent increase, even though last
14 year wages increased by an average of only 3.4
15 percent, which is a 3.6 percent shortfall for a
16 tenant who was lucky enough to even get that
17 increase. Where will this rent money come from?
18 Will tenants skip meals? Will they stop paying for
19 their medications? Will their children have to
20 forego their education? Or will you do the right
21 thing and vote to stop these unconscionable rent
22 hikes? Thank you.

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23

Thank you.

24

(Applause.)

25

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next three

1

2 speakers will be Allison Bryson, Johnny Rivera and
3 Rebecca Harshbarger.

4

(Audience participation).

5

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Please, go
6 ahead.

7

MR. RIVERA: Okay. It's quite
8 emotional to be sitting here. Do it. I'm Johnny
9 Rivera. I'm lieutenant organizer with Brooklyn
10 Legal Service Corp A. I support zero percent
11 increase.

12

(Applause.).

13

MR. RIVERA: They're many
14 rent-stabilized buildings where at tenants are
15 living in substandard conditions. My recent
16 canvassing of these buildings has revealed a
17 shocking lack of upkeep and maintenance in the
18 apartments and in the common areas. Working class
19 families in Brooklyn face increasingly difficult
20 time in finding affordable housing and are often
21 taken advantage by the landlords.

22

MALE VOICE: Every year.

23

MR. RIVERA: Despite tenants
24 struggling to pay their monthly rent, they still
25 face unfair treatment, leaving them feeling

1

2 powerless and frustrated. While landlords see
3 their rental properties as a source of profit,
4 tenant view them as their home, a place to cook, to
5 laugh, to dream because housing is a human right.

6 (Applause.).

7 MR. RIVERA: Legally, tenants not
8 landlords, all real estate interests make New York
9 work for New Yorkers. An increase in rent will
10 only hurt the most vulnerable people in our city.
11 Support zero percent increase.

12 (Applause.).

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
14 Thank you very much.

15 Rebecca Harshbarger?

16 FEMALE VOICE: Come on, Rebecca.

17 MS. HARSHBARGER: Hi, my name is
18 Rebecca Jane Harshbarger and I'm a tenant in a city
19 worker who lives at 341 21st Street in Sunset Park.
20 I first moved to my community in 2008. I
21 definitely have the best neighborhood in Brooklyn.
22 I can say that right here.

23 (Applause.).

24 MS. HARSHBARGER: Thank you to
25 everyone who came out today to defend tenants and

1

2 thank you to my fellow Sunset Parker, Genesis
3 Aquino on the Board for fighting for us.

4

(Applause.).

5

6 MS. HARSHBARGER: We truly
7 understand our common struggle as tenants.
8 Rent-stabilized housing is the only thing that is
9 keeping more than a million working class
10 households in their homes. I am here today to urge
11 the Rent Guideline Board to vote a hard no on any
12 rent increases. Any rent increase that you approve
13 is unacceptable and will cause more of our
14 neighbors to be homeless.

15

16 Last year, tenants were already
17 hit with the largest rent increase since 2013 from
18 the Rent Guideline Board. That was disgusting and
19 it was shameful. And we are facing a tremendous
20 housing crisis in my neighborhood Sunset Park as
21 well as all of Brooklyn and New York City. Given
22 the inflation of these necessities like food and
23 utilities, there has never been any more time
24 urgent for rent rollback in New York City.

25

26 Rent-stabilized housing is a
27 lifeline for elderly New Yorkers as well as the New
28 Yorkers with disabilities in our lives that we care

1

2 about so much. It is disgusting that you would
3 even consider raising the rent during these
4 economic times. These rent increases don't just
5 affect rent-stabilized buildings, they have ripple
6 effects on all apartment buildings and the worse in
7 gentrification.

8 I deeply love my neighbors and my
9 community and I want all my community members to
10 stay in the neighborhood. I don't want to see a
11 single neighbor being displaced or evicted or
12 forced to leave the city we love and we are not
13 going anywhere.

14 FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

15 MS. HARSHBARGER: So do the right
16 thing for New York City. Vote for a rent rollback
17 now.

18 (Applause.)

19 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
20 Thank you. Our next three speakers -- thank you.

21 (Audience participation).

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next three
23 speakers are Gabrielle Guerrero, Lula Fle, and
24 Nancy Morisseau.

25 FEMALE VOICE: Come on Gabriela.

1

2

FEMALE VOICE: Let's go Gabby.

3

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MS. GUERRERO: Me being shocked that I've had a chance to speak tonight, I'm a little (unintelligible), sorry. So I would like to start by saying that the absolute sickening irony of a board of mostly white, middle-aged men deciding on rent increases for a majority of black and brown tenants is not lost on any of us.

So, like I said, my name is Gabby. I'm a nursing student, the proud daughter of two essential workers and a rent-stabilized standing here in beautiful Brooklyn. My apartment is located in building, be up of older adults, families, and multi-generational Caribbean and black households. They're food service workers, home care workers, MTA employees, city employees, USPS employees, mothers, fathers, grandparents, students, and young children of the next generation. They are the backbone of this city and they kept it running through the pandemic.

This beautiful community that I am so very lucky to witness every day represents everything good and beautiful about Brooklyn and my extension New York City. I urge you to connect the

1

2 very visible dots and realize that to raise rent is
3 to effectively maim the culture and livelihoods
4 that people flock to this city for. What would New
5 York be with all these New Yorkers? Do the right
6 thing and utilize this power that you are unjustly
7 crowned with and will know on rent increases and
8 better yet, roll that back.

9

(Applause.).

10

MS. GUERRERO: And find out that
11 many landlords that may be, you know, kind of creep
12 in here today without letting known or watching on
13 YouTube. And the words of Kim Kardashian, get your
14 ass up and work. Emptying our pockets to landlords
15 is not a real job. And finally, do not forget that
16 there are many, many more of us than you are. Thank
17 you.

18

(Applause.).

19

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20

Lula Fle. Thank you.

21

MS. FLE: Good evening. I travel

22

here from Central Harlem. I'm a New Yorker.

23

(Unintelligible) give us the least notice within 19

24

percent month ago. When we asked why our rent

25

increase is so significant, the millennia's

1

2 response was, oh, you can't afford it. Is 19
3 percent rent increase has prompted me to
4 investigate whether my unit was rent-stabilized.
5 The longest short of it, it was under -- it was
6 under the 421 A tax abatement program. This means
7 my landlord receives a deduction on their property
8 tax bill in return for providing affordable
9 housing.

10 After involving HPP in Home and
11 Community Renewals, we were ultimately handed to --
12 handed a rate-stabilized lease with a 3.25 rent
13 increase. To the Board members that support
14 landlord, I am here today to inform you that as a
15 young native New Yorker, we cannot afford the plan
16 rent increase by the Board. My landlord believed
17 we could -- we could afford the rent increase
18 because they are not there to see us struggle to
19 pay. They're not here to see us struggle to pay
20 our bills.

21 Let me explain in more details.
22 We are responsible for paying our own heat and hot
23 water. Our utility cost has risen dramatically
24 this year. We couldn't afford to keep our
25 thermostat to 68 degrees because it was too

1

2 expensive.

3

4 My grocery bill has risen
5 substantially to be -- to be more exact, the
6 container of a Greek yogurt I buy every week
7 increased price from 5049 cents to 799, is 45
8 percent increase.

8

9 (Unintelligible) is going to
10 resume this in a few months. My salary will not --
11 as a nonprofit employee, my salary will not
12 increase this year. And I will not -- it'll not
13 increase next year either. This year my rent
14 jumped by 3.25 percent. I won't be able to afford
15 another two to five percent rent hike.

15

16 I strongly advise you to consider
17 the testimonials you have heard this month from
18 those with fixed income, low income, and so many
19 others before considering -- before considering
20 raising our rent during this inflation time. Thank
21 you for listening.

21

(Applause.).

22

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23

Nancy Morisseau?

24

MS. MORISSEAU: Hi, I'm Nancy

25

Morisseau. Thank you to the tenants and the

1
2 audience that are here today. It's 8:45 and
3 instead of putting my three-year-old to bed, I'm
4 standing here fighting against rent increase so
5 that my family can stay in the only home she is
6 living. To stay in the community she knows to stay
7 with the same crossing guard we see every day, Miss
8 Elizabeth to be able to say hello to Sabrina, the
9 park worker that keeps our playground clean and
10 safe. You are destroying the New York that we all
11 love.

12 (Audience participation).

13 MS. MORISSEAU: You're creating a
14 New York that is only for the wealthy.

15 FEMALE VOICE: That's right.

16 MS. MORISSEAU: The dreams people
17 come here to chase; they'll be gone because it is
18 all of us that makes New York the dream that it is.

19 (Applause.).

20 MS. MORISSEAU: We raise rent and
21 push us out of the city to make more room for the
22 rich. Apartments sit empty to make room for the
23 rich. Family size apartments, I'm not talking
24 about these little closet three bedrooms, but
25 apartments that are built for families to stay and

1

2 grow are all but eliminated to make room for the
3 rich. More and more New Yorkers are working two
4 and three jobs to make room for the rich. And so I
5 ask you all, why are you on this Board?

6 FEMALE VOICE: Good question.

7 MS. MORISSEAU: It's not
8 rhetorical. I'm not asking the tenant
9 representatives. I'm asking you all. You were
10 appointed. You didn't have to accept it. Why are
11 you on this Board?

12 (Audience participation)

13 MS. MORISSEAU: So it sounds like
14 you don't even know why you're here. Because you
15 clearly don't have an answer. When I volunteer for
16 things, I know why I'm doing it. I'm doing it to
17 make my community a better place, to make New York
18 a stronger place. As a first generation American,
19 my parents moved here from Haiti. Me and my
20 daughter were born in the same hospital in Brooklyn
21 and we planned to stay here. Why are you here?
22 You don't have the answer. (Unintelligible).
23 Because you don't have the answer.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:

25 (Unintelligible) testify, thank you very much.

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MS. MORISSEAU: Right, right. You don't have an answer. You don't need to be here. Roll the rents back.

(Audience participation)

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our next three -- our next three speakers will be Viviana Montes Hdz, Chris Suizzier (phonetic), and Richard Young.

Is Viviana here?

MS. MONTES: Yes.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. Thank you very much.

MS. MONTES: My name Viviana Montes. My husband is (unintelligible). I live in Sunset Park. I'm a member of Neighbors Helping Neighbors. I am a parent who has paid rent for many years and it is not fair that we pay too much for our rent while the landlord doesn't fix anything.

I'm here to tell you that the increase that is being proposed is an excessive increase to stabilize rent in the apartments that are very old.

We have faced many difficulties

1

2 over the years, including a lack of repairs, not
3 only in one apartment, but in all of the buildings
4 owned by the same landlord.

5 Furthermore, we have had many bad
6 experiences over the years, and the truth is that
7 our children are the most affected. And why do I
8 want justice to be served and to pay a fair price
9 for our rent? We are not refusing to pay the rent,
10 but we want to pay what is fair without any excess.
11 In our apartment, we have many rats, roaches and a
12 lot of molds and the landlord does not make any
13 repairs.

14 Last week they turned our
15 electricity off because the landlord had not paid
16 the bill and we were also without gas for about two
17 days. And in the hallways, we had no electricity.
18 The attendance had called 311 and it wasn't the
19 landlord that came to make the repairs or turn on
20 the electricity. It was actually HPD because the
21 landlord doesn't bother himself with paying the
22 bills. And anybody could have had an accident.
23 And it is the landlord's fault because he didn't
24 pay any of the bills that they turned off our
25 electricity because like it's independent. And I

1

2 suffer because I have a child with asthma and he
3 depends on a machine. Thank you.

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

(Applause.)

6

MR. YOUNG: Can you all hear me?

7

AUDIENCE: Yes.

8

MR. YOUNG: Good evening,

9 everyone. My name is Richard Young. My pronouns
10 are (unintelligible) and I'm a student at American
11 University in Washington, DC, double majoring in
12 political science and psychology. I first want to
13 thank everyone for coming out and speaking. I'm
14 hearing solidarity to the tenants who continue to
15 face abuse from their landlords and people in
16 privilege positions.

17

The importance of not increasing

18

rent in New York City cannot be understated. For

19

starters, a staggered number of New Yorkers are

20

already rent burdened, meaning they're spending

21

over 30 percent of their income on housing. Any

22

increase in rent would only exudate this problem

23

leading to greater financial strain and already

24

struggling individuals and families.

25

Moreover, when rent prices rise,

1

2 it can lead to a displacement of longtime residents
3 who can no longer afford to live in their
4 neighborhoods, many of which are people of color.
5 All of these are -- all of these consequences can
6 have wide ranging impacts on the character and
7 social fabric of the city.

8 Additionally, rent stabilization
9 laws serve to protect tenants from landlords who
10 may engage in predatory or discriminatory
11 practices, assuring that housing is a basic human
12 right rather than a commodity.

13 (Audience participation).

14 MR. YOUNG: Ultimately by keeping
15 rent stable and affordable, we can preserve the
16 diversity and (unintelligible) that makes New York
17 City such a unique and desirable place. Also that
18 I have 30 seconds left. I just want to say --

19 MALE VOICE: Take your time.

20 MR. YOUNG: -- please, please,
21 please, please stick together. We are a community.
22 We go get this; we fight for this. To the people
23 sitting on the Board just realize that you guys
24 have privilege, you guys have power. You guys
25 don't go through what these people are going

1

2 through sitting here begging to please not raise
3 the rent. You guys don't know what it's like to
4 deal with families have to sleep on the floor with
5 roaches and rats. Just please take them to
6 consideration and let's just move forward together,
7 helping them build with better place. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9 (Applause.).

10 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I just want to
11 make sure that we didn't miss that they're there.
12 Chris Salazier? Okay. Our next three speakers
13 would be -- would be Allison Bryson, Emily
14 Hernandez-El Murr, and Isabelle Munoz.

15 MS. BRYSON: Hi. Good evening,
16 everyone. I just want to say how touched I am with
17 all of your testimonies and thank you all for
18 coming out. I stand before you as a concerned
19 member of our community and a solo mother to this
20 toddler advocating to vote against rent percentage
21 for rent stabilized homes.

22 I have lived in New York City
23 since 1999 and made a hope and career for myself
24 here. In 2021 I was picked for the coveted rent
25 stabilized, "Affordable housing lottery unit." At

1

2 that time, the laws indicated that rent and
3 stabilized units could not be raised more than 1
4 percent. Shockingly, shortly after it moved in,
5 the law was changed. The rents could be raised up
6 to 5 percent on the two-year lease.

7 Now two years later, my management
8 company is raising my rent at a four or five
9 percent. This increases well outside of my budget
10 and may force my daughter and I out of our home.
11 My young daughter is enrolled in a local school
12 where she's comfortable, safe and thriving and some
13 walking distance from our home.

14 The school provides very much
15 needed aftercare, but it comes at a price of \$800
16 per month. Between childcare and these rents
17 increases of five percent and seven percent leading
18 unable to provide for the basic needs for our
19 family, it put us out of our home. She loves her
20 teachers and has many friends and this community
21 has been a great sense of support to me.

22 I work two jobs full time for
23 one, and then I have to work another one. And I'm
24 a solo mom. Not once in my 24 years of living in
25 New York City have I ever made a single late rent

1

2 payment, including a small time of unemployment
3 during the pandemic. I urge you to consider the
4 impact of raising rent and the burden to
5 hardworking single parents. And I call upon you to
6 work towards a solution that benefits everyone who
7 keeps us in our homes. Thank you.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9

(Applause.).

10

MS. HERNANDEZ-EL MURR: So I wrote
11 down a lot of stuff but I want to do something else
12 instead. And maybe I'll get to what I wrote down.
13 But I would like to ask you a question and I
14 really, really need you to answer and I would like
15 to ask the audience to just be quiet so that we can
16 get an actual answer.

17

Alex, I would like to address you
18 first because you look so bored and like you don't
19 want to be here and like it's not touching your
20 heart that these people are suffering. So why are
21 you here? Truly, I need an answer.

22

(Audience participation).

23

MS. HERNANDEZ-EL MURR: I'm
24 waiting for an answer. That is quite unfortunate,
25 truly. Anyway --

1

2

(Audience participation).

3

MS. HERNANDEZ-EL MURR: They're

4

not going to answer. So you know what, it's okay.

5

(Unintelligible). All right. I'm going to read

6

what I wrote down. I have been a tenant in New

7

York for two years. I come to you today as a sad

8

and frustrated human being. When I moved to New

9

York, I was aware that it was expensive, but I came

10

because of the heart and soul that this place is

11

said to have. And it does. Unfortunately, if you

12

continue to raise rents, all that gives this place

13

life will be gone. You will have nothing but your

14

money and greed to bathe in while your city

15

crumbles. I'm not going to talk to you in numbers.

16

I'm speaking to you human to human. How can you

17

live with yourselves? How can you live knowing

18

that people are and let continue to be on the

19

streets because of your favoritism to help to

20

(unintelligible). I work at a coffee shop full

21

time and the majority of people I speak to tell me

22

that they cannot afford to live here. Whether

23

they've been here all their lives for two years.

24

People are leaving. If what you

25

want is a cold city of rich money, hungry business

1

2 people, then you are succeeding. I'm currently
3 living in an apartment that is too high for me.
4 You know what, enough about me. I'm going to cut
5 that out because I'm running out of time.

6 I took a Lyft to work the other
7 day and yes, I take Lyfts when I wake up late for
8 work because I'm allowed to make mistakes as a poor
9 person. My driver's name was Omar. To make this
10 short, he expressed to me that he'd rather be dead
11 because all he does is work to make ends meet and
12 sleep. When I told him that he is in bed, off
13 dead, he said, well, what's the difference between
14 me and a dead body right now? The people in this
15 city that have given it its life are screaming for
16 help. If you put this into effect, the blood of
17 thousands of New Yorkers and adults and children
18 will be on your hands, okay?

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. HERNANDEZ-EL MURR: And I also
21 want you to consider when a child, did you ever
22 think you'd be here making a life decision -- a
23 decision like this that could affect millions of
24 lives and taking millions of lives? Did you ever
25 think that when you were a child? I don't think

1

2 you did.

3

(Audience participation).

4

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5

Isabel Munoz?

6

MS. MUNOZ: My name is Isabel

7

Munoz. I've been living in the apartment for 21

8

years. I live in Sunset Park.

9

(Audience participation).

10

MS. MUNOZ: And (unintelligible)

11

been paying them for many years and it is not fair

12

that we have to pay a higher rent increase while

13

the landlord does not make the necessary emergency

14

repairs. And of course, the landlord does not make

15

the emergency repairs that are needed.

16

And I'm here to tell the Board,

17

the Guidelines Board with the excessive increase in

18

stable house rent is not fair. We faced many

19

difficulties over the years, such as lack of

20

repairs. For example, during the winter, there's

21

not enough hot water. And during summers when we

22

turn on the air conditioning, the electricity cuts

23

out. This happens in other apartments and

24

buildings owned by the same landlord. We have

25

aches and (unintelligible) and this seriously

1

2 affects my children.

3

4 For this reason I'm here I would
5 like a fair price for the rent. We're not refusing
6 to pay rent; we just want to pay what is fair.

7 Thank you so very much.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9 Thank you so much.

10

(Audience participation).

11

12 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: One special
13 announcement if you can hear me. I'll announce our
14 next three speakers, but just a reminder, it's
15 after 9:00 p.m., and the venue closes at 10:00 p.m.
16 Thank you.

17

18 Our next three speakers are Miss
19 Julia Easterlih, Sears Sklar, and Tom Beemer.

20

(Audience participation)

21

22 MS. DANIELLA: Good evening,
23 everyone. My name is Daniella. I will be speaking
24 on behalf of Julia, who is a senior citizen. She
25 was here with her brother, but unfortunately,
they're 80 years old and they were not able to stay
the state. They actually had to take the trouble
to come here to testify and then they had to leave.
So Julia has worked with council with the members

1

2 and she constantly comes to our assembly member
3 (unintelligible) and she constantly comes to our
4 office to request the repairs be made in her
5 apartment. When she asked about her rights, she
6 was told to look at the guy and then she said, why
7 aren't there enough tenants representing tenants on
8 the Board?

9 That's part of it. So the other
10 part is something that I would like to say, every
11 single day our office is constantly filled with
12 people begging and pleading that the rent not go
13 up, because they're afraid to be put out on the
14 street. You must adhere to that. We could not
15 raise the rents.

16 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17 (Applause.).

18 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Cedar Sklar?

19 MR. SKLAR: So my name is Sears
20 Sklar Lewis. I'm currently a resident of Ridgewood
21 living in my friend's bedroom while I search for my
22 own place to live. After my roommates and I were
23 forced to leave our old apartment in May after 30
24 percent increase in rent. I do not -- while I do
25 not live in a rent-stabilized apartment, we both

1

2 know that these rates affect all tenants in the
3 end. And I'm here in solidarity with the thousands
4 of New Yorkers who do have rent-stabilized housing
5 and will be crushed if these rent hikes go through.
6 You and I both know the rent is too damn high.

7 This would be a different
8 conversation if this city was doing more for
9 working class people. If we were actually invested
10 in housing first initiatives, instead of leaving
11 unhoused New Yorkers to our collapsing shelter
12 system and criminalizing them from the -- by NYPD,
13 then this maybe would be a different conversation.

14 If we actually invested in social
15 safety nets that we know -- that we know work to
16 provide working people with essential resources
17 instead of cutting funding across the Board in the
18 city's most recent budget and giving money to the
19 NYPD, then this conversation might be different.

20 But that's not what's happening
21 here. People have told you today what the stakes
22 are for tenants if you raise our rents. You have
23 the power to place hundreds if not thousands of
24 people onto the streets. You have the power to
25 inflict unspeakable trauma upon children, families,

1

2 and frankly anyone experiencing the violence of
3 homelessness in the city. If you raise our rents,
4 you will be abandoning the people of the city. The
5 people who make this city run; the people who make
6 this city run. It is --

7

FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

8

MR. SKLAR: -- the working people
9 who make your luxurious life possible are the same
10 people you will be leaving out in the cold with
11 this decision.

12

FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

13

MR. SKLAR: But right now you're
14 thinking, I'm sure you're thinking, what do
15 landlords have to lose? Landlords I'm sure have
16 been complaining to you for months asking for rent
17 -- asking for rent increases because they claim
18 that the pandemic has left them struggling to pay
19 bills. Would it be easier for them to keep
20 apartments empty rather than rent them out? But
21 what would happen if they couldn't pay those bills?
22 What would happen if they couldn't make a profit
23 off of the property their own? What would happen
24 if they even foreclose on those properties? They
25 would become renters just like us.

1

2

(Audience participation).

3

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10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11

(Audience participation).

12

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Tom Beemer?

13

(Audience participation).

14

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Go ahead.

15

16

17

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24

25

MR. SKLAR: And that's what they mean when they talk to you about risk. When they talk to you about risk, the only thing -- the only risk that landlords have the worst possible thing that could happen is they end up like us. If landlords are not New Yorkers, they are parasites. Do not raise the rent, roll it back.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

(Audience participation).

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Tom Beemer?

(Audience participation).

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Go ahead.

MR. BEEMER: My name is Thom Beemer and I live in (unintelligible). This is one of the few things that only -- they leave more concern with I was going back to elders of my building and my community. What does one mean for what the city we have (unintelligible)? There's a lot of technocratic arguments from landlords, renting and the political pros about policy on stabilization.

But all of these ignore the material impacts of this decision on actual

1

2 people's lives. For tenants a rent increase will
3 result in homelessness and death. The displacement
4 of poor racialized people will increase other on
5 physical income, will not be able to afford
6 medications.

7 Child (unintelligible) mother will
8 increase, life or death views of the states. For
9 landlords a rent blow that will at worst result in
10 meaningless reductions in profit margins.

11 Landlords in their backers would
12 have you believe that some lions moving on a graph
13 means that poor deserve to suffer and die. This
14 kind of thinking is indicating truly sick people or
15 fundamentally inhuman system.

16 (Audience participation)

17 MR. BEEMER: (Unintelligible)
18 bringing up warehousing and renovations. But this
19 is a red herring. Warehousing increased even after
20 the highest rent increase in a decade last year.
21 Growing up to now 88,000, rent statewide
22 departments being held vacant at shaped.

23 (Audience participation).

24 MR. BEEMER: We're not making a
25 rational economic decision here for holding housing

1
2 hostage to engage in political and economic
3 distortion and to try to deregulate these
4 buildings. What the miss of the housing afford
5 affordability crisis in an eviction crisis, not a
6 landlord profit crisis. You have a choice to make
7 either protect people or protect profits. If you
8 keep squeezing people, something's going to break.
9 We need to roll back down. Thank you.

10 (Audience participation).

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you. Our
12 next three speakers will be Rosalia Cruz, Mario
13 Cortes, and Mohammed Alterhir (phonetic).

14 Ms. Rosario Cruz, here? Thank
15 you.

16 MS. CRUZ: My name is Rosario Cruz
17 I'm member of Neighbors Helping Neighbors
18 (unintelligible). An increase in rent will be much
19 more difficult for us than it is already. And it
20 will affect our -- it will affect us not only
21 financially, but also emotionally, psychologically,
22 and even in terms of our very own health. Because
23 we worry about trying to have money to pay the rent
24 and other basic expenses. Aside from this, even
25 though I pay my rent, the landlord harasses me by

1

2 demanding payment for past month's rent, rents that
3 I've already paid.

4

5 Although I've shown him that
6 (unintelligible) continues to deny and keeps
7 harassing me with calls and visits. In the past
8 11, took me to court claiming that they hadn't paid
9 rents for some months. But when an investigation
10 was conducted, the landlord had already changed or
11 cashed the money orders. I believe it is typical
12 for landlords to harass tenants. Once the tenant
13 leaves the apartment they simply painted and make
14 minor repairs and then rented out at a higher
15 price.

15

16 At one point the landlord turned
17 my neighbors against me with lies, creating
18 conflicts among neighbors and dividing us in such a
19 cruel, malicious way to harass tenants. And for
20 this reason, I am here so that in some way I can
21 express my feelings and for the Rugby to understand
22 what our day-to-day life is like in this city,
23 which is becoming increasingly out of reach due to
24 high prices. Thank you very much for your time.

24

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25

Mario Cortes?

1
2 MR. CORTES: My name is Mario
3 Cortes, a member of Neighbors Helping Neighbors.
4 And I've been a resident at 22923 Street in Sunset
5 Park, Brooklyn since 2011. And experience talk
6 about the harassment we've been experiencing since
7 2018 in an attempt to be evicted from our
8 apartments, we were offered the amount of \$10,000
9 to move out. This led me to request my rent
10 history and realize that the apartments had not
11 been registered for many years.

12 During the pandemic we were
13 (unintelligible) heating and hot water for more
14 than three weeks, increasing the risk of COVID flu,
15 as well as other illnesses due to the cold weather.

16 In addition, the windows were poor
17 conditioned, allowing the cold and wind to seep in.
18 An order did not appear in court. And when he
19 finally did, he sold the building and you order
20 also refuses to make repairs and harasses us to the
21 point of not wanting us to file complaints with
22 HPD. We have notified him several times in person,
23 by mail, and through economic e-mail about the
24 conditions. (Unintelligible) work several hours
25 without being able to ((unintelligible)). Sometimes

1

2 your electricity is cut in the public hallways of
3 the building.

4 We have a huge problem in building
5 right now in (unintelligible), we have to chase
6 mold and this is affecting our health. At the
7 moment the owner is trying to sell the property of
8 \$5 million (unintelligible) is a respectable place
9 to live, and all he wants to do is set a property
10 so he can run his pockets and become richer. For
11 this very same reason, I as a father, a family man,
12 I was left (unintelligible) for three months and
13 now I'm still looking for employment.

14 I made my rent payments on time
15 and worked several hours without being able to
16 insurance with my family. It is not fair to have
17 another rent increase without considering that the
18 cost of food and everything else has gone up. But
19 there has been no increase in wages.

20 Therefore, a respectfully request
21 that the Rugby not approve or rent increase as the
22 low-income community is suffering greatly and is at
23 risk of displacement.

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 MR. CORTES: Thank you.

1

2

(Audience participation).

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Mohammed

4

Alterhir?

5

FEMALE VOICE: He live in the

6

Hamptons.

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay, our next

8

three speakers will be Carla Ferrera (phonetic),

9

Malick Reed (phonetic) and Alicia Gordon

10

(phonetic).

11

Gabriela Allison (phonetic).

12

Gabriela? Okay, great, thank you.

13

(Audience participation).

14

MS. ALLISON: Hi, my name is

15

Gabrielle Allison. I am a member of New York

16

Critical Resistance. We are an anti-capitalist

17

anti-imperialist org dedicated to the liberation of

18

Puerto Rico, both (unintelligible) and the

19

diaspora. And I bring this up because Puerto Rico

20

and New York's histories and ties are deeply

21

intertwined. Operation Bootstrap brought hundreds

22

of thousands, if not billions of Puerto Ricans to

23

New York City. Many revolutionary -- many

24

revolutionary birthright movements in for Puerto

25

Rico were created in New York, such as the Young

1

2 Lords. And I -- our organization organizes in
3 Bushwick, and we see how constantly members of the
4 community note that gentrification and displacement
5 are some of the highest concerns that they have.
6 And a rent -- a rent increase is not only
7 unconscionable; we recognize that it's intentional.

8 We know that all you landlords
9 there, we know you're doing this because that,
10 well, you do this to stave off revolution because
11 we know -- you know -- that we can -- you know,
12 it's harder to do -- you know it's harder to fight
13 back if we're -- if we're worried about housing, if
14 we're worried about our needs. But I just want to
15 say that we will never stop fighting against you.
16 And there's millions of us --and there is millions
17 of us, and we understand that our fight for
18 liberation is tied to this.

19 So I'm not even going to like,
20 very polite. I'm not going to like politely ask,
21 please don't like -- please don't increase our
22 rent. Like, no, fuck that, fuck no. Don't increase
23 our fucking rent, especially all you all because,
24 you're rich people and you probably donate. So all
25 your addresses and info are probably public record

1

2 on the Federal Commission site. So know that we'll
3 find you and know that -- know that we'll find you,
4 know that we'll tear you down at some point. Fuck
5 you all. Rent rollbacks. Thank you.

6 (Audience participation)

7 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next three
8 speakers will be Lisa McNatt, Stephanie Nicole
9 (unintelligible), Christina Scordilis.

10 Lisa McNatt?

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12 (Audience participation).

13 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14 Please, go ahead.

15 MS. MCNATT: Good evening,
16 everyone. My name is Lisa McNatt and I live with
17 my brother, along with my nieces and my daughter at
18 584 Maple Street in Brooklyn, New York. We live --
19 we have lived here for 49 years. Our apartment
20 currently has 24 violations of record, including
21 10C violations, which has lead. I brought copies
22 of the current violations of record. Most of these
23 series violations concern lead paint hazards, not
24 understanding all the Landlords' ongoing -
25 landlord's ongoing obligation to aid these

1

2 conditions.

3

4 In addition, much of our apartment
5 has been damaged by water leaks. I have photos of
6 these conditions.

7

8 According to my attorney, my
9 landlord neglected his obligation to repair and
10 correct his obligation to eliminate these
11 conditions. My brother Ronnie, currently works at
12 the security guard. I lost my job and so did my
13 daughter and my niece. We rely on my brother's
14 income.

15

(Audience participation).

16

17 MS. MCNATT: It barely covers the
18 course of our rent and expenses. Any increase rent
19 will affect our ability to pay the rent or feed off
20 rent. I ask you to please rollback our rent. Thank
21 you.

22

(Applause.)

23

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.
25 Stephanie Nicole (unintelligible).

26

27 MS. SCORDILIS: Hi, good evening.
28 My name is Christina. I'm a REBNY member. Who --
29 the ones that don't know what that is. That's a
30 Real Estate Board of New York. I work in real

1

2 estate, so I represent (unintelligible) landlord,
3 but I'm a rent-stabilize tenant, okay?

4

5 The proposed increase that is on
6 the table is an increase that is usually brought to
7 a free market unit. We are not free market
8 tenants. We are middle class and we are making it.
9 It's -- I'm sorry, I'm so -- I'm shaking because I
10 am so emotional.

11

(Audience participation).

12

13 MS. SCORDILIS: And I'm here --
14 and I hope you're paying attention and that you are
15 being moved and speaking to you. And I'm looking
16 at each and every one of you because I heard a lot
17 of people here where their concern is their
18 survival, displacement, and determined that it
19 could bring to the family to have to endure a 7
20 percent increase. I'm not getting paid 7 percent
21 increase this upcoming year. I would like to. I
22 have to get a pay cut this year compared to the
23 previous year. I'm a single woman. I raised two
24 children as a single mother that are now young
25 adult. My son is still living with me. So your
26 decision is not only affecting me, as you can see,
27 I'm shaking but is affecting many other.

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So I'm here pleading with you and hoping from the bottom of my heart that you will have some compassion and understand how you are affecting the millions out there that are rent-stabilized. Again, we are not living in three market units. We are in rent-stabilized units. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

(Audience participation).

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:

(unintelligible) Suarez (phonetic), Cruz Roselio (phonetic), excuse me. Tesita Aquinas (phonetic), Rodrigo Camarena. Thank you.

(Audience participation)

MR. CAMARENA: All right. Good evening, everyone.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MR. CAMARENA: I just want to thank everyone for still being here, by the way.

FEMALE VOICE: Absolutely.

MR. CAMARENA: Give a shout out to yourself, okay.

(Applause.).

MR. CAMARENA: (Unintelligible).

1

2 I'm also a former member of this area very board.

3 That's right.

4

Now, you've now heard from
5 hundreds of tenants across the five boroughs.

6 You've heard from children, you've heard from your

7 elderly, you've heard -- you've heard about

8 struggles to pay for food, to pay for housing, to

9 pay for medical bills. Evictions are violence --

10 evictions are violent, plain and simple. You

11 should know this.

12

Now, I was a public member in
13 2019. I was probably (unintelligible), and I was a
14 member before the Global Pandemic. I was a member
15 before millions loss of jobs. I was a member before
16 the city experience record homelessness and
17 record-breaking evictions.

18

And before we entered this
19 inflationary crisis. Your task is not to just
20 consider the indicators given to you by Andrew.
21 Your job is to listen to the testimonies of the
22 hundreds of New Yorkers that are coming here,
23 spending time away from their families to speak to
24 you about their struggles. And your job is to
25 consider this historic moment when you make your

1

2 vote.

3

4 As a board member appointed by the
5 mayor, I'm proudly voted alongside my tenant
6 advocates to freeze rents. And now board members,
7 sometime before the vote, the chair is going to
8 come to you and ask you how you're feeling.

9

10 They're going to (unintelligible) you out and
11 they're going to communicate to you what the mayor
12 would like the rent increase to do. It's going to
13 happen. It's going to happen.

14

15 FEMALE VOICE: Don't listen to
16 him.

17

18 MR. CAMARENA: I'm here to tell
19 you that you don't have to listen to him. I'm here
20 to tell you that you have a conscience, that you
21 have mind, that you're not robots. You're not mini
22 puppets. You're not here to do the mayor's bidding.
23 You're here to go to your conscience. You're here
24 to look at your children in the eye in the morning.
25 You're here to do your job for New Yorkers and for
the rest of us.

26

27 Thank you so much. Thank you to
28 the tenants that have testified. Thank you for
29 being here. New Yorkers (unintelligible) this

1

2 communities.

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4

(Unintelligible).

5

(Audience participation)

6

MALE VOICE: How's everybody

7

going? I just want to say, millions of New Yorkers

8

are experiencing financial abuse because of high

9

rent. The abuse bucket is full. It's overflowing.

10

Don't raise rent. Do a 20 percent rollback.

11

(Audience participation)

12

MALE VOICE: Just to give the

13

public a breath, it's -- the financial crisis for

14

people is way, way overboard. So I'm just asking

15

you to do a rollback. A certain percent of a

16

rollback to give the public a breath. That's all.

17

Thank you.

18

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

19

(Audience participation).

20

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: The next

21

speaker is William Bershadksy.

22

MR. WILLIAM: My name is, Mr.

23

William Bershadksy. And I also was one of the

24

children and one was born when the country was

25

protesting President Nixon. June 23rd, 1973, I was

1

2 one of children with one Nixon presidency. It's
3 shortly with the election of Gerald Ford, the
4 president. And my birthday is also the anniversary
5 of War date and all the anniversary of former
6 (unintelligible) Johnson's death.

7 Anyway, I am also here to demand
8 rent freeze and a rent rollback. And I say this,
9 don't play with me. This is Memorial Month. It's
10 supposed to be our and our troops and our veterans
11 and remembering them. We sacrifice for our country
12 and our freedoms, our constitutional rights. That
13 means rights for affordable housing. And that
14 means right to Council on housing. So if you can,
15 I know you don't have any respect for us tenants.
16 And if you don't think of our tenants, you still
17 have to think of our troops. Rent freeze, and rent
18 rollback to honor and remember our troop's veterans
19 and first responders, you know, (unintelligible) do
20 it for our needs. You know, just think of them
21 still out to their, that's what they sacrificed
22 for.

23 And I demand a ban on
24 gentrification. Ever rising --

25 (Audience participation.)

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MR. BERSHADSKY: -- makes it bad for a lot of reasons. Price in us out of New York City and out of New York State. I know that my time is officially up, but (unintelligible).

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MR. WILLIAM: Gentrification price (unintelligible) out New York City and states bad for a lot of reasons.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MR. BERSHADSKY: That rent increases are dangerous for a lot of reasons. You, first of all, you keep on hearing in the news outside New York City, outside of New York State, you keep hearing of increasing sightings of wild animals. And when Senator Price out New York City, New York State, that's where they would be forced to live. You also keep hearing that outside of New York City and outside of New York State, abortion rights and body rights are severely restricted and banned. So tenant out of New York City and State, they could also lose their abortion rights and their voting rights. And outside of New York City state, there's no public transportation (unintelligible).

1

2 (Audience participation.)

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4 MR. BERSHADSKY: I'm the king of

5 Great Britain. I --

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7 (Applause.).

8 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next

9 speaker is Adrienne Holder.

10 (Audience participation).

11 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12 MS. HOLDER: Good evening. It is

13 a real pleasure to be here. I'm Adrian Holder.

14 I'm the Chief attorney of the Civil Practice for

15 Legal Aid (unintelligible) Society. I also serve

16 for 11 seasons as a tenant member of the Guidelines

17 Board. It is a hard thing.

18 The Rent Guidelines Board stated

19 goal is to protect the public health, safety, and

20 welfare to prevent exact actions of unjust,

21 unreasonable, and oppressive rent and rental

22 agreements. If public health, safety, and welfare

23 are put in jeopardy by rising rent prices.

24 For many, many years, the Legal

25 Aid Society has come before the Rent Guidelines

1

2 Board and testified about what the Board's rent
3 increases mean for the clients of the Legal Aid
4 Society. Most times our words were ignored. Board
5 members' actions told us that this Board's job was
6 to provide landlords with fair income regardless of
7 the rent burdens that were created. And we were
8 told that the Board could do nothing about tenants
9 increase rent burden.

10

11 But then in 2015 and 2016,
12 represented a departure from this harmful tradition
13 where the Board did not issue any rent increases
14 for one year lease for grievance. The board
15 finally rendered decisions that considered the full
16 scope of its statutory mandate and gave due
17 consideration of ever-increasing tenant rent
18 burdens as required by rent stabilization law.

18

19 Consideration of the tenant rent
20 burdens and setting rents is not only compelled by
21 the statute, but represents sound policy. And a
22 well-functioning housing market, heavy rent burdens
23 should -- would suppress housing demand, which
24 would downward -- put downward pressure on rents.

24

25 The statute requires a
consideration of tenant rent burdens because those

1
2 burdens would be an important factor and a
3 well-functioning housing market. When the Board
4 wanted to bring increases in the past without
5 considering tenant rent burdens, it provided more
6 income to landlords than they would've received in
7 a well-functioning market environment. The
8 preliminary proposed adjustments of two to five
9 percent for one-year leases and four to seven for
10 two-year leases reflect return to the fall -- law
11 methodology of the past.

12 I just would like to end because I
13 know I'm running out of time. You'll get our
14 testimony, but Rugby is essential and vital part of
15 addressing New York's supportability crisis. New
16 York's affordability crisis is one that we're all
17 trying to address in different ways. And I'm so
18 very proud of everyone that came out and the lines
19 around the block of people understanding how
20 important those to be here with them.

21 Yes, we need increase housing
22 subsidies and as a Legal Aid Society, we're working
23 hard with that. Yes, we need to enhance tenant
24 protections. And at the Legal Aid Society, we've
25 worked really hard with that. We help to write the

1

2 Housing Stability Tenant Protection Act in 2019.

3 And yes, we need to build deeply affordable
4 housing, truly affordable housing for New Yorkers,
5 but we also need to preserve affordable housing and
6 prevent tenant displacement.

7 When the Rent Guidelines Board
8 imposes rent increases and the Board becomes -- the
9 Board then becomes part of the problem. Lack of
10 leadership in Albany and in the city this year is
11 preventing us from addressing the housing crisis.
12 And I ask that you exercise your leadership and do
13 the right thing. Consider tenant rent burdens and
14 go for rent freeze issue. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16 (Audience participation).

17 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next
18 speaker is Shantel (unintelligible). Sarah Lazur?

19 MS. LAZUR: Hi. Good evening. Hi,
20 my name is Sarah Lazur. I'm a member of the Crown
21 Heights Tenant Union and a rent stabilized tenant
22 from Crown Heights. So Crown Heights Tenant Union
23 started because of -- started 10 years ago, because
24 of the cycle of displacement and overcharge for
25 decades, where loopholes and the rent laws were

1
2 incentivizing the displacement of long-term
3 tenants, usually black and brown folks who were
4 denied repairs in order to make their lives
5 miserable, to make them leave so that you could
6 replace them -- landlords could replace them with a
7 string of new tenants who they overcharge using the
8 vacancy bonus unaudited improvements or just
9 illegally deregulating leases, giving the -- you
10 know, unregulated leases to people who just didn't
11 know any better, hoping they could get past the
12 statute of limitations from the look back period.

13 I've looked at hundreds of rent
14 histories and maybe seen two that were not loaded
15 with inexplicable and illegitimate increases.
16 Landlords in Crown Heights have made a speculative
17 bet. We can buy a rent-stabilized building and
18 even through neglect or abuse, we can deregulate
19 and double its revenue in just a few years. So the
20 tenant movement put a stop to many of the loopholes
21 in 2019. Go us!

22 But these landlords who either
23 overpaid for their buildings or to out giant
24 mortgages in order to pump it for equity, they are
25 now expecting you to bail out their irresponsible

1

2 choices during the feeding frenzy of 1999 or 1993
3 to 2019. That is not your job and that's not
4 what's in the city's best interest.

5 My rent-stabilized neighbors and I
6 can't afford an increase. I'm one of the people
7 who's going over 50 percent of my income and rent,
8 but many of my neighbors are in a worse position
9 than me because 50 percent of you, even in smaller
10 income, leaves no room for error, no room for
11 emergencies, much less for billing in the future.

12 If you think people are going to
13 be okay, if they get hard times, our safety net is
14 broken, okay. Arrears assistance is only available
15 if you have future ability to pay. And it's
16 heartbreaking to go over somebody's income after
17 losing a spouse or a job and realize they're
18 ineligible for a life vest because they're already
19 drowning, right. So you're --

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21 MS. LAZUR: Sorry. Thank you.

22 Just we need a rent rollback.

23 MALE VOICE: Take your time.

24 MS. LAZUR: It's not your job to
25 bail out the real estate industry. They've already

1

2 -- they've fucked us for enough. And we're done.

3 We can't afford it. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5 (Audience participation)

6 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Next speaker
7 is Alvin (Unintelligible).

8 (Audience participation).

9 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Pati
10 Rodriguez. Thank you.

11 MS. PATI RODRIGUEZ: So yes. Hi,
12 my name is Patti. I'm part of (unintelligible) and
13 I anti-gentrification group from Brooklyn. I was
14 raised my whole life in Brooklyn. And that's why
15 I'm here because I'm here to demand that the rent
16 rollback now.

17 I'm so sick of seeing my
18 working-class neighbors and families being
19 displaced in areas where gentrification has already
20 exasperated the housing situation by
21 (unintelligible). Housing is not affordable for
22 communities who have lived here long term unlivable
23 for working-class people and unlivable for black,
24 indigenous, and people of color and immigrants.

25 The potential hikes from the Red

1
2 Guidelines Board are too damn high and
3 unacceptable. The unelected board appointed by
4 Mayor Adams are entirely out of touch with the
5 struggles facing everyday New Yorkers as we see
6 today. When three-quarters of rent -- renter
7 households are struggling to afford basic
8 necessities. You are effectively wiping the city
9 away with the people who keep the city running. In
10 these outrageous increase decreases pass,
11 low-income tenants will be the most impacted by
12 this decision.

13 This rent hikes is escalating an
14 already harsh housing crisis where tenants are
15 dealing with a rising inflation, stagnating wages
16 that have not increased. And tenant protections
17 eroding in light of the recent failure to include
18 the good cause eviction bill in the New York State
19 budget.

20 The proposal red hike is beyond
21 many tenants' income in a city that is getting more
22 expensive to live and working every day. And this
23 rent hike will increase the likelihood of eviction
24 for many rent-stabilized tenants on a fixed income
25 who are struggling to make ends meet right now.

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Rent-stabilized apartments are a critical source of affordable housing for billions of New Yorkers, but our system is broken when 40 percent of rent-stabilized tenants are spending more than half their income on rent. This is not only untenable, but predatory and inhumane.

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MS. PATI RODRIGUEZ: A city that only wealth attracts wealth and doesn't (unintelligible) we'll suffer there in the long run. We deserve --

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MS. PATI RODRIGUEZ: I'm going to talk. We deserve a chance at keeping housing affordable amidst the housing, economic and environmental crisis. So we demand -- we demand the Rent Guidelines Board decided the insurance of the community ones and for all and demand the roll back the rent now. Because if we end up losing our homes, I promise you we'll be coming to yours.

(Audience participation).

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Our next speaker is Amy Collado. Amy Collado?

(No response.)

1

2

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Okay. Andy

3

Mark Marte?

4

MS. COLLAFO: Hi again. I was

5

here just on Monday at Queens, so I figured I'd

6

come here and just talk in the heart. As long as

7

I've been coming up here, this is probably the

8

first time that I wasn't sure which hat to wear,

9

organizer or tenant. Unsure of which mask to wear.

10

Trying to pick a traumatic story that I think will

11

move you. Back at Queens, I said this was my sixth

12

time, oh, now seven, testifying. It's actually my

13

ninth. No wonder I get super anxious when this

14

time of year comes around because I have to figure

15

out how am I going to convince tenants that this is

16

important and this is for them, and that they

17

should show up and still talk when they think that

18

you guys have already been bought.

19

Tenants have been screaming that

20

they need to rent rollback for years. Even before

21

the pandemic rents were too high. But you don't

22

listen to us. You listen to landlords whose

23

business it is to live off of working-class people.

24

Landlords lie because of greed. How could you take

25

their pleas into consideration? How can you trust

1

2 them when they say they're struggling? The same
3 landlords that leave their tenants to live in ways
4 that they never would live themselves. The same
5 landlords that collected fat PPP checks while
6 tenants worked to -- while tenants I worked with
7 struggled to keep their internet on, for their kids
8 to go to school and to stay connected to their
9 loved ones while we were in quarantine.

10 The same landlords that offered
11 unknown people COVID discounts just to take them
12 away, raising their regulated rents by hundreds of
13 dollars and displacing them. That threatening
14 tenants with court if they didn't leave their
15 apartments during quarantine when we had an
16 eviction moratorium.

17 (Audience participation)

18 MS. COLLADO: Who hosts open house
19 -- houses with people lined up down the block
20 because the need is so urgent only to have them
21 participate in bidding boards so that whoever
22 agrees to pay more, pays more regardless as to
23 whatever increases you all agree to. How is this
24 legal? It's not. They don't care and you don't
25 care. You don't hear us here in Brooklyn or in

1

2 Queens or in the Bronx. We're the ones affected,
3 not landlords. To be an organizer is to have a
4 never-ending list of issues to solve, to get out
5 and teach tenants basic rights that landlords
6 constantly violate, including not respecting rent
7 regulation protections.

8 Every year we have fewer and fewer
9 tenants motivated to come out because what's the
10 point they said? Because your minds are already
11 made up. It doesn't matter what comes out in
12 preliminary vote. This order can choose to roll
13 the rents back. Right now, Chairman Davidson, you
14 have that power. You can choose to be part of the
15 right side of history.

16 FEMALE VOICE: Yes.

17 MS. COLLADO: Right now we need a
18 rent rollback. New York is talking and we need a
19 rent rollback.

20 (Audience participation).

21 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you,
22 thank you. Just a reminder, we have about 10
23 minutes left.

24 (Audience participation).

25 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Andy Mark

1

2 Marte?

3

 MR. MARTE: Good evening and thank
4 you for the opportunity to speak. Has the son of
5 small property owners immigrated for the Dominican
6 Republic and were able to accomplish their American
7 dream? I just want to say that they're also
8 struggling during this time.

9

 However, as someone who will
10 celebrate his 10th year anniversary on October 1st,
11 living in a rent-stabilized unit, I believe raising
12 the rent to even \$1 will exacerbate issues in the
13 city.

14

 On the brink of a migrant crisis
15 when migrants are getting free government
16 resources. On the work of a mental health crisis
17 when we have more people in our streets than ever
18 before. On the brink of a drug crisis where
19 younger and younger people are using drugs. On the
20 brink of a crime crisis where stores have to lock
21 up their merchandise. What is this Board thinking?

22

 FEMALE VOICE: Mm-hmm
23 (affirmative).

24

 MR. MARTE: Who are you trying to
25 help? When will this madness end? Where are the

1

2 funds to help small landlords like my parents and
3 owners of rent-stabilized units to make viable
4 repairs in their units? Where's the heart to help
5 landlords cover their backup utilities to avoid
6 worsening a third-party transfer scandal. Where is
7 the political and human will to push for more home
8 ownership opportunities and resources?

9 We have an entire New York
10 government that loves talking about being woke, but
11 when it's time to put their money where their mouth
12 is, all of a sudden, they fall asleep at the wheel.
13 Let's stop these increases. Put our politics aside
14 and start working to help the tax-paying,
15 hardworking people of the city. Let's stabilize
16 the city and come up with creative ideas to solve
17 these issues. Let's stop taking the easy way out
18 and putting the burden on the poorest in our
19 society. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21 (Audience participation).

22 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: We will
23 probably have time for one or two more speakers,
24 but we will extend -- excuse me, if people want to
25 submit testimony through our portal which is at

1

2 Rugby -- Rugby.org.

3 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Rugby.org.

4 MALE VOICE: Sorry, nyc.gov.

5 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Nyc.gov/org.

6 If you Google Rent Guidelines Board, you'll find
7 it, our website. You can submit testimony that way
8 through tomorrow.

9 FEMALE VOICE: It's really hard to
10 find you guys when we Google. Can you guys
11 actually make sure that we have a clear link so we
12 can submit these testimonies? It's very hard to
13 find these dates for these hearings. And you guys
14 make it that way so that we can't show up. So
15 rather than making it more difficult or giving us
16 more homework to do because we already have to do
17 enough homework to make sure that our tenants
18 actually know that they're have -- they have rights
19 and they are able to be heard. Why don't we make
20 it clear for the people that have been here all
21 night and have lined up so that they can know where
22 to go if their voices haven't been heard today and
23 they've waited all time?

24 CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25 (Audience participation).

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CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: And just to repeat the URL, it's nyc.gov/rgb. Thank you. Briss Ash (phonetic).

(Applause.).

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

MS. ASH: I didn't actually write anything to prepare for that. But that's because I wanted to say what I need to say from heart. And I am a non-profit theater worker. I'm about to lose my job in a month because COVID -- thank you. And during Covid, I paid my rent every month even though I was furloughed for over a year. And I believe that rent increase of that 3.4 percent knocked me over to 60 percent of part of my income.

I am just going to talk personally about myself because you've heard all the stats, you've heard all the data that you needed to hear. And that's not going to change your mind. But I just need to know, I need everybody to know that this isn't just me, it's everyone in the city. It's not just even the poorest here. It's the suffering lower middle class, the middle class, even the upper middle class. Only one that's not being affected are the rich.

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So think about it. All these little babies that are in here, those sweet little faces, their lives are being affected. That's all I got to say.

6

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7

(Applause.).

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9

Felicity Wel (phonetic).

10

MALE VOICE: Don't go down.

11

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Scott. Thank

12

you.

13

(Audience participation).

14

MS. SCOTT: This is my first time

15

in a situation like this. And I'm one of probably

16

the subcategory of people, the people who rent

17

rooms, who are in the most-cheap poorest of

18

situations. And so this whole idea of -- and I'm

19

not looking for a handout from anybody. I'm not

20

looking to take anything from anybody. I work in a

21

position that since the pandemic, I have not gotten

22

all my others, but I did not get an increase of

23

anything. In fact, I've gotten a decrease of a

24

rent of my income of at least 45 percent, okay.

25

And I'm -- I -- like I said, I

1
2 went to (unintelligible), and so to hear about
3 increases on people who already bred everybody here
4 myself, it's an absurd cruelty. It's an absurd
5 cruelty. Unspeakable. And I do not know what the
6 impressive people have because all of your people
7 too, what you are thinking, whether it's funny or
8 there's some human, think people here want to harm
9 out, want harm to them after hearing how hard
10 everybody works. This is amazing, okay, or funny,
11 but it's not, it's so survival. I don't fucking
12 feel like being homeless. I don't do homeless.
13 She saw me, I went to bed, I went to go and lay
14 down and feel comfortable in my room. In my room.
15 Just to read the chair to do, I mean, you guys love
16 to do, but in my own humble way. I just want to
17 live. I just want a chance not to fucking feel
18 insane and depression. Because I think I'm going
19 to be fucking out of the street. That's all.
20 Thank you.

21 (Audience participation).

22 CHAIR DAVID: Thank you all for
23 being here tonight and for your testimony.

24 FEMALE VOICE: I'm sorry, Chair.
25 There's one more testimony that hasn't been called

1

2 Camilla (phonetic). If --

3

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: I know where
4 the venue is closing. Actually have a number of
5 people --

6

(Audience participation).

7

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON:

8

(Unintelligible) we'll have to close. Last
9 speaker, please?

10

MS. CAMILLO: My name is Camillo.

11

MALE VOICE: There you go.

12

MS. CAMILLO: I'm 12 years old and
13 I'm live -- and I'm currently living in Sunset
14 Park. I'm being raised by single mother and I've
15 been living in fear of losing my home for the past
16 months. But for years my mom has been worried if
17 she has enough money to pay rent, groceries and
18 other essentials. The landlord has been raising
19 the rent and threatening to evict me and my mom.
20 The landlord even tried to break into our
21 apartment. She's terrified.

22

Ever since I was little, I went
23 from apartment to apartment all because of the
24 different states that each apartment was in. If it
25 was a ceiling cracking or mole or rodent, but it's

1

2 time for that to stop because I'm tired of
3 overthinking of where I will live or even if I have
4 a place to live next, and if I won't have to change
5 schools. So I ask of you to stop because you are
6 affecting tons of people, children, and their
7 education. And that's all.

8

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9

(Audience participation).

10

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Can I have a

11

motion to adjourn?

12

MR. ERLICH: So moved.

13

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Second?

14

MR. APPLE: Second.

15

CHAIRMAN DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16

(Audience participation.)

17

(At 10:00 P.M., the proceedings

18

were concluded)

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

I, MARC RUSSO, a Shorthand
(Stenotype) Reporter and Notary Public within and
for the State of New York, do hereby certify that
the foregoing pages 1 through 179, 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 10th day of August, 2023.

Marc Russo

MARC RUSSO

Concordance

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