1

2   THE CITY OF NEW YORK

3   RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

4   ---X

5   PUBLIC MEETING

6   OF THE

7   DIRECTORS

8   ---X

9   Adler Hall

10   New York Society for Ethical

11   Culture

12   2 West 64th St

13   New York, NY 10023

14   June 11, 2024

15   5:00 P.M.

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17 B E F O R E:

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19   NESTOR DAVIDSON,

20   THE CHAIR

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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   S T A F F:

14   Andrew McLaughlin - Executive Director

15   Brian Hoberman - Co-Research Director

16   Danielle Burger - Co-Research Director

17   Charmaine Superville - Office Manager

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2   P R O C E E D I N G S

3   CHAIR DAVIDSON: I'd like to

4   welcome you to this public hearing of the New York

5   City Rent Guidelines Board, and thank you, all for

6   attending.

7   This is the last of four public

8   hearings to consider comments concerning proposed

9   rent adjustments for leases, for apartments, lofts,

10   hotels, and other housing units. Subject to the

11   Rent Stabilization Law of 1969 and the Emergency

12   Tenant Protection Act of 1974, these adjustments

13   will affect leases commencing between October 1,

14   2024 and September 30, 2025.

15   I will now take roll call.

16   Please respond if present.

17   Doug Apple?

18   MR. APPLE: Present.

19   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Genesis

20   Aquino?

21   MS. AQUINO: Present.

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Christina

23   DeRose?

24   (No response.).

25   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Robert

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2   Ehrlich?

3   MR. EHRLICH: Present.

4   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Arpit Gupta?

5   (No response.).

6   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Alex

7   Schwartz?

8   MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

9   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Christina

10   Smyth?

11   MS. SMYTH: Present.

12   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Adan Soltren?

13   (No response.)

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Nestor

15   Davidson, I'm present. Let the record show that we

16   have a quorum.

17   Anyone who wants to comment on

18   the proposed guidelines at this public hearing,

19   must sign up to speak. The registration desk is

20   open from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. today.

21   We also accept comments on the

22   proposed guidelines outside of our public hearings.

23   You can submit written audio and video comments for

24   the Board to review through today, June 11th.

25   Instructions on how to submit your comments will be

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2   available on the Board's website at nyc.gov/ -- can

3   you hear? Okay. I'm sorry about that. No, no, I

4   appreciate it. We're going to get some sound. I

5   will speak as loudly as I can. Okay. My students

6   tell me I'm very loud.

7   Okay. On the Board's website

8   at nyc.gov/rgb by email at @askatrgb.nyc.gov, or by

9   calling the RGB at 212-669-7480. Our final vote on

10   the guidelines will take place on Monday, June

11   17th, starting at 7:00 p.m. at Assembly Hall at

12   Hunter College, East 69th Street between Park

13   Avenue and Lexington avenues. The doors will be

14   open at 6:00 p.m. and we encourage you to arrive

15   early to avoid delays and help speed the entry of

16   all members of the public.

17   If you are unable to attend in

18   person, you may watch the vote live by streaming it

19   on the RGBs YouTube video channel. To find out

20   how, again visit the RGB website, nyc.gov/rgb, at

21   212-669-7480, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

22   Before we proceed, I would

23   like to go over the rules and procedures for those

24   who are testifying before the Board. If you wish

25   to speak, you must confirm with RGB staff at the

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2 registration table located near the entrance of the

3 hall. Speakers will not be called on if you have

4 not checked in at the registration table.

5   There are Spanish interpreters

6 here today, and when registering to speak, please

7 notify the staff if you would like an interpreter.

8 I will try to call several names in advance, to let

9 you know you will be soon called on to speak. I

10 will attempt to alternate speakers between tenants

11 and owners, but this may not always be possible.

12   In order to accommodate as

13 many speakers as possible, each speaker will have

14 two minutes to give their testimony. An additional

15 two minutes of speaking time will be given to those

16 speakers utilizing interpretation services.

17   To help speakers keep track of

18 time, we have a clock. We will start the clock

19 when you begin speaking. The clock will beep once

20 the speaker has 30 seconds left, and will continue

21 beeping when the two allotted minutes are up. If

22 you are still speaking at the end of your two

23 minutes, I will ask you to quickly wrap up your

24 testimony. We expect a number of people to testify

25 tonight.

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2   We do want to hear from as

3   many of you as possible in the limited time we have

4   for this hearing. We understand that it may be

5   difficult to say everything that you want us to

6   hear in just two minutes, but please understand it

7   is our responsibility to try to make sure that

8   everyone who has taken the time to come here and

9   testify has a fair opportunity to be heard.

10   Thank you for your

11   cooperation, and the Board is looking forward to

12   hearing your comments, regarding proposed rent

13   adjustment guidelines.

14   THE INTERPRETER: (Translating

15   from English to Spanish.)

16   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17   Our first four speakers will be Manhattan Borough

18   President, Mark Levine, New York Assembly member,

19   Deborah Glick, New York Assembly member, Linda

20   Rosenthal, and New York City Council member, Carmen

21   De La Rosa. Thank you. Thank you.

22   MR. LEVINE: For a minute, I

23   thought the landlords were messing with my mic.

24   But it's back. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am Mark

25   Levine, Manhattan Borough President. Thank you for

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2   holding this hearing in the borough of Manhattan.

3   We fought for this. But as you can see, tenants

4   are here because we need our voice heard. I am

5   here to speak up for tenants. I have submitted

6   formal written testimony, which I will not read.

7   It's in the record. So, I just want to briefly

8   reiterate some key points.

9   I am extremely concerned about

10   the burdens facing working class and low income

11   families in New York City right now that are

12   finding it harder and harder to make ends meet.

13   And nowhere is that burden greater than rent. And

14   if we increase tenants on rents in this --

15   increased rents on tenants in this environment, it

16   will add significant pain to many families who

17   would be in risk of eviction.

18   There's just no doubt about

19   that. After years of rent increase, further

20   increases would put families in jeopardy of

21   eviction in a housing market that is the worst and

22   least affordable that we have seen in New York City

23   history. Average rents in the borough of Manhattan

24   are now over $5,000 per month. Vacancy rates at

25   1.4 percent. You are condemning families who would

1

2 be evicted due to increases in their stabilized

3 rents to homelessness -- to homeless shelters.

4 That will be the net outcome if you raise rents.

5 It's why I'm speaking out here on behalf of a zero

6 percent increase for regulated tenants.

7   (Applause.)

8   MR. LEVINE: Thank you. And

9 to small landlords who are concerned about high

10 costs, I hear you, and the city should find ways to

11 help reduce your costs, but increasing rents is not

12 the solution, because of the impact it would have

13 on 1 million families in this city.

14   So, thank you for this

15 opportunity to testify. Since I have 20 seconds,

16 I'll just wrap by saying (foreign language). Thank

17 you so much.

18   (Applause.)

19   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20 Thank you. Please go ahead. Thank you. Sorry.

21   MS. GLICK: I'm Assembly

22 Member Deborah Glick, I represent the 66th Assembly

23 District, which is the Village East and West SoHo,

24 NoHo and Tribeca, and a little bit of Chelsea. And

25 I can say that average New York renters are

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2   hurting. In 2023, 3% increase for one-year lease,

3   and a two-year leases were raised 2.75 for the

4   first year, and then cumulative that increase in

5   the second year was 3.2 percent. And we saw the

6   largest loss of rent-stabilized housing in eight

7   years because of that.

8   So, it is incredible to me and

9   everyone here that the recommendation for this year

10   is a range between 2 and 4.5 percent for one-year

11   leases, and 4 and 6.5 percent for two-year leases.

12   Median rents in Manhattan have increased 12% across

13   the Board, and the vacancy rate in rent-stabilized

14   unit is under one percent. My district and

15   community boards one, two, and three, 34% of

16   residents are rent-burdened; people making less

17   than 50,000, 86% are rent-burdened. In CB, one

18   third of households are rent burdened and 76% for

19   those under 50,000.

20   Given the economic insecurity

21   felt by so many New Yorkers, it is unconscionable

22   to saddle rent-stabilized tenants with the proposed

23   hikes. What is needed is a rent freeze. Small

24   owners may be suffering. We have to find a

25   different way to assist them, but we cannot face

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2   these people being forced out of their homes, with

3   these rent increases. Please freeze the rents.

4   (Applause.)

5   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6   MS. ROSENTHAL: Hi, I'm

7   assembly member, Linda Rosenthal. I represent the

8   67th Assembly District, and I'm also chair of the

9   assembly -- I'm also chair of the Assembly Housing

10   Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to

11   testify on the proposed increases of 2 to 4.5

12   percent for one-year leases, and 4 to 6.5 on

13   two-year leases for rent-stabilized apartments.

14   I am deeply troubled by the

15   lack of affordable housing options available to

16   everyday New Yorkers across the five boroughs, and

17   the proposed increases will make it even harder for

18   people who are hanging on by a thread to remain in

19   New York City. Our vacancy rates have plummeted.

20   Manhattan rents are as high -- start at five, and

21   there are so many evictions.

22   Evictions have increased by over

23   190% from the previous year according to RGB's 2024

24   income and affordability study. Given the bleak

25   reality, it should come as no surprise that tens of

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2   thousands of low income and middle class New

3   Yorkers earning between 32,000 and 174,000 a year,

4   are leaving the state in search of a more

5   affordable place to live.

6   So many New York City tenants

7   are rent-burdened. 51% of residents have reported

8   feeling pressured to leave their apartments over

9   rising rents, and 32% of rent-stabilized tenants

10   with incomes below 200,000 of the poverty measure,

11   say they had trouble making rental payments over

12   the last year.

13   Now big real estate is flush

14   from their victories in Albany. They can charge

15   more for IAIs, and I know they're going to,

16   although I'm sure HPD will be giving a watchful

17   eye. They've thought of many different ways to

18   make tenants pay. However, this is not a good way.

19   Tenants should not have a rent increase,

20   particularly in these dreadful economic times for

21   people of low and moderate income. Thank you.

22   (Applause.)

23   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24   Thank you.

25   MS. DE LA ROSA: Good evening.

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2   I'm council member Carmen De La Rosa representing

3   District 10 in Northern Manhattan.

4   (Applause.)

5   MS. DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

6   We cannot say that we are a city of opportunity

7   while continuing to increase the cost of living and

8   stable housing, especially for those struggling, to

9   make ends meet, amid the housing crisis that we are

10   currently facing, and in the wake of a global

11   pandemic. We have heard time and time again that

12   housing courts and eviction prevention support

13   staff are at capacity. Following the lifting of

14   the eviction moratorium in 2022, eviction filings

15   went up 167%, with more than 3000 evictions by

16   June, 2023.

17   Our shelter system is

18   overwhelmed. Processing for housing is delayed,

19   with vacancies across city agencies. And there is

20   insufficient available housing stock currently

21   available, to folks who desperately need it. To

22   increase rents on rent-stabilized tenants is to

23   turn a blind eye on the realities of everyday New

24   Yorkers.

25   Just yesterday, I toured 705

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2   and 709 West 170th Street in my district of vacant

3   and dilapidated units, currently owned by one of

4   the most unscrupulous landlords in our city, Daniel

5   Ohebshalom. The tenants of 705 and 709 still face

6   a long journey battling the landlord in court after

7   years of harassment, unsafe infrastructure, a lack

8   of safety, no superintendent infestations and much,

9   much more.

10   Many of these tenants are

11   seniors with disabilities. Some are even battling

12   cancer. They have fought for years for ownership

13   of their homes and assemblance of housing justice,

14   when in fact, tenants across this city can tell you

15   similar stories of unscrupulous landlords who have

16   systematically neglected their properties and

17   displaced tenants. A rent increase at this time

18   would destabilize and displace communities. My

19   district in Northern Manhattan has over 46,000

20   rent-stabilized units, yet approximately 69% of the

21   population in Washington Heights and Inwood are

22   rent-burdened.

23   An average of 90% of our

24   constituent cases are housing related. By design,

25   it is an unfair system, and our communities deserve

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2   much, much more.

3   I want to express my

4   disappointment with the Board, and their lack of

5   consideration for adding an additional hearing in

6   northern Manhattan. Washington Heights and Inwood

7   have the largest concentration of rent-stabilized

8   units in the city. Over 60% of my district is

9   directly impacted by the decision of you all

10   tonight and throughout this process. Yet their

11   voices are sidelined consistently. It is

12   disappointing, that communities bearing the brunt

13   for the unaffordability crisis cannot be here

14   tonight.

15   Make no mistake. If this

16   Board votes for an increase, it will deepen

17   inequities with a third consecutive increase and

18   the largest in a decade. Today, I am here joining

19   the voices of tenants and my colleagues across the

20   city and across the borough, calling on you to do

21   the right thing. Certainly a rent freeze would be

22   amazing, but what tenants really want and what they

23   desperately need is a rent rollback. Thank you.

24   (Applause.)

25   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you,

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2   thank you.

3   Our next three witnesses will

4   be Gale Brewer; New York City Council member Gale

5   Brewer. Council member Shaun Abreu and New York

6   Senate member Kristen Gonzalez. Thank you.

7   MS. BREWER: Thank you. I'm

8   Gale Brewer, city council member for the Upper West

9   Side in Central Park. New York City system of rent

10   regulation is our largest and most important

11   affordable housing program. Even the low end of

12   the Rent Guidelines Board preliminary estimate, 2

13   to 4.5 percent for one-year leases and 4 to 6.5

14   percent for two-year leases; they are unreasonable.

15   Recent years and years in the

16   past have included relentless rent hikes that have

17   been imposed on tenants. Bringing average rents in

18   some neighborhoods to the brink of affordability or

19   beyond; that is not affordable. In a city that's

20   desperate for affordable housing, we cannot allow

21   increases of this magnitude that favor property

22   owners over rent-stabilized tenants. The most

23   responsible course of action for the rent

24   guidelines board is a rent freeze.

25   I'm very appreciative of my

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2   state legislative colleagues who passed good cause

3   eviction and who compromised, they had to, with

4   owners who wanted, to eliminate the 2019 law that

5   denied landlords the opportunity to take an

6   apartment to market rent when the stabilized

7   vacated the unit.

8   The -- the deal in Albany this

9   year doubled the individual apartment improvement

10   cap. And this means that renters in these formerly

11   vacant apartments will experience rent hikes. The

12   Rent Guidelines Board should take this newly

13   allowed rent increase into consideration.

14   According to your housing and

15   vacancy survey, the city's vacancy rate is at a

16   mere 1.41%. That is alarming. I've lost 150,000

17   rent-stabilized units on the Upper West side, and

18   in New York City, 600,000s have been lost. So,

19   there's a lot of inflation. We know that evictions

20   increased so much in 2023 and they hit over 12,000.

21   And we know that the NOI for buildings with

22   rent-stabilized units increased 10.4% between '21

23   and '22.

24   Wealthy people do not live in

25   rent-stabilized apartments, despite what the press

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2   says. We must retain the stock that we have at the

3   rents that exist. I also want to advocate zero

4   increase for renters and SROs in rooming houses.

5   Thank you very much.

6   (Audience participation.)

7   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8   Thank you.

9   MR. ABREU: Hello. Good

10   evening. I'm council member Shaun Abreu. I'm a

11   former tenant lawyer, a council member, and a

12   survivor of eviction. I was nine years old when I

13   came home from school one day to see my mom holding

14   an eviction notice at the kitchen table. And I can

15   only tell you how much our lives were turned down

16   as a result. The truth is that working class

17   families here in New York City are experiencing the

18   same thing. The reality that New Yorkers live with

19   every day because of skyrocketing rents.

20   Do you know what it's like to

21   lose a home? Do you know what it's like to wonder

22   where you're going sleep at night? These are the

23   real consequences of a rent increase.

24   Last week, the governor

25   claimed that our economic recovery was so bad, that

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2   we couldn't subject drivers to congestion pricing.

3   If that's true, then the Board has no business

4   raising the rent. Homelessness. Homelessness in

5   our city has reached the highest level since the

6   Great Depression. The solution is not higher

7   rents. Make no mistake. If you raise the rent,

8   you're abandoning the people this board was

9   designed and entrusted to protect. If you raise

10   the rent, New Yorkers will lose their homes, their

11   lives will be shattered, you will not make our city

12   safer, and a more prosperous place. Please

13   remember. Remember your obligation to the city and

14   find the courage to do the right thing. Roll back

15   our rent and let New Yorkers breathe. Thank you.

16   (Applause.)

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

18   Thank you.

19   MS. GONZALEZ: Hi, good

20   evening. My name is Kristen Gonzalez. I'm the

21   state senator for Senate District 59. Thank you.

22   I have some of my constituents here today. And, as

23   a lifelong renter, the housing crisis is personal

24   to me. I was born and raised in a one bedroom

25   apartment in Queens. I've had family that has been

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2   unhoused. When I was a student at Columbia, I

3   experienced housing instability in between school

4   years. And I've had family, that's not only going

5   through the shelter system, but in public housing.

6   I say all of this because I have lived the housing

7   crisis that we are in.

8   And tonight, we've heard

9   statistic after statistic that proves we're in a

10   housing crisis. And in a senate district like

11   mine, which spans three boroughs in east side of

12   Manhattan, western Queens, and northern Brooklyn,

13   and represents 80% of constituents who are renters.

14   I know that my constituents are also feeling the

15   burden of this housing crisis. And tonight, I am

16   joined by the Stuyvesant Tenants Association, one

17   of the biggest concentration of rent-stabilized

18   tenants.

19   And so, I'm here in opposition

20   to any proposed increase to our rent-stabilized

21   units. Because I know, firsthand, that New Yorkers

22   cannot afford this. We deserve safe and affordable

23   housing. We deserve rent rollbacks. And at a time

24   where you all well know, that the cost of living is

25   increasing, having the highest proposed increases

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2 to rent since 2013 simply does not make sense.

3 And by raising rents, this

4 Board would be essentially siding with large

5 corporate landlords like Blackstone that own

6 Stuyvesant town. And so, I urge this board to

7 please, please oppose and reject the notion of

8 increases. Do right by the New Yorkers who are in

9 this room, do right by renters, do right by

10 families like my own. And not only do that, but

11 roll back our rent increases. Thank you.

12 (Applause.)

13 CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14 Thank you. Our next three speakers will be Allen

15 Rabinovitch, Eli Northrop, and Maria Rabinovitch.

16 CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

17 MR. RABINOVITCH: Hi. Thank

18 you for the opportunity to speak. I'm here as a

19 small housing provider. I own a single building

20 built in 1890 -- skyrocketing costs. It's majority

21 rent-stabilized and it has a negative net operating

22 income. That means I lose money every month. And

23 every year when you all vote, you vote to increase

24 it by less than what my property taxes, insurance,

25 and other costs go up. But I'm not going to spend

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2   my two minutes educating you on your own data.

3   You've already read the economic reports. I've

4   watched your YouTube streams. You know these

5   informations to be true. I know the tenant reps

6   don't like to listen to it, but it is true.

7   What I do want to do dispel

8   though, is the myth that there's any programs to

9   help landlords. Time and time again, I come to

10   these hearings and I hear about how there's

11   programs to help me, if I'm insolvent or if my

12   building experiences hardship. They don't exist.

13   I've called Gale Brewer, I've called Assembly

14   Member Rosenthal, I've called every one of your

15   elected officials that have testified here today

16   and said, "What are these programs you speak of?"

17   They don't know. J 51, expired years ago, 2022.

18   DHCR -- DHCR gets nine applications a year. You

19   know how many they've approved since they've even

20   reviewed since 2022? Total of five. All denials.

21   My own application hasn't been looked at and it's

22   been there since last year.

23   So, again, if you all want a

24   rent rollback, if you all want a rent decrease,

25   what I ask you all to do is look at the elected

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2   officials that are sitting next to you and ask them

3   why are they intentionally raising taxes, why are

4   they intentionally --

5   (Audience participation.)

6   MR. RABINOVITCH: I won't

7   interrupt you during your testimony, please don't

8   interrupt me during mine. Why they're actively

9   making your housing costs more expensive and making

10   the city more expensive, rather than working to

11   reduce those costs and create programs that fund

12   your rent, instead of me funding your rent. I

13   won't interrupt your end testimony. Don't

14   interrupt mine. Be respectful. Thank you very

15   much for your time.

16   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please,

17   continue. Thank you.

18   MR. RABINOVITCH: If you'd

19   like to review the data, I'd be happy to send it to

20   you. I actually -- I think I already have, but I'd

21   be happy to meet with you at any time to explain

22   where these costs are coming from. I don't want to

23   raise anybody's rent. I want to lower your rent.

24   Ask Shaun ABreu right here why my property tax bill

25   went up.

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2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3   Thank you. Eli Northrop. Please. Thank you.

4   Please let this speaker speak. Thank you.

5   MR. NORTHROP: Good evening.

6   My name is Eli Northrop, I am a public defender.

7   I'm running for state assembly in the 69th Assembly

8   District just north of here, but I'm here as a

9   rent-stabilized tenant. And when I talk to people

10   on the streets, which I do a lot these days, the

11   number one issue they bring up in Morningside

12   Heights in the Upper West Side in Manhattan Valley

13   is affordability. And we are clearly in a crisis.

14   And, I'm a tenant, but I'm also a lawyer. I like

15   to look at facts and logic, and as I understand the

16   Board's statutory obligation, it's to ensure that

17   landlords do not take advantage of an ongoing

18   housing shortage. And that's what we have right

19   now. A vacancy rate citywide of just 1.4%.

20   Two in five rent-stabilized

21   tenants pay more than 30% of their income for rent.

22   And that includes me. One in four tenants pay over

23   half of their income in rent. And homelessness is

24   at unprecedented levels. The eviction rate is

25   skyrocketing. And that doesn't even take into

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2   account people who leave, because they leave before

3   being evicted. And yet, according to your own

4   staff reports, building which report operating

5   losses have declined from a high in 1990 of 13.9 to

6   9.8 percent today. You have solid information

7   indicating that 90% of rent-stabilized buildings

8   are not in any kind of distress, and that on

9   average landlords net operating incomes have grown

10   by nearly 48.4% since 1990, after adjusting for

11   inflation. So the vast majority of owners are

12   doing well.

13   Now, I recognize that you've

14   heard credible concerns from certain small sector

15   of owners, particularly with buildings with high

16   proportions of low income tenants. But I submit to

17   you that this stress stems from economic factors

18   outside of your control. From poverty,

19   unemployment, declining incomes, a highly

20   disruptive pandemic, and not by any shortfall in

21   this Board's actions. It does not make sense to

22   raise rents on all tenants because of 10% of

23   owners.

24   Now, I've heard that freezing

25   rents appears to some to be too radical, that the

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2   proposals issued by the Board on April 30th

3   appealed to continuity and moderation. In fact

4   raising rents should be seen as the radical action.

5   Look around, look at the crisis that's happening

6   and do the right thing.

7   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8   MR. NORTHROP: Thank you.

9   (Audience participation.)

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11   While we're waiting for our next speaker, the next

12   three speakers will be Steven Birkeland, Robert

13   Nelson, and Ken Gale. Please go ahead. Thank you.

14   MS. RABINOVITCH: Yes. Hello.

15   My name is Maria, not, Maro nor Mara.

16   (Unintelligible cross-talk.)

17   MS. RABINOVITCH: Hello.

18   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Better --

19   MS. RABINOVITCH: Better?

20   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21   MS. RABINOVITCH: My name is

22   Maria Rabinovitch. I am a Latina woman who is --

23   who immigrated this country. I own a small

24   building. Their rents do not allow me to pay any

25   of the cost of taxes. I have been running at the

1

2   loss since I purchased the building. Most of my

3   tenants pay less than the cost of hitting their

4   units during winter. This is not sustainable for

5   me. One of the rents-stabilized tenants in my

6   building is a hoarder, who's abusive to me and the

7   other tenants. I can't do anything about it.

8   I have actively and

9   substantially made repairs to the building to

10   ensure my tenants and myself enjoy living there.

11   None of the repairs have been covered by the rent.

12   Just my personal savings. I am responsible for

13   heat, water, sanitation, electricity for the

14   building. Insurance, mortgage, repairs, taxes, and

15   many other expenses. None of the rent covers that.

16   I have contacted the city to

17   get assistance with my taxes. And they have

18   literally told me, "go, sell your house, move to

19   Jersey. You cannot afford to live in the city."

20   There is no help for me as a -- to offset the cost

21   of rent stabilization. I agree, we need affordable

22   housing. I do. But the government has to agree as

23   well. If you don't agree that we need affordable

24   housing and don't allow me a way to find a solution

25   to -- or at least lower my cost of living, there

1

2 will not be no solution for this. So, if you want

3 affordable housing that -- you need to help us as

4 well.

5   And to you, sir, who said that

6 we don't know what is to be hungry or homeless, I

7 have been homeless. I have been hungry.

8 (Unintelligible).

9   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10 Thank you very much.

11   MR. BIRKELAND: Good evening.

12   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13 Go ahead.

14   MR. BIRKELAND: Members of the

15 Board, distinguished guests, and fellow New

16 Yorkers, thank you for this opportunity to speak

17 with you and offer my story. My name is Steven

18 Birkeland and I'm a New Yorker. 52 years ago, I

19 was born to two loving parents, who offered me a

20 childhood and a loving home surrounded by access to

21 activities, diverse people, and experiences that

22 have provided me with the opportunities to grow,

23 thrive, explore the world, and become the man I am

24 today.

25   I am employee of the city of

1

2   New York, supporting our city's most children and

3   their families, in one of the most poverty stricken

4   neighborhoods in the country. I am fortunate

5   enough to live in a neighborhood called Hell's

6   Kitchen, which I've called home now for two

7   decades. Having lived in numerous buildings over

8   the years, over a decade ago, I was approved to

9   move into a rent-stabilized building on West 55th

10   Street. My first rent-stabilized building with the

11   hope it would be my forever home.

12   In recent years, I have

13   escalated and requested assistance with the

14   following: The presence of reoccurring black mold

15   in my ceilings; water damage due to flooding in an

16   apartment above me, due to elective construction;

17   deteriorating kitchen pipes causing leaks; peeling

18   kitchen cabinets, creating an opportunity for mold

19   to grow, in exposed and unexposed areas; loose and

20   damaged countertops and backsplash remedied by

21   mismatched caulk; broken appliances. At one point,

22   I did not have the ability to cook for myself for

23   six weeks. Gas leaks, holes and exterior walls

24   exposing the comfort of my home to the outside

25   elements, cracked moldings being offered to be

1

2   replaced with spackle. The lack of paint

3   maintenance, exposed wiring that is not up to code,

4   causing the absence of electricity, short

5   circuiting, and the forced use of extension cords

6   to power air conditioning during 90 plus degree

7   weather. Lack of hot water, flaking, peeling

8   paints and splintering wooden floors.

9   When emails are sent to the

10   building managers, which is the preferred method of

11   communicating in the 21st century for many

12   businesses, there are significant responses in both

13   the onsite and the building management office.

14   Since 2012, my preferential rent was increased more

15   than 40% with the amenities, services and support

16   from my building management team --

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please,

18   please --

19   MR. BIRKELAND: -- decreased

20   or.

21   CHAIR DAVIDSON: --please.

22   MR. BIRKELAND: -- eliminated.

23   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you

24   very much.

25   MR. BIRKELAND: Thank you.

1

2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3   Very much appreciate it. Thank you.

4   MR. GALE: Thank you for

5   holding this hearing and for the opportunity to

6   speak. I'm Ken Gale. I'm a producer and host of

7   an environmental radio show in WBAI FM here. I

8   want to emphasize that we're not living in a

9   vacuum. Decisions made by this board affect many

10   other areas. In 2008, I was part of an

11   environmental coalition that brought commercial

12   solar net metering to the state of New York, that

13   resulted in the creation of thousands of jobs in

14   New York City alone and cleaner and healthier air

15   as well. But the jobs created were working class

16   jobs, and it's nearly impossible for someone like

17   that to be able to afford to live in New York City.

18   They're not making the $80,000 rent threshold for

19   what little so-called affordable housing there is.

20   Jobs were not filled.

21   When Superstorm Sandy hit New York

22   City and did all that damage, thousands of people

23   came from all over the US to offer their skills and

24   get jobs. But again, those are working class jobs.

25   Most of them couldn't afford to live here, but

1

2   could afford to live in New Jersey and Long Island.

3   And those areas recovered from Sandy much faster

4   than New York City did. They had the skilled

5   labor, we didn't.

6   Our rents are slowing down our

7   ability to meet the lowering of our greenhouse gas

8   emissions, a bill number 378 that was passed

9   unanimously in the New York City Council in 2014.

10   Because again, the work to make our buildings more

11   efficient, to waste less energy as well as building

12   those solar panels is done by people who usually

13   can't afford to live here and there are other

14   places that can and do use their skills. And

15   that's a shame, for them, their family and the rest

16   of us because we need those people and the jobs

17   they do.

18   The mayor has talked about

19   making New York City another Silicon Valley, but

20   the tech people who would fill those jobs can't

21   afford to live here or barely can. So, they don't

22   move here and fill those jobs. When only the

23   wealthy can live here, you end up with people who

24   don't work here and don't spend their money here.

25   Loss of jobs and places for working families to

1

2   live affects the entire economy of the city.

3   Students are the same situation.

4   And if you think the outer

5   boroughs are a solution, let me remind you of what

6   happens to the subways when there's a severe

7   nor'easter or hurricane. They shut down.

8   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9   MR. GALE: People who were

10   forced out of Manhattan cannot get to work and the

11   economy of the city suffers a severe blow. Climate

12   chaos is creating more winter and summer storms and

13   they're more severe, and keeping working class

14   people from affording to live here hurts our --

15   CHAIR DAVIDSON:

16   (Indiscernible.) appreciate it.

17   MR. GALE: -- ability to

18   recover from those storms.

19   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20   We have a number of speakers. Thank you very much.

21   Thank you. Just want to make sure, do we have

22   Robert Nelson?

23   (No verbal response.).

24   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Okay, our

25   next three speakers will be City Council member,

1

2   Keith Powers, Anne Greenberg, and Andrew Hoffman.

3   (Audience participation.)

4   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5   MR. POWERS: Thank you. Thank

6   you. Nice to see everyone tonight. Before I

7   start, I just want to recognize all my constituents

8   who are here today from Stuyvesant Town, who are --

9   you'll be hearing from in a short few moments. I

10   also, am a resident of Stuyvesant town, and I've

11   been a lifelong resident of Stuyvesant town, and

12   I'm here to stand with my tenants here today. And

13   I want to start -- I do want to thank the Rent

14   Guidelines Board.

15   We had asked, alongside my

16   colleagues, Shana ABrau, Carmen De La Rose, and

17   other Manhattan Council members to hold this

18   hearing in Manhattan, which had not been -- was not

19   previously scheduled. And we had ask in every

20   year, for there to make sure there was a Manhattan

21   hearing, because you can see the tenants from

22   Manhattan who want to be here and hear their voice.

23   But I do want to thank you guys and the chair for

24   granting that.

25   I'm City council member Keith

1

2   Powers, representing the fourth council district,

3   which represents Stuyvesant Town at Peter Cooper

4   Village on 14th Street all the way up to 93rd

5   Street. And if you look at my district, you'll see

6   vastly different populations, but all folks who are

7   in desperate need for more affordable housing and

8   to maintain affordability for existing tenants.

9   I want to up our start by

10   saying the obvious, the proposed increases put out

11   by the Rent Guidelines Board, particularly the 6.5%

12   proposed increase for two-year leases goes way

13   beyond what is reasonable to ask tenants to pay at

14   any particular time, especially right now.

15   Whether you are a senior

16   citizen on a fixed income or young family trying to

17   hold onto the dream of living in New York City,

18   these proposed rent increases create real economic

19   challenges for tenants in the five boroughs. And

20   after subsequent years of increases to tenants'

21   rents. I'm asking once again to take a stand for

22   the tenants that are in this room and do not raise

23   their rents in this coming year. And that is a 0%

24   increase for one and two-year leases both.

25   As the Board highlight -- I

1

2   only have 18 seconds. So, I'll say as the Board's

3   highlights, affordability is a struggle right now

4   for tenants. We have our shelter population up,

5   non-filings and housing court up, and we have

6   resident evictions up skyrocketing.

7   This is the wrong time to be

8   asking tenants to pay more after years and years of

9   increases. We are going to ask, once again -- I

10   know people are here for a rollback, I support that

11   too. But the minimum we are asking, do not raise

12   rents for tenants in Manhattan or anywhere in New

13   York City at this point. We cannot afford it. So,

14   thank you to the Board for giving me time.

15   I've stand with all the

16   tenants from Stuyvesant Town throughout the city,

17   asking for the Rent Guidelines Board to throw away

18   those numbers that you put out in your initial vote

19   and to stand up for tenants this year, because of

20   -- for affordable housing spike. And one thing

21   I'll say is, we are going to take steps I hope,

22   this year and in the future years to increase the

23   supply of housing in New York City so that we can

24   also address this.

25   And I'm going to ask my,

1

2   obviously colleagues, to support that, but right

3   now in the situation that we are in, I do not think

4   tenants can afford another year of rent increases.

5   So, please listen to tenants that are here today

6   and the elected officials and please stand with

7   tenants today. Thank you.

8   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9   Thank you.

10   (Audience participation.)

11   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12   Anne Greenberg?

13   (Audience participation.)

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please go

15   ahead. Thank you.

16   MS. GREENBERG: Thank you.

17   Good evening. My name is Anne Greenberg, I'm a

18   rent-stabilized senior and a resident of Peter

19   Cooper Village. This is my 11th year testifying.

20   Usually, I argue for tenants getting a

21   well-deserved break, but not tonight. The past two

22   years have reinforced for me, what a sham, the RGB

23   process is. Especially with a mayor who doesn't

24   care about tenants and an RGB chair doing his

25   bidding, by rigging the vote ahead of time to the

1

2   exclusion of tenant's interests.

3   So, here's what I have to say.

4   The vacancy rate is 1.4%. The RGB doesn't care.

5   Tenants are paying 30% of their income to rent.

6   Mayor Adams, he doesn't care. Some are paying 50%

7   of their income to rent. Nestor Davidson, you

8   don't show that you care. Christina De Rose reps

9   landlords, she doesn't care. Doug Apple is a

10   consultant representing real estate clients. Does

11   anyone here think he cares?

12   (Audience participation.)

13   MS. GREENBERG: Alex Schwartz

14   teaches housing policy yet votes against tenants.

15   I guess he just pretends to care. Arpit Gupta is a

16   "little skeptical of rent control". He uses large

17   data sets to understand default dynamics in real

18   estate. Tenants are just widgets to him, so he

19   really doesn't care.

20   RGB research says total owner

21   income grew an average of 7.6% while operating cost

22   rose only an average of 6.1%. NOI is up 10.4%.

23   Mayor Adams is a landlord. He is never going to

24   care. The RGB process is a sham and a scam and,

25   you, the so-called public members are personally

1

2   responsible for adding to the suffering of the past

3   two years, including an effective 6% increase on a

4   two-year lease last year, and for what you are

5   determined to inflict on renters this year.

6   (Audience participation.)

7   CHAIR DAVIDSON: While we're

8   waiting for Mr. Hoffman, our next three speakers

9   will be Pablo Zevallos, Tom Owner, and Susan

10   Steinberg. Please go ahead. Thank you.

11   MR. HOFFMAN: My name is

12   Andrew Hoffman. I'm a third generation owner

13   operator of Rent regulated housing in New York.

14   Over the past decade, I've watched as the RGB has

15   repeatedly ignored critical data indicating

16   escalating costs of operating our buildings.

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please

18   continue. Thank you.

19   MR. HOFFMAN: To begin with,

20   property taxes have more than doubled, while

21   elected officials continue to impose significant

22   tax burden on our rent-stabilized buildings,

23   especially with low rents, and then they offer

24   massive tax breaks to new developments. This sets

25   off an unjust systems where older buildings carry

1

2   the tax load without adequate compensation.

3   Insurance costs have surged the past years, with

4   20% increases in the past three years alone,

5   particularly in buildings housing tenants with

6   vouchers.

7   This increase is both

8   unsustainable and unconscionable. Climate has

9   dramatically increased our cost for national gas

10   electricity. Much of my buildings have experienced

11   $20,000 annual increases. This rise along with the

12   water boards 8.5% in water and sewer costs this

13   year, with further hikes planned over the next five

14   years, creates a crushing financial burden.

15   The 2024 research --

16   (Audience participation.)

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

18   the speaker speak. Thank you. Please continue.

19   Please continue. Thank you. We can hear you.

20   MR. HOFFMAN: The 2024

21   research from the RGB reveals that approximately

22   10% of all buildings with rent regulated apartments

23   are now classified as distress. Meaning they spend

24   more on operations than they collect in rent. This

25   is an increase from last year and highlights the

1

2   growing financial distress owner's face. As a

3   result, many of our rent-stabilized apartments in

4   my portfolio have rents that are lower than the

5   operating cost. This forces me to cut back on

6   essential maintenance and capital improvements each

7   year, risking the long-term integrity and

8   inhabitability of our buildings.

9   While I recognize that the

10 broader housing issues are not solely the fault of

11 the RGB, we rely on the RGB to act as a backstop.

12 It's imperative to ensure that our buildings do not

13 fall into disrepair. Last year's rent adjustments

14 were less than half of the inflation rate --

15   CHAIR DAVIDSON:

16 (Indiscernible.).

17   MR. HOFFMAN: -- effectively

18 announcing --

19   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20   (Audience participation.)

21   MR. HOFFMAN: Am I finished?

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We have a

23 number of speakers. Please.

24   MR. HOFFMAN: They stopped me

25 a few times.

1

2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please.

3   Please finish. Thank you.

4   MR. HOFFMAN: One paragraph.

5   (Audience participation.)

6   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7   Please let the speaker finish.

8   (Audience participation.)

9   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please,

10   please let the speaker finish. Thank you.

11   MR. HOFFMAN: I urge you to

12   consider these facts and the detailed data from

13   your own reports as you deliberate. You know what?

14   If you want owners to testify, you need to treat

15   them better. This is ridiculous.

16   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

17   the speaker speak.

18   MR. HOFFMAN: Christina. Hi.

19   Ridiculous.

20   (Audience participation.)

21   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We can wait.

22   MR. HOFFMAN: Thanks.

23   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24   One moment before you speak. One moment. I just

25   want to remind everyone that you --I want you to be

1

2   respectful of other speakers. We want to hear from

3   everyone tonight. We have a number of speakers

4   signed up and I really urge you when people speak

5   to allow speakers to speak.

6   THE INTERPRETER: (Translating

7   in foreign language.)

8   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please, let

9   the translator speak. Thank you.

10   THE INTERPRETER: (Translating

11   in foreign language.)

12   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13   Mr. Zevallos. Thank you.

14   MR. ZEVALLOS: Good evening.

15   My name is Pablo Zevallos. And I'm a tenant's

16   rights attorney, testifying in support of a rent

17   freeze. A freeze is needed to guard against the

18   quote "speculative and unwarranted rent increases",

19   the rent stabilization law was enacted to counter,

20   yet this Board has too often permitted. Between

21   1990 and 2022, in buildings containing

22   rent-stabilized units, inflation adjusted income

23   from rent has increased by 40% while costs have

24   increased by 36%, facilitating a net operating

25   income increase of 48%.

1

2   Between 2021 and 2022 alone,

3   Nano NOI increased by 10% and more broadly,

4   citywide NOI remains at or near historic highs.

5   Simply put landlords economic indicators, neither

6   warrant nor justify a rent increase this year.

7   While rents continue to soar and rent collection

8   nears decade long highs, the post pandemic economic

9   recovery has yet to reach many New York City

10   tenants. In contrast to the national data, many

11   New York City workers have seen decreases in

12   inflation adjusted wages since 2021. Meanwhile,

13   many of my clients trying to get back on their feet

14   tell me that between the rent and other costs like

15   food, healthcare, and raising children, there is

16   not enough to go around.

17   70% of the lowest income

18   renters and 30% of rent-stabilized tenants without

19   vouchers pay a majority of their incomes in rent.

20   Rental assistance is in short supply as we learned

21   last week, when over 600,000 New Yorkers applied

22   for a lottery for a 200,000 household section eight

23   wait list. And with 1 in 150 apartments renting

24   for under $2,400 being vacant, there was little

25   chance of moving elsewhere. Those tenants cannot

1

2   afford a rent increase.

3   In light of the imbalance

4   between landlords' economic indicators and the

5   needs of rent burden tenants, I urge this Board to

6   adopt a rent freeze. Thank you for the opportunity

7   to testify.

8   (Audience participation.)

9   MR. OWNER: Hi guys. Look,

10   the simple facts, two plus two is four. No matter

11   what people complain about, the basic cost for the

12   apartment does not change. It's that simple. Your

13   number is too low. It's always been too low.

14   (Audience participation.)

15   MR. OWNER: And you get people

16   here --

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Let the

18   speaker speak.

19   MR. OWNER: You get people

20   here--

21   (Audience participation.)

22   MR. OWNER: -- who turn around

23   and are paying less than the minimum rent and then

24   complaining about people making money. Okay? This

25   is --

1

2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

3   the speaker speak.

4   MR. OWNER: Okay. I wonder

5   what these attorneys who have the -- a

6   rent-stabilized apartment, what are they paying?

7   Okay, what are they paying? Okay. How many of

8   these people in 35 years of owning a building --

9   you know, my number one reason for evicting

10   tenants? Because they don't bother working. My

11   tenant seven years, she does not work. Okay? She

12   does not work.

13   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Let the

14   speaker speak.

15   (Audience participation.)

16   MR. OWNER: The previous

17   tenant that I had to push out, again, she didn't

18   bother working. She wanted to go out with her

19   boyfriend constantly and they didn't do it --

20   (Audience participation.)

21   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Okay, we're

22   going to need a little bit --

23   MR. OWNER: All right.

24   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Okay, we need

25   a little respect in here.

1

2   (Audience participation.)

3   CHAIR DAVIDSON: This is a

4   public hearing. We need --

5   (Audience participation.)

6   CHAIR DAVIDSON: All right.

7   We are not going to have that kind of language in

8   this hearing.

9   MR. OWNER: I can't even hear

10   you over the noise.

11   CHAIR DAVIDSON: I can hear

12   you.

13   MR. OWNER: Okay. Now --

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please

15   continue.

16   MR. OWNER: -- this is what is

17   happening. This is what's happening --

18   (Audience participation.)

19   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Let the

20   speaker finish.

21   (Audience participation.)

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

23   the speaker finish. Please. We can hear you.

24   MR. OWNER: My other tenant

25   that I finally asked to leave again, she didn't

1

2   bother working for almost a year. All right. This

3   is what the problem is. It's not that the rent is

4   too high, they're not working. And then they go to

5   the legal aid to just muck up the evictions. Since

6   last week, my costs have now gone up because again,

7   my tenant got another adjournment -- she got

8   another adjournment for another three months not to

9   pay the rent.

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11   MR. OWNER: All right.

12   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13   MR. OWNER: Thank you.

14   (Audience participation.)

15   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please,

16 please, please. Please.

17   (Audience participation.)

18   CHAIR DAVIDSON: While we're

19 waiting -- please, please. I want to announce our

20 next three speakers. Our next three speakers --

21 please. Our next three speakers --

22   (Audience participation.)

23   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please. Our

24 next three speakers will be New York Assembly

25 member Harvey Epstein, Ann Korchak and Marcelo

1

2   Lopez. Please go ahead.

3   (Audience participation.)

4   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We could have

5   -- if we could be able to hear the speaker, I'd

6   appreciate it. Please.

7   (Unintelligible cross-talk.)

8   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We want to be

9   able to hear the speaker. Okay. Yes, Ms.

10   Steinberg, please. Thank you.

11   MS. STEINBERG: I'm Susan

12   Steinberg. I'm Susan Steinberg and I'm president

13   of the Stuyvesant Town Peter Cooper Village Tenants

14   Association representing 30,000 tenants in 110

15   buildings.

16   For decades I have been coming

17   every year to the Rent Guidelines Board to testify

18   way before any of you, and I've tried a number of

19   approaches. I talk about how the rent regulated

20   apartments in Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper

21   Village have skyrocketed in rents to market rate.

22   How inflation is impacting our tenants about the

23   historic double digit RGB increases during some of

24   the worst recession and what have you. And we now

25   have -- excuse me, a thousand residents in our

1

2   community who can't even afford air conditioning in

3   a world that's becoming hotter and hotter. But you

4   know what? No matter what I say, it doesn't work

5   and I've come to the conclusion that it's useless.

6   What the Board represents to

7   our tenants and our community is theater of the

8   absurd. And you know what the characteristic of

9   theater of the absurd is? It portrays people

10   living in an incomprehensible world. And that's

11   what we are living in.

12   Rent stabilization is supposed

13   to balance landlord and tenant needs, and it's

14   supposed to allow landlords to maintain their

15   building and protect tenants from skyrocketing

16   rents. And year after year, we've seen nothing but

17   increases. And I think that you may believe that

18   the RGB is supposed to make landlords whole no

19   matter what. So, I'm completely discouraged. The

20   system is unfair and I have nothing to say except I

21   don't think you're doing your job.

22   (Audience participation.)

23   MR. EPSTEIN: Good evening,

24   everyone. My name is Harvey Epstein. I'm a state

25   assembly member and I sat on the rent guidelines

1

2   board for five years as a tenant representative.

3   So, when we sat on the Board, we made decisions

4   around what affordability meant. And we ensured

5   that two years in a row, we had one-year rent

6   freezes for tenants. Today, the stories of those

7   tenants exist still today. Eviction rates are up

8   200% based on your own studies. Tenants can no

9   longer afford to live in our city. Vacancy rates

10   at 1.5%.

11   For a million tenants who are

12   living these apartments, the question we all have

13   to answer is, "what is your job?" So, for someone

14   like me who was a tenant lawyer for decades and

15   represented thousands of tenants, all tenants want

16   to work. Tenants care deeply about living in their

17   buildings. They care about their families, their

18   securities. They want to feed their kids, maybe

19   get them school supplies. They have to make

20   choices between school supplies and rent. Holiday

21   presents, and rent. Tenants need a rent freeze.

22   On behalf of the 25 assembly members, who have

23   signed on to this letter all over New York City, we

24   need a rent freeze.

25   And if you look at net

1

2   operating income for landlords, they're doing well,

3   continue to do well. No matter what people say,

4   the sky is falling, because of good cause. The sky

5   is falling because of rent freezes. Year after

6   year, after year after year, landlords continue to

7   do fine and tenants continue to fall into poverty.

8   The question you have to answer is, what is our

9   decision today? What are our choices today? We

10   need you to answer with the facts. The reality of

11   the facts, the tenants need a rent freeze today.

12   Thank you.

13   (Audience participation.)

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15   Ann Korchak? Thank you. And while Ann is coming

16   up, our next three -- our next four speakers,

17   Marcelo Lopez, Anne Perryman, Paulina Rieloff, and

18   Marina Metalios.

19   MS. KORCHAK: Thank you.

20   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21   MS. KORCHAK: My name is Ann

22   Korchak. My family owns two small buildings here

23   on the Upper West Side. They were purchased in

24   1941 and 1965. We are committed responsible

25   operators, the kind of owners this Board should

1

2   want to keep in the market. We, along with many

3   other small building owners, are housing thousands

4   and thousands of New Yorkers and supporting the

5   city's budget through our tax dollars. I've been

6   speaking at these public hearings for over a decade

7   and it doesn't get any easier. You know what I've

8   seen here tonight is quite intimidating. It's

9   really hard to come up here. But it's important

10   that you be able to hear from multiple voices.

11   During COVID, our rent roll took a tremendous hit

12   and it took four years for us to recover from that.

13   And all that time, our expenses were accelerating

14   at an alarming rate. When COVID hit our property

15   taxes were $78,000. And now they're 102.

16   (Audience participation.)

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Allow the

18   speaker to speak. Please continue.

19   MS. KORCHAK: Yes.

20   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We can hear

21   you. Thank you.

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

23   the speaker--

24   MS. KORCHAK: I'm not leaving

25   --

1

2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

3   the speaker finish. Thank you.

4   MS. KORCHAK: -- I'm not

5   moving from this spot until I get to say every word

6   that I want.

7   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

8   the Speaker -- Please let the speaker finish. We

9   will wait. Please be respectful and let the

10   speaker finish. Thank you. Continue.

11   MS. KORCHAK: Thank you. I

12   appreciate that.

13   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

14   her finish. Thank you.

15   MS. KORCHAK: In 2020, our

16   insurance was 13 --

17   (Audience participation.)

18   MS. KORCHAK: I'm not leaving.

19   I'm not going to leave this spot until I get a

20   chance to speak. I gave everybody else here

21   consideration.

22   (Audience participation.)

23   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

24   the speaker finish. Please --

25   MS. KORCHAK: Should I call

1

2   the police?

3   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please Let

4   the speaker finish. We will wait. We'll wait.

5   MS. KORCHAK: Is there an

6   elected official here who'll stand up for me?

7   (Audience participation.)

8   MS. KORCHAK: Will one of you

9   --

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Ma'am,

11   please.

12   MS. KORCHAK: -- speak up for

13   me and let me speak.

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please, let

15   us hear your testimony. Thank you.

16   (Audience participation.)

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please.

18   We're going to wait. Thank you.

19   MS. KORCHAK: I spent $20,000

20   in legal fees this year to deal with a hoarder so

21   that we could get --

22   (Audience participation.).

23   CHAIR DAVIDSON: I can hear

24   you.

25   MS. KORCHAK: -- access to the

1

2   building to deal with a condition that was making

3   everybody in the building unsafe. My cost for my

4   super has doubled since the pandemic began. His

5   costs went up, his labor, and insurance, so, my

6   costs go up. And that's the point I wish to make

7   here today.

8   (Audience participation.)

9   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

10   the speaker finish. Please let the speaker finish.

11   We're going to wait. Please. Thank you.

12   MS. KORCHAK: These buildings

13   are not in a vacuum.

14   (Audience participation.)

15   CHAIR DAVIDSON: All right.

16   We have a number of speakers tonight and if we

17   cannot hear from everyone who has signed up to

18   speak, we will not be able to hear from everyone

19   who has signed up.

20   (Audience participation.)

21   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We need to be

22   able to hear the speaker

23   MS. KORCHAK: I have all

24   night. I'll stay here all night.

25   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We'll wait.

1

2   MS. KORCHAK: Thank you.

3   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4   Please complete your testimony. Thank you.

5   MS. KORCHAK: So, as I was

6   trying to say that these buildings do not -- do not

7   operate in a vacuum.

8   (Audience participation.)

9   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Again, I

10   implore you. We need to be able to hear the

11   speakers who have signed up to speak. This is a

12   public hearing and we need to be able to hear our

13   speakers. This is a forum for everyone to speak.

14   Please continue.

15   MS. KORCHAK: We are subject

16   to the same economic forces every other industry is

17   facing. We cannot operate these buildings in 2024,

18   if the regulated rents are not keeping up with

19   expenses. The annual rent increases are vitally

20   important to the stability of the old --

21   (Audience participation.)

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: All right,

23   can we please --

24   MS. KORCHAK: None, never.

25   Not once --

1

2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: -- hear from

3   our speaker.

4   MS. KORCHAK: Not once.

5   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Ma'am, thank

6   you.

7   MS. KORCHAK: 80 years. We

8   have never evicted a tenant. See now they -- I

9   took the bait. I took the bait. I'm not leaving.

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: I know.

11   MS. KORCHAK: Mr. Davidson, I

12   am not leaving and I'm going to call the police if

13   they don't let me speak.

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We need to be

15   able to hear from our speakers. We will not be

16   able to hear from any tenants until we have allowed

17   this speaker to complete her testimony. Thank you.

18   MS. KORCHAK: The annual rent

19   increases are vitally important to the stability of

20   the old rent-stabilized buildings and our financial

21   stability directly impacts the stability of the

22   tenants we house. Thank you.

23   (Audience participation.)

24   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

25   Our next speaker is Marcelo Lopez.

1

2   MR. LOPEZ: Good evening. My

3   name is Marcelo Lopez. I'm a Bronx resident asking

4   --

5   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please let

6   the speaker speak. One moment.

7   MR. LOPEZ: I am a Bronx

8   resident asking for a rent freeze. There have been

9   lots of -- they've presented lots of data that

10   justifies that freeze, but let's talk about

11   actions. This year the legislature passed IAI

12   increases and laws against insurance discrimination

13   that landlords were complaining about. You have

14   already been told of all the programs that exist

15   for landlords to unlock their doors and up their

16   rents during this whole cycle of hearing, and yet

17   nothing was implemented to help renters pay rent.

18   Last year the lobbying group chip NYC, went almost

19   bankrupt trying to eliminate rent stabilization

20   entirely. At a Queen's hearing, there was a

21   landlord who said if they can recover more profits

22   from burning their buildings than rent they would

23   do. So, compare that to the people here who are

24   asking at worst for a minor reduction in what their

25   rents are.

1

2   And as you've seen from the

3   landlords who have spoken here today, their biggest

4   fear, as many of them have clearly articulated, is

5   to become a renter. Think about that. Their

6   biggest fear is the subjugation of us to what they

7   do. And it was owner representative Christina

8   Smyth who said of us last year that beggars can't

9   be choosers, when referring to tenants who have to

10   be subjugated to the corporate landlords. We are

11   not beggars, we are not numbers on an insurance

12   claim, and not any other abstract concept. We are

13   human beings who are paying our rent and deserve to

14   have decent housing fit for the shelter of human

15   beings.

16   How do you expect us to be on

17   the receiving end of this type of disgusting

18   treatment and believe you when you say that you

19   have to raise the rent? How do you justify saving

20   two or three little landlords from what they call

21   their hard-earned investments by drowning the rest

22   of us in poverty?

23   At the Bronx meeting this

24   year, an owner said that the only renters who do

25   not pay rent are those who do not want to. And

1

2   that is the imbalance of power play. There is

3   almost an infinite price that any of us would pay

4   to not be homeless. But in a just society,

5   government exists to stop extortion of the

6   vulnerable. And that is your job. I encourage you

7   to enact a rent freeze or instead, you'll force a

8   rent strike as this unaffordability crisis worsens.

9   (Audience participation.)

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11   MR.LOPEZ: Thank you to the

12   people who are here.

13   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Anne

14   Perryman?

15   MS. PERRYMAN: Yeah.

16   CHAIR DAVIDSON: And while

17   we're waiting, our next three speakers after

18   Paulina Rieloff will be Sharon Canns, Ren Ping Chen

19   and Yung Chen.

20   (Unintelligible cross-talk.).

21   CHAIR DAVIDSON: I'm sorry,

22   MS. PERRYMAN: I think I'm

23   next.

24   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Sorry, Anne

25   Perryman --

1

2   MS. PERRYMAN: Yes, okay.

3   CHAIR DAVIDSON: And then

4   Paulin Rieloff.

5   MS. PERRYMAN: Yes. Yes. Hi.

6   Is this working?

7   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Yes, we can

8   hear you.

9   MS. PERRYMAN: Okay.

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11   MS. PERRYMAN: I'm Anne

12   Perryman, an Upper West Side renter for the past 50

13   years and president of the Tenant Association at

14   Lincoln Towers. I represent the remaining 200

15   rent-stabilized tenants in the Lincoln Towers

16   community.

17   Let me tell you a little about

18   us. For the most part, we are old and we have seen

19   our city through bad times and good. Through the

20   60s, 70s and 80s, we were part of the rebuilding of

21   the Upper West Side. We raised our kids here. We

22   supported our schools, libraries, theaters, and

23   local stores. Over the years, our rents increased

24   on average about 500% since we moved into our

25   apartments. And these days, most of us live on

1

2   fixed incomes. So, we are feeling the RGB rent

3   increases and they hurt. We are fully aware of the

4   -- of an extremely critical problem in New York

5   City. The lack of affordable housing for all, but

6   the very wealthy among us.

7   Another large rent increase

8   for New York City tenants is not the answer to this

9   problem and will only make matters worse.

10   Before I left for this

11   hearing, my neighbor said, "Why bother even talking

12   to them? It's a landlord friendly Eric Adams Rent

13   Guidelines Board. They've already decided what

14   they're going to do".

15   (Audience participation.)

16   MS. PERRYMAN: I hope that's

17   not true. You have the data. Since the 2019 rent

18   laws were passed, the real estate industry has

19   spent almost $14 million lobbying state legislators

20   to water down that legislation. Landlords net

21   operating incomes are up more than 10% from last

22   year. And the distress landlords are claiming has

23   more to do with over-leveraging and the inability

24   of many tenants to pay already high rents. So,

25   I'll just say, surprise us. Do something for the

1

2   rent-stabilized tenants who have contributed so

3   much to this city. Vote for a 0% increase. Better

4   yet, give us a rent rollback. Thank you.

5   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6   (Audience participation.)

7   MS. TEJERA: Hello? Yes, yes,

8   please. Hello. Hello. Hello. Okay. Thank you.

9   Thank you.

10   (Unintelligible cross-talk.)

11   MS. TEJERA: Okay. I'm going

12   try to beat my two minutes. So, first of all, I

13   want to say thank you to the representatives of New

14   York City rent guidelines hearing for giving me

15   this opportunity to express my concerns regarding

16   rent stabilization. Forget my accent please. I am

17   Ms. Paula Tejera, tenant of a rent-stabilized

18   apartment on the Upper West Side. I have a nice

19   apartment, a few steps from Central Park at the

20   cutting edge of Harlem and surrounded by Harlem

21   Renaissance on Manhattan Avenue.

22   I have witnessed and endured

23   years of the scarce maintenance of the streets, the

24   trash on the buildings. Years of broken elevators,

25   the stride and five minute alarms and sometimes

1

2   shootings. I have lived in Manhattan for 65 years

3   and have known the cost of living and how it has

4   changed over the time period in contrast with the

5   stagnation of income.

6   Landlords are claiming that

7   they're losing money as a result of stabilized

8   rent. I believe this is -- to be false. Landlords

9   are not losing money. They're losing to the

10   opportunity of making more. You can't claim you

11   are losing money when you start with one building

12   and you end up with over a dozen. If the argument

13   is that the cost of maintenance is too high to

14   allow for renters like myself, I can say firsthand

15   that the maintenance of these buildings is subpar

16   in comparison to New York City standards. If

17   income seems to be the problem, why are there so

18   many vacant apartments?

19   I have been the victim of

20   fraudulent lawsuits with the intention of evicting

21   me. If it is true that presently I pay less than

22   everybody else, it is also true that I have

23   invested many years. If I were to total my

24   payments in and out of pockets, maintenance and

25   rent from the beginning, I would have covered the

1

2   mortgage of the building already.

3   To those who claim that rent

4   must be increased, otherwise landlords will lose

5   money, I say addressing the issue of vacant

6   apartments is more worth your time, rather than

7   making life harder for renters. Thank you for

8   allowing me to speak my word. Thank you.

9   (Applause.)

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you

11   very much. Thank you. Sharon Canns?

12   MS. CANNS: I'm Sharon Canns.

13   I'm the president of the 50 West 93rd Street Tenant

14   Association. Our building once had 125 apartments

15   for rent-stabilized tenants, and then it's been

16   reduced now to 70. Many tenants have been bought

17   out or they said they just couldn't live in New

18   York and they moved in places like New Jersey and

19   other states that were just less unaffordable. And

20   I have spent 48 years in this neighborhood. I'm

21   born, bred in New York City, but not on this

22   particular neighborhood. I've lived 48 years. I

23   have been a part of many community projects and

24   I've watched the tenants that I work with, doing

25   the same things that I did. And again, it's

1

2   unaffordable. And you have the stats to prove

3   that.

4   I'm requesting that you really

5   consider. Do you really want people who have been

6   the -- built the community that many other people

7   are trying to get into. Are you really ready to

8   throw us out? Thank you.

9   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10   (Applause.)

11   MS. CHEN: My name is Ms.

12   Chen. I'm 76 years old. I've lived in Chinatown

13   for 43 years. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant and I'm

14   a member of Chinatown Tenants Union. I was there

15   when 911 happened. I saw the towers and afterwards

16   I experienced a lot of health issues. I had high

17   blood pressure all from the effects post 911 and so

18   I was forced to retire early. So, that's why my

19   retirement is really low.

20   So, my income every month is

21   only around $700 and my rent has gone up and it's

22   more than that. It's a 100% of my income. It's

23   800 something dollars and I can't afford it on my

24   own.

25   I've applied for so much

1

2   affordable housing and when I finally went, they

3   told me my income wasn't enough. I didn't make

4   enough to be -- to get affordable housing. My

5   income minimum wasn't met. I had to make more than

6     $16,000.

7   Real estate and big landlords

8   have received so much benefits from the

9   governments, right? There have been so much

10   support for them. Where's the support for working

11   class tenants like myself? Where is the support

12   for low income tenants like myself?

13   So many people, we work so

14   hard every day and you know what we do after work?

15   We have to go buy $1 vegetables because we can't

16   afford healthy food. Have you seen inflation?

17   Have you seen the prices? Right? This is what the

18   people are experiencing. They're suffering and

19   real estate is getting bailed out in the city. So

20   please consider our lives as well. Thank you.

21   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

22   (Applause.)

23   CHAIR DAVINSON: Our next

24   speaker is Yun Chen.

25   (Audience participation.).

1

2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We'll

3   continue to call our speakers. Yun Chen. Is Yun

4   Chen still here?

5   MS. LAFRANCE: Am number 48.

6   I'm still here to talk.

7   (Unintelligible cross-talk.)

8   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Sam LaFrance.

9   Thank you.

10   MS. LAFRANCE: Thank you.

11   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please go

12   ahead. Thank you.

13   MS. LAFRANCE: The increase

14   that is being considered by the Board is obscene.

15   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Hold on one

16   second.

17   (Unintelligible cross-talk.)

18   MS. LAFRANCE: Is it on?

19   Okay. What about now? Okay. The increase that is

20   being considered by the Board is obscene. I think

21   I speak for most tenants when I say that despite

22   working my ass off this year, I did not receive a

23   6.5 percent raise from my employer. After years of

24   living in unmaintained buildings with unresponsive

25   landlords, fearful each year that I would be pushed

1

2   out by a rent hike, I finally feel a sense of

3   security in my stabilized unit. But I am offended

4   by the idea that landlords need more of my

5   paycheck, which is worth less and less each day.

6   What tenants are asking for in

7   a rollback is not radical, but simply recognition

8   that the city is becoming more and more difficult

9   to afford for the people who actually do the work

10   to keep the lights on. I urge you to reject the

11   exorbitant hike that has been proposed and to

12   protect tenants from vampiric greed. Thank you.

13   (Applause.)

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15   Our next three speakers would be Marina Metalios,

16   Kenton Ngo, and Eugenie Dubna. Our next three

17   after that would be Stephen Durham, Jenny Laurie,

18   and Kenny Schaefer. Sorry.

19   MR. NGO: Hello, my name --

20   hello, my name is Kenny Ngo. I am a Woodside

21   resident of Woodside Queens. I am here today

22   because for the first time in my life having

23   secured a rent-stabilized apartment, I no longer

24   fear in annual 10, 12, 15% rent increase, which I

25   have personally faced most years of my working

1

2   life.

3   So, the system that you are

4   here as guardians of is something that I-- I'm

5   grateful to have. It's something that separates

6   the city of New York from other cities where

7   there's no moderating force on the profit -- on the

8   landlord's profits that is dedicated to the

9   interest of the city. Your decisions here are the

10   only thing keeping millions of New Yorkers from

11   having to face those increases, your decisions here

12   are the only thing keeping the neighborhoods that

13   make New York unique, that draw tours from around

14   the world that only exists in this city alive for

15   the next generation.

16   So, I'd like to repeat what

17   everyone else said. I'm not going to repeat it

18   exactly, but I would agree that a rent freeze would

19   be the ideal outcome or at least somewhere lower in

20   the raise that you're considering.

21   I'll add three more points on

22   top of what everyone else has said before. First,

23   the biggest driver of inflation in the United

24   States right now is housing costs. You are not

25   driven by inflation, you have the chance, you are

1

2   holding the keys, you have the chance to bring

3   inflation down to benefit the whole city, right?

4   Let's talk about maintenance costs for landlords,

5   where are your maintenance folks living? Right?

6   Where are the restaurant, where are the restaurant

7   workers that you patronize? Where are they living?

8   If their rent goes up, your costs also go up.

9   Second, there is -- I

10   acknowledge for the landlords that there is a

11   national insurance crisis that is the largest

12   component of increase in your own reports but I --

13   I beg you not to take this out in tenants. This is

14   a political problem that you need to solve, you

15   don't have to take it out on the people of the city

16   of New York. Your job here is to balance the

17   interests of both the landlords and the city. And

18   finally, you know, thank you. I speak not just on

19   behalf of my behalf, but on the lower income folks

20   here. Please, please, please consider a lower

21   increase or freeze. Thank you.

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank You.

23   Steven Durham? Jenny Laurie? Kenny Schafer?

24   Our next three would be Max

25   Keisling (phonetic), Fern Purnell, Tim Boyd.

1

2   MS. PURNELL: Good evening.

3   My name is Fern Purnell, I've been a resident with

4   302 West 12th Street, within the last 34 years.

5   I'm sorry -- even though I'm under rent-stabilized

6   -- Yes, I'm doing that, thank you. Even though I'm

7   living under rent stabilization watching other

8   people coming under market prices and dealing with

9   deterioration of the conditions of our buildings

10   and no super on site, which seems to be a big

11   problem. We don't get proper responses, we are

12   told to report all conditions to 311 without proper

13   recourse even with court orders.

14   There has been citywide issues

15   with people losing our homes as well as lives with

16   the faulty buildings that have recently been

17   happening. This seems to be the only time

18   landlords show any concern. It's not so much about

19   the tenants, it's about the concern of major

20   lawsuits they are about to receive. Why as tenants

21   should we be liable for paying rent with continuous

22   hikes with not being responsible for improper

23   responses and repair? I believe that we deserve a

24   rent decrease, if not a rent freeze. Thank you.

25   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

1

2   Max Keesling (phonetic). Tim? Okay, thank you.

3   Tim Boyd. That's him (sic)

4   MS. BOYD: That's me.

5   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Oh, Tim,

6   please go ahead.

7   MS. BOYD: Okay.

8   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

9   MS. BOYD: Okay.

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Just want to

11   make sure we didn't miss something.

12   MS. BOYD: Okay.

13   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14   MS. BOYD: Hi. Good -- good

15   -- Good evening everyone. My name is Tim Boyd and

16   I live at 302 West 112th Street in Harlem. I'm

17   here today because I'm -- there's a couple of

18   issues in my building that I'd like to be

19   addressed. The first one is we already -- we pay

20   so much money in rent that when they do the jobs,

21   it's a shabby job. So, I feel that what is the

22   sense of paying rent for the buildings if the

23   buildings are going to continue to have shabby work

24   done?

25   Second, there's a scaffolding

1

2   up in Harlem, It's been up there for like 20 plus

3   years, and I feel that it needs to be taken down

4   because it seems like the landlord doesn't want to

5   pay the companies that put these -- the scaffolding

6   up, claiming that the building needs to be worked

7   on but they've been doing that for like 20 plus

8   years. It was taken down once and it was put right

9   back up. So that defeats the purpose of claiming

10   the building needs to be fixed. And we have a

11   super that just shows up willy-nilly, what's the

12   sense of having supers if they're just going to

13   show up willy-nilly but they want you to leave your

14   keys so they can gain entry into your apartment and

15   we know what happens when we leave our keys with

16   these supers. Things start disappearing, but

17   managements don't want to take full responsibility.

18   And lastly, I feel that we as

19   New York City residents deserve a rent rollback

20   because like I said, what essence of paying for

21   work if it's going to be shady? Thank you.

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

23   Micah Lasher(ph)? Clara Alcove(ph.)? Maria

24   Pena(ph)? Sarah Batchu? Alexandra Rodriguez? Rosa

25   Basquez (ph)?

1

2   MS. BATCHU: Good evening. My

3   name is Sarah Batchu and I am a rent-stabilized

4   tenant in East Village. I also on my day job

5   oversee eviction prevention services at 5th Avenue

6   Committee in Brooklyn and I'm a candidate for city

7   council in district 2 Downtown.

8   All of these experiences give

9   me a unique insight into what tenants are going

10   through right now. In 2022, I faced it myself. I

11   had a significant rent increase of $400 in a market

12   rate unit and was facing the end of a relationship

13   that put me in an unexpected apartment search. And

14   as I looked around at what was on the market, $400

15   didn't seem like so much. And I was lucky enough

16   to find a rent-stabilized unit, the first that I've

17   ever lived in here in New York, just four blocks

18   away from where I had been living. It wasn't

19   cheap, but it was within my budget.

20   When I attempted to negotiate

21   the rent down, the broker incorrectly assured me

22   it's rent-stabilized so it won't go up.

23   Unfortunately, that's not the reality we've been

24   dealing with since I've been living in a

25   rent-stabilized unit. Rent stabilized apartments

1

2   ensure community stability and diversity, which

3   ultimately drives our city's economic growth.

4   Whether a tenant is a social service worker like

5   me, or a painter like my neighbor, or a service

6   worker in the food service industry, like many of

7   the tenants that I work with on a daily basis,

8   having a rent-stabilized apartment allows each of

9   us to set down roots without fear of displacement.

10   With wages growing much lower

11   than rents as everyone's attested to, and the lower

12   median incomes amongst rent-stabilized tenants,

13   these are the folks who are least able to weather

14   the increases that we're talking about this year.

15   Furthermore, we all know that finding a new home

16   right now is nearly impossible with where vacancy

17   rates are, especially in rent-stabilized units

18   where they're at one percent currently.

19   As someone in the housing

20   field, I understand the challenges that landlords

21   face, including the rising cost of insurance and

22   capital needs. However, as others have spoken to

23   net operating income for buildings that are

24   rent-stabilized has increased significantly. And

25   landlords not seeing these gains should take

1

2   advantage of government programs and not tenants.

3   I want to thank you so much

4   for the opportunity to speak, and again I urge the

5   Board do not pass the bill onto tenants.

6   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7   Our next three speakers are Alice Sutter, Madeline

8   Mack, and Gustavo Zuniga.

9   MS. SUTTER: Hello. Thank you

10   for this opportunity to speak. I make 80K a year

11   and which is four times the -- my monthly rent for

12   my stabilized apartment, It's -- I pay about $2,000

13   a month, I've been in that lease for only four

14   months now and similar to the last speaker. I

15   thought that I could afford it because I thought I

16   was finally getting into a space that I could grow

17   into and then I could be in -- sorry, I'll get

18   emotional but I'll try and speak through it.

19   Anyway, so I have a bachelor's

20   degree, I'm a young professional. I actually have

21   like upward mobility in my career like three years

22   ago I was making 70K and at that income, there's

23   lots of people here that are in far worse positions

24   than I am, sorry, but what I want to say is that as

25   a young professional, as a millennial, I -- as you

1

2   could say, I am even struggling.

3   So, after a 80K after tax is

4   about $5,000 a month after you take my rent out,

5   I'm dealing with 3000 a month and then I have -- I

6   don't get covered by medical insurance and then the

7   cost of medication, everything else I'm dealing

8   with like 1500 to spend on utilities,

9   subscriptions, everything else that I need to do my

10   work. I'm making 80K a year and I've been building

11   to -- I've been working since I was 13, I think.

12   I've been building towards this career, I have

13   upward mobility. I finally have a place that I can

14   settle into and I can hopefully build from and

15   that's just not the case. If these rent increases

16   come through, I'm not going be able to afford to

17   live here, and I don't have the job that is in like

18   the country. I live in the city because my

19   industry is in the city. I don't have another

20   option. My -- I will do what my sister has done

21   and I'm going to move in back with my mother in a

22   one bedroom studio that my sister and my mother

23   share.

24   I come from privilege; I'm a

25   white woman, I know I have an accent but I am

1

2   American I was born here, and yet I am feeling it.

3   So if I'm feeling it, the people that are mothers,

4   the people that are students, the people that are

5   trying to grow, you know, I've had to come to the

6   conclusion that I'm not going to be able to afford

7   to have kids in this lifetime. I'm never going to

8   own a house and yet I've been working towards this

9   my whole life. So thank you.

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11   MR.ZUNIGA: Good evening, my

12   name is Gustavo Zuniga, and I'm speaking to you

13   guys today in solidarity with all the great and

14   hardworking people of my neighborhood of Hell's

15   Kitchen, and across the city to say no to the

16   proposed rent hikes and yes to a rent rollback.

17   I grew up in Hell's Kitchen

18   for my entire life, it's somewhere I never want to

19   leave, but with the rent hikes, I don't know if

20   I'll ever be able to live there once I get an

21   apartment for myself. Do we want criminal

22   landlords to get a raise while ignoring the

23   dilapidated State? Sorry, are many of their

24   buildings putting all of us in danger possibly

25   costing their lives? No. Do we as tenants want to

1

2   continue to struggle paying the massive rent

3   prices, having to work multiple jobs or having to

4   use a large percent of our monthly wage to pay the

5   rent? No.

6   And what do us tenants do with

7   the rent increase being priced out of the

8   neighborhoods that we grew up and raised our

9   families in to make room for new wealthy

10   professionals who are here only to make money and

11   not be a steward of the city? These rent increases

12   will only exacerbate the damage and gentrification

13   of Delta (sic) to our communities in the last 30

14   years. You know, I want to believe that everybody

15   here knows how gentrification has negatively

16   affected their -- our neighborhoods. It's also

17   just very fitting that this meeting is held on the

18   site of old San Juan Hill, a vibrant Puerto Rico

19   and African American neighborhood destroyed by

20   urban renewal of the 1960s.

21   If we don't fight for a rent

22   and rollback as tenants will inevitably be priced

23   out making room for -- making our neighborhoods not

24   a place for working class New Yorkers who help

25   build this city to live and raise their families.

1

2   But for transplants who use our neighborhoods to

3   accrue wealth, add nothing to the community and

4   abandon it once their needs of living in New York

5   City have gone.

6   I know what your Board's

7   decision is going to most likely be, and the

8   tenants of Hell's Kitchen, and you saw everybody

9   here before they left that we're organizing and

10   it's only going to get stronger. We are sick of

11   these landlords and the rent prices we will take

12   our neighbor hoods backed (foreign language).

13   Thank you.

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15   Our next, our next three speakers are Bonita Monet

16   Haskins (phonetic), Sean Connolly, Pamela Grace.

17   Thank you.

18   MS. GRACE: Good evening. I'm

19   Pamela Grace, and I'm a senior. Fortunately, I

20   live in Midtown Manhattan and I have a

21   rent-stabilized apartment, but I'm one of the one

22   -- I'm one of the 3.6 million seniors who live in

23   the five boroughs. According to AARP, that number

24   has grown over 36% over the last 10 years.

25   So, I want to tell you because

1

2 I'm a senior, I want to tell you what it's like for

3 in healthcare costs for me. I pay -- I have

4 numbers because I heard you guys like numbers. I

5 pay $150 a month, Medicare part B, that pays for

6 doctor's visits. I pay another $93 a month for

7 prescription drugs, I pay another $361 that's for

8 part F for specialists; that comes out to $604 a

9 month. My rent's only 700, so that's like another

10 rent payment.

11   But that's not all, you see

12 prescription drugs have a $545 deductible per year.

13 But if you have a serious illness, its -- it goes

14 up to $8,000 a year for catastrophic illnesses for

15 prescription drugs, that means if I need a

16 transplant, I'll get -- I won't even be put on the

17 list unless I come up with my $8,000 check, that is

18 a year's rent. So, I'm being forced into paying,

19 either, do I just kill myself or do I pay the

20 landlord? That's what it's come down to.

21   Now, just yesterday I got a

22 card in the mail from AARP about the mayor's

23 proposed decrease in the senior services in New

24 York. The Department of Aging, their budget is

25 only point five percent of the budget. However,

1

2   the increases he wants to decrease the number of

3   senior centers by 60. Now, those senior centers

4   are important for seniors because they provide

5   lunch every day. So what they're effect doing is

6   making seniors even more food insecure. So I'm

7   asking you to reconsider a rent increase because of

8   the deleterious effect, especially on seniors.

9   Thank you.

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you so

11   much. Thank you. Regina Karp.

12   MS. KARP: I'm Regina Karp.

13   I'm an Upper West Sider for 55 years in a rent

14   control department. I'm a retired New York City

15   public school teacher. Right now, my pension does

16   not cover my rent. My rent is more than 50% of my

17   income. Inadvertently, I help my landlord. I'm

18   here for a rollback forget about the flat but

19   inadvertently, I helped my landlord because of all

20   the pro bono work I've done for the city, the

21   landlord who said that people don't work. Not only

22   did I work as a public school teacher, I did hours

23   and hours of pro bono work at the Lighthouse as

24   parents associations, block associations, and I did

25   so much wonderful work that my neighborhood is so

1

2 -- you know, prosperous now, I'm sorry I did all

3 the pro bono work.

4   Not only did the volunteer

5 work pro bono, but even my teaching career, I

6 started at $4,500 a year and then for 15 years, the

7 New York City Board of Education didn't bother to

8 appoint art and music teachers, so I was at a

9 beginner teaching salary for 15 years. So, it's

10 really ironic that working for the city that I

11 love, I can't really afford to live here unless

12 possibly I have a -- you know, a roommate, that's

13 all I have to say.

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

15 Our next three speakers are Christopher Teda,

16 Patricia Jewett, and Crystal Parrish.

17   Ms. Jewett?

18   MS. JEWETT: Good evening.

19 The name is Patricia Jewett and I'm here to remind

20 you guys that many of us who live in New York City

21 thought that we hit the lotto when we moved into

22 rent stabilization. But there's a catch and it's a

23 catch that you on the Board need to understand,

24 remember and recognize. Every time the landlord

25 does any kind of renovation, at MCI, a (inaudible),

1

2   or whatever acronym they use, it devastates us.

3   Everyone in my building went

4   through this massive renovation and our rent went

5   up $300 a month. That's right, $300 a month. HPD

6   came and met with us and told the tenants "we

7   didn't want to hurt you, that's why we opened up an

8   opportunity for you to get section eight. But

9   because of the loans that the landlord took out

10   that you didn't have any input in, we were able to

11   restructure your rent. So, now your rent went up

12   $300 a month."

13   Now, $300 a month on top of

14   whatever you decide to do is devastating. Many

15   families, many parents are forced to choose between

16   paying the rent, providing food, putting clothes on

17   a bag, buying a pair of sneakers; that is not what

18   this is supposed to be about. I am a pensioner, I

19   don't get to work overtime, I got to live within my

20   means, which I cannot do.

21   When the landlord gets a loan

22   and the RGB decides to put something on top of

23   that, we are struggling. Everyone that is still in

24   this room and those who are chanting out in the

25   hallway, we are struggling. We are the backbone of

1

2   the city. I worked 32 years for transit. I

3   retired with a pension and I thought I would not

4   have to worry that I would have to be able to smell

5   the roses, right? No, I'm not. I'm here in front

6   of you because not that long ago I was in housing

7   court.

8   Let me tell you something, I

9   wasn't in housing court because I'm not paying my

10   rent. I'm in housing court because they want you

11   to recertify. So you work hard, you get a pension

12   and they want all your business --

13   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

14   MS.JEWETT: -- why did I get a

15   job? Why did I get a pension? To now have to

16   divulge everything so they can charge me more and

17   more and more.

18   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank You

19   ma'am. Thank you.

20   MS.JEWETT: You really need to

21   think about that when we chant, we want to rent

22   roll back. It's not just because we like that

23   song. It's because we need a break. Thank you.

24   (Applause.)

25   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank You.

1

2   We are going to hear from one or two more speakers

3   and then we're going to take a brief break. Just a

4   very brief break and we'll be right back.

5   Hi, Crystal Parrish?

6   MS. PARRISH: Yes.

7   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8   MS. CPARRISH: Good afternoon.

9   My name is Crystal Parrish, I live at 225 West

10   123rd Street, in this Francis houses, the landlord

11   is Joseph Madoff. We are having a lot of issues

12   there where elevator sometimes is actually broken,

13   sometimes we don't have heat, sometimes we don't

14   even have hot water, and we always calling the HPD

15   or calling management and management is harassing

16   the tenants because we are asking what we actually

17   paying for in our rent.

18   So, it's not right for us to

19   pay more rent if things that needs to be done in

20   our apartments that most of our tenants are having

21   mold inside of their apartments. A lot of senior

22   citizens, it's a lot of people who are disabled and

23   live in my apartment building as well as a lot of

24   people there who has big families.

25   How are we going to actually

1

2   take care of our homes if we would not have one?

3   If we go with this rent increase, we cannot afford

4   this in increase. The word of God says to love the

5   Lord with all your hearts, your soul, your mind

6   with all your mind, with all your strengths. Love

7   thy neighbor as thyself; these are my neighbors,

8   stays right here. These are my neighbors. We are

9   all going through and we are all struggling. You

10   are even my neighbors. We have to start thinking

11   about each other. Have a heart for each one of us

12   because a lot of us, if this comes forward, we are

13   not going to have anywhere to live. We cannot

14   afford to be evicted. So we are asking you to

15   please place in your heart to change it. That

16   there be no rent increase, please. Thank you.

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

18   We're going to take a very brief break now and

19   we'll be right back.

20   THE INTERPRETER: (Foreign

21   language)

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: And one

23   reminder as well, if you are here to speak, make

24   sure that you have signed up at the front desk in

25   the hall outside.

1

2   THE INTERPRETER: (Foreign

3   language)

4   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank You.

5   (A recess was taken.)

6   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We're going

7   to -- we're going to get started again. But just

8   to remind everyone, if you want to speak this

9   evening, make sure that you've checked in at the

10   registration desk in the hall by 8:00 p.m. We will

11   continue to take speak up speakers until 8:00 p.m.

12   THE INTERPRETER: (Foreign

13   language). Gracias.

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Gracias,

15   thank you. Our next three speakers are Rosa

16   Jaquez, and we'll need a translator.

17   THE INTERPRETER: Good

18   evening. My name is Rosa Jaquez and I come here

19   representing hundreds and hundreds of families that

20   live in Washington Heights and I represent the

21   tenant association for Seaman Avenue. I thank you

22   so very much for this hearing in Manhattan. Last

23   year unfortunately, we needed to go to the Bronx.

24   Thank you so much for having us. I am very

25   committed to tenant rights including my own.

1

2   I'm very worried with what I

3   am seeing happening in the city. In fact, I'm

4   actually fearful of it just because I know that

5   this is definitely not a coincidence that every

6   single year we have -- we face the same struggles

7   and we the tenants need to do this every year.

8   Owners don't even respect

9   Court orders that come from housing court. And

10   that's actually scary because they don't even

11   represent their own benefits. Why is it that they

12   don't follow through on leases? Why is it that

13   they don't offer us heat when we need it? Why do

14   we have molds in our apartments, including my own?

15   Why do we have lead vermin (unintelligible)? What

16   is this due to? And I can't believe that there's

17   no consequence to this. I follow the laws, why

18   don't they follow the laws? And if we call HPD,

19   it's a joke at this point. They don't even take

20   into account our needs, who is it that we're going

21   to address?

22   Where do you want to move us

23   to, for God's sake? Families, women, children, the

24   working class and the middle class, what's going to

25   happen in the city of New York, to all of us? Who

1

2   represents us? Who represents us in the city?

3   So, I ask you from the bottom

4   of my heart, this is why I chose to speak in my

5   native language, please have pity on us, we are all

6   human beings. None of the tenants that are here

7   that come here owe rent; we pay our rent. I

8   actually have a rent reduction that was ordered by

9   a housing court, and my landlord doesn't want to

10   accept this, he keeps sending me notices saying

11   that I am delinquent on my payments and calls me so

12   he can charge me for late fees that are not late

13   fees, because I pay everything on time, I send it

14   to his office. He, of course, doesn't even look at

15   the date that I post the mail, the fact that it has

16   the mail inside or the rent in type, and he charges

17   me a late fee. So, what is it that we can do in

18   the city? So, please God bless you and again, from

19   the bottom of my heart I ask you for this. Thank

20   you so very much.

21   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Ceasar

22   Martinez (phonetic)? Gordon Lee?

23   MR. LEE: Goodnight.

24   Goodnight, people. I am from Brooklyn Kings

25   County. I'm Gordon Lee from Kings Brooklyn County,

1

2   New York City. It is where I live, I was one of

3   the children who was born when the country's

4   protesting President Nixon, June 23rd of 1973. I

5   protested President Nixon on my birthday as well as

6   Gerald Ford. I came here in 1977 when he elected

7   James Carter, and I grew up here under the Reagan

8   presidency. Now I am -- as you know, I'm from --

9   and I'm from all groups with all groups, I'm a

10   member of all groups. I want to be member of all

11   groups.

12   I also am here because I am

13   taking great concern with the attempt to raise

14   rent. I also take outrageous issue with the Board

15   members and Mayor Adams, their attempt to raise

16   rent. And not only, we're not getting any service,

17   we're getting disservice. And I want to continue

18   with a brief reminder, if you don't think of us

19   tenants and what we said, you still have to roll

20   rent back and freeze it to honor our men in

21   uniform, our first responders, troops, and veterans

22   who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

23   These -- the next three months is going to be

24   Memorial Day. In three months it's going to be

25   September 11th, and again, we have to, we still

1

2   have to freeze rent and roll it back to honor our

3   men in uniform, who make the ultimate -- ultimate

4   sacrifice for our country. And as you know, one of

5   our concerns is, you know --

6   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

7   MR. LEE: All right, thank

8   you. Goodnight.

9   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10 Our next -- thank you. Our next three speakers are

11 Julie Matos. Yes. Julie Matos, Maira Duarte,

12 Debra Robles, and Tamika Mapp.

13   MS. MATOS: Hello. Thank you

14 for having this -- well, I really can't -- I'm high

15 risk but, thank you for having -- thank you for --

16 can everyone hear me? Thank you for having this

17 meeting, I think it's incredibly important. I live

18 in a rent-stabilized apartment, but my rent is not

19 cheap. My -- I'm a third generation downtown from

20 hardworking people. I moved into my apartment 40

21 years ago to a family-owned a small walk-up

22 tenement and they were great because they fixed and

23 they loved their building.

24   Well, not unlike the other

25 eighty nine percent of the United States that was

1

2   sold in 2021 due to rent arrears and people being

3   evicted, eighty nine percent of real estate is now

4   owned by private equity, including my little dumpy

5   building that's dirty and falling apart. So, we

6   don't have hot heat and hot water in the winter,

7   and then when the weather gets warm, the heat gets

8   jacked up. We don't have a super. We have a

9   management company. I write from one -- my rent to

10   a -- my address is the LLC and then I mail it to

11   another LLC, which then goes to another LLC. Of

12   course, I've done my own little investigation, so I

13   have figured out who they are; not different than

14   Blackstone, big petroleum companies. So I live in

15   NoHo. When I moved there, no one wanted to live

16   there.

17   I endured rats, ceilings

18   falling down. It's been raining in my kitchen now

19   for one year. I put a lot of money into my

20   apartment. I put in a new kitchen, I put in a new

21   bathroom because I worked with my landlord, my

22   previous landlord. I'm sorry I only have seven

23   seconds left but if -- please give a little bit

24   more time.

25   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

1

2   MS. MATOS: I just -- so many

3   people left so we have it. This is not only

4   happening to me, it's happening to everyone.

5   Private equity just doesn't care and I'm glad that

6   that landlord was here so I could actually hear him

7   say, F you, F you, F you over and over and over

8   again to people who -- that's exactly how they feel

9   about them.

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you,

11   ma'am.

12   MS. MATOS: And it is so

13   insulting, I really feel like crying to hear

14   someone like that because that's exactly what they

15   say to me on a daily basis. I've been flooded 10

16   times, I've had gas leaks --

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We have a

18   number of speakers. I really appreciate it.

19   MS. MATOS: -- and --

20   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

21   MS. MATOS: -- that's going

22   around and for a rent increase on that shame.

23   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24   Maira Duarte. Thank you.

25   MS. DUARTE: Hello. Mm-Hmm

1

2   (affirmative). My name is Maira Duarte. I live

3   with my 2-year-old daughter and my partner in a

4   small one bedroom apartment in the lower East side.

5   As our child grow -- I think she's good. As our

6   child grow up, we won't be able to fit there much

7   longer. Our hope is to maybe save some money and

8   put down a payment to buy something or buy -- or

9   find another rent-stabilized apartment with a --

10   with another bedroom so that we can live with some

11   dignity. But if the rent keeps getting higher and

12   the number of stabilized rent units keeps

13   shrinking, we don't see that that can be a

14   possibility. I'm here to tell you in person that I

15   can't sleep at night thinking about that.

16   I don't understand this

17   process. You have already passed considerable

18   increases to our rents last year. We are already

19   paying more each time we sign a new lease.

20   For example, if I was paying

21   1500 in 2023, and I signed a two year lease with

22   the increases you approved, I paid around $40 more

23   per month the first year and then on the second

24   year, $90 more. Adding up those increases, it

25   comes up to around $1,500 the landlord has received

1

2   to pay for any repairs. I think that should cover

3   it considering they haven't fixed anything and that

4   they have already kicked out several of the older

5   tenants in my building and are renting those units

6   at market price, which are about three times the

7   rent I pay.

8   Now you want another increase

9   on that up to 6.5 percent that would mean I would

10   be paying around 20 -- around $200 more on my

11   original rent. Each year we have to meet here to

12   make you understand that those increases do not

13   reflect our ability to pay.

14   Think about it for a moment if

15   this was a separate bill; $200 a month or 300, 500

16   or however people are paying, where is that money

17   going to come from? I work as an arts educator in

18   public schools, the mayor has been slashing the

19   budgets for education, the arts public libraries et

20   cetera. I think the many -- I think of the many

21   employees that are not seeing a $200 bonus on their

22   checks, but who are actually losing work since the

23   pandemic and also since having to care for my

24   child, I have been banking less money each year not

25   more. You can't say that about the real estate

1

2   business.

3   I just want to say I hope you

4   too can't sleep at night thinking of my family and

5   many others who are struggling to keep a roof over

6   their heads and I hope you do the right thing and

7   pass at the very least, a zero percent increase or

8   a rent rollback. Thank you so much.

9   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10   Debra Robles?

11   MS. ROBLES: Good evening, my

12   esteemed colleagues in New York City. My name is

13   Deborah Robles. I am 66 years old, live in East

14   Harlem, the 68th 28th assembly district. I just

15   want to say that in East Harlem, we are suffering

16   dramatically supposed rent-stabilized, affordable

17   housing, all this stuff does not pertain to

18   seniors. We have housing crisis, the landlords who

19   harass tenants who some of them have section eight,

20   they will not send in paperwork so people can lose

21   their section eight and also then destabilize our

22   apartments. This is disgusting.

23   My parents came here in the

24   20's. That building is from 1920, which they are

25   several in East Harlem and now they're trying to

1

2   destabilize as we know. This generation has not

3   helped us at all to keep our homes number one and

4   our generation; my daughter sits here in this room.

5   What do you expect? We built this

6   (unintelligible).

7   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you

8   ma'am.

9   MS. ROBLES: So, we put

10 ourselves in hands every year coming.

11   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you

12 ma'am.

13   MS. ROBLES: Many elderly and

14 New Yorkers this (unintelligible). Thank you.

15   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you,

16 ma'am. Thank you. Our next three speakers are

17 Tamika Mapp, Pilar DeJesus, and Maria Lucero

18 (Phonetic). Okay.

19   MS. MAPP: Hello. Okay, thank

20 you. Hi, thank you for having me. My name is

21 Tamika Mapp, I'm a district leader for the 68th

22 Assembly District Part D and the state committee

23 woman for the 68th Assembly District as well as a

24 state committee -- state assembly candidate for the

25 68th Assembly District. I'm here on behalf of the

1

2   tenants who have lived over in our district for

3   over 30 years. The rent-stabilized apartments are

4   vital, align them to grow and age in their homes

5   and spend time with their families and focus on

6   their health.

7   Since the 2019, rent laws real

8   estate lobbyists has spent -- over $13 million

9   trying to undermine stable affordable housing.

10   While they have funds lobbying, they neglected

11   essential repairs in the buildings in East Harlem.

12   Despite their complaints,

13   landlords are not suffering the net income raise

14   over ten percent over the previous year, marking

15   the fourth highest increase in the past 32 years,

16   but yet they demand more. Including they get a

17   ERAP and telling their tenants they didn't get

18   ERAP. So the tenants are actually double paying

19   their rent.

20   The distressed landlords claim

21   in due to their over ledger and tenants inability

22   to pay already high rents, raising rents further

23   increases this issue added to tenant financial

24   strain and removing accountability for bad

25   investments. This is not the purpose of the Rent

1

2   Guidelines Board. The purpose of the Rent

3   Guidelines Board is to protect tenants. Currently

4   tenants paying over -- almost fifty percent of

5   their income in rent and unstable burden for them

6   and for New York City. Over the past years their

7   rent increase over $500, yet essential repairs like

8   fixing, building entrances, providing monthly pest

9   controls, having wires exposing their bathrooms,

10   not able to brush their teeth in their bathrooms or

11   take a shower and addressing leaks, it remains

12   still undone. Each of you on the Rent Guideline

13   Board members hold the fate of work in New Yorkers

14   in your hands. These New Yorkers are the real

15   engine of our city; they need relief, they need a

16   rent rollback, and the New York City needs a rent

17   rollback now.

18   (Applause.)

19   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

20   Pilar DeJesus?

21   MS. JESUS: Hi. I just want

22   to just say ahead of time and you know, all

23   apologies to everyone who is going to speak. I'm

24   going to probably go over my minutes just by a few.

25   I'll do my best to keep it as short as possible,

1

2   but there's just so much to talk about. I'm going

3   to stick to -- you know, information, data, you

4   know, business.

5   So one of the points I want to

6   make -- and Christina, good to see you again, folks

7   who don't know, Christina is working with one of

8   the worst landlords in New York City, the Ink

9   Property Group and I've done a little

10   investigation, Robert, so are you. So for-- and if

11   you don't know about Ink, Ink was sued by the

12   attorney general for the harassment that they have

13   done to tenants by illegal buyouts when it comes to

14   repair condition, all these things and then they're

15   always talking about broke like even the landlord

16   came the other day; it was like, "Oh, we're broke",

17   but then purchased the building for $2.6 million

18   two weeks ago.

19   So, one of the points I want

20   to make and aligned with what has been said here

21   that the RGB feels like a sham. And I -- you know,

22   for the landlord reps, I just like DMX, it says, I

23   expect the landlord reps to just advocate for their

24   clients. I mean, they're working with people who

25   are like being sued by the attorney general. So,

1

2   that says enough, but I think I want to

3   specifically if-- I want to focus on your five

4   public members because what you're acting as for

5   me, now given doing this work for the last 10 years

6   and now looking at all the data for the last 30

7   plus years going back to 1969, we have given the

8   landlords over 200% of increases; that's wild to

9   me. I don't know any other business that you can

10   go and be like, "Hey, I'm not profiting enough. So

11   give me money, New York City elected official,

12   agencies"? How many businesses do we know, that

13   you can go and get some money and more increases,

14   if the landlords aren't profiting?

15   Again, I think, you know, the

16   Ink portfolio; they have roughly -- when you look

17   up the numbers again, they have a whole bunch of

18   owners. It's roughly about 9,000 buildings, right?

19   So, if you got 9, 000 buildings, if you do the math

20   on the units, you have to do a lot of math and a

21   lot of research. I'm going to get there. We're

22   talking about millions of dollars in increase.

23   Tenants are not your investors. RGB, you're not

24   here to provide investment to the landlords. The

25   landlords, the real estate industry is a business.

1

2   Landlords, if you're not making money, then

3   consider going into a new business. This is not

4   the business for you. It's pretty obvious because

5   they can't follow the law.

6   If the Attorney General is

7   suing the people that you have given over 200% of

8   the increase, your job is to adjust and all you

9   have done is increased. You're literally making

10   profit for the landlord. So it's the fact that the

11   five public members, mostly you're a shame. You're

12   a shame. And I'm curious if we could really do the

13   research on opening the books and see how you all

14   getting money in this. Maybe you got a little land

15   you're trying to get help from. I just want to

16   say, stop treating the tenants as if they're your

17   business investors. They're not. You're supposed

18   to be providing them shelter and habitable

19   conditions, not rats running around.

20   Christina, we saw the rats in

21   the yard. You know those buildings, they're

22   keeping vacant and they're not paying taxes because

23   if you're not making money on vacant units, you're

24   not paying taxes. So they're getting tax breaks

25   and millions of dollars.

1

2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you for

3 your testimony. Thank you.

4   (Audience participation.)

5   CHAIR DAVIDSON: There's two

6 more announcements. Just a reminder that sign-ups

7 to speak will close at 8:00 p.m. And remember, we

8 do have a number of people still here to speak. So

9 please, please keep to your two minutes. Thank you

10 so much. Maria Lucera? Modesta Chong King? Carl

11 Edward Curry? Please.

12   And after Mr. Curry, we have

13 Mary Lee Barnes, Jennifer Almanza, and Mary

14 Rodriguez.

15   MR. CURRY: Good evening,

16 everyone. This is my first time attending a board

17 meeting such as this. As I watch everyone interact

18 with one another, the thing that echoes -- screams

19 to me is that something is not working. We're not

20 listening to each other. The tenants, the

21 landlords, RGB, something is not working. And it

22 has to work, because we all need each other.

23   And I've been living in the

24 building that I live in now for 31 years. When I

25 first moved into the apartment, two days later, my

1

2 apartment was broken into. I called the police.

3 The police, when they come to the apartment, they

4 asked me -- they said "Did you tell anyone about

5 the robbery?" I was like, "No, I didn't." He

6 asked me again, "Are you sure? Did you tell anyone

7 about your apartment being broken into?" And I

8 said, "No." I said, "Why are you asking this?"

9 And he told me -- he says (Sic), because when I got

10 out of the car, the super asked, "Where was that --

11 where was it going?" He says, "Are you going to

12 apartment number 2J?" And he said, "Yes." And he

13 said, "It had to be the super who broke into your

14 apartment."

15   My apartment in the last few

16 years, between 2022 and now, has been broken into

17 over 30 to 40 times.

18   (Audience participation.)

19   MR. CURRY: I have made

20 complaints to my landlord, and in retaliation,

21 cameras have been placed in my apartment. My

22 apartment has been broken into -- the police have

23 finally given me a detective to work with.

24 Something is not working, and I think things have

25 to be done a little bit better. Thank you.

1

2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3   (Audience participation.)

4   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Mary Lee

5   Barnes.

6   MS. BARNES: Hi, good evening.

7   And thank you for listening to me on behalf of the

8   New York City rent stabilized folks. I am retired

9   after 40 years working in the field of mental

10   health and addiction services. I didn't make much

11   when I first started here. When I came to New York

12   to finish my education, I stayed here. And thank

13   God I had a rent-stabilized apartment eventually,

14   because I made no money in social services, but

15   because of the rent stabilization law and the

16   apartments I worked here for over 40 years; 28 of

17   them for New York City Health and Hospital

18   Corporation.

19   Now, for the last 15, 20

20   years, I think this building that I live in, in

21   Greenwich Village, which seems to be very

22   fashionable now, has been taken over by

23   corporations. They tried to get us out. They

24   harassed us. They continue to harass us. We still

25   live within an LLC. They deregulated 16 apartments

1

2   and I'm one of the six left. And we are

3   continuously harassed. We don't get any services

4   unless we call 311 and or take them to court, which

5   we've had to do. I personally had to pay thousands

6   of dollars taking the landlord to court just to fix

7   things; cracks and leaks and mice and rats and

8   things like that -- and for the building.

9   So, I agree with the former

10   speaker who said that if the small -- if you're

11   basing your decision on small owners, maybe counsel

12   them to get another profession. You know that,

13   that's passive income. They're making money on the

14   backs of us. And you know what about us? Who

15   teach your children, clean your streets and parks

16   and work with the mentally ill and addicted? What

17   about us? We're not getting raises. I'm on a

18   fixed income and no more families even live where I

19   live anymore. It's only, you know, the rich or the

20   -- the young people who spend two years in these

21   very expensive apartments now. My landlord now

22   makes 6 to 7,000 dollars a month for these

23   apartments.

24   So, I hope you reconsider

25   raising (sic) rents and consider the heart and soul

1

2   of New York City and for the people of us, who have

3   given our heart and soul to New York City.

4   (Applause.)

5   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6   MS. BARNES: Thank you.

7   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

8   Jennifer Almanza? Mary Rodriguez?

9   MS. RODRIGUEZ: Okay, let's

10   see if I could fix this mic. Good evening. Can

11   you hear me?

12   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Yes.

13   MS. RODRIGUEZ: No? Hello.

14   Okay. My name is Mary Rodriguez. I live in

15   Midtown, New York. I live in a building run by LLC

16   also called Equity Residential. I've been there 21

17   years. Before they owned the building, it was

18   owned by another company, who sold it within one

19   year to this LLC. It's a 259-unit building. And

20   when I moved in, I was under rent stabilization.

21   But what people fail to acknowledge here, and all

22   those that left, is that a lot of these building

23   real estate owners got a tax abatement when they

24   got into these buildings or bought these buildings.

25   Those tax abatements is what made those apartments

1

2   rent-stabilized. They run together. If that ends,

3   which is going to end the tax abatements for all

4   owners that have buildings in the five boroughs on

5   June 30, 2024 of this year, at the end of this

6   month, our rent stabilization ends.

7   I went to DHCR, who manages

8   rent stabilization apartments, and they told me the

9   same. They said, "If your landlord is been giving

10   you lease renewals, and they tell you that there's

11   a tax abatement and it's ending in June 30, 2024,

12   and they have a regulatory agreement, rent

13   stabilization ends for you, and then you go into

14   their regulatory agreement." Which they're asking

15   us to re-certify our income, which of course, most

16   of us make more than what we made 20 years ago.

17   And they want to multiply that gross by 2.53% rent

18   increase, added to our rent now, which could be

19   anywhere from 500 to a 1,000 dollars more to our

20   rents, okay?

21   People don't understand that.

22   They think they're going to remain rent stabilized

23   forever. Nothing lasts forever in this world. So,

24   we need the legislatures. We need our Governor to

25   fix that. Because she made a new law now, or

1

2   legislature Good Cause. The Good Cause is not

3   protecting low or middle income people. It's

4   protecting the middle class, the middle income --

5   not the middle, the high income tenants and it's

6   protecting them for getting evicted and their rents

7   getting raised. But what happened to the low and

8   middle income people? We need our legislatures,

9   all assembly, council, senate, to go back to her

10   and tell her to adjust that Good Cause and stop us

11   from getting increases, stop us from getting our

12   rents -- what do you call it? Getting

13   re-certified. If we're going to be rent

14   stabilized, let us remain rent stabilized. And of

15   course, that's where you come in. You have these

16   guidelines, then don't raise our rents no more --

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

18   MS. RODRIGUEZ: -- only by

19   your guidelines, if that's the case.

20   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you,

21   ma'am.

22   MS. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

23   (Applause.))

24   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Miriam

25   Fisher? Lina Rojas?

1

2   MS. ROJAS: Hi. So I've been

3   to these hearings a few times already, and we've

4   had a long night, so thanks for having me. I

5   almost feel like you guys kind of have your minds

6   made up but I still come to the hearings because I

7   love my neighbors. I love my community. I'm on

8   my, you know, my tenant association. So I'm here

9   representing them. And I think this is how

10 democracy works. So, I try to show up for this

11 even though we've been here for like three hours.

12   I come from upper Manhattan,

13 from the Washington Heights. And what I see is

14 predatory landlords. My landlord is -- her name is

15 Susan. She owns 12 buildings up there. My

16 building has 50 units. She has a

17 multimillion-dollar portfolio so she's not a small

18 landlord. What I see is disrepair, harassment,

19 intimidation and trickery.

20   When I say trickery is I see

21 all these kids do I, just move to the city and they

22 all rent these apartments at market price. She

23 rents them above -- she takes them off

24 stabilization, under false pretenses illegally,

25 right? I took her to court for that same reason.

1

2   I'm still in court with her for that. It's been

3   years. So, we'll see how that comes out.

4   So, why are we giving them a

5   break? Why are you guys rewarding that behavior,

6   right? Why is that happening? Why would we take

7   their side over folks, over hundreds of families,

8   thousands of families that -- oh, my God, 30

9   seconds -- that, you know, cook for you, clean for

10   you, drive your Ubers, teach your kids -- are your

11   social workers -- are -- run your nonprofits, etc.

12   $50, $100, to you guys maybe is like a night out on

13   the town, but for a lot of families, that pays

14   dinner for the week.

15   I feel for the small landlords

16   that we heard at the beginning of the night. I

17   feel for them, you know, but like, did -- didn't

18   they look at -- they knew when they bought these

19   units that they were rent stabilized? Did they not

20   run the numbers? If I'm going to get into a

21   business, I would do the math first. So I don't

22   know what the thought was there. I feel for them,

23   but I do not feel for my landlord. And I think

24   most landlords in New York are like that. So thank

25   you so much and have a good night. Bye.

1

2   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

3   (Applause.)

4   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Lina Rojas?

5   MS. ROJAS: Oh, that was me.

6   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Oh, that was

7   you. Sorry. Thank you Lina. Jonathan Bloom?

8   And then after Jonathan, we

9   have (unintelligible) and Cesar Reyes.

10   MR. BLOOM: Hello, RGB.

11   Hello, Alex, in particular. You are my housing

12   policy professor at the new school. It's nice to

13   see you again.

14   I can't really add much to the

15   experiences that have already been shared. You've

16   seen the faces and you've heard the emotional

17   testimony from people who are going to be impacted

18   by the decision that you're about to make. My rent

19   burden will also increase. My income has stayed

20   flat for the last two years, so my rent burden will

21   increase. If you increase the rents, it's been

22   shown that higher rent burdens lead to increased

23   odds of eviction. And we know that eviction hold a

24   host of -- causes a host of social problems,

25   including quite literally premature death. So --

1

2   (Audience participation.)

3   MR. BLOOM: -- I don't think

4   it's an exaggeration to say that your decision

5   tonight impacts lives -- could save lives. You

6   could choose to freeze the rent, freeze rent

7   burdens, keep things as they are. You could even

8   decide to lower people's rent burdens. So, it's

9   not fair to -- it's fair to say that this is a

10   decision that should not be taken lightly.

11   I just have a few more points

12   to make. First of all, this year, the state

13   legislature modified HSTPA to allow for IIS in

14   perpetuity. I'm curious how this has been taken

15   into account in this decision. The fact that

16   landlords are going to have an additional way to

17   raise rent, on the rent-stabilized units, when they

18   make repairs. This is something that a lot --

19   we've heard from a lot of these landlord owners

20   today.

21   And second, and landlords that

22   don't make enough profit, are not the same as

23   tenants that can't afford rent. Landlords that

24   can't cover their expenses are not the same as

25   tenants that cannot afford rent. One is an

1

2   existential crisis, one is not. Landlords are not

3   owed a return on their investment. They're not

4   owed a recuperation of their operating costs.

5   Tenants are owed a place to live and call home. If

6   you own a rent-stabilized building, you either made

7   an investment or you inherited it, which I don't

8   have much sympathy for. I implore that you do the

9   right thing, freeze the rent, save lives. Thank

10   you.

11   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12   (Audience participation.)

13   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Nazaar

14   (unintelligible)?

15   Cesar Reyes?

16   Chaplain Reddy?

17   MR. REDDY: Good evening. I'm

18   Chaplain Reddy. I'm glad to be here somewhat.

19   This is my first, and it might be my last RGB,

20   because this is a hearing, and I came to hear, not

21   go through the, you know, I'm 65 years old. I'm in

22   my golden years right now, and when I come in, I

23   want to have business handled. So, I need to just

24   thank you that you're still here. Because I know I

25   probably would've shut down a long time ago and

1

2   closed the door and went on out the door. But I'm

3   grateful that you're here. I'm grateful to hear

4   what I'm hearing. But I see this word up here,

5   "ethical." And all of us, I believe, have a

6   purpose. I have a purpose in life. I don't know

7   what your purpose is, but if you're sitting on this

8   Board, I hope that ethics would be a part of the

9   center core of your being.

10   Because if I'm sitting on a

11   board and I know that it's something that's sitting

12   on my spirit that lets me know that I'm not doing

13   right by people, I need to remove myself from that

14   because I have to give an account to what I do in

15   my life. I have to have purpose in what I do. So,

16   I'm going to give you, not stats. I am the stat.

17   I've been homeless. I've rode on the subway,

18   sleeping at night when it wasn't safe; okay? I've

19   slept in a car where situations came.

20   I came out on Long Island to

21   New York. Did not know what the shelter system was

22   all about. But I learnt the system and what the

23   shelter system was. It's not a pleasant, it's not

24   a pretty picture at all. I didn't know if I was

25   going to make it out of there. Because some of

1

2   them people in there were very dangerous. But I

3   managed to get through the whole process, see it.

4   And I knew and my purpose that God, I'm going to be

5   the poster child for homeless and housing because

6   this experience has made my life not the same ever

7   again. So that's why I am here.

8   I want to make sure that you

9   hear what you're hearing. Because let me tell you

10   something, when a mayor and a governor starts

11   bringing people all over the world here, and the

12   rats can live here, but the people that's been

13   serving this city for so long and working for the

14   city can't live here, that's a problem. So I came

15   to give you solutions.

16   You heard about the lotto, the

17   lottery. They was told to us that, you know, that

18   money that's going to go to the education

19   department because of the lottery. People spend

20   money for the lottery every day. We have Wall

21   Street and we have Fifth Avenue. There's money in

22   New York. It doesn't have to come on the backs of

23   people who are struggling when they got people that

24   come in this city that can raise money to help

25   housing be done correctly. That's all I got to

1

2   say.

3   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

4   (Applause.)

5   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Lee Ellen

6   Landon. Thank you, ma'am.

7   MS. LANDON: Hello. I've

8   noticed all of you watching me and looking at me.

9   Let me introduce myself. I'm fully deaf and I

10   struggle with Rheumatoid arthritis. And I get all

11   my money from SSDI monthly and spend it. This is

12   how I spend it.

13   First, I spend it on my power

14   bills, takes my money, then on my phone bills, and

15   then on my internet, so I can run the computer,

16   takes away more of my money, and then taking the

17   subway, the MetroCard takes away my money. And

18   just doing laundry, takes away money from my pay

19   check every week. And where am I even supposed to

20   get money for toilet paper, paper towels, soap? It

21   all disappears. It's impossible. Where can I even

22   buy new clothing? It's impossible. And enjoy

23   food, the restaurants, museums, shows, it's all

24   impossible. Where can I even go to sit down a

25   restaurant and to eat? I have to eat all three

1

2   meals at home. It's impossible.

3   And so when I signed my second

4   lease, it was $30. When I assigned my third

5   release, it was $20. I made it even harder and it

6   trapped me. I can't get out of it. I had to take

7   out loans. And my loans soared to $90,000 in just

8   one year. So I'm asking all of you, I can't pay

9   the rent, show me how. After two weeks, I'm broke

10   from my SSDI. Thank you very much.

11   (Applause.)

12   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

13   Our next three speakers will be Susan Davis Elly

14   (phonetic), Corah Hexstone, and Virginia Crawford.

15   MS. ELLY: Hi. My name is

16   Susan Davis Elly. I live in a rent --

17   rent-stabilized apartment on the Upper West Side.

18   My rent is more than $4, 500 a month, and I'm a

19   senior citizen. My rent is actually so high that I

20   don't qualify for screen, because the income limit

21   is $50, 000 per year.

22   I hadn't planned on speaking

23   tonight, but I'd like to raise an important

24   question. Do we want to lose the middle class in

25   New York City? The way things are going, this

1

2 could become a city of extremes, in which there are

3 only the very wealthy and the very poor.

4 Everything I've been hearing from landlords and

5 those who represent them is from a purely

6 profit-driven perspective. However, any landlord

7 who has a property with rent regulated tenants

8 should recognize and accept that they are part of a

9 system, whose initial mission was to protect

10 tenants.

11   If a landlord struggles to

12 make ends meet with their building costs and rent

13 regulated tenants, they can always sell.

14   There should not have to be

15 this battle each year. Rent regulation is an

16 important system which has worked effectively for

17 decades. The City should step up to protect the

18 people who have rent regulated status.

19   As the system gets older, so

20 do all those individuals who are rent-stabilized

21 and rent controlled. We are not in a low income or

22 rent subsidized status, but we do need a stable

23 system to make our lives continue to function. Our

24 protected status should not be continually

25 threatened by the personal interests of landlords,

1

2   who are in a far better economic position than

3   those they wish to exploit.

4   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

5   (Applause.)

6   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Corah

7   Hexstone.

8   MS. HEXSTONE: Good evening.

9   My name is Corah Hexstone, I'm a tenant and I live

10   in Harlem. I'm here to talk about the conditions

11   of the building that I live in, okay? I've been

12   there since '81.

13   In 2016, when it rains, the

14   flood comes in my house. I'm on the ninth floor.

15   It's not coming from the roof, it's not coming from

16   the windows, it's coming from the baseball of the

17   floor, okay? They had to come up and use the water

18   vac. to vacuum the water out. It stopped for a

19   minute.

20   Right back again, in the last

21   couple of years, the water is still doing the same

22   thing. I'm asking for testing for mold. I know

23   there's mold in my house. Because I went to the

24   doctor and it's on my results. I asked them for

25   the report because they had people coming in to

1

2 check the mold. I can't get a report from them.

3 What they told me -- this is coming from my

4 landlord, the owners of the building, matter of

5 fact, "Oh, have you ever thought about maybe moving

6 to a different apartment?" Why should I have to

7 move to a different apartment? Why not fix the one

8 that I'm in? Why do I have to relocate myself?

9 Take care of what you're supposed to take care.

10 I'm not fussing. I'm not running nor cussing them

11 out. I'm not saying I'm taking you to court, which

12 I know if I did, I would have a case. But I try to

13 handle it in a professional way.

14   When it comes to their rent,

15 they want their rent, they want it on time. When I

16 need something fixed, I have to wait until they

17 come off of vacation, wait until after the holiday.

18 We have intercoms that don't work. We have

19 handicapped people in the building that they say,

20 you have to come down and open the door for anyone

21 that's coming to visit. They tell security, "Do

22 not open the door, okay?" The elevators, they go

23 out. You get stuck in the elevator, the elevator

24 turns off. It says, okay, you're stuck there for

25 maybe a minute or two, before it comes back on.

1

2   I have a whole lot of health

3 issues. If I was to get stuck in the elevator --

4   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Yes, ma'am.

5 Thank you.

6   MS. HEXSTONE: Give me a

7 moment. If I was to get stuck in the elevator, I

8 would panic, something would happen to me, I would

9 die. They don't fix the elevators, they don't fix

10 the apartments, and they need to take care of what

11 they need to take care of in all these apartments

12 that we have and all these rent stabilized

13 buildings. They need to stand up and do what they

14 supposed to do.

15   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you,

16 ma'am.

17   MS. HEXSTONE: Thank you.

18   (Applause.)

19   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Virginia

20 Crawford. And after Virginia, we'll hear from Jill

21 Rappaport (phonetic), Deborah Greene (phonetic),

22 and Rossy Hensman (phonetic).

23   MS. CRAWFORD: Hello. Thanks

24 for being here and listening to us. My name is

25 Virginia Crawford. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant in

1

2   the West Village. I've lived there for about 20

3   years, I think now. I too have noticed that, you

4   know, we're meeting here in a building that is

5   called New York Society for Ethical Culture. And

6   this is one of the things that is just so harmful

7   to tenants, is that we everyday are impacted by

8   unethical real estate investors. And we live in

9   buildings purchased by these investors who lie

10   every single day to city agencies about what's

11   going on in our buildings, and we are just gaslit

12   for years and years on end. And New York benefits

13   financially when all these violations are issued in

14   these buildings. And New York benefits also when

15   these buildings are renovated with us living there,

16   being exposed to asbestos and lead and, you know,

17   extremely loud circumstances when there's

18   construction, and we're not warned about

19   construction. And yet when those buildings

20   increase in value, New York State and New York City

21   also benefits financially from the profitability of

22   these buildings and tenants end up being the --

23   we're just disregarded. We feel valueless. We're

24   the one group of people that are not benefiting

25   from all this construction and property

1

2   improvement.

3   And a lot of times it just

4   cost us major capital improvements and we're

5   basically paying more for experiencing a lower

6   quality of life for years on end.

7   So anyway, I just want to say

8   that we are -- when we have these financial

9   investors, they're not actually invested in the

10   common good. That is what ethics is about. What

11   are we looking at through what lens? We need to

12   look at it through the common good and many of us

13   are suffering.

14   I just want to say that we all

15   deserve a sense of safety, especially in the one

16   place where we have lived. We need a sense of

17   safety in our homes. And we are not just in a

18   housing rise crisis, we're in an ethics crisis.

19   So, please use ethical leadership principles and

20   think about the common good and the tenants who are

21   suffering financially and physically and

22   financially. Thank you.

23   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

24   (Applause.)

25   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Jill

1

2   Rappaport?

3   MS. RAPPAPORT: Hi. People

4   have made a lot of good points tonight about things

5   like private equity investors buying buildings.

6   They also do that with healthcare and hospitals and

7   so on, and it does not benefit the public.

8   I remember I -- in my

9   lifetime, the City of New York was a place where

10   ordinary people and working people could afford to

11   live in a civilized way. And that is not the case

12   anymore, in large part. And the Rent Guidelines

13   Board, is an official organization that does owe it

14   to the public and the city and to history, to

15   protect the public. Somebody made the point

16   earlier that landlords are not necessarily entitled

17   to a return on investment, but people should be

18   entitled to live in a decent manner when they're

19   paying rent. And often times they are not. And

20   these horror stories we've heard are pretty a hear

21   raising. There should not be tax breaks for luxury

22   developers. That's outrageous.

23   And -- what was the other

24   thing I was going to say? I'm lucky to live in a

25   pro -- in a limited equity co-op called Penn South

1

2   where people do live decent lives. But I've lived

3   for many years in rent stabilization, and it is a

4   terrible struggle, a lot of the time and there's a

5   lot of unethical behavior. So, I think in a

6   civilized society, housing, education, and

7   healthcare should not be out of reach for working

8   people. Thanks.

9   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

10   (Applause.)

11   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Deborah

12   Greene? Rossy Hensman?

13   MS. GREENE: Hello.

14   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Hello.

15   MS. GREENE: Hi, everybody.

16   My name is Deborah J. Greene --

17   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please come

18   to the mic.

19   MS. GREENE: I'm sorry. My

20   name is Deborah J. Greene. This is my first time

21   here.

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We can hear

23   you. Thank you, ma'am.

24   MS. GREENE: This is my first

25   time here, and I live in a rent-stabilized

1

2   building. And the building I live in is an

3   edge-cut building. And he put the building there

4   for people of low income to be with families and

5   seniors. So that, you know that I am a senior and

6   I'm living there in a building that the landlord

7   doesn't want to fix anything in my apartment. For

8   the third time, I have my own personal water spring

9   coming into my apartment. And it's happened this

10   year for the third time, and I've been trying to

11   get him to fix it. And my refrigerator is going

12   out. And I call him and I tell him, he -- all he

13   says is, "Let me take note." But in the meantime,

14   I'm a single mom and I have my son. And it's a

15   struggle living in there.

16   And my income -- I'm retired.

17   I used to be a school teacher. I had to retire in

18   2020 because I caught COVID. So that meant I

19   couldn't -- you know, I had to retire, and now my

20   income is very low. And trying to talk to him to

21   get things done is not happening. And I have to

22   keep calling 311, 311. And I'm grateful for them

23   because they're in him, because he needs to fix

24   what we have to have fixed in our apartment.

25   I'm begging you, please put a

1

2   freeze, because it's hard for me to pay rent. My

3   income is very limited and I have a number of

4   things I have to pay. If I try to buy some

5   clothing, I have to go to the dollar store, you

6   know, to get these things. So, I employ you to

7   please, please put a freeze because it's hard for

8   people like me and us here who are struggling to

9   pay they bills. So please put a freeze on the rent

10   or just roll back, please. Thank you so much.

11   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

12   (Applause.)

13   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Rossy

14   Hensman. Thank you.

15   MS. HENSMAN: Can you guys

16   hear me? Thank you. I'm here today to support the

17   tenants. I am also a tenant. I would like to say

18   that I am a New Yorker. I grew up here, in many

19   ways. I have lived throughout the city because I'm

20   always -- I have always been looking for the next

21   opportunity for an affordable opportunity.

22   Meaning, I live in the Lower East Side, Brooklyn,

23   Washington Heights, The Bronx, everywhere, but the

24   Staten Island, God knows. That's my last place.

25   However, throughout it, I

1

2   would like to share a story that happened to me and

3   my family during COVID. I had this amazing

4   apartment. It was rent-stabilized. Through too

5   many situations, the apartment had a lot of issues;

6   a lot of situations, rodents, etc. We endure

7   because it was rent-stabilized and I knew what it

8   meant if we move out.

9   We were in Washington Heights.

10   It was a lovely neighborhood. However, even though

11   we were in COVID, I still pay the rent because I

12   was very scared to lose in this opportunity.

13   Sadly, during this time a few

14   storms happened and the water came in through the

15   apartment. The first time we let it be, because I

16   knew looking for another apartment will be hard.

17   And we sat through it. We started seeing mold grow

18   into the apartment. I keep calling the landlord,

19   et cetera, et cetera, nothing really happened.

20   Eventually, Hurricane Ida happened. We have to be

21   evacuated. The water came through. We lost

22   everything. I mean, everything. I had to run with

23   my niece that was six months old at that point.

24   Then I fought in court. I did everything I could.

25   To this day, I lost the apartment.

1

2   And I'm just saying, we endure

3   a lot of things for the -- for this type of

4   opportunities, apartments, et cetera. Right now, I

5   hear everybody. I cry here every other -- I know

6   my time is up, but I just want you guys to think

7   about those things that we even endured for this

8   type of opportunity. Please either reduce or call

9   for a phrase. Thank you.

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

11   (Applause.)

12   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Our next two

13   speakers are Magdalena Vee (phonetic), and Hector

14   Cortez (phonetic).

15   Magdalena? Thank you.

16   MS. VEE: I have my friend

17   here with me. I'm disabled and I have a

18   Neuroimmune disease, which can cause me to freeze.

19   If I freeze, he will continue for me as my

20   "interpreter."

21   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

22   MS. VEE: Okay.

23   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Please.

24   MS. VEE: All right.

25   CHAIR DAVIDSON: And if you

1

2   could speak into the mic, ma'am.

3   MS. VEE: I'm sorry. Oh,

4   sorry.

5   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

6   MS. VEE: I also have issues

7   with speech and different things. They will pop up

8   out of nowhere. So, I will do my best. I have

9   never done this before. I also come from a family

10   where you don't make your voice. You don't speak

11   up. They're immigrants from South America and

12   always afraid. And that was very much the case

13   with this landlord who took over for a family-owned

14   landlord. He is, as others have said, a corporate

15   landlord.

16   So I heard another tenant say

17   who they represent. I represent the tenants in my

18   location who used to be families, used to be

19   immigrants that would scratch their pennies

20   together and find a way and always pay their

21   obligations and continue to do so. I also

22   represent people who are disabled and ill, many of

23   which fell ill during COVID and have developed the

24   disease of Myalgic encephalomyelitis, and a ton of

25   Comorbid conditions that despite our ages cause us

1

2 to lose careers and thus cause us to lose respect

3 from people who think they're above us because they

4 are corporation landlords.

5   I represent people who used to

6 live in this city, who have been pushed out. And I

7 also speak up for people like my mother, who was

8 actually my aunt, but became my mother when my

9 birth mother died at the -- when I was a baby and

10 helped my father. We are Hispanic, we take care of

11 our families. We're considered non-traditional and

12 persecuted for that in-housing court and a landlord

13 trying to scare us away.

14   I live in a building which was

15 a large corporate landlord, 63rd street owner, LLC,

16 another LLC BLDG management, owned by a gentleman

17 from the Goldman family, a very rich, large family

18 in real estate, who isn't fortes (sic) and such. I

19 have put up with surrogate court, housing court to

20 drain me financially. The difference, if we're

21 going to look at finances, is look at their

22 finances that get imposed upon us by dragging us

23 into housing court. By causing us to have to

24 choose between medicine, medical care, and food and

25 the energy that we don't have.

1

2   I spend most of my time

3   housebound and bedbound, and yet this landlord will

4   know that that will kill me if they continue to

5   drain me like this. Both financially and

6   physically as well as mentally. They do this not

7   only to me, but to others. Like a 92-year-old

8   tenant in our building with Alzheimer's who they

9   basically kick us off one by one. And --

10   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you,

11   ma'am.

12   MS. VEE: I also state from

13   financial standpoint, if you're going to look at

14   solely that. What kind of business will spend

15   money on redoing apartments left and right and

16   doing MCI's of things that are unnecessary just to

17   raise our rents? I give you a 12 -- 1,211 to 1,

18   500 plus without RGB increases --

19   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you,

20   ma'am.

21   MS.VEE: They use unlawful

22   ways, dishonest ways, and they lie. What you need

23   to look at facts, not things that are

24   unsubstantiated by a landlord who gave them to you

25   on a piece of paper. Because the other thing I

1

2   deal with is a landlord that does not accept my

3   checks at times who does creative accounting. And

4   we all know what that is if we've been in the

5   business world at one point --

6   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you,

7   ma'am.

8   MS. VEE: So, when you are

9   doing this, make sure you're looking at the facts.

10   Make sure you are doing public policy that takes

11   into account, not only landlords' statements which

12   have not been double-checked, but they're lies to

13   DHCR, they're lies to the courts and they're lies

14   to you.

15   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

16   MS. VEE: You need to look at

17   all of the facts and look at the --

18   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you. I

19   appreciate your time.

20   MS. VEE: -- the damage they

21   are doing to people.

22   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you,

23   ma'am. Thank you.

24   MS. VEE: Thank you.

25   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Thank you.

1

2   (Applause.)

3   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Hector

4   Cortez? Mr. Cortez? All right, we have come to

5   the end of our speakers. Do I have a motion to

6   adjourn?

7   MR. EHRLIC: Motion.

8   CHAIR DAVIDSON: Do I have a

9   second?

10   MR. GUPTA: Second.

11   CHAIR DAVIDSON: We are

12   adjourned. Thank you all for being here. We very

13   much appreciate it. Thank you.

14   (Applause.)

15   (At 8:00 P.M., the proceedings

16   were concluded.)

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2   STATE OF NEW YORK)

3   SS.

4   COUNTY OF NEW YORK)

5

6

7   I, MARC RUSSO, a Shorthand

8   (Stenotype) Reporter and Notary Public within and

9   for the State of New York, do hereby certify that

10   the foregoing pages 1 through 142, taken at the

11   time and place aforesaid, is a true and correct

12   transcription of my shorthand notes.

13   IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have

14   hereunto set my name this 23rd day of August, 2024.

15   _____

16   MARC RUSSO

17

18

19

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22

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24

25

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Concordance

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