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THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

-----X

PUBLIC MEETING  
OF THE  
DIRECTORS

-----X

Symphony Space  
2537 Broadway  
New York, NY 10025  
June 17, 2025  
5:00 P.M.

B E F O R E :

DOUG APPLE,  
THE CHAIR,

1

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

3 Doug Apple, Chair

4 Arpit Gupta

5 Alex Schwartz

6 Jordan Reed

7 Christina Smyth

8 Robert Ehrlich

9 Genesis Aquino

10 Adan Soltren

11 Alexander Armlovich

12

13 STAFF:

14 Andrew McLaughlin - Executive Director

15 Brian Hoberman - Co-Research Director

16 Danielle Burger - Co-Research Director

17 Charmaine Superville - Office Manager

18

19

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2

MR. GUPTA: Present.

3

CHAIR APPLE: Reed Jordan?

4

MR. JORDAN: Present.

5

CHAIR APPLE: Alex Schwartz?

6

MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

7

CHAIR APPLE: Christina Smyth?

8

MS. SMYTH: Present.

9

CHAIR APPLE: Adan Soltren?

10

MR. SOLTREN: Present.

11

CHAIR APPLE: Doug Apple, I am

12

present. Let the record show that we have a

13

quorum.

14

The next meeting of this Board

15

will be a public hearing to comment on the proposed

16

guidelines on the following date and time: June

17

27th at the New York City Department of Health, 125

18

Worth Street, between 10:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m.

19

Anyone who wishes to comment

20

on the proposed guidelines at the public hearing

21

must sign up to speak. People wishing to speak at

22

the public hearing can preregister in advance

23

either through our website [nyc.gov/rgb](http://nyc.gov/rgb) or by

24

calling (212) 669-7480 from 9:00 to 5:00 Monday

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through Friday.

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For those who do not preregister for the hearings, registration is also available at the public hearing from 5:00 to 8:00 -- I'm sorry, from 10:00 to 12:00 on the 27th.

All our public hearings will be live-streamed, and Spanish interpretation will be provided at each hearing.

We'll also accept comments on the proposed guidelines outside of our public hearings. You can submit written audio and video comments for the Board to review through June 27th. Instructions on how to submit these comments are available on the Board's website or by calling the RGB.

Our final vote on the guidelines will take place on Monday, June 30th, starting at 7:00 p.m. at El Museo del Barrio in Manhattan. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. The public may attend in person or may watch the vote live by streaming on the RGB YouTube channel.

Before we proceed, I'd like to go over the rules and procedures for those who are testifying before the Board. If you wish to speak, you must confirm with RGB staff at the registration

1

2 table located near the entrance of the hall in the  
3 back there. Speakers will not be called if they  
4 have not checked in at the registration table.

5 There are Spanish interpreters  
6 here today. When registering to speak, please  
7 notify the staff you would like an interpreter. I  
8 would try to call several names in advance to let  
9 you know that you will be soon to -- be up to  
10 speak.

11 If you have material to  
12 distribute to the Board, please give them to the  
13 RGB staff sitting at the sign-in table in the back.  
14 And we'll attempt to alternate speakers between  
15 tenants and owners, but this may not always be  
16 possible.

17 In order to accommodate as  
18 many speakers as possible, each speaker will have  
19 two minutes to give their testimony. Additional  
20 two minutes of speaking time will be given to those  
21 speakers utilizing interpretation services.

22 To help speakers keep track of  
23 time, we have a clock. We'll start the clock when  
24 you begin speaking. The clock will beep once when  
25 the speaker has 30 seconds left and will continue

1

2       beeping when the allotted two minutes are up.  If  
3       you're still speaking at the end of two minutes, I  
4       will ask you to quickly wrap up your testimony.  
5       And staff are also available to assist you with the  
6       microphones and remind you when your allotted time  
7       is completed.

8

                          If you are handicapped and  
9       cannot come to the mic, please let us know and  
10      we'll make sure we bring the mic to you.

11

                          I understand that many  
12      speakers have a passion and speak from the heart.  
13      We want to hear all of what you have to say,  
14      however, we do ask that you be respectful, use  
15      non-discriminatory language, and not make any overt  
16      physical threats towards a member of the Board or  
17      others.  This type of language will not be  
18      tolerated and if you continue to do so once warned,  
19      I may ask you to stop speaking.

20

                          We expect many speakers and  
21      the Board wants to hear from as many of you as  
22      possible in the limited time we have for this  
23      hearing.  We understand it may be difficult to say  
24      everything you want to hear in just two minutes,  
25      but please understand that it's our responsibility

1

2 to try to make sure everyone has -- who's taken the  
3 time to come here and testify, will have a fair  
4 opportunity to be heard.

5

Thank you for your  
6 cooperation, and the Board looks forward to hearing  
7 your comments regarding the proposed rent  
8 adjustments.

9

And I also now want to allow  
10 the Spanish interpreter to read this in Spanish.  
11 Thank you.

12

THE INTERPRETER: (Translating  
13 from English to Spanish.)

14

CHAIR APPLE: Great. Thank  
15 you. Thank you so much.

16

I'm going to call our first  
17 speaker, and then I'll call a couple of others on  
18 deck. Our first speaker is Councilman Keith  
19 Powers. I believe he's here. Followed by Ilan  
20 Rabinowitz and Anne Greenberg.

21

So, the councilman is here.  
22 And then we'll have our next speakers. Is he not  
23 here?

24

MALE VOICE: (Unintelligible.)

25

CHAIR APPLE: Oh, okay. It's

1

2 hard to see.

3

4 Okay. When he gets in, let us  
5 know. We'll come to him.

6

7 So, let me call Ilan  
8 Rabinowitz, followed by Anne Greenberg. Sir?

9

10 MR. RABINOWITZ: Good  
11 afternoon. My name is Ilan and I am an owner for  
12 apartments of a building here in Manhattan. The  
13 majority of them are rent-stabilized. And of  
14 course, which means I can -- which means I can pay  
15 within 1,100 to 1,500 a month.

16

17 At the same time, the city  
18 charges me \$75,000 in taxes on the property every  
19 year. Those taxes go up 8 percent every year.  
20 Here we are fighting for 4 percent -- between 4  
21 percent and 7 percent in increase. You don't have  
22 to be a mathematician to know that the \$1,500 that  
23 are charged per apartment a month are more than the  
24 1,100 that I charge for rent a month.

25

26 Aside from these costs, there  
27 are also things that are being charged by the city  
28 now. Six additional costs; you have the gas, you  
29 have lead paint, you have the garbage containers,  
30 and that's between 400 and 500 extra dollars a

1

2 month, aside from what I've already -- I have to  
3 pay on a monthly basis.

4                   So, I beg of you, if you're  
5 here fighting against the landlords, you're  
6 fighting against the wrong people. So, I think the  
7 person you really have to fight against is Keith  
8 Powers who will be here soon. I think he's running  
9 for borough president. He's actually the one  
10 that's voted in the past to raise the rent -- not  
11 the rents, but for the costs. The costs that are  
12 being offered to raise the rent.

13                   So if you want accessible  
14 living space for yourself, for your neighbors, for  
15 your friends and family members just like me,  
16 please don't come here and argue against the Board.  
17 They have an impossible task as it is. You need to  
18 fight against the mayor, the governor, the borough  
19 president, and all these other people that come  
20 here and tell you that it's an impossible task to  
21 lower the rent and do everything but help us.

22                   MR. RABINOWITZ: Thank you for  
23 your comments about respect here. The last few  
24 hearings have had some anti-Semitic comments and  
25 testimony, and I hope we won't see that again here.

1

2 Thank you.

3

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Back  
4 to -- is Keith Powers in the room? No. We also  
5 have -- I believe New York State Senator Brad  
6 Hoylman-Sigal. Senator, please.

7

MR. HOLYMAN-SIGAL: Thank you  
8 very much. My name is State Senator Brad  
9 Hoylman-Sigal. I represent the 47th Senate  
10 District, which encompasses the west side of  
11 Manhattan we're in it right now in this amazing  
12 space. Thank you to Symphony Space for allowing us  
13 to use this incredible space for this important  
14 hearing. I represent from Christopher Street,  
15 literally the base of the Stonewall Inn, birthplace  
16 of the LGBTQ Human Rights Movement, all the way up  
17 to West 103rd. We like to say, from the Gay Bars  
18 to Zabar's.

19

Thank you, Chair Apple, and  
20 members of the RGB for your opportunity to submit  
21 testimony today. The RGBs research tells a clear  
22 story. While rent-stabilized tenants are -- and  
23 landlords are seeing growing income --  
24 rent-stabilized landlords are seeing growing income  
25 and economic health, their tenants sink deeper into

1

2 poverty. A rent freeze this year is not only  
3 justified, it is necessary.

4

(Applause.)

5

6 MR. HOLYMAN-SIGAL: My Senate  
7 District includes some of the highest rents in the  
8 city with the average rent for an Upper West Side  
9 apartment totaling \$6,526 in March of 2025. This  
amounts to over a 70 percent increase since 2022.

10

As market-rate apartments in  
11 my district grow even more unaffordable,  
12 rent-stabilized apartments are the last refuge for  
13 older and lower-income constituents.

14

Windfall profits for landlords  
15 and developers do not reflect broader economic  
16 health. As New York City poverty rate has risen to  
17 25 percent, the highest rate in the at least seven  
18 years. As a result, desperate New Yorkers are  
19 turning to government assistance to pay for food,  
20 healthcare, and mounting bills.

21

In 2024, public benefit  
22 caseloads increased by 16.2 percent. At the same  
23 time, close to 17 percent of tenants in the metro  
24 area owe rent arrears, the second-highest  
25 proportion of households in the country. These

1

2 economic woes are felt especially hard among  
3 rent-stabilized households, which are more likely  
4 to contain an older adult, a child, or a person  
5 with a disability.

6

The data, the economic and  
7 institutional environment, and RGB precedent all  
8 support the case for a rent freeze. I urge this  
9 Board to order a rent freeze. Thank you very much.

10

(Applause.)

11

MR. HOLYMAN-SIGAL: And let me  
12 personally say on a personal note, I want to thank  
13 each and every one of you for your service. It  
14 means so much to me whether you're a landlord, a  
15 tenant, or appointed by someone else, your service  
16 is really appreciated. Thank you.

17

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Anne  
18 Greenberg. Followed by Ron Cohen and Pablo  
19 Zevallos.

20

Ms. Greenberg?

21

MS. GREENBERG: Thank you.

22

Can you hear me?

23

CHAIR APPLE: Yes.

24

MS. GREENBERG: Okay. So, my  
25 name is Anne Greenberg. I'm a senior citizen

1

2 living in Peter Cooper Village and I'm on the Board  
3 of the Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village Tenants  
4 Association.

5 Landlords must be the most  
6 inept business people. Although guaranteed a 5  
7 percent profit for hardship, they always plead  
8 poverty and ask for more. And the RGB public  
9 members are happy to oblige. Look at the math for  
10 the past three years, the increase is as high as 5  
11 percent and effective 6 percent and 5 and a quarter  
12 percent. Depending on the lease term a tenant  
13 chose, their rent went up at least a total of 7.9  
14 percent or as much as 10.5 percent.

15 I ask you, Doug Apple, Arpit  
16 Gupta, Alex Schwartz, Reed Jordan, Alexander  
17 Armlovich, did your income go up even 7.9 percent?  
18 Do you have a savings account or ACD paying  
19 anywhere near that? What about social security or  
20 your investments? Maybe some of you got a nice  
21 juicy bonus, but you expect tenants who are already  
22 rent-burdened to shell out even more to satisfy  
23 landlords' insatiable greed.

24 Another number, 12.1 percent,  
25 landlords' NOI in buildings with stabilized units,

1

2 and it beats last year's 10.4 percent. And what  
3 about 0.98 percent, the vacancy rate for  
4 rent-stabilized apartments? And according to  
5 attorney, former RGB Executive Director Tim  
6 Collins, you have inflicted cumulative rent  
7 increases 13.5 percent more than what would've kept  
8 owners whole. That excess is baked into our rents  
9 forever.

10 So, when you callously throw  
11 out preliminary ranges of 1.75 to 4.75 and 3.75 to  
12 7.75, I question whether you're really number  
13 nerds. Consideration for what tenants need and  
14 deserve and what the city needs, never come into  
15 play. But hey, you could still freeze the rent.  
16 It's time to go low. Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

19 I believe Councilman Powers  
20 has joined us.

21 MR. POWERS: Thank you. I'm  
22 sorry for my delinquency. I want to echo my  
23 neighbor, Anne Greenberg, who is a great tenant  
24 advocate and say, go low, freeze the rent, give  
25 tenants the relief they deserve this year. Am I

1

2 right?

3

(Audience participation.)

4

MR. POWERS: My name is Keith

5

Powers. I'm a city council member for the 4th

6

District in Manhattan, representing the East Side.

7

I'm a proud tenant myself and the proud

8

representative of rent-stabilized tenants across my

9

district.

10

I want to start by stating the

11

obvious: the proposed increases that have been put

12

out, especially the 7.75 percent increase for the

13

two-year leases, go way beyond what is reasonable

14

to ask to take -- pay tenants in the coming year.

15

If you are a senior citizen on

16

a fixed income or a young family trying to hold

17

onto the dream of living in New York City, those

18

rent increases create economic challenges for

19

tenants, not only in my district but across the

20

five boroughs.

21

We should be making it easier,

22

not harder to build a stable life in this city.

23

And for New Yorkers struggling to keep up with the

24

rising costs, some of those numbers that are being

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thrown out here would make it impossible.

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After years of increases to tenants' rents and rising hardship for everyday New Yorkers, I'm asking the Rent Guideline Board to echo the words of Anne to go low, to stop these ridiculous increases and those proposed numbers, and to stand up for tenants.

I will submit the rest of my testimony because it is long, but I am here to make sure on behalf of my tenants, the tenants of Manhattan, and the tenants across the city that they know they have representatives here, who are here to fight to make sure that we protect their cost of living here and we tackle the cost of affordability.

I want to thank the Rent Guidelines Board. I know you have a tall task ahead of you but we ask you to listen to the voices of the tenants here and the ones that are coming in today and out this -- outside the -- throughout the city to hear the everyday challenges of the middle class and working class are facing when it comes to affordability.

And yes, we have a lot of other goals here in this city, too. We need to

1  
2 build a lot more housing, we need to make sure that  
3 we can build housing in every single community to  
4 accommodate the great demand on the greatest city  
5 on earth. But for the tenants that are there and  
6 are fighting and want to hang on, they need to know  
7 they have a Rent Guidelines Board and a city  
8 government that will stand up for them. So, I say  
9 what she said, go low. Rent freeze. Thank you,  
10 guys.

11 (Applause.)

12 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

13 I now call Ron Cohen, followed  
14 by Pablo Zevallos and Hannah Lawson.

15 Mr. Cohen?

16 MR. COHEN: Good evening. My  
17 name is Ron Cohen, and I want to thank the RGB and  
18 everyone here for the opportunity to speak.

19 I'm a lifelong New Yorker,  
20 born in Queens, I schooled in the Bronx, lived in  
21 Brooklyn, and raised my family right here on the  
22 Upper West Side. I love this city and the diverse,  
23 hardworking people who call it home. They deserve  
24 safe, stable, and sustainable housing.

25 I've spent over 20 years in

1

2 New York City commercial real estate with a company  
3 called Best in Partners (phonetic) I've seen the  
4 market go through many cycles, but what we're  
5 facing today is hurting both tenants and landlords  
6 alike. It's the result of well-intended policies  
7 that, unfortunately, aren't working in practice.

8 Contrary to public  
9 perception, not all landlords are greedy,  
10 deep-pocketed corporations. Up to 50 percent of  
11 the rental market is owned by small mom and pap  
12 landlords, owners of buildings with 10 units or  
13 fewer, many of whom who are struggling.

14 The 2025 RGB report cites a 12  
15 percent rise in landlord profits, but that's  
16 misleading. The jump largely reflects deregulated  
17 units in prime Manhattan. In contrast,  
18 rent-stabilized buildings, particularly older ones  
19 outside of Manhattan, are seeing operating income  
20 fall. In the Bronx, for example,  
21 inflation-adjusted net income dropped 7.6 percent.

22 Right now, the median  
23 stabilized rent is \$1,328, while the average cost  
24 to operate a unit is \$1,379. Meaning many  
25 landlords are losing money every month. Insurance

1

2 premiums alone have tripled in some areas. For  
3 example, a 38-unit Walk-up building I'm working on  
4 in the Bronx at present now pays \$3,000 per unit  
5 annually just for insurance.

6                   Meanwhile, rent increases have  
7 lagged far behind inflation. 14 percent in  
8 aggregate increases over the past decade, compared  
9 with 23 percent inflation, creating massive  
10 financial pressure.

11                   The property values are  
12 dropping, defaults are rising, and buildings are  
13 falling into disrepair. Just this month, an  
14 83-unit building located on West 65th Street up  
15 here on the Upper West Side, sold for 42 percent of  
16 its 2017 price, a value equivalent to its 2008  
17 value.

18                   An estimated 45,000 to 70,000  
19 stabilized units are sitting empty --

20                   CHAIR APPLE: If you could  
21 wrap up, sir, please.

22                   MR. COHEN: 20 more seconds --  
23 because owners never recuperate the cost to  
24 renovate them under current rules.

25                   If we want to improve supply

1

2 and affordability, we need to consider reasonable  
3 rent adjustments and explore policy changes like a  
4 rent reset to bring these homes back into  
5 circulation. In closing, rent-stabilized housing  
6 is a vital part of New York's future. Let's ensure  
7 we have the right tools to preserve it. Thank you  
8 very much.

9

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.

10 Pablo Zevallos, followed by Hannah Lawson and Maria  
11 Mercado.

12

Mr. Zevallos?

13

MR. ZEVALLOS: Good evening.

14 Good evening. My name is Pablo Zevallos, and I'm a  
15 tenant rights attorney testifying in support of a  
16 rent freeze. A freeze.

17

(Applause.)

18

MR. ZEVALLOS: A freeze is

19

needed to guard against the speculative and

20

unwarranted rent increases the Rent Stabilization

21

Law was enacted to counter, amidst what the law

22

also described as an acute housing shortage and

23

proposed cuts to federal assistance in housing

24

programs, situations that we are facing today.

25

Between 1990 and 2023, in

1

2 buildings containing rent-stabilized units,  
3 inflation-adjusted income from rent has increased  
4 by 37 percent, while costs have increased by 31  
5 percent, facilitating a net operating income  
6 increase of 48 percent.

7

8 Between 2022 and 2023 alone,  
9 NOI increased by 12 percent, and NOI increased in  
10 83 percent of community districts across the city.  
11 Simply put, landlords' economic indicators, many of  
12 which continue to strengthen post-pandemic, neither  
13 warrant nor justify a rent increase this year.

13

14 While rents continue to soar  
15 and rent collection nears decade-long highs, the  
16 post-pandemic economic recovery continues to evade  
17 many New York City tenants. In contrast to the  
18 national data, inflation-adjusted average wages for  
19 private sector New York City workers have decreased  
20 since 2021. Many of my clients are trying to get  
21 back on their feet and they tell me -- tell me that  
22 between the rent and other costs like food,  
23 healthcare, and raising children, there is not  
24 enough to go around.

24

25 70 percent of the  
lowest-income renters and 30 percent of

1

2 rent-stabilized tenants without vouchers pay a  
3 majority of their incomes in rent. Rental  
4 assistance is in short supply and proposed cuts to  
5 federal housing assistance would place thousands of  
6 households at risk of eviction.

7 And with about one in 150  
8 apartments renting for under \$2,400 being vacant,  
9 there is little chance of moving elsewhere. These  
10 tenants cannot afford an increase.

11 In light of the imbalance  
12 between landlords' economic indicators and the  
13 needs of rent-burden tenants, I urge this Board to  
14 adopt a rent freeze. Thank you for the opportunity  
15 to testify.

16 (Applause.)

17 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.

18 Hannah Lawson, followed by  
19 Maria Mercado and Guadalupe Brito.

20 Ms. Lawson.

21 MS. LAWSON: My name is Hannah  
22 Lawson. I have been living in New York City for  
23 nine years in my rent-stabilized apartment in  
24 Washington Heights for nearly four.

25 I moved here to attend Fordham

1

2 University on a full-ride academic scholarship. I  
3 graduated in 2020 at the start of the COVID-19  
4 pandemic with a BA in art history, a BS in  
5 biological sciences, and three theses in  
6 sustainable architecture.

7 It took me three years to find  
8 a job after the pandemic. My job salary now is  
9 only \$50,000. Before taxes, over half of all my  
10 income goes to rent. I have no debt, I have no  
11 student loans, and I graduated from one of this  
12 city's top universities as a presidential honors  
13 scholar. I should be one of the few in my  
14 generation that is doing superlatively and yet I,  
15 too, am merely scraping by. I am your best-case  
16 scenario and I'm standing here to tell you I have  
17 nothing left to give.

18 I cannot imagine what is the  
19 assumption about the economic state of our city if  
20 you think raising the rent at all is the correct  
21 decision. The pandemic is over, but the  
22 infrastructural effects on our city's economy are  
23 far from fixed. And if I, me, am a solid  
24 representation of the best-case scenario for a  
25 recent college graduate in this city and I still

1

2 can barely afford to live here? There is a serious  
3 problem.

4

Your solution should begin  
5 with prioritizing keeping smart, talented, and  
6 in-driven individuals such as myself in this city  
7 to lead us into the bright future we all deserve.  
8 Freeze the rent.

9

(Applause.)

10

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

11

Maria Mercado, Guadalupe

12

Brito, followed by Reuben Florencio Ramirez.

13

MS. MERCADO: Good afternoon,

14

ladies and gentlemen. My name is Maria Mercado and

15

I'm part of Environmental Justicia from El Barrio.

16

I am here representing all of the tenants of my

17

organization.

18

We fight for just living

19

spaces and against displacement. You might think

20

that we're repetitive because we're here demanding

21

no more increases to the rent, but we are the ones

22

that are the tenants living in deplorable

23

conditions. We already pay exorbitant rents, and

24

the building owners only think to increase that

25

rent. And of course, not to provide us with good

1

2 maintenance with regard to our apartments.

3

4 The buildings are dirty and  
5 full of vermin. People who are living on the  
6 streets are actually in better living conditions  
7 than we are. They don't pay rent. And in our  
8 situation, we work very hard to pay our rent, we  
9 then don't get good service. All of us are  
10 demanding what is just, no more rent increases.

11

(Audience participation.)

12

13 MS. MERCADO: Owners only  
14 think about lining their pockets. I'll provide you  
15 with an example. Owners only make halfway repairs,  
16 and a few days later, we are facing the same issues  
17 once again. We need justice for tenants in El  
18 Barrio. We need justice for the tenants in El  
19 Barrio. Justice for the tenants in El Barrio.

20

(Audience

21

participation.)

22

MS. MERCADO: Thank you.

23

24 CHAIR APPLE: Guadalupe Brito,  
25 followed by Ruben Florencio Ramirez.

26

Please.

27

MS. BRITO: Good afternoon.

28

My name is Guadalupe Brito. I'm also part of the

1  
2 movement Justicia El Barrio. I have changed  
3 departments five times in the last 15 years. And  
4 with all these changes, we've had horrible  
5 experiences. A family has to have at least two  
6 jobs in order to be able to pay the rent. And of  
7 course, you have to sacrifice certain things while  
8 everything continues to go up. You also want to  
9 increase the rent. We need to have a rent freeze  
10 for our life to be fair and just.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. RAMIREZ: Good afternoon,  
13 everyone. My name is Reuben Florencio Ramirez and  
14 I am also part of the movement Justice for El  
15 Barrio. An organization that seeks out just and  
16 fair living spaces for all.

17 Today we are here to demand  
18 that you not give us a rent increase. That is our  
19 demand today. Access to fair housing in the city  
20 is more and more expensive every day.

21 I, like millions of other  
22 immigrants and families, do not want a rent  
23 increase. On the contrary, we want accessible  
24 housing for people with low resources. I suffer  
25 every single month in trying to make my rent

1

2 payment. The high cost of living affects us in  
3 terms of our job, our health, and of course to pay  
4 for our own living space.

5

We reiterate our demand, no  
6 more rent increases. El Barrio united shall never  
7 be defeated.

8

(Audience participation.)

9

MR. RAMIREZ: Stop to the rent  
10 increases. Stop to the rent increases. Stop to  
11 the rent increases. Thank you.

12

(Applause.)

13

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

14

I believe State Senator Robert  
15 Jackson is here. Please, sir.

16

MR. JACKSON: Good evening,  
17 everyone. I'm State Senator Robert Jackson and I  
18 have the honor to represent the 31st Senatorial  
19 District, home to Inwood, Washington Heights, and  
20 parts of the Bronx, including; Kingsbridge Heights,  
21 Kingsbridge University Heights, and Morris Heights.

22

And I serve approximately  
23 339,000 constituents, families whose very survival  
24 hinges on housing stability. And tonight, I speak  
25 with urgency, with purpose, and with moral clarity.

1

2 I stand in firm opposition to the Rent Guidelines  
3 Board proposed increases of 1.75 to 4.75 for  
4 one-year leases and 3.75 to 7.75 for two-year  
5 leases beginning this October.

6

7 And these hikes have driven  
8 working-class New Yorkers and driving them already  
9 suffocating with rising costs, and stagnant wages  
10 are close to the edge, if not over it.

11

12 And let's dispense with the  
13 myth, landlords are not operating out of loss  
14 according to the Rent Guidelines Board on 2020  
15 income -- 2025 income expense study, landlords net  
16 operating income, what's left after expenses is  
17 increased by 12.1 percent. Between 2022 and 2023,  
18 even after adjusting for inflation, there's still  
19 an 8 percent gain.

20

21 Meanwhile, operating costs  
22 increased by 3.8 percent. And this isn't a crisis  
23 for the landlord, it's a payday for the landlord.

24

(Applause.)

25

MR. JACKSON: And meanwhile,  
26 tenants face a starkly different reality.  
27 According to the Rent Guidelines Board 2024 Housing  
28 Supply Report, the city's rental vacancy rate

1

2 dropped to a historic low of 1.4 percent, the  
3 lowest ever recorded. And at the same time, the  
4 Board's income and affordability study reveals that  
5 the number of New Yorkers on cash assistance rose  
6 by 16 percent, unemployment increased by 5 percent,  
7 homelessness rose nearly 9 percent, and residential  
8 eviction surged by 23 percent.

9 And this is not a moment to  
10 raise rents. It is a moment to raise our standards  
11 of care and decency.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. JACKSON: And landlord  
14 claims that they need these increases for  
15 maintenance, yet one of the top 311 complaints  
16 across the city remains poor building conditions  
17 and negligent management.

18 And in short, tenants are  
19 being charged more and getting less. And across my  
20 district, the consequences of negligence is  
21 scarcity. And everywhere in Washington Heights,  
22 the notorious landlord, Daniel Ohebshalom, was  
23 arrested not once, but twice last year for  
24 willingness -- ignoring more than over 700 housing  
25 code violations, including lead paint, mold,

1

2 electrical hazards, vermin infestation. And while  
3 tenants endured unlivable conditions, he continued  
4 to cash rent checks and turn a profit.

5 In Morris Heights, tragedy  
6 struck on December 11th, 2023, when a building at  
7 1915 Billingsley Terrace partially collapsed due to  
8 the landlord's -- gross negligence removing  
9 structural support. And over 100 people were  
10 displaced in an instant. And proof of what  
11 happened when rent revenue is hoarded, not  
12 reinvested.

13 But my office hears from  
14 constituents every week, who's drained their  
15 savings just to keep up; single parents, retirees,  
16 immigrant families. They all live with fear that  
17 one day rent hikes could push them into eviction or  
18 homelessness.

19 A vote to raise rent is not a  
20 vote to displace them. We must be clear-eyed.  
21 Housing is not just an economic issue; it's a human  
22 right.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. JACKSON: And policies  
25 that force people from their homes are acts of

1

2 violence against the working class. The choice  
3 before you is not theoretical; is painfully real.  
4 Will working people be allowed to remain in the  
5 city -- just -- the city they built, or will they  
6 be priced out, pushed aside, and raised from the  
7 future?

8 So, stand with the tenants,  
9 reject these increases, and let history record when  
10 it mattered most, your justice. The Rent  
11 Guidelines Board must put people before profit,  
12 freeze the rent. Anything less is not  
13 irresponsible; it's unjust. Thank you for the  
14 time.

15 (Applause.)

16 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

17 I now -- Councilwoman Carmen  
18 De La Rosa. Please.

19 MS. DE LA ROSA: All right.  
20 Good evening. I'm Council Member Carmen De La Rosa  
21 representing District 10 in Northern Manhattan.  
22 Also, the communities of Washington Heights,  
23 Inwood, and Marble Hill. Home of the largest stock  
24 of rent-stabilized units in the state of New York.

25 Almost a year ago. I

1

2 testified before the Rent Guidelines Board, calling  
3 for a rent freeze. Today I return with the same  
4 request, but with much more urgency.

5

My district in Northern  
6 Manhattan has over 46,000 rent-stabilized units,  
7 yet the majority of the population in Washington  
8 Heights and Inwood are rent burden. Meaning that  
9 they contribute over 30 percent of their pre-tax  
10 income to rent. An average of 90 percent of our  
11 constituent cases, address housing insecurity and  
12 the average has remained consistent since I entered  
13 office in 2022.

14

Prior to COVID-19, most New  
15 Yorkers faced significant financial strain from  
16 rent. COVID and inflation has further exacerbated  
17 the housing crisis in communities like Northern  
18 Manhattan.

19

Having experienced for years  
20 the plight of tenants, rents continue to increase  
21 every single year since the COVID crisis began,  
22 leaving tenants behind while prioritizing landlord  
23 profits.

24

Following the lifting of the  
25 eviction moratorium in 2022, eviction filings went

1

2 up 167 percent, with more than 3000 evictions by  
3 June 30 of 2023. Our shelter and housing systems  
4 are overwhelmed. There is insufficient housing  
5 stock, tens of thousands of which are warehoused by  
6 landlords who put profit over people.

7 By design in an unfair system,  
8 the most impacted communities look like mine. With  
9 approximately 70 percent of rent-stabilized  
10 households being households of color. Black and  
11 brown families are moving out of our state at a  
12 higher rate, as shown in drops in school  
13 enrollment, often citing the unaffordability of our  
14 city. Soaring food insecurity in my district leaves  
15 residents with heartbreaking decisions. Family  
16 needs to pay their rent or feed their children.

17 When landlords cite the cost  
18 of everything has gone up, making repairs more  
19 expensive, they should not exclude New York renters  
20 from that line of thinking. Tenants do not have  
21 buildings they can sell off when it is no longer  
22 profitable for them to recoup funds.

23 The aging population on a  
24 fixed income cannot go get a second job to cover  
25 the rent. Young native New Yorkers are struggling

1

2 for independence and the space to start their own  
3 families. Unable to find affordable apartments,  
4 contributing to overcrowding condition in many  
5 apartments as people are forced to split the cost  
6 to avoid becoming homeless.

7 As my constituents have often  
8 reminded me, landlords find the money when it comes  
9 to donating to pro-landlord Super PACs during  
10 election cycles to protect their interests --

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. DE LA ROSA: -- but seem  
13 to find the money to give tenants and their -- and  
14 their clients a better quality of life.

15 The plight behind the need to  
16 raise rents appears insincere in our realities.  
17 Tenants in units such as 705 and 709, West 170th  
18 Street, as Senator Jackson just testified under the  
19 neglect of the worst landlord in New York City,  
20 Ohebshalom, spending limited funds on the -- on  
21 repairs and maintenance that the landlord should  
22 have provided.

23 Our tenants are at a breaking  
24 point and an increase will not make their lives  
25 better. They'll be stuck paying rent they can't

1

2 afford as repairs remain ignored, accumulating  
3 housing court cases, and facing a Board year after  
4 year in a grueling, unfair process to avoid  
5 homelessness in their decaying homes.

6 Today I am here to join the  
7 voices of tenants across the borough and across the  
8 city calling on you, on all of you, to do the right  
9 thing. New Yorkers do not deserve a rent increase;  
10 they desperately need compassion and a reprieve in  
11 the form of a freeze to continue to fight for the  
12 homes and communities they've built.

13 In what is supposed to be a  
14 city of opportunity and the greatest city in the  
15 world, I join my constituents in asking you for a  
16 rent freeze. Thank you.

17 (Applause.)

18 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

19 I would like to call up Sam  
20 Greenberg, followed by Damien Tejada and Spiros  
21 Sonos (phonetic).

22 Mr. Greenberg?

23 MR. GREENBERG: Hello. My  
24 name is Sam, I'm with the Party for Socialism  
25 Liberation.

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I am physically disabled. I was born here and I was raised here. I spent my entire life living in New York and I have loved every single moment of it. I'm also terrified of public speaking but I am here today because I do not know how much longer I can live in the city.

Every single week you have State and Federal Governments cutting vital services that we need, whether that be Medicaid or social security, to the point where simply living is becoming extremely difficult. My wheelchair, for example, costs \$10,000. I have constant medical expenses that cost tens of thousands of more dollars. And this is, of course, not even mentioning utilities, groceries, and so much more that are constantly increasing because, you know, these people are chasing ever greater profits.

And now we are here talking about the possibility of rents increasing again. Simply put, I and so many people like me cannot afford to live in the city any longer. You know, sometimes I hear people say like, "Oh, why are there so few born and raised New Yorkers left in the city?" Well, my answer to that is, look around

1

2 you. Right? We cannot afford to live here, right?  
3 We are being forced out of a city that we love,  
4 even though we want to stay.

5 And for what, you know, we  
6 have landlords sitting here earning more and more  
7 money. They say that they need this money so they  
8 can help repair things, but I'm sure so many people  
9 in this room can tell you that's not happening,  
10 right?

11 We don't need higher rents.  
12 What we need is actual tenant control over the rent  
13 guidelines.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. GREENBERG: What we need  
16 is an increase in rent-controlled and  
17 rent-stabilized apartments that are constantly  
18 being demolished and turned into luxury housing  
19 that people cannot afford.

20 What we need is actually  
21 guaranteed housing. We built these housings,  
22 right? The working class built the housing. We  
23 should be able to live in them.

24 (Applause.)

25 MR. GREENBERG: No matter what

1  
2 happens, we need to be making sure that we're  
3 getting organized. Rent stabilization came here to  
4 the city because tenants stood up and did not  
5 budge. So, we need to get organized now. Thank  
6 you.

7 (Applause.)

8 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

9 Damien Tejada, followed by  
10 Spiros Sonos, and Yun Chen.

11 Mr. Tejada?

12 MR. TEJADA: Hi. Good  
13 evening. Well, I'm up here with everyone --  
14 alongside everyone in the room to denounce the rent  
15 hikes and call for a rent freeze. I've lived in  
16 this city my entire life. Moving in between the  
17 Bronx and Manhattan, I've seen the short-term and  
18 long-term effects of gentrification and  
19 displacement in every single neighborhood that I've  
20 lived in.

21 And so, I would like to speak  
22 about like the working-class experience here for  
23 New Yorkers, right? Because that's who's in this  
24 room right now. That's who makes up the majority  
25 of the city. That's who makes up the majority of

1

2 the people who are living in dire situations.

3

4 It is -- I'm here to say that  
5 an increase of 7.75 percent for rent-stabilized  
6 housing is ridiculous. It is unreasonable that  
7 landlords are allowed to raise the rent for  
8 operating costs while we continue to live in  
9 conditions that don't get any better. When over 50  
10 percent of our wages go into our rent, go into our  
11 housing, and we still live in the same level of  
12 housing. When the heat and the hot water don't  
13 work properly. When I have to do the maintenance  
14 and repairs in my own apartment when the cost  
15 should more than cover those services.

16

17 It is an unjust increase when  
18 New York City landlords in the last year alone have  
19 made a 12 percent profit and they want to get up  
20 here and talk about operating costs, shame on them.

21

(Applause.)

22

23 MR. TEJADA: Shame. The  
24 Borough of Manhattan is one of the most expensive  
25 places to live on the planet. We don't live in a  
vacuum. These rent hikes come at a time when the  
cost of living in this city is at an all-time high,  
due to inflation wages, due to inflation wages that

1

2 have staggered, the prices of groceries, goods,  
3 gas, and utilities are the highest it's ever been.  
4 When the transportation costs keep going up and  
5 working people continue having to foot the bill, we  
6 can thank the MTA for that.

7                   When we are stuck paying debts  
8 of all types, right? Student debts, predatory  
9 loans, when the taxes that we pay don't even go  
10 towards the infrastructure of the neighborhoods  
11 that we live in. They come at a time when good,  
12 hardworking, honest people are constantly living  
13 under threat of deportation who can't afford  
14 medical crisis or an emergency. It's more than  
15 unjust. The rent increase is criminal.

16                   So, check it. I'm going to  
17 wrap this up because I want to hear some of the  
18 other voices in my community here.

19                   And I'm going to address the  
20 two groups here. One significant and one not  
21 significant. First, the not significant group Rent  
22 Guidelines Board. You were undemocratically  
23 appointed by the mayor, the "sham" Mayor of New  
24 York City, Eric Adams. You do not represent the  
25 people in this room. No one here voted for you.

1

2 And if you vote for an increase, I want you to know  
3 that you are sending the elderly adults and  
4 children to bed hungry. Shame on you if you vote  
5 for this increase

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. TEJADA: Now to my  
8 significant group, to my working people. They  
9 don't speak on behalf of us. We didn't vote them  
10 in. We are the majority of this city. We make up  
11 the majority of this city. It wouldn't run without  
12 us, we run this city. It was working people who  
13 created rent control and together we can build a  
14 more affordable, rent-controlled New York City.

15 (Audience participation.)

16 MR. TEJADA: We demand a rent  
17 freeze and nothing less. My name is Damien, I'm  
18 with the Party for Social and Liberation.

19 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.

20 MR. TEJADA: I just got one  
21 more thing to ask you all.

22 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.

23 MR. TEJADA: What do we want?

24 AUDIENCE: Rent freeze.

25 MR. TEJADA: What do we want?

1

2

AUDIENCE: Rent freeze.

3

MR. TEJADA: And when do we

4

want it?

5

AUDIENCE: Now.

6

MR. TEJADA: What do we want?

7

AUDIENCE: Rent freeze.

8

MR. TEJADA: And when do we

9

want it?

10

AUDIENCE: Now.

11

MR. TEJADA: Thank you. Power

12

to the people.

13

(Applause.)

14

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

15

Spiros Sonos, Yun Chen, and

16

Kayla Popuchet.

17

Sir.

18

MR. SPIROS: All right.

19

Hello, my name is Spiros and I'm the New York State

20

Executive of the American Communist Party. It has

21

come under our attention that yet again, our

22

government is putting the interests of speculators

23

and landowners ahead of the popular demands of the

24

working class and is considering to siphon away

25

even more of their wages from their own pockets.

1  
2                   Me and my comrade brothers and  
3 sisters have attended and observed past meetings  
4 and we can't help but feel angry at the site of  
5 tenants, both young and old pleading, begging even,  
6 a Board that is composed of majority of real  
7 estates, landlord and other property interest  
8 groups that we are supposed to somehow trust that  
9 they will adhere to the popular demand to freeze  
10 the rent and do right by us.

11                   I am not here to beg and I'm  
12 not here to plead either, but I am here to tell.  
13 Instead of targeting the largest real estate and  
14 land-developing monopolies like Blackstone that are  
15 responsible for reducing the supply stock of  
16 residential units. Instead of dissolving tax  
17 breaks, which makes the city lose billions a year  
18 in tax revenue for these developers to build luxury  
19 condos and no one can afford.

20                   Instead of targeting those who  
21 sit on vacant properties and accrue value for  
22 speculative purposes, while our tenants are being  
23 -- while our citizens are being displaced, the  
24 property interests of this Board who are at  
25 interest to the property interests of our

1

2 government, wants to raise the rents of over 2  
3 million people within this city.

4

5 It's even more insulting when  
6 the landlords themselves cry victim for the high  
7 taxes and high operational costs, when in reality,  
8 all they do is pass the burden onto the renters who  
9 still want to say to our faces how rents need to  
10 increase.

11

12 The writing is on the wall.  
13 Raising the rents may not be the straw that breaks  
14 the camel's back, but in due time, a crisis will  
15 come when workers, let alone those who subsist on  
16 welfare, will be unable to deliver those razor-thin  
17 profit margins that these capitalists depend on,  
18 and all hell will break loose.

19

20 Housing is for living in, not  
21 for speculation. Freeze the rent. Thank you.

22

(Applause.)

23

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

24

Thank you, sir.

25

Yun Chen, Kayla Popuchet, and  
Casey McNaughton. Ms. Chen?

26

MS. CHEN: Hi. My name is Yun  
Chen and I'm a member of Chinatown Tenants Union.

1  
2 I'm here testifying today on behalf of our  
3 250-member tenant Union in Chinatown. The rent is  
4 already so high that working people cannot afford  
5 to live. We've been talking to our neighbors and  
6 we met a father in the park. He works six days a  
7 week and currently only has one day a week to spend  
8 with his daughter. If you raise the rent, he won't  
9 be able to see his children anymore. Do you  
10 understand the effect that this has on families?  
11 This is a lifetime of sorrow and trauma for these  
12 children. For many of the kids in Chinatown, they  
13 wake up in the morning, their dad already went to  
14 work. They go to bed at night and their dad's  
15 still not home from work. Their dad has to work,  
16 so their dad becomes a stranger.

17 In Lori's side in Chinatown,  
18 right now, families making more than \$250,000 a  
19 year are flooding into the neighborhood and  
20 families making less than \$100,000 a year are being  
21 displaced out.

22 Chinatown has almost 50  
23 percent rent-regulated apartments. If there wasn't  
24 rent regulation, there would be no Chinatown.  
25 Without Chinatown, what will all the tourists come

1

2 to see? Won't that affect New York City's  
3 economy? You all come to Chinatown to eat, and  
4 take pictures, and play. Do you understand the  
5 struggles of families in the neighborhood?

6 Right now in Chinatown,  
7 families of four to five are crammed into one room.  
8 They want better, but they can't afford to find  
9 somewhere with more space. In one apartment,  
10 there's two to three families living there. You  
11 have to wait in line to use the kitchen, and you  
12 have to wait in line to use the bathroom.

13 If you raise the rent, we  
14 don't know how to keep living. We need a rent  
15 freeze. We want to live in dignity and we want a  
16 rent freeze. We want to stop evictions and we want  
17 to stop deportations. We need to protect our  
18 neighborhoods and only unity is strength. We need  
19 a rent freeze.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. CHEN: Thank you.

22 CHAIR. APPLE: Thank you.

23 Thank you.

24 Kayla Popuchet, Casey

25 McNaughton, and Fernandez Perez.

1  
2 MS. POPUCHET: Hello. My name  
3 is Kayla Popuchet, and I am a member of the New  
4 York Chapter of the American Communist Party. I'm  
5 a New Yorker, born and raised, working in tenant  
6 advocacy for nearly 10 years no. And year after  
7 year, I've watched community members come to the  
8 Rent Guidelines Board to share their woes, which  
9 fall on deaf ears. We are demanding from a Board  
10 that is chaired by a real estate CEO and all but  
11 three members who represent private sector interest  
12 in price gouging the working class to contradict  
13 their own paychecks.

14 This Board is merely  
15 bureaucratic theater, the decisions were already  
16 made. When housing is treated as a commodity,  
17 decisions will always prioritize the interests of  
18 capital.

19 So, I'm not talking to the  
20 Board tonight. I'm talking to the people who make  
21 this city run but are struggling to stay in it.  
22 Most rent-stabilized buildings in the city aren't  
23 owned by mom and pap landlords. They're owned by  
24 big corporate forms, landlords with thousands of  
25 units. The top 10 landlords alone own more than

1

2 50,000 rent-stabilized apartments.

3

4 So, these aren't people  
5 renting out their basements. They're companies  
6 backed by banks, asset managers, and private equity  
7 firms. The most recent city data shows that  
8 landlords of rent-stabilized units in our city are  
9 currently collecting an average of 1,786 per  
10 apartment, while only spending actually 1,000 on  
11 operating costs, yielding a profit margin of over  
12 35 percent. All while claiming that they need rent  
13 hikes to survive. Now you multiply that by  
14 hundreds of units and you're looking at millions in  
15 annual income. And those profits have been rising  
16 for the last three decades.

16

17 And yet, tenants we are told  
18 that we have to accept yearly rent hikes because  
19 landlord's costs are going up. But even with  
20 inflation, insurance hikes, and labor costs,  
21 landlords' profits still outpace their expenses.  
22 So, what we're paying for is to preserve a rate of  
23 return. And that's what this is all about. This  
24 is about profit.

24

25 To us, these buildings are our  
homes, but to them, their assets. And when profit

1

2 margins shrink even slightly, they respond by  
3 pushing tenants out, holding units vacant, or  
4 lobbying our government for higher rents.

5                   There are tens of thousands of  
6 rent-stabilized apartments sitting empty right now,  
7 completely withheld off the market. And not  
8 because there's no demand, but because the legal  
9 rent is too low for these owners to return -- to  
10 get the return that they expect. So, that is  
11 market manipulation.

12                   (Applause.)

13                   MS. POPUCHET: In this city --  
14 in this city, in this system, landlords have  
15 control over the land that they do not live on, and  
16 people they don't know. And that control is backed  
17 by the law, by the courts, and by this Board.

18                   So, our power is not in this  
19 room begging the rich for crumbs, but it is with  
20 our collective organization of the working class.  
21 So this city isn't suffering from a housing  
22 shortage, it is a surplus of greed that we're  
23 suffering from. And we have to stop asking for  
24 mercy and start building real power. Thank you.

25                   (Applause.)

1

2

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

3

Casey McNaughton, Fernandez

4

Perez --

5

MS. MCNAUGHTON: Hi there. My

6

name is Casey McNaughton

7

CHAIR APPLE: -- and Sayed

8

Ali, sorry.

9

MS. MCNAUGHTON: You're all

10

good.

11

CHAIR APPLE: Please.

12

MS. MCNAUGHTON: I'm a member

13

leader with the Youth Alliance for Housing, and I'm

14

speaking as a rent-stabilized tenant in Astoria,

15

Queens.

16

My family was priced out of

17

their neighborhoods in New York City almost 27

18

years ago, and now I'm being priced out of mine.

19

Right now, I'm rent-burdened.

20

Approximately 42 percent of my income goes to rent.

21

And if my rent increases even a percentage, I'm

22

going to have to make some really hard decisions

23

about my life. About the medical care that I and

24

my family rely on, about how I can be a caregiver

25

to my aging father and my sister. And ultimately,

1

2 it will determine if I can live in my home any  
3 longer.

4 Last year, it took me calling  
5 311 three different times for my landlord to turn  
6 on the heat. Water damage is everywhere in the  
7 apartment from a leak caused by a poorly maintained  
8 facade that took seven years to repair. Yet, I  
9 know that landlords made 12 percent last year. 12  
10 percent. And what did my landlord do with that  
11 money? He got renovated three of the  
12 non-rent-stabilized apartments and hiked up the  
13 rent another \$1,700 in those apartments. He is  
14 making out like a bandit.

15 FEMALE VOICE: He's a bandit.

16 MS. MCNAUGHTON: That money is  
17 not returning to my apartment or any of the  
18 rent-stabilized units in my building. My neighbors  
19 jokingly say that we will never be able to move  
20 somewhere else, and it's not a joke. We look  
21 around at what we have, and we realize it's all we  
22 got. And so I'd like my building to be  
23 well-maintained and I'd like the rent to be frozen.

24 This Board does a lot of  
25 talking about data. I have seen you guys purr over

1

2 it so much in the past couple of months. And look  
3 around this room, this room is filled with living  
4 data points. People here are begging you to freeze  
5 the rent. You are kicking people out of their  
6 homes. These rent hikes kill us.

7

(Applause.)

8

MS. MCNAUGHTON: There is a  
9 human cost of these rent increases, and that's why  
10 I am asking the Board today to reconsider these  
11 ranges and instead a rent freeze. But we really  
12 deserve rent rollbacks. Thank you.

13

(Applause.)

14

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

15

Fernandez Perez, Sayed Ali,

16

and Emily Rodriguez.

17

MS. PEREZ: Good afternoon.

18

My name is Fernandez Perez. I'm part of Make the

19

Road New York, and I have lived in the city for

20

several years. I am a tenant in a rent-stabilized

21

apartment at 352 Bleecker Street. And I am here to

22

ask the Board to freeze or stop the rent hike.

23

Speaking here is a little

24

difficult for me, but I am tired of the abuse of

25

the -- injustice and the unfairness of it all. I

1

2 live in an apartment where the owner just refuses  
3 to do even the most basic repairs. And I have had  
4 to call 311 many times for simple things, including  
5 to turn on the heat.

6 I also suffer harassment on  
7 the landlord's part. She makes me feel as if I do  
8 not have the right to complain, as if being a  
9 tenant means I am nothing. I'm thankful for the  
10 help that I received from Make the Road New York  
11 because I was able to obtain a lease renewal. This  
12 tires you, and it also affects you emotionally and  
13 psychologically. Even though work or jobs are not  
14 the best and you get tired, but you have to keep  
15 working just to pay the rent. With just a little  
16 effort, the minimum that we require is just to be  
17 able to live with dignity and fairness.

18 And now you want to raise the  
19 rent. Why? For what? Why should we pay more to  
20 live in fear, to live in the cold -- to live with  
21 fear? Almost 40 percent of my income goes to my  
22 rent, and a new increase is just unfair. With this  
23 increase, I can be evicted from my home, and I do  
24 not know where I would go.

25 From the deepest part of my

1

2 heart, I ask you, please don't turn your backs on  
3 us. Do not approve a rent hike this year. Think  
4 of us, those who suffer in silence. Those of us  
5 who are always on our feet, struggling because we  
6 have no other option. Please don't increase the  
7 rent. Thank you.

8

(Applause.)

9

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you,  
10 ma'am. Thank you. Sayed Ali. Followed by Emily  
11 Rodriguez and then Brandon Barrera.

12

Mr. Ali.

13

MR. ALI: My name is Ali. I'm  
14 a longtime resident of New York City and a member  
15 of the American Communist Party. I wanted to  
16 follow up with what Spiros and Kayla just mentioned  
17 and give concrete details about how this Board is  
18 fundamentally at odds with the people of our city.

19

I'm going to expose how their  
20 decisions enable the largest theft from working New  
21 Yorkers in decades. So, let me tell you about A&E  
22 Real Estate, owned by Douglas Eisenberg, and how  
23 this board helps them turn our homes into ATMs.

24

So, in 2021, A&E took out a  
25 \$506 million loan from JPMorgan Chase, leveraging



1

2 inflated rents based on DHCR, rubber-stamped MCIs  
3 plus your annual increases. A&E paid \$540,000 to  
4 the attorney general for illegal buyouts. And this  
5 is the system that your guidelines prop up.

6 A&E's business model  
7 explicitly targets, "Heavily rent-stabilized  
8 buildings." They deploy capital from pension funds  
9 and endowments, meaning Wall Street money, to  
10 extract wealth through DHCR's MCI loophole and your  
11 guaranteed annual increases.

12 This Board pretends to protect  
13 tenants while being a crucial part of the  
14 systematic theft. Your annual rent increases  
15 provide the baseline that makes over-leveraged  
16 speculation profitable. You give landlords, like  
17 A&E, the cushion they need to take on massive debt  
18 knowing that between DHRs, MCIs, and your  
19 increases, they'll extract enough money from us to  
20 pay their lenders.

21 Stop improving rent increases  
22 -- stop approving rent increases that just service  
23 voluntary debt. Stop being DHCR's partner in this  
24 whole con game, or just admit what you really are,  
25 a protection racket for financial parasites feeding

1

2 on New York's working class. Thank you.

3

(Applause.)

4

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

5

Emily Rodriguez, Brandon

6

Barrera, and Audrey Lindsay.

7

Ms. Rodriguez.

8

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Hi. I'm Emily

9

Rodriguez. I'm a member with Youth Alliance for

10

Housing. I'm 23 and I've been organizing

11

in-housing since I was 16 years old. And you know

12

why? Because I'm from Williamsburg, Brooklyn, and

13

I know what it's like to be displaced. I know what

14

it's like to see my neighbors be displaced and I'm

15

tired of it. I'm really angry, and I'm tired of

16

being here in these places asking you to care about

17

young people like me and my friends.

18

(Applause.)

19

MS. RODRIGUEZ: But I've

20

watched my neighborhood change drastically over the

21

years, and I'm really angry. The rent is too damn

22

high and it's been too damn high for a while. The

23

Rent Guidelines Board has the power to stop the

24

cultural genocide that started decades ago in

25

Williamsburg and continues on today with rent

1

2 hikes, like what you're trying to pass this year.

3

4 If my family faces more rent  
5 hikes, we will be another Dominican family  
6 displaced from Williamsburg, which is all we know.  
7 It is all I've ever known. I deserve to remain in  
8 my neighborhood. My parents deserve to age in  
9 dignity in their neighborhood. What is the Rent  
10 Guidelines Board doing about this? Because I've  
11 seen nothing.

11

12 Tenants are here begging you  
13 to consider them and we need now more than ever, a  
14 rent freeze. Thank you so much.

14

(Applause.)

15

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

16

Brandon Barrera, Audrey

17

Lindsay, and Kenny Schafer.

18

Mr. Barrera?

19

MR. BARRERA: First and

20

foremost, freeze rent. Full stop.

21

(Applause).

22

MR. BARRERA: Hello, everyone.

23

My name is Brandon. I'm an organizer with the

24

Party for Socialism and Liberation. And I have a

25

question. Is there anyone here who hasn't been

1

2 left dazed by the increase in the cost of food of  
3 groceries?

4

(No response.)

5

6 MR. ARRERA: Is there anyone  
7 here who hasn't been left struggling with the rise  
8 of cost and basic goods, clothing?

8

(No response.)

9

10 MR. BARRERA: And here we are  
11 again, year after year, fighting just to keep the  
12 rent affordable. And before an unelected Rent  
13 Guidelines Board, by the way, right? And we're  
14 fighting to prevent an increase of 2 percent, 4  
15 percent, an increase as high as 8 percent at the  
16 same time as these other costs -- living costs go  
17 up.

17

18 So, when your \$50 at the  
19 supermarket just doesn't quite cut it, maybe you  
20 can get by a couple of days. And if you have a  
21 family, I mean, I can't even imagine the difficulty  
22 that struggling New York families are going  
23 through.

23

24 So, that's going on. At the  
25 same time, we have to survive. We have to navigate  
a federal budget threatening to kick millions of

1  
2 Americans off of social programs. How many of us  
3 won't qualify under the proposed budget? About 40  
4 million Americans rely on SNAP benefits and 3  
5 million of those are in New York State alone. What  
6 does it look like when those benefits get cut? How  
7 do we make those ends meet? And on top of that, we  
8 got to talk about a rent increase. So,  
9 we have greed-flation on the one hand, cuts to  
10 vital social programs on the other. We have the  
11 raising of the rents that we have to pay to  
12 profit-seeking landlords.

13 AUDIENCE: Shame.

14 MR. BARRERA: Exactly. Well,  
15 that's right, right? Come on. Now, like I might  
16 have been born on a Tuesday, but I surely wasn't  
17 born last Tuesday. And we got to say that because  
18 here's the thing. They have the money, right?  
19 The government has the money to put 20,000 new ICE  
20 agents out on the streets.

21 AUDIENCE: Shame.

22 MR. BARRERA: Thugs snatching  
23 people. They have the money to call the military  
24 in, to call people standing up for their neighbors,  
25 for their communities. That does exist. That

1

2 money is there. They do have the money. Our  
3 money, by the way, taxpayer money to cut taxes for  
4 the most parasitic, do-nothing millionaires and  
5 billionaires, because make no mistake, that's what  
6 those tax cuts are for.

7 So, we also -- and right now  
8 -- right now, what we're seeing is that they're  
9 trying to sell us, a war in Iran. There's money  
10 for that.

11 MALE VOICE: Shame.

12 (Audience participation.)

13 MR. BARRERA: There is money  
14 for that, make no mistake. So, let's not be  
15 fooled. Freeze the rent and tax the billionaires,  
16 these anti-social billionaires, to fund the  
17 dignified housing that we deserve.

18 MALE VOICE: That's right.

19 MR. BARRERA: Say no to war --

20 CHAIR APPLE: If you could  
21 finish, sir.

22 MR. BARRERA: -- and instead,  
23 let's fund healthcare and education. We need to  
24 fight together for solutions that go beyond begging  
25 the RGB year after year. And in the words of our

1

2 brother Kwame Sere (phonetic), "Organize, organize,  
3 organize. Thank you.

4

(Applause.)

5

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

6

Audrey Lindsay, followed by

7

Kenny Schafer and Steve Morales.

8

Ms. Lindsay?

9

MS. LINDSAY: Hi. My name is

10

Audrey Lindsay. I'm here as a member of the

11

Full-Time Tenant Union. My landlord is Full Time

12

Watermark, a large corporate landlord with hundreds

13

of buildings across New York City. Specifically,

14

I'm from our Harlem Chapter, I'm representing 514

15

and 516 West 135th Street, which are

16

rent-stabilized buildings.

17

Almost every apartment in our

18

buildings has recurring ceiling leaks because the

19

plumbing system is non-functional. And we've also

20

had multiple apartments with electrical fires

21

because the electrical system has been set up in a

22

dangerous way. And we've raised this issue to the

23

landlord through a petition and they've

24

acknowledged that there are problems, but said that

25

they won't do anything about it.

1

2

3

4

5

6

So, this is what we get for our big rent increases that we've been paying in the past couple of years. Not really getting anything for our money. So, let's freeze the rent. Thank you.

7

(Applause.)

8

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

9

Kenny Schafer, followed by

10

Steven Morales and Stella Ron.

11

Sir?

12

MR. SCHAFFER: Good afternoon.

13

My name is Kenny Schafer. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant in this neighborhood my whole life. A member of Met Council Action and co-chair of its board, and I work as a legal aid society housing attorney in Queens.

18

Landlord profit margins

19

industry-wide are bloated and obscene, given the

20

chronic and acute affordability crisis plaguing

21

tenants in New York City. An affordability crisis

22

which this Board was created to cure, not

23

exacerbate as it has decade after decade.

24

In case you haven't read the

25

Rent Stabilization Law of 1969, it created this



1

2 The rest is just noise or self-serving, unsworn,  
3 anecdotal stories from landlords who won't open  
4 their books.

5 But you don't have to raise  
6 the rents for a million struggling households to  
7 cover a few landlords who might be struggling.  
8 It's not widely known, but under the Rent  
9 Stabilization Law Section 26-511(c)(6)(a), any  
10 landlord who opens their books and is not getting a  
11 fair net operating income can get a special  
12 hardship increase in addition to what you impose on  
13 everybody else. But guess what? In the statute,  
14 fair net operating income is defined as 5 percent,  
15 not 39.1 percent.

16 So, stop relying on  
17 discredited trickle-down economics. Public  
18 members, you have one job: do it. Protect tenants,  
19 not landlords. Roll back rents to allow 10 percent  
20 net operating income.

21 (Applause.)

22 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

23 Steven Morales, followed by Stella Ron and Red  
24 Young (phonetic).

25 Mr. Morales.

1

2

MR. MORALES: Good evening.

3

My name is Steven Morales, and I'm testifying on

4

behalf of Manhattan Borough President, Mark Levine.

5

Thank you, Chair Apple and members of the Rent

6

Guidelines Board for the opportunity to testify

7

today.

8

Right now, New York is in the

9

midst of the most severe housing crisis in our

10

city's history. Homelessness is at a record high,

11

eviction filings are nearly back to pre-pandemic

12

levels, and we have housing shortages in every

13

borough, pushing rent skyward. The rental vacancy

14

rate now at only 1.4 percent is the lowest it has

15

been since 1968 and in Manhattan, the median rent

16

is over \$5,000 a month. Low-income working --

17

low-income working and middle-class families

18

stretch every dollar as they try to live and raise

19

a family.

20

To address this crisis, we

21

must use every tool at our disposal to increase

22

housing supply and affordability while at the same

23

time protecting tenants from displacement from

24

their homes. That is why we need to continue to

25

build more housing, including low-income housing in

1

2 Manhattan and across the city. It's why we must  
3 ensure tenants facing eviction have access to legal  
4 representation. And it's why this Board must ban  
5 -- or pass a rent freeze this year for New Yorkers  
6 living in the nearly 1 million rent-stabilized  
7 apartments across the city.

8 It's my understanding that the  
9 Board is considering a 1.75 to 4.75 increase on  
10 one-year leases and a greater increase on two-year  
11 leases, largely due to concerns regarding rising  
12 costs for property owners.

13 While these concerns must be  
14 considered, we must also consider the needs of  
15 tenants across the city who are struggling  
16 financially. Inflation and the consumer price  
17 index continue to rise. Average wages in real  
18 terms are declining, and tenants are spending  
19 larger portions of their income on rent. Now is  
20 not the time to put additional financial burden on  
21 renters.

22 It is also true that the  
23 number of financially distressed, rent-stabilized  
24 buildings in Manhattan and across the city is on  
25 the rise. And the city must do more to support the

1

2 capital and operational needs of these buildings in  
3 order to preserve this critical part of our  
4 affordable housing stock without forcing tenants to  
5 absorb the cost.

6 We know that rent-stabilized  
7 tenants cannot afford rent increases. Increasing  
8 the rent as this Board has done each of the last  
9 three years, would risk displacing them. Our  
10 city's future depends on addressing the historic  
11 housing emergency and ensuring that tenants can  
12 afford to stay in their homes. That means voting  
13 to freeze the rent for rent-stabilized tenants this  
14 year. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

15 (Applause.)

16 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

17 Sheila Rone, followed by Red  
18 Young and Rosa Jaquez. Jaquez, sorry.

19 Please, Ms. Rone.

20 MS. RONE: I represent  
21 Washington Heights, the Met Council, and the  
22 Housing Tenant Association.

23 And most of the tenants in  
24 here. I co-sign everything you've said, okay? I  
25 am a retired teacher. I'm 70 years old, okay? So,

1

2 I guess, you can figure out how much pension I  
3 probably have.

4 The rent increase is going  
5 into -- thank you. It's -- thank you. I know I'm  
6 short. It's dipping into my pension, and it's  
7 really messing with my social security. Now, how  
8 much more rent could I pay with a pension, a  
9 teacher's pension? And I'm not Tier 1. And I must  
10 give credit to Michael Musgrove (phonetic), and I'm  
11 glad that he did not endorse a mayoral candidate  
12 until they started focusing on education.

13 The problem with the rent  
14 increase, I think, one person hit on it really --  
15 maybe several people. Landlords own too many  
16 buildings. That is your problem. They own too  
17 many buildings. They steal from Peter to pay Paul.  
18 They neglect buildings, and then they won't even  
19 help the tenants. If the tenants start a tenant  
20 association, they harass them. They harass them.

21 MALE VOICE: Shame.

22 MS. RONE: Is that right? We  
23 don't have a right to our say about how we should  
24 live? This is the quality of our life. They are  
25 predatory thieves. When I came into my apartment,

1

2 I had to pay \$500 just for them to hold it, okay?

3 I didn't care if they held it or not, but I wanted  
4 an apartment, so I had to pay that, okay?

5 Now they want to charge us for  
6 air conditioners that we don't even use all year  
7 round. They want to charge us for pets. They want  
8 to charge us for lease. You split the lease last  
9 year, why? That never happened in New York  
10 history. You split that lease. And when you did  
11 that, you sunk us.

12 Now I heard a landlord say,  
13 "Oh, well, we need the money to stay afloat. Well,  
14 we need the money to stay afloat." We need the --

15 FEMALE VOICE: We need.

16 MS. RONE: -- for you to roll  
17 it back so we can stay afloat because you're  
18 sinking us.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. RONE: You are sinking,  
21 New Yorkers. Many New Yorkers have left this city.  
22 I would've left, but I don't drive. That's the  
23 only -- that's the only reason. I've lived here  
24 all my entire life, and I've been spoiled by the  
25 bus and train. That's the only reason. Plus my

1

2 medical. I would have to come back here for my  
3 medical. Is that fair? I've had two heart  
4 attacks, cancer, diabetes, and I'm 70 years old.  
5 Mind you, how much more can they take from my  
6 pension and social security without me being  
7 homeless?

8 Now, I'm a professional person  
9 like many of you are. How do you feel? You -- we  
10 are at your mercy, and you have the decision to  
11 make about our lives. You think about our lives.  
12 Think about it.

13 These people are predatory  
14 thieves, okay? And you allow them to own more than  
15 one building, okay? And they can't even take care  
16 of them. So, what should we do; beg you? Because  
17 that's what we are doing, okay? And a lot of us  
18 can't afford to move. We are stuck. And we are at  
19 your mercy. And we are begging you -- begging you  
20 with every ounce of our being to look at our  
21 problem.

22 And I have some homework for  
23 you, too. I'll leave it at the table so that you  
24 can analyze what I'm talking about. And a lottery  
25 system? We are -- we are not a -- we are not

1

2 games. We are not people that want to be in a  
3 game.

4

(Applause.)

5

MS. RONE: We're human. We're  
6 HI, we got human intelligence, not AI intelligence.

7

I thank you for doing the job  
8 that you do because it must be very difficult, you  
9 know, for you to go home and think about what  
10 everybody said. And I hope you do, because this is  
11 critical to all of us, to our children. Our  
12 children won't be able to live here. And if they  
13 do, then they're going to have to live with  
14 roommates. You know, the dormitory model? That's  
15 part of the lottery system. Oh, I tried that.  
16 Right away, that's a discriminatory scam.

17

So, you tell me and you tell the  
18 rest of these people that they deserve better. We  
19 deserve better. We built this city.

20

(Applause.)

21

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

22

MS. RONE: We built it and  
23 they're tearing it down. Don't let them do this to  
24 us.

25

(Applause.)

1

2

MR. APPLE: Thank you, ma'am.

3

Thank you. Red Young, followed by Rosa Jaquez and

4

Michael Davis. Please.

5

MR. YOUNG: What's going on,

6

everybody, people of New York.

7

So, I want to also ask for

8

mercy. That is the first thing that I think is on

9

my mind. And I think that's what everybody in here

10

feels like. Let's be realistic about it. We could

11

shout at each other all we want but what we really

12

all know we want is goodness. Y'all don't want to

13

be evil, I know it. We all -- we all want

14

something here that is just basic dignity and y'all

15

know it's okay to provide the end.

16

Look, we don't have to make

17

enemies out of each other, we just have to

18

understand each other. And something that I know

19

y'all understand is that New York is about the

20

people. I'm sure many of y'all are actual New

21

Yorkers. You know, that's a badge of honor, right

22

there. We're real people. And the only reason we

23

are that way is because we have a city to come from

24

with other people and their cultures and their

25

contributions. We contribute as New Yorkers and if

1

2 we not here, how are we going to contribute to it?

3

4 If we aren't allowed at the  
5 table whatsoever, we can't have a discussion. I  
6 mean, something like this is really healthy but we  
7 need y'all to constantly hear this is the top  
8 priority for maintaining dignity, humanity,  
9 goodness, New York, all of that stuff. This is the  
10 big thing. If we're not here, this is the last  
11 chance of all of this and y'all know it. We're at  
12 the end.

12

13 So, there's only one right  
14 choice to make and y'all know what it is. And  
15 that's why I ask for mercy on behalf of all of us  
16 here. Y'all know the right choice, and I'm  
17 confident you will make it. Thanks.

17

(Applause.)

18

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.

19

Thank you.

20

Rosa Jaquez, Michael Davis --

21

just one second -- and Adam Blazig.

22

Please, ma'am.

23

MS. JAQUEZ: Blessings to all.

24

My name is Rosa Jaquez, and I represent Washington

25

Heights in Inwood. I am the president of the

1

2 Communal Organization for Northern Manhattan. And  
3 I'm also the president for the Seaman Avenue Block  
4 Association.

5 And I have to say, I am  
6 exhausted to have to come here every single year to  
7 offer testimony. And I thank you for listening to  
8 all of us. But I hope that you haven't already  
9 made your decision and that you'll please listen to  
10 our testimonies.

11 I'm not against landlords,  
12 that's not my MO of life. The only thing I want  
13 for you to please respect the law, and also respect  
14 the service for which we all pay. That it's not  
15 fair that during the winter with temperatures going  
16 below zero, we don't have working heat or hot  
17 water. And that our buildings be littered with  
18 garbage, the front area of the building because no  
19 one wants to clean or repair. And if they do  
20 repair, they do a shoddy job. And the problem  
21 comes back once again.

22 I also think that slavery is  
23 there, however, it's just changed its status.  
24 Because I believe we're the new slaves in the -- in  
25 the immediate presence. And that's not funny

1

2 because we work to live a dignified place and we  
3 truly love New York City. We're still living in  
4 the most expensive city in the world, and it's one  
5 of the most expensive cities. And we're still  
6 living here. We're still here.

7 We want repairs. We want  
8 dignity in our homes. We want our rights to be  
9 respected that if I have a frozen rent or control  
10 or hold by the court, there's a reason for that.  
11 And the landlord is still not doing their job.

12 They sent me -- they sent me a  
13 rent bill stating that I have not paid. They make  
14 it seem like I'm a criminal and I'm a retired  
15 person for several years after 40 years of work.  
16 Please stop. Enough. You need to clean the mold.  
17 You have to clean the buildings. You have to make  
18 the repairs, and you have to provide us with heat  
19 and hot water. It's not fair that the radiators  
20 explode in our apartment because someone negligent  
21 doesn't want to repair it. God bless you.

22 (Applause.)

23 CHAIR APPLE: Gracias. Thank  
24 you, ma'am. Thank you.

25 Michael Davis, followed by

1

2 Adam Blazig and Joe Rappaport. Mr. Davis.

3

MR. DAVIS: Hi. I don't know  
4 if I could have followed that. I'm a retiree, so I  
5 qualify to have a senior citizen rent increase  
6 exemption. I'm 70 years old. No --

7

MR. APPLE: Sir, can you reach  
8 up the mic a little bit so we can hear you better?

9

MR. DAVIS: Okay.

10

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

11

MR. DAVIS: I'll bend down.

12

CHAIR APPLE: We don't want  
13 you to --

14

MR. DAVIS: I'm tall anyway.  
15 Okay. Thank you. Let's see. I've been retired  
16 for a couple of years. I'm 72 years old, and I've  
17 finally got a SCRIE, a senior citizen rent increase  
18 exemption. And I would wish that for everybody. I  
19 always felt that the rent should be tied to the  
20 ability to pay, to income, but if that's not  
21 possible, then please try to persuade the powers  
22 that be in Albany to lower the age limit from 62  
23 down to 50. At least there will be more people  
24 allowed to qualify.

25

Yeah, and the key to it is tax

1  
2 abatement credits. I know you know what that  
3 means. Whatever shortfall the government does not  
4 recoup from the taxes, find the money elsewhere.  
5 There's plenty of money from other sources than  
6 from renters. So, apply that to a greater swath of  
7 people, and you will not have this uproar every  
8 year or every two years or three. Thank you very  
9 much for your time.

10 (Applause.)

11 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.  
12 Thank you.

13 Adam Blazig, followed by Joe  
14 Rappaport and Jose Cabrera.

15 MR. BLAZIG: Hi. Good  
16 evening. My name is Adam, and I'm here to advocate  
17 for a rent freeze. I think that's the bare minimum.  
18 For the past three years, I have been organizing  
19 with other tenants in upper Manhattan for --  
20 against disrepair and displacement, and conditions  
21 that just make our homes feel as though they're not  
22 our homes due to harassment and tactics by the  
23 Sugar Hill Capital Partners. This is a landlord  
24 that we all share in common across our buildings --  
25 Sugar Hill Capital Partners is the corporate

1

2 landlord that owns rent-stabilized buildings across  
3 the city. They own at least 50 in upper Manhattan  
4 alone. And in 2021 and 2022, executives with Sugar  
5 Hill Capital were named number one and number seven  
6 worst landlords in the city, respectively.

7 And in 2023, it was reported  
8 that some of that Sugar Hill Capital, the landlord,  
9 had stopped paying the mortgages on several of  
10 their buildings, and they had begun to go into  
11 foreclosure. And we had found -- looking at data  
12 from their mortgage provider, Freddie Mac, that  
13 provides mortgages for 35 or 40 of their buildings  
14 in Harlem, that they had in fact stopped paying  
15 mortgages on all these buildings. Going back to  
16 2022, they're still not paying their mortgages.

17 And so I think this raises a  
18 question like why are we being asked to pay any  
19 money at all, let alone a rent increase, when  
20 they're not -- maybe not repairing our ceilings,  
21 not fixing our elevators, not fixing the windows,  
22 and not even paying their mortgages.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. BLAZIG: Of course,  
25 there's the excuse that you know, the 2019 rent



1

2 laws changed in 2019 and messed with their  
3 "Business models."

4

5 So, again, I think a rent  
6 freeze is the bare minimum. And thank you.

7

(Applause.)

8

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.

9

10 Joe Rappaport, Jose Cabrera,  
11 and J. Paula.

12

13 I just want to remind  
14 everybody that if you want to speak, we encourage  
15 you to do so, but you must sign up. Sign-up will  
16 be open until 8:00 p.m.

17

18 THE INTERPRETER: (Translating  
19 from English to Spanish.)

20

CHAIR APPLE: Please.

21

22 MS. RAPPAPORT: Hi. I'm glad  
23 to be testifying before the Board. I've done it a  
24 number of times since moving out of a  
25 rent-stabilized situation into Penn South, a  
26 limited-equity co-op Downtown, where I am not  
27 hounded by abusive landlords and predatory rents.

28

29 People complain about the  
30 homelessness on the streets of New York. There  
31 would not be an unbelievable number of homeless had

1

2 it not been for absolutely inflationary rents,  
3 which are tolerated and should not be.

4

5 We have a new problem, which  
6 is a thing called Donald J. Trump, which is going  
7 to increase people's financial insecurity and, you  
8 know, make hits on their medical and educational  
9 and every other kind of American so-called freedom.

10

11 So, we should be preparing for  
12 that eventuality because it is going to make the  
13 rent crisis far more -- far more difficult for  
14 people. And as several people have -- many people  
15 have pointed out, open the books of landlords and  
16 let's see how high their profits are. And if they  
17 can't afford to maintain their buildings, maybe  
18 they should get into another line of work. Like  
19 something else. Thank you.

20

(Applause.)

21

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you,

22

ma'am. Thank you.

23

Jose Cabrera, J. Paula, the

24

initial J, and A. K. Cavan.

25

MR. CABRERA: Members of the

26

Board, workers won't be priced out. And let me

27

make it plain to the Rent Guidelines Board. While

1

2 you sit up here playing numbers games, real people  
3 are being buried alive. You talk about balance,  
4 but there is no balance. When landlords swim in  
5 profits while working people drown in rent.

6

Let's look at the facts.

7 Cold-hearted and indisputable landlord profits are  
8 up 12.1 percent while tenant wages fell. 84  
9 percent of us are rent-burdened. Half our  
10 paychecks stolen by greed. That greed that you  
11 protect. Eviction skyrocketing. Families are  
12 thrown into the streets like trash, and you call  
13 this fair? It's not fair. This is economic  
14 violence.

15

(Applause.)

16

MR. CABRERA: They tell us to  
17 beg politely for relief while the Rent Guideline  
18 Board rubber stamps are destruction. While I say  
19 we reject your rigged system, when workers can't  
20 live in this city we build, when seniors are taxed  
21 out of homes they've had for 40 years, that's not  
22 policy. That's theft. That's a crime.

23

See, here's the question:

24

whose side are you on? Because we know what side

25

we're on. The side -- you are on the side of Wall

1

2 Street landlords. But you're not on the side of  
3 nurses, cab drivers, dishwashers, the people who  
4 keep this city moving, the people who keep this  
5 city alive, the people who built this city.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. RAPPAPORT: So, you're on  
8 the side of the loopholes and lies.

9 We want rent rollbacks, not  
10 hikes. We won't wait for crumbs from your table.  
11 We'll fight by any means necessary in these  
12 hearings, in these streets, in our communities,  
13 until you freeze the rent and stop this legalized  
14 looting. The time for excuses is over. Freeze the  
15 rent now. Power to the people. Free Palestine.

16 (Applause.)

17 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.  
18 Thank you, sir.

19 J. Paula, A. K. Cavan, and  
20 Erica Overton.

21 Please.

22 MR. PAULA: To begin, I want  
23 to make this note. I do not establish a difference  
24 between you humans there or these humans here or  
25 anywhere in the world. We're all humans. We're

1

2 playing the game of civilization, but we need to  
3 understand what that construct is in the covenants  
4 that we've made before.

5

My speech is this one. I  
6 believe in love above all and will speak from  
7 there, especially as a father. As each of you and  
8 every human of our own speeches, I was born on this  
9 earth. And from this earth as a citizen of this  
10 earth, I have the intrinsic right to live and  
11 nourish from it. No one owns the earth. We all  
12 belong to it.

13

If we shall speak in terms of  
14 the construct of ownership, if that be the only  
15 language understood in this forum, then we are all  
16 shareholders of this earth. And no one has more  
17 rights than another. The construct of a deed of  
18 ownership and of money itself, both ink on paper,  
19 are all upheld by the fundamental social covenant  
20 of the collective civilization organized for the  
21 greatest good of all.

22

The moment an owner or  
23 management takes their duty and obligation to  
24 upkeep a building structure in all its maintenance  
25 needs, for which we the people compensate to the

1

2 rent you impose, it invalidates the very deed of  
3 ownership we all agreed to uphold in this game  
4 called civilization. Sustained only by everyone  
5 playing a fair game and fulfilling their duty.

6 As a professional of building,  
7 design, architecture, and the construction  
8 industry, I serve this city in projects as the  
9 World Trade Center, JFK, LGA, Newark, SC Schools,  
10 the Federal Jail, and MTA train stations, so just  
11 to name a few. All infrastructures that serve  
12 society for everyone's progress.

13 I am an insider and I know  
14 exactly how everything is run, what buildings cost,  
15 everything. Yet, as a tenant with my own family  
16 and 6-year-old daughter, I am forced to leave,  
17 fearing for our own life safety because the  
18 landlord won't maintain a building's structural  
19 problems.

20 Landlords ask for higher rents  
21 and more money each year in order to allegedly have  
22 enough to keep the buildings, yet they only  
23 cosmetically conceal the problems and keep  
24 everyone's rents for profit.

25 You need to be clear and aware

1

2 that your actions may endorse the corruption and  
3 fraud that has been going on for decades. We've  
4 all had enough. Each will be held accountable for  
5 every building collapse and lives lost moving  
6 forward if we don't put an end to the monopoly game  
7 with everyone's homes.

8

My building moves every day.

9 We have to hammer back the nails. We get  
10 entrapment. We get so many conditions that I don't  
11 have time here to explain because of this  
12 oppressive club that you have there with two  
13 minutes --

14

(Applause.)

15

MR. PAULA: -- when this --

16 when this auditorium is almost empty. If you've  
17 listened to every person speaking here, their blood  
18 rises because of this. It's a way that you oppress  
19 all of us, causing extra stress. I'm going to  
20 continue to finish this page.

21

MR. PAULA: We've all had

22

enough --

23

CHAIR APPLE: Please, finish,

24

sir.

25

MR. PAULA: -- of each will be

1  
2 held -- okay. Buildings are rotten inside while  
3 looking pretty at the surface. Collapses are going  
4 to increase if you continue to endorse the fraud.  
5 I'm not here for a rent increase nor I want a rent  
6 freeze, I demand a rent rollback. And the  
7 fulfillment --

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. PAULA: -- and the  
10 fulfillment of landlord obligations to fix problems  
11 at source and keep every structural aspect of every  
12 building they have allowed to rot for decades while  
13 we paid.

14 Building maintenance costs  
15 have been paid for -- have been paid for already  
16 yet buildings remain in ever-graded advance towards  
17 collapse. Where did the money go? If you present  
18 to force, we the people to higher rents, while we  
19 live terrified in unstable buildings like my  
20 building, it's a violation. By negligence for  
21 profits, you may be acting as part -- as part of a  
22 ring of terrorists against Americans and our  
23 families in our own homeland. That must end.  
24 Americans do not negotiate with terrorists.

25 CHAIR APPLE: You can finish,

1

2 sir, please.

3

4 MR. PAULA: We need to choose  
5 between terrorism or patriotism. Rent reduction  
6 and landlord accountability, that is currently your  
7 duty. You break the fundamental social covenant  
8 for the current reality beyond the real estate  
9 financial construct. Rent decrease is in order.  
10 Thank you.

11

(Applause.)

12

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

13

Thank you very much. A. K. Cavan --

14

MR. CAVAN: Yeah, A.K., can

15

you hear me?

16

CHAIR APPLE: -- followed by

17

18 Erica -- one second, sir. Let me just -- Erica  
19 Overton and Lee Hamilton.

20

I'm sorry, please proceed.

21

MR. CAVAN: Okay. A. K. here.

22

23 This is about an illegal lockout. A landlord  
24 illegal lockout. I'm 80 years old and I'm on the  
25 streets. I'm in the shelter. I need press and I  
need a lawyer. The courts are a farce. It takes  
five months to get in front of a judge. They're  
underfunded, they're overcrowded, and it's a joke.

1  
2 My email, ashwoodart@gmail. Ashwoodart,  
3 A-S-H-W-O-O-D art, A-R-T. I need help. I need a  
4 press. Folks, we're hanging on by our fingernails  
5 out here. We're hanging on by our fingernails. I  
6 saw a guy on the street in front of Bloomingdale's  
7 it's like he has cancer. He's sleeping on the  
8 streets. We need the SROs back. The SROs were  
9 great. They could -- if we did those, we did two  
10 years ago for all the people from out of the  
11 country. We can do them for 160,000 that are on  
12 the streets.

13 Single occupancies. The  
14 landlords don't want -- they want, you know, they  
15 don't want it because it takes the pressure off of  
16 the rents. So, I mean we can -- if we are  
17 together, you know, we can elect our next - our  
18 next mayor if we got together. But it -- but it's  
19 divide and conquer.

20 So, I'm here to tell you that  
21 I need help. I'm 80 years old. 80 years old, and  
22 I'm on the streets because my landlord has locked  
23 me out. I need a lawyer. I need money. It's 5 to  
24 \$10,000 for a lawyer to get in front of the right  
25 judge in front -- in court.

1

2

3

4

5

So, that's where I'm at. And ashwoodart@gmail is my story. I need to tell my story. I'm in trouble and this is crazy. This is crazy. Your system.

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

And by the way, thank you for being here for us tonight. Even those who are not on our side, thank you for coming out tonight because we need help. And our country is going down the drain. You know, we're losing the middle class. We're becoming a third-world nation. We're becoming a third-world nation. Thank you.

13

(Applause.)

14

15

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir. Thank you.

16

17

Erica Overton, followed by Lee Hamilton and -- Delsenia Glover.

18

So, please.

19

20

21

22

23

24

MS. OVERTON: Hi. My name is Erica Overton, I'm the chief of staff to the New York State Assembly member Linda B. Rosenthal, chair of the New York State Assembly Committee on Housing. She's currently in session, so I am here today but reading parts of her testimony.

25

"The RGB cannot afford to

1

2 treat this year's vote like business as usual.

3 This moment in history demands that we do  
4 everything possible to proactively protect people  
5 from an unforgiving federal government that is  
6 waging more on low-income people and New Yorkers in  
7 particular.

8

Congressional Republicans'  
9 current bill, the One Big Beautiful Bill -- the One  
10 Big Beautiful Act -- Bill Act, will decimate New  
11 York State Safety Net.

12

Under OBA, 1.5 million New  
13 Yorkers with -- lose access to Medicaid, and close  
14 to 1 million people, including 363,000 children,  
15 stand to lose food benefits. It's not hyperbole to  
16 say that these changes are catastrophic.

17

According to the RGBs own  
18 data, 21 percent of rent-stabilized tenants are  
19 food insecure, with 8 percent of rent-stabilized  
20 tenants identifying as very food insecure. OBA  
21 will only exacerbate that crisis. What's more, the  
22 number of people applying for cash assistance  
23 increased by a staggering 38 percent from 2022 to  
24 2023.

25

One Shot Deal, a grant  
administered by the New York City Human Resources

1  
2 Administration that helps people pay their rental  
3 arrears, increased by 59.4 percent. While the RGB  
4 states that the 108,000 One Shot cases that were  
5 approved by the city are equal to the number of  
6 grants approved in the seven years preceding the  
7 pandemic, those statistics are still alarming as  
8 the federal government makes it harder for people  
9 to feed themselves or pay for medical care, more  
10 New Yorkers will undoubtedly fall behind their rent  
11 to keep pace with other pressing expenses,  
12 especially if this Board approves another increase.

13 As more people go hungry and  
14 fall behind on rent, it should not be surprising  
15 that evictions are increasing against  
16 rent-stabilized tenants. According to the RGB's  
17 own data, approximately 56 percent of evictions in  
18 2023 were against rent-stabilized tenants. 65  
19 percent of rent-regulated households facing  
20 eviction lived in the Bronx and in Brooklyn, 59  
21 percent in Manhattan.

22 Last, but certainly not least,  
23 President Trump unveiled a budget containing a  
24 historic 44 percent funding cut to the United  
25 States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

1

2 It would also zero out funding for tenant and  
3 project-based rental assistance, as well as funding  
4 for public housing authorities.

5 While I'm proud that my bill,  
6 the housing access voucher program, was passed as  
7 part of the 2025/2026 New York State budget, we --  
8 it won't be enough if we lose Federal Section 8  
9 vouchers. And if Mayor Adams continues to impose  
10 unnecessarily strict guidelines on city feds  
11 recipients, it will become increasingly difficult  
12 for New Yorkers to claw their way out of shelter  
13 once they are evicted.

14 OBA abandoned low-income New  
15 Yorkers by further upending in -- on an equal  
16 playing field. Thus, this Board must recognize  
17 this moment, we cannot saddle hardworking New  
18 Yorkers with a rent increase when they have no idea  
19 where their next meal is coming from, or have  
20 they're going to keep the lights on, or if they'll  
21 be able to continue their cancer treatment.

22 This Board has an opportunity  
23 to champion true affordability and to protect  
24 people from the inevitable at the federal level.  
25 Keeping money in people's pockets could make all

1

2 the difference once OBA has passed.

3

4 Again, we do not have to aid  
5 and abet Donald Trump's war on New York Social  
6 Safety Net by imposing rent hikes on those who can  
7 least afford it. In fact, history and current  
8 conditions beg us not. Thank you.

8

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

9

10 Lee Hamilton, followed by  
11 Delsenia Glover.

11

MALE VOICE: Delsenia left.

12

13 CHAIR APPLE: Oh, Delsenia  
14 left. Okay. Josephina Ventura.

14

Lee Hamilton? No.

15

I saw someone -- no. Okay.

16

17 If Lee Hamilton comes, let us know, and we'll -- we  
18 should let them speak.

18

19 Josephina Ventura, followed by  
20 Tiffany Lee and Janine Dubnow (phonetic).

20

MS. VENTURA: Good evening.

21

22 My name is -- I am Josephina Ventura, co-chair of  
23 Riverside Edgecombe Neighborhood Association in  
24 Washington Heights.

24

25 Actually, we are having an  
extremely difficult economic situation due to the

1

2 fact that income has not risen up at the same level  
3 as the rent in New York City.

4 We are experiencing salary or  
5 time reductions in our jobs. Average wages in real  
6 terms are declining and tenants are spending larger  
7 portions of their income in rent. Rent-stabilized  
8 tenants cannot afford more increases. If this  
9 Board approves the proposed percentages, there will  
10 be no units in which we can be alternatively  
11 housed. It only will create displacement  
12 throughout the entire city.

13 Many low-income renters have  
14 failed -- have -- had failed to paying the rent.  
15 Taken to civil court by their landlords, ending up  
16 losing their homes. All the -- while others have  
17 to make more difficult trade-offs between rent,  
18 food, medical care, transit fair, and other  
19 necessities. Even single mother has to spend money  
20 in their children's school supplies. What about  
21 senior citizens who have a fixed income they barely  
22 can make their end needs?

23 A rent freeze can be done --  
24 if a rent freeze can be done, why not? A former  
25 mayor De Blasio did three times. Landlord had a 12

1

2 percent increase in operating income in  
3 rent-stabilized buildings last year. Increasing  
4 our rent will add more homelessness to the actual  
5 housing crisis we are experiencing. We are  
6 struggling to keep up with this inflation. On top  
7 of that, we are rent-burdened.

8

I urge the Board to freeze the  
9 rent for a stabilized apartment this upcoming year.  
10 We need a rent rollback, too. Thank you.

11

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

12

Tiffany Lee, Janine Dubnow,

13

and Linda Smith.

14

Please.

15

MS. LEE: Good evening. My

16

name is Tiffany Lee, and I'm the Executive Director

17

of Altagracia Faith and Justice Works, a

18

community-based nonprofit in northern Manhattan

19

dedicated to putting faith into action, promoting

20

social justice, affordable housing being one of the

21

top issues we are concerned about.

22

Many of our parishioners and

23

neighbors we work with are longtime rent,

24

rent-stabilized tenants in one of the city's

25

largest concentrations of rent-regulated housing.

1

2 I represent many rent-stabilized tenants and I am  
3 also a former rent-stabilized tenant, myself, and a  
4 current tenant.

5 I lived in a rent-stabilized  
6 apartment from 2014 to 2020, during which time I  
7 started with a preferential rent, which increased  
8 each year about 10 percent until it reached the  
9 legal rent. During part of that time, I was also  
10 working on two jobs, both in my nonprofit work and  
11 as a high school teacher.

12 Although I didn't see the  
13 immediate benefits of the RGB's historic rent  
14 freezes during that time due to my preferential  
15 rent increases, I'm grateful to the RGB for those  
16 freezes that capped the legal rent from increasing  
17 once the preferential rent reached that legal rent  
18 threshold.

19 After leaving my  
20 rent-stabilized apartment due to numerous issues  
21 with my landlord, I moved to a small,  
22 non-rent-stabilized apartment building, and I'm now  
23 rent-burdened and in an insecure housing situation,  
24 living month to month without a lease since the  
25 landlord wants to sell the building.

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25

So while your decision tonight or this season will not impact my current immediate situation, I appreciate all the more the importance of rent stabilization. And I speak out now for our neighbors and our community members who rely on these affordable homes and the protections of rent stabilization.

I echo that the cost of living for working people is unmanageable. And many of these neighbors have fixed incomes and are facing threats to other social programs and cannot afford any increases in rent, let alone the increases the Board is proposing.

In the current political climate, the rights of tenants, low-income workers, immigrants, and other vulnerable groups are being eroded, dismantled, and attacked. New York City strives to be a welcoming, diverse bastion of opportunity for all. Affordable housing is key to that vision at this pivotal moment; every act, every vote, every decision counts.

The RGB has a unique opportunity to send a message across this city. And for all those watching from beyond to say we

1

2 value working-class tenants, those struggling with  
3 inflated rents, rising cost of living, stagnant  
4 wages, those who contribute so much to our city and  
5 also deserve to live in dignity.

6 Vote for a rent freeze, to  
7 send a message to protect affordable housing in New  
8 York City and ensure that New York will remain a  
9 place for all. Thank you.

10 (Applause.)

11 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.  
12 Thank you. Janine Dubnow, Linda Smith, and Rachel  
13 Ann Younger.

14 Please, ma'am.

15 MS. DUBNOW: Hi. My name is  
16 Janine Dubnow, and I'm from the organization RENA,  
17 Riverside Edgecombe Neighborhood Association in  
18 Washington Heights.

19 So I want to speak to you, the  
20 Rent Guidelines Board. I'm not talking about the  
21 tenant members, I'm talking about the landlord and  
22 the public members. You and the public -- the  
23 landlord members and the public members you are  
24 doing the work of Donald Trump. Do you support  
25 Donald Trump? Do you? Are you -- did you vote for

1

2 him? That's his work. That's the work. What's  
3 the work? Take from the poor and give to the rich.  
4 That's what you are doing.

5

(Applause.)

6

MS. DUBNOW: This Big  
7 Beautiful Bill of Donald Trump is removing food  
8 stamps, Section VIII, support for housing. And a  
9 lot of other people have already mentioned, many  
10 programs that low-income people need. This is  
11 going to make it even harder for people to pay  
12 their rent.

13

And now you are raising the  
14 rents. You are raising the rents. You've decided  
15 to raise the rents. You've already made a  
16 decision. We don't know exactly how much, but you  
17 have decided to raise the rents.

18

So do you believe that housing  
19 is a human right? Do you? Do you believe that  
20 tenants should make a choice between food and  
21 housing or medicine and housing? How much do you  
22 pay for your rent? Do you pay more than 30 percent  
23 of your income for rent? That's what I want to ask  
24 the public members. Do you? Think about that. Do  
25 you ever think about food or rent? Do you? No, you

1

2 do not. I'm sure.

3

4 How can you live with  
5 yourselves when you cause such suffering? How can  
6 you? Do you go to church? Do you go to synagogue?  
7 Do you go to mosque? How do you feel?

8

9 Landlords are making a 12  
10 percent profit. You know it. We all know it.  
11 Everybody has already mentioned that. And yet you  
12 still have decided to raise rents on the poorest  
13 people in New York. "Oh, because the cost of  
14 housing is so high."

15

(Applause.)

16

17 MS. DUBNOW: Yes, but the  
18 profits are still high. The profits are even  
19 higher. So all you care about is the landlords.  
20 And I'm talking about the public members, not just  
21 the landlords.

22

23 So in March 2025, over 110,000  
24 people slept in New York City shelters each night.  
25 70 percent of them being members of homeless  
26 families, including 37,870 children. Did you think  
27 of that? Did you?

28

MALE VOICE: Shame.

29

MS. DUBNOW: Homelessness grew

1

2 by 53.1 percent from January 2023 to January 2024.

3 And I don't know what it is now. More than four  
4 times the rest of the nation because of you.

5 Because of you.

6 Northern Manhattan has the  
7 highest concentration of rent-stabilized apartments  
8 in New York. And also a high concentration of  
9 immigrants. Now a mayoral candidate, Brad Lander,  
10 was arrested by ICE today.

11 MALE VOICE: Shame.

12 MS. DUBNOW: What is going on  
13 in our country? By raising rents, you are  
14 attacking immigrants, doing Trump's work. That's  
15 what you're doing. Did you vote for Trump? But  
16 you're doing his work?

17 We say no rent hikes, no  
18 deportations, landlords plus ICE is displacement.  
19 Deportation is displacement. No one is illegal in  
20 our city. Rent freeze now.

21 (Applause.)

22 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

23 Linda Smith, Rachel Younger,  
24 and then Mark Thiery (phonetic).

25 MR. THIERY: Martin.

1

2

CHAIR APPLE: Oh, Martin. I'm  
sorry. It says, Mark. I'm sorry.

4

MS: SMITH: So, I'm Linda  
Smith. I live in Washington Heights, just as Janine  
was talking about. I am in a rent-stabilized  
building, I've been there for about 20 years. I'm  
a teacher in the South Bronx. I work with -- as  
another teacher had said, I'm a single income. I'm  
living paycheck to paycheck. Literally, I, just  
like many other teachers, I get up at 5. I get to  
work by 7. Our school goes till 4. I work after  
school, do aftercare. I get home because it takes  
an hour, 6:30 to 7:00 sometimes.

15

That's hours of a hedge  
funder. But I don't have the salary of a hedge  
funder. That's a problem because when we tell  
people who -- I mean, to really make it, you've got  
to be making over 250,000 in New York City. You  
have to, we know this.

21

So how are people that are  
serving the majority here, hygienists, you know,  
paraeducators, teachers, how -- and we're serving  
children, your children. We're serving maybe  
grandchildren. And how is that -- how -- and food

25

1

2 it's just -- it doesn't pay. It doesn't -- it's so  
3 expensive at this point. And our parents, many of  
4 our parents work their asses off, and they've got  
5 some of them two jobs.

6 I mean, you know, the medium  
7 income in Hunts Point is like \$30,000. And some of  
8 them drop their kids off at 7:30 a.m. and pick them  
9 up at 6:00 p.m. not because they want to because  
10 they have to. And they're serving the communities,  
11 the progressive communities in the Upper West Side,  
12 the Upper East Side, Park Slope, they're serving  
13 them. And we know this, right? We know this. And  
14 -- but yet they're hardly paying the bills,  
15 paycheck to paycheck.

16 And you heard all of these  
17 testimonies. The reality is you voted already.  
18 You decided already. And that's the heartbreaking  
19 thing. I heard about this meeting and I was like,  
20 "I'll just come." Not that I have any voice or  
21 anything, but "I'm a working-class, Joe" like  
22 everybody else. And it's just really hard when  
23 rent is like the highest it has ever been in New  
24 York City. Ever been.

25

And like what is going on?

1

2 You're hearing these stories. I mean, my mother  
3 was an immigrant. She literally worked herself to  
4 death. 73 years old, literally on her deathbed,  
5 working because she had to keep working. And it's  
6 like, when does it ever get better for the next  
7 generation? And again, my parents, the kids at our  
8 schools, they work so damn hard. When is it  
9 enough? When is enough, enough?

10 And I'm just -- I can't say  
11 encourage you because you decided already, but I'm  
12 encouraging everybody in this room. We got to just  
13 galvanize. We got to keep going. They tried  
14 earlier. We got to get the word out because it's  
15 already done here but we got to get going. And I'm  
16 not going to waste any more time but I'm blown away  
17 by the testimonies I heard.

18 It's my first time here and I'm so  
19 sorry for what you're going through. I'm so sorry.  
20 And I just want you to know, like you just keep  
21 working hard because we want better for our kids,  
22 right? So thank you. Thank you for your time.

23 (Applause.)

24 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

25 Rachel Ann Younger --

1

2 MS. YOUNGER: Yes. Hi.

3 That's me. Thank you.

4 CHAIR APPLE: Mark -- let me  
5 just Mark Thiery, and Maria Brown.

6 I just want to remind  
7 everybody it's almost 7:30, 7:28, and we'll stay  
8 for as many speakers who want to speak, but we ask  
9 that you sign up by 8:00 p.m. So you have another  
10 half hour to sign up if you'd like.

11 THE INTERPRETER: (Translating  
12 from English to Spanish.)

13 CHAIR APPLE: I'm sorry.  
14 Ma'am, please.

15 MS. YOUNGER: Thank you. Hi.  
16 My name is Rachel Ann Younger. I'm a  
17 rent-stabilized tenant in the apartment my parents  
18 moved into in 1966.

19 My mother, speaking of  
20 mothers, I'm sure, is rolling in her grave right  
21 now. The rents are rising faster than wages for  
22 most people. And in my case, in my industry, as  
23 with many other people in other industries, the  
24 combination of advancement of technology and  
25 industries, corporate monopolization of those

1

2 industries. And I've recently found myself  
3 competing in a market for job against people in  
4 other countries living -- at a cost of living  
5 that's a fraction of what we have here.

6                   And after skyrocketing  
7 increases already, where did that money go? They  
8 had money to spend on lobbying but not on repairs  
9 for the apartment that I lived in with my  
10 90-something-year-old World War II veteran with  
11 health issues for whom I was a caregiver. When  
12 they got that money, did they care? Did they care  
13 about these things? Did -- here are the -- some of  
14 the things that they haven't done; power is not up  
15 to code, power not functioning in certain areas of  
16 the apartment; improperly functioning stove oven,  
17 even according to the new super. The last one was  
18 removed for harassment, thankfully. Dealing with  
19 less of that now. And thankfully, my father has  
20 passed and doesn't have to anymore.

21                   Cracked ceiling with layers  
22 going back, including lead paint over my bed; mold;  
23 broken window; blinds; and a broken floor piece  
24 that was right by where my dad slept. There was a  
25 tripping hazard and he had Parkinson's.



1

2 rent rollback. Thank you.

3 (Applause.)

4 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Mark  
5 Thiery.

6 MR. TIERY: Thiery.

7 CHAIR APPLE: Thiery. Sorry.  
8 Please.

9 MR. THIERY: Hello, my name is  
10 Mark Thiery. I've been fortunate to connect with  
11 housing conservation coordinators in the West Side  
12 Neighborhood Alliance.

13 But I can speak firsthand  
14 about the landlord and owner in my building,  
15 leaving the building in disrepair to pressure  
16 tenants to move out of their own accord so that the  
17 landlord could do reconstruction of my entire  
18 building while I lived in the building alone as the  
19 only rent-stabilized tenant remaining for more than  
20 four years, while I had to listen to drilling and  
21 buzz saws and hammering and everything else so that  
22 they could do superficial renovations, some of  
23 which were done illegally and without permits and  
24 deregulate some and increase the rent of all of the  
25 other apartments in my building by 1 to \$2,000

1

2 each.

3

4 During that time, workers,  
5 management, the super, and the landlord herself  
6 regularly harassed me in ways like trying to break  
7 in, make me feel unsafe, endangering my health, and  
8 double-talk me as if I wasn't smart enough to  
9 recognize their assumption that I wouldn't  
10 understand my rights and push back.

11

12 I learned my rights,  
13 documented everything, got DOB, HPD, DOH, and ConEd  
14 to come many times, and eventually settled an  
15 eviction case significantly in my favor.

16

17 But most tenants don't know  
18 enough and aren't supported enough to be brave and  
19 fight back against housing injustices. The owner  
20 of my building basically just finally brought the  
21 apartments and building up to code after way too  
22 many years, barely just to eventually sell it to a  
23 group of owners equally interested in maintaining  
24 the building to code without significant pressure  
25 from tenants to do so.

26

27 And even then, with multiple  
28 unnecessary and purposeful delay tactics employed  
29 to try and exhaust the will of tenants to demand

1

2 required services and improvements. Landlords are  
3 making more than enough additional income because  
4 of shady business practices like I've experienced.  
5 And they have hidden themselves behind LLCs, to  
6 protect themselves from being held accountable for  
7 the condition of their properties.

8 More so, they claim that they  
9 don't have the money to do -- upkeep their  
10 buildings if they don't increase their rent but  
11 there are pools of funding resources available to  
12 them if they wish to make necessary repairs and  
13 truly do not have the financing available. All  
14 they have to do is open their books and demonstrate  
15 their need. Why don't they want to demonstrate  
16 their need by opening their books? Well, I think  
17 it's pretty plain to see that the reason is because  
18 their books show that they do not need the  
19 additional income in order to maintain their  
20 properties. They just want to gouge tenants and  
21 that's not fair.

22 Freezing the rent or reducing  
23 tenant rent for rent-regulated and currently  
24 unregulated or deregulated apartments as well, if  
25 we're being real about affordability in this city,

1

2 is the right thing to do. That is unquestionable.

3

I implore you to vote for  
4 either freezing or reducing the rent but if you  
5 insist on raising the rent, please only vote on  
6 increasing the rent, the minimum reasonable amount.

7

Please, be considerate of the  
8 facts in this year's 2025 income and expense study  
9 and provide dignity and fairness to tenant  
10 residents of NYC who are struggling to continue to  
11 exist in a city that continually makes it more  
12 difficult for real, everyday New Yorkers to  
13 maintain a presence and a community here that makes  
14 NYC the place people want to live and visit.

15

De Blasio did it for three  
16 years. You can do it too, based on the legitimate  
17 merits. Please be logical, reasonable, and  
18 merciful public servants. Thank you.

19

(Applause.)

20

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

21

Maria Brown? No, Maria Brown?

22

Okay. If she comes back, please let us know.

23

I believe Councilwoman Gale

24

Brewer is here.

25

CHAIR APPLE: Nice to see you,

1

2 councilwoman.

3

(Applause.)

4

5 MS. BREWER: I have copies if  
6 you want them. I'm Gale Brewer, and I am the city  
7 council member for the Upper West Side. And I very  
8 much appreciate you holding this hearing at this  
9 location on the Upper West Side. I want to thank  
10 the members of the Rent Guidelines Board and,  
11 certainly, Chair Doug Apple.

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I think you know it's your  
responsibility to ensure that every New York City  
person can afford rent. However, members of the  
RGB are tasked with analyzing the history of the  
market conditions and I think determining what  
keeps owners whole and protects tenants from undue  
rent burdens.

As you know, just like every  
other elected official, we have calls, emails, so  
many residents who are experiencing housing  
insecurity and need help from the government. We  
have a monthly housing clinic with attorneys but  
the demand far exceeds what we can provide. I'd  
love to see more (unintelligible) recipients get a  
higher eligibility but I believe that the

1

2 legislation in Albany that would do that did not  
3 pass the assembly. Only the Senate. So it's not  
4 going to happen this year.

5 In voting to adopt guidelines  
6 of 1.75 to 4.75 for a one-year lease and 3.75 to  
7 7.75 for a two-year, I think you are contemplating  
8 increases that a well beyond reason and I'm asking  
9 you to reconsider this decision and vote for a rent  
10 freeze.

11 I also urge the Board to vote  
12 0 percent as you have in the past for SRO and  
13 lodging house tenants; they're incredibly  
14 vulnerable.

15 The City of Yes passed -- I  
16 voted for it in the city council and it would help  
17 but it is -- the future. People need relief today.  
18 I think in Manhattan the median rent is 4,500 as of  
19 April '25. It's very, very high. It's  
20 unaffordable. And of course, those at lower  
21 incomes are being forced out.

22 Believe it or not, households  
23 with children are 112 percent more likely to leave  
24 New York City than households without children.  
25 Great schools, we want them to stay here. We know

1

2 that City Hall and others are critical of districts  
3 like mine for not developing affordable units.

4 We'd love to have them. They keep building  
5 shelters and not affordable units.

6                   Meanwhile, the overall vacancy  
7 in New York is 1.41 percent, and the vacancy rate  
8 for affordable apartments is even smaller. And of  
9 course, rents in New York City are rising as much  
10 as seven times faster than wages.

11                   We all want tenants to be able  
12 to afford rent and remain in their apartments.  
13 Evictions are not higher than during and after the  
14 pandemic but only 50 percent of those going to  
15 housing court get an attorney despite the law.

16                   I also want to just mention  
17 quickly, those who are small property owners. I've  
18 heard from them. They need help particularly if  
19 you have 100 percent rent-regulated in your small  
20 building. Then I know you have utility rates and  
21 DEP charges and insurance all going up. Water bill  
22 goes up. Property taxes go up. We should think of  
23 something for them because they have seen a 21.7  
24 percent increase in operating costs since 2019  
25 putting a strain on these rent-stabilized

1

2 buildings.

3

4 I believe that the price index  
5 of operating costs, PIOC calculations shows a 6.3  
6 increase in operating costs. I get it. We have to  
7 make sure that we take care of the small owners,  
8 too. The majority of owners in this city have some  
9 options that may not be in such dire need of the  
10 additional income and should -- and that would be  
11 gained from the proposed rent increases. Maybe  
12 they can take out loans, financing from HPD, file  
13 for hardship with HCR, have reserves.

14

15 And as a report that the Board  
16 stated, the net operating income for  
17 rent-stabilized landlords increased by roughly 12  
18 percent across the city. A 2 percent increase from  
19 last year. But the real matter to me is to protect  
20 the financial security of our most vulnerable  
21 citizens. Those who pay more than they can afford  
22 do not have options. They can't find a less  
23 expensive apartment. They can't double dip with a  
24 bad option for their -- with their friends and food  
25 and health care. They can't cut it in order to  
make the rent.

25

Thank you to the Board for

1

2 your dedication and thoughtful consideration.

3 Please freeze the rent. Thank you very much.

4

(Applause.)

5

6 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. And  
7 thank you, councilwoman, for all your service.

7

8

8 Xavier Rodriguez, Allie Perez,  
9 and Ray Dietz.

9

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: How are you  
11 all doing today? My name is Xavier Rodriguez, I'm  
12 with Arena (phonetic). I'm from 442 West 106  
13 Street between Amsterdam and Saint Nicholas. And  
14 the reason I said my full address is because we  
15 were currently fighting our landlord who is  
16 J-S-A-F, JSAF Management. In case you didn't know,  
17 now you probably do. One of the worst management  
18 in the city, 100 percent look him up.

18

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25 JSAF last year took over our  
19 building for -- thinking that we were going to be  
20 good, happy, they're going to fix everything, we  
21 were going to have an elevator, we're going to have  
22 AC, we were going to have heat, right? Wrong. For  
23 the past -- last year of 2024, the winter, spring,  
24 and summer, we were going through hell with this  
25 management.

1  
2                   Hell, not only that, but the  
3 rent was increasingly high for everybody in that  
4 building. And they did not fix a single thing. We  
5 have tenants, our neighbors in their apartments,  
6 their ceilings collapsing on them. And what would  
7 they do, they would hire some regular  
8 (unintelligible) from the street, act like he's our  
9 super and they act -- and act to duct tape it, fix  
10 it up, and put a patch over thinking that it's  
11 fixing it. Then the next month, boom, the same  
12 thing happens again.

13                   Yes, so what we did, me and my  
14 friends all we got tired. We were exhausted,  
15 right? We were young, we were very angry, we know  
16 what we want. We live in New York City, we come  
17 with the shit. Sorry for cursing. Yes, so what we  
18 did was we had Guillermo and Gina (phonetic) hook  
19 us up with (unintelligible) Legal Services.  
20 Amazing legal services. If anybody needs them, I  
21 recommend 100 percent.

22                   So what we did was we stepped  
23 up, we have our tenant association. I am the  
24 president of the tenant council for 442 West  
25 Apartment 6C. That is me. So what we did was we

1

2 got the whole entire building. Not just one, not  
3 just one floor, not just two, the whole entire  
4 building to hold their rent for how many months?  
5 For six months straight.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Six months  
8 straight. Because of why? Because we were tired  
9 of this shit. We put our foot down, and we planned  
10 it ourselves. We not playing this game with them  
11 anymore, man. We are tired of it. They are  
12 raising our rent, they are treating us like scrap.  
13 We're not sticking with it.

14 So what we did was -- they saw  
15 a bunch of younger -- young, angry kids go looking  
16 to fight, and they stuck with us. And what  
17 happened? Now, as of this month, as of June, those  
18 six months that we held our rent, we no longer have  
19 to pay it. As of this month of June, we are  
20 starting off clean off the slate. And that's what  
21 happens, we have the determination and persistence  
22 because we do not fuck around. And we are young  
23 and hungry. Do not play with us because we're here  
24 to stay.

25 (Applause.)

1  
2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And we're here  
3 to stay. And I remember and I will never forget  
4 this moment, the director from -- we were making  
5 such an impact on their company that director from  
6 JSAF came to our building and I'll never forget  
7 this moment, he came to the roof and I remember he  
8 turned around, I looked at him and I said, "Yo, I'm  
9 coming for your building." He turned around, he  
10 laughed at me, and I shook his hand. I said, I'm  
11 coming for your building." And as of today, I came  
12 from his building. And as of today, they're fixing  
13 every single apartment in that building.

14 MALE VOICE: Yeah.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: This is for  
16 everybody in here. Step up, get in a tenant  
17 association --

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: -- stop being  
20 treated like scrap because you all don't deserve  
21 that, you're so important than that. Put your foot  
22 down because enough is enough. Thank you.

23 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Allie  
24 Perez. Allie Perez.

25 MR. PEREZ: Good evening,

1

2 everyone. I just came from outside. I went to  
3 make a conference call and just got in.

4

I think that I saw now  
5 Hispanic-speaking people in here that I know of,  
6 that I would like to express myself in Spanish and  
7 have a translator at this point, you know.

8

This evening is a very  
9 important evening. It's very important for  
10 everyone that's here and for all the people that  
11 had to leave. I'm coming straight from work and  
12 I'm pretty sure a lot of other people did the same  
13 thing. Because this has to do with human value  
14 that belongs to all of us, it's everyone's  
15 responsibility. Fortunately, the  
16 politics of today is actually ending or is on the  
17 verge of ending love for each other, the peace that  
18 we should have, family values, and just the peace  
19 that we should share with everyone, with our  
20 neighbor.

21

Unfortunately, it's such a  
22 shame that -- for me as a community activist, it's  
23 such a shame for me to visit a tenant who is  
24 elderly, who is retired, and listen -- like, listen  
25 to them, like I've listened to many that were here

1

2 today and see that this person is suffering inside  
3 their apartment, where their bathroom is in such  
4 shambles that you can see the bathroom above it or  
5 below it.

6 And their tubs, their bathtubs  
7 are so high that it's impossible for someone of  
8 such an advanced age to lift their leg up in order  
9 for them to get into the tub to take a shower.

10 They've also shown me bags  
11 like this size full of letters, certified letters  
12 or letters sent certified mail that they have sent  
13 to their landlords asking them to change the  
14 bathtub or to fix the floor or to fix the radiators  
15 that are in the kitchen, in the bedrooms. And it's  
16 been 10, 12, 15 years, and no one has paid any  
17 attention to this.

18 And the sad thing is that even  
19 after reading and reviewing the DHCR records, the  
20 HPD records, and all the public information that we  
21 can all read. And it's just to have these  
22 slumlords that are -- that list, all these  
23 slumlords. I'm pretty sure that each and every one  
24 of you at this table over here knows who we're  
25 talking about.

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There are criminal landlords,  
there are criminal individuals who actually should  
be serving time, they shouldn't be doing a bid and  
should have been in prison years ago.

6

(Applause.)

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MR. PEREZ: And instead of --  
instead of paying attention, what we're doing is --  
it is just giving them more profit and giving them  
more wealth.

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Right now we have to kneel  
before you, we have to beg you like if you are  
saints. You understand the suffering that we go  
through and for you to just like prize or reward  
these criminal landlords instead of actually  
thinking about the children, thinking about the  
elderly, thinking about the single mothers with  
kids, the single fathers with kids, the parents  
that are living under these circumstances. And  
it's unfortunate that we're here in this situation.  
But thank you so much.

22

(Applause.)

23

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

24

25

We still have a few more  
minutes to sign up. If you have not signed up to

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2 speak, you're welcome to do so. Please just go to  
3 the back there and give them your name.

4

THE INTERPRETER: Translating  
5 from English to Spanish.)

6

CHAIR APPLE: Ray Dietz.

7

MR. DIETZ: Good evening, all.  
8 My name is Ray, I am a member of the PSL, the Party  
9 for Socialism and Liberation. You'll notice I'm  
10 speaking with you all and not these clowns up here.

11

I'm also -- thank you -- I'm  
12 also here as a representative of my tenant  
13 association, which has been fighting our landlord  
14 for years after they illegally converted thousands  
15 of apartments from rent-stabilized to market rate,  
16 paying over a million dollars in kickbacks to  
17 contractors.

18

And when New York Attorney  
19 General Letitia James caught wind of this scheme in  
20 2022, do you think that we, as tenants, were  
21 reimbursed for being overcharged? Just a guess.

22

MALE VOICE: No.

23

MR. PEREZ: Yeah, no. Do you  
24 think that our apartments were returned to rent  
25 stabilization?

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AUDIENCE: No.

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MR. PEREZ: No. And do you think that the landlords were punished at all?

5

(Audience participation.)

6

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MR. PEREZ: Right. Exactly. The Attorney General actually accepted 4 million dollars for her own coffers and left the tenants out to dry. Now, is that right?

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AUDIENCE: No

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MR. PEREZ: No, it's not right. We demand a restoration of rent-stabilized and rent-controlled units that were lost through vacancy decontrol. New York City must be a rent-controlled city where no tenant pays more than 20 percent of their household income on rent.

17

MALE VOICE: Yeah.

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23

MR. PEREZ: Tenants, workers, immigrants, everyone here in this room. We make this city run and we should run this city. We should live in dignified housing. We shouldn't have to beg these people for scraps every single year.

24

25

When 19 people were killed by landlord neglect at Twin Parks and East Tremont in

1

2 2022, did Eric Adams denounce the landlord Rick  
3 Ropper (phonetic).

4

MALE VOICE: No.

5

MR. PEREZ: No, he didn't. Did  
6 he even publicly mention that Rick Ropper was one  
7 of his housing advisors? No, he didn't. What did  
8 Eric Adams do? He blamed the tenants for using  
9 space heaters to survive the winter. Shame.

10

Shame.

11

AUDIENCE: Shame.

12

MR. PEREZ: These landlords  
13 and their representatives they don't see us as  
14 humans; they see us as numbers on a spreadsheet, as  
15 pure profit. We are being used for these -- as  
16 tools for these landlords and for the criminals in  
17 the White House and City Hall so that the  
18 ultra-rich can get even richer. So they can spend  
19 our hard-earned money to bomb Palestine, Libya and  
20 Iran. Name a country they want to invade it.

21

MALE VOICE: Shame.

22

MR. PEREZ: We don't need to  
23 have any more hearings about rent increases for  
24 tenants. What we need are hearings to hold these  
25 criminal landlords accountable.

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(Applause.)

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MR. PEREZ: What we need is justice. What we need is justice, and we're going to organize until we get it. That's all.

6

(Applause.)

7

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

8

Marley Vincent Lindsay.

9

MR. LINDSAY: Hello. Okay. I don't think I'm going to follow that up very well.

11

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15

My name's Marley Lindsay. I represent the Full Time Tenant Union Association. I'm not going to say anything new. I just want to share our story and our experience with our rent-stabilized units.

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23

So we have two units -- two buildings, 514 and 516 West 135th Street, which are owned by Watermark Full-time Management. My wife, myself, and a few other tenants who were here earlier have worked on organizing the building and speaking to tenants about the issues that have been going on. Some of whom have lived there since the seventies.

24

25

And what's remarkable about it is the uniformity of the problems. We thought we

1  
2 were the only ones having our ceilings collapse in  
3 our bathrooms like seasonally, like once every six  
4 months. But it turned out some of the older  
5 tenants have had this going for 10, 15, 20 years.  
6 And when they've brought this issue up to our  
7 landlord, they were pointed to as the problem  
8 because you're the older tenants who are paying not  
9 enough in rent. We can't actually maintain these  
10 buildings. That's the sort of response that they  
11 were receiving. And it's the sort of response that  
12 some of the newer tenants were receiving, too.

13 But the thing is, every time  
14 one of these rent raises occur, somehow there's  
15 still not enough money to fix the building. So I  
16 am left a little confused as to like why we  
17 continue to raise the rents in part to maintain  
18 housing stock if that housing stock is being failed  
19 to be maintained.

20 So I have a small proposal. I  
21 feel as though every building with 311 issues at  
22 the very least, but maybe issues across the Board  
23 that have been raised by tenants, should be  
24 addressed before they get to implement a rent  
25 increase of any sort.

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And heck, let's roll back the rent because I know of multiple people in our building who've sustained severe injuries as a result of these collapsing ceilings. So that's what I've got. Hope you'll consider it. And yes, I appreciate everyone out for being here.

(Applause.)

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

Thank you.

Rochelle Thompson. Ms.

Thompson.

MS. THOMPSON: That would be

me.

CHAIR APPLE: Please.

MS. TOMPSON: Good evening.

My name is Rochelle Thompson, and I am known as the 1st Lady of Jazz in Harlem, USA, the continent that I love.

I also do housing and I also represent the seniors in the court because we are having problems with the court. We're constantly going to court when we have paid our rent by certified mail return receipt because -- and like me have a credit on my rent.

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We are also concerned as the -- one of the gentlemen said that when we are in our apartments and the tenants are aging, they are not making the apartments made for them. In other words, there's the high bathroom, they're -- they're not giving us (unintelligible) they're not doing anything that would help an elderly person.

I'm here today also. I have lived in my building for 40 years. I won two Supreme Court cases. One I wrote on my own, one the late Michael Hardy took -- helped me and I did 18 HP actions. In front of my building, there is scaffolding and the huge cry about that is, how come the landlords cannot fix when they see that the front of the building is crumbling? How come they're not fixing it? Why are they waiting for it to be -- for scaffolding to be put up?

I have asked them to take care of this. Our letters go unanswered. They're rude to us when it -- we have a new management company they ask for us to pay our rent by four options. But you didn't meet with the tenants about the scaffolding of the building and the facade falling down.

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Let's get to eviction. 51

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percent of residents in Central Harlem are being

4

evicted. 58 percent of that are women. So that

5

right-to-counsel law is BS because it is not

6

helping us. I had to fire four of my attorneys.

7

So I come to you today to say

8

we have to be American again. We have to be human

9

again. We have to look at the country of our

10

heart, as Helen Keller would say. We have to stop

11

this atrocious cruelty, as Frederick Douglass would

12

say, because you are killing us. We're being

13

killed. And then here's another thing. Why would

14

we not want to pay our rent? Why is there this

15

overculture and this underculture that we do not

16

want to pay our rent? It's like going to dinner.

17

If you're going to dinner, you better pay that

18

dinner bill.

19

So I'm asking -- I'm asking

20

for someone to listen to us, to meet with us.

21

Gloria Holmes, Apartments LP, Donna and Francis

22

Simone -- they're -- you know, they don't even show

23

up in court. They don't even want to pay -- to

24

change a light bulb in the public area. They

25

wanted me to make an appointment. This is

1

2 ridiculous. Ridiculous.

3

4 And I know, as I've listened  
5 to these stories, because I've been going to court  
6 for 32 years. No one should have to go through  
7 that. And I've won every time because I've told  
8 the truth. And everybody, keep fighting. I'm on  
9 your side. Keep fighting. I'll come to your block  
10 and sing a song for you. I got a call tonight.  
11 Keep fighting. We will win. Thank you.

11

(Applause.)

12

CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

13

Thank you, ma'am.

14

Ching Wong. Please.

15

16 MS. WONG: I'm Ching. I've  
17 been living in Harlem my whole life. I am a member  
18 of IEEE/Optica at the American Chemical Society.  
19 Today, I'm a grad student and tenant organizer  
20 living on a stipend that has not increased with  
21 inflation. And on behalf of my fellow students, we  
22 ask, not beg that you freeze the rent or consider a  
23 negative rent increase. We're scientists, we don't  
24 beg.

24

25

I have met many students and  
scientists who can barely afford to New York -- to

1

2 live in New York as it is. And you, as a driver of  
3 high prices in New York, are responsible for the  
4 brain drain that will happen if this continues.

5

My professor lamented that we  
6 were losing talent to Boston because, for years,  
7 there were affordable places. A roller skate trip  
8 across the bridge in Boston, there is no place in  
9 New York like that. And you know why?

10

You'll know that the last time  
11 a brain drain happened, something happened that  
12 started with Manhattan and ended with a project. I  
13 am not threatening you today since none of my peers  
14 are nuclear physicists but my classmates are  
15 leaving for China, Europe, and the Middle East when  
16 they graduate because they can't afford to live  
17 here.

18

We can live without landlords  
19 but can any of you live without chemists,  
20 computers, engineers? Can you afford to lose  
21 quantum sciences to China and the UAE? We have  
22 been told by our own institutions to tighten our  
23 belts when it came to the stipends and here you're  
24 crying that you need the increases to stay afloat.  
25 Pathetic.

1

2

3

4

5

6

When the first computers were used in 1940, it cost the equivalent of 6 million dollars today. Today you can buy a computer for a few hundred dollars thanks to science and their magnitude faster.

7

8

9

10

11

12

Why exactly does the same apartment, the same fixtures, and the same piece of land from 1940 have followed the reverse course? Scientists are talking to each other about rent loss. They're hungry, they're angry and they can organize.

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

My landlord literally waits for people to die, to bring apartments up to code. Makes up stories why he can't fix the dangerous conditions for elderly tenants, cries, and lies to the city that they died alone, saying that their families forgot them instead of telling their families that they died in squalor and he's taking back the apartment.

21

22

23

24

25

He spent a hundred thousand dollars on renovations this year to raise rents and pennies on repairs and hundreds in fines for neglecting these repairs. My electricity can't handle modern appliances, and he uses my rent

1  
2 increase to pay the fine for not fixing my  
3 electricity instead of actually fixing it. Yet,  
4 I'm one of the lucky ones among my classmates  
5 because I pay the least in rent. This is a  
6 disgrace and you chose this every time you increase  
7 the rent

8 MALE VOICE: Bullshit.

9 (Applause.)

10 CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

11 And that concludes our public  
12 testimony. Everybody who signed up has testified.  
13 So thank you very much.

14 I'm asking for a motion from  
15 the Board to adjourn.

16 MR. EHRLICH: So moved.

17 CHAIR APPLE: Second?

18 MR. ARMLOVICH: Second.

19 CHAIR APPLE: Okay. With  
20 that, thank you and we're adjourned for this  
21 evening. Thank you very much.

22 (At 8:00 P.M., the proceedings  
23 were concluded.)

24

25

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

I, MARC RUSSO, a Shorthand  
(Stenotype) Reporter and Notary Public within and  
for the State of New York, do hereby certify that  
the foregoing pages 1 through 138, taken at the  
time and place aforesaid, is a true and correct  
transcription of my shorthand notes.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have  
hereunto set my name this 7th day of October, 2024.

*Marc Russo*  
-----  
MARC RUSSO

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