1

2   THE CITY OF NEW YORK

3   RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

4   ---X

5   PUBLIC MEETING

6   OF THE

7   DIRECTORS

8   ---X

9   NYC Department of Health

10   125 Worth Street

11   Second Floor Auditorium

12   New York, NY 10007

13   June 27, 2025

14   10:00 A.M.

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16   B E F O R E:

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18   DOUG APPLE,

19   THE CHAIR,

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

3   Board of Directors:

4   Doug Apple, Chair

5   Alex Schwartz

6   Jordan Reed

7   Robert Ehrlich

8   Genesis Aquino

9   Alexander Armlovich

10

11   STAFF:

12   Andrew McLaughlin - Executive Director

13   Brian Hoberman - Co-Research Director

14   Danielle Burger - Co-Research Director

15   Charmaine Superville - Office Manager

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

3   CHAIR APPLE: Good morning, all.

4   I'm Doug Apple, Chair of the Rent Guidelines Board,

5   and I'd like to welcome you today to this public

6   hearing of the New York City Rent Guidelines Board.

7   This is the last of five public hearings to

8   consider comments --

9   MR. EHRLICH:

10   (Unintelligible).

11   CHAIR APPLE: Oh, it's not

12   working.

13   MR. EHRLICH: You got to get

14   closer.

15   CHAIR APPLE: Okay. Can you

16   hear okay now?

17   MR. EHRLICH: You just got to

18   get --

19   CHAIR APPLE: I'll get close.

20   This is the last of five

21   public hearings, as well as seven other meetings,

22   to consider comments concerning proposed rent

23   adjustments for leases, for apartments, lofts,

24   hotels, and other housing units subject to the rent

25   stabilization law of 1969 and the Emergency Tenant

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2   Protection Act of 1974. These adjustments will

3   affect leases commencing between October 1, 2025,

4   and September 30th -- through September 30th, 2026.

5   I will now take roll call.

6   Please respond if present. Genesis Aquino?

7   (No response.)

8   CHAIR APPLE: Alex Armlovich?

9   MR. ARMLOVICH: Present.

10   CHAIR APPLE: Robert Ehrlich?

11   MR. EHRLICH: Present.

12   CHAIR APPLE: Arpit Gupta?

13   (No response.)

14   CHAIR APPLE: No?

15   Reed Jordan?

16   MR. JORDAN: Present.

17   CHAIR APPLE: Alex Schwartz?

18   MR. SCHWARTZ: Present.

19   CHAIR APPLE: Christina Smyth?

20   (No response.)

21   CHAIR APPLE: No.

22   Adan Soltren?

23   (No response.)

24   CHAIR APPLE: Not present.

25   And Doug Apple. Let the

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2   record show that I am indeed present. With that,

3   we do have a quorum for today's meeting.

4   Outside of the public

5   hearings, like today, we're accepting comments on

6   the proposed guidelines -- proposed guidelines.

7   You can submit written audio and video comments for

8   the Board to review through today, June 27th.

9   Instructions on how to submit these comments will

10   be available at the Board's website @nyc.gov/rgb by

11   email and ask@rgb.nyc.gov, or by calling RGB at

12   (212) 669-7480.

13   Our final vote on the

14   guidelines will take place on Monday, June 30th,

15   starting at 7:00 p.m. at El Museo del Barrio at

16   1350 5th Avenue at 104th Street. Doors will open

17   at 6:00 p.m. The public may attend in person or

18   may watch the vote live by streaming it on RGB's

19   YouTube channel. To find out how, visit the RGB

20   website, call us or call us at (212) 669-7480.

21   Before we proceed, I'd like to

22   go over the rules and procedures for those who are

23   testifying before the Board. If you wish to speak,

24   you must confirm with RGB staff at the registration

25   table located right outside here. Speakers will

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2   not be called if they have not checked in at the

3   registration table.

4   I will try to call several

5   names in advance to let you know that you'll be

6   soon to be called up to speak, and we do have a

7   microphone on a podium right here for you to speak

8   at.

9   If you have materials to

10   distribute to the Board, please give them the RGB

11   staff sitting at the sign-in tables near the

12   entrance. I will attempt to alternate speakers

13   between tenants and owners, but this may not always

14   be possible. In order to accommodate as many

15   speakers as possible, each speaker will have two

16   minutes to give their testimony.

17   In addition, two minutes of

18   speaking time will be given to those speakers

19   utilizing interpretation services. To help

20   speakers keep track of time, we have a clock.

21   We'll start the clock when you begin speaking. The

22   clock will beep once when the speaker has 30

23   seconds left, will continue beeping when the

24   allotted two minutes are up. If you're still

25   speaking at the end of two minutes, I will ask you

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2   to wrap up your testimony. Staff are available to

3   assist you with the mic and remind you when your

4   allotted time is up.

5   I understand that many

6   speakers have a passion and speak from the heart.

7   We want to hear all of what you have to say.

8   However, we do ask that you be respectful, not make

9   any overt physical threats towards members of the

10   Board or others, and keep your comments to germane

11   to the issue at hand. Any type of language beyond

12   this will not be tolerated, and if you continue to

13   use it, I may ask you to stop speaking.

14   We expect many speakers, and

15   the Board wants to hear from as many of you as

16   possible in limited time we have for this hearing.

17   This hearing does run till 12 o'clock, but anybody

18   who's signed up before 12 will be able to speak.

19   We understand that may be

20   difficult to say everything you want us to hear in

21   just two minutes, but please understand it's our

22   responsibility to try to make sure that everyone

23   who has come ha has time to be heard. Thank you

24   for your cooperation. The Board is looking forward

25   to hearing your comments regarding proposed rent

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2 adjustment guidelines. Now we'll translate to

3 Spanish.

4   THE INTERPRETER: (Translating

5 from English to Spanish.)

6   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

7 Okay. Let me - let me call the first several

8 witnesses -- speakers to come up. Jennifer Laurie,

9 followed by Elon Rabinowitz, and Pillar de Jesus.

10   Jennifer, please.

11   MS. LAURIE: Very nice to be

12 first. Thank you. My name is Jenny Laurie, I am

13 the Executive Director of Housing Court Answers.

14 We provide --

15   CHAIR APPLE: Could you speak

16 -- yeah, I think the mics are a little bit echoey

17 in here, so if you get a little closer to the mic.

18   MS. LAURIE: Okay. How's

19 that?

20   CHAIR APPLE: Better. Thank

21 you.

22   MS. LAURIE: Okay, great. We

23 provide support and legal information to tenants

24 and landlords without attorneys through a hotline

25 and information tables in the city's housing court.

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2   We talk to about 200 people a day, most of whom are

3   tenants facing eviction for nonpayment of rent.

4   We focus most of our work on

5   preventing evictions, connecting tenants to

6   emergency rent, resources, and legal services. Of

7   the total number of tenants we assisted in the

8   current fiscal year ending Monday, who either had

9   non-payments or called us because they were behind

10   on their rent, over 20,000 were rent-stabilized.

11   Their average rent was about $1,500 a month, and

12   the average arrears was $15,000. Tenants with a

13   rent of $1,500 per month. Even though they owe a

14   shit ton of money, excuse my French, their

15   evictions can be prevented.

16   The city, New York City, has

17   some great tools for eviction prevention. We have

18   the One Shot deal, which provides grants and loans

19   to pay back rent for those who can't afford their

20   rent going forward; and FHEPS and city FHEPs, which

21   pay rent arrears and ongoing rent for families and

22   single adults on public assistance or poverty-level

23   incomes.

24   These programs work best for

25   tenants with rent-stabilized leases for obvious

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2   reasons. Our affordable housing ecosystem is about

3   to get really ugly if Donald Trump's budget passes,

4   the federal budget. The city faces a loss of $4

5   billion in federal support for subsidy programs.

6   And so, I urge the Board to do a rent freeze as I

7   do most years, but this year, I think it's

8   particularly urgent. Thank you.

9   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

10   Thank you.

11   Elon Rabinowitz followed by

12   Pilar de Jesus.

13   Sir.

14   MR. RABINOWITZ: Hello. Thank

15   you for the opportunity to speak at the verdict to

16   the Board again.

17   I'm here today not to ask for

18   anything specific decision, although I do think the

19   data backs the need for an increase, given the

20   rising costs and the testimony from groups like the

21   Furman Center and the Community Protection Program,

22   and others.

23   But what I'm here to ask for

24   is honesty. Each hearing, I come here and I listen

25   to a tenant rep or a tenant advocate say that there

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2   are programs to help landlords. All we have to do

3   is open our books. As somebody who has opened

4   their books four years in a row, I can tell you,

5   there are no programs. I've been to the -- it took

6   me three years to get DHCR to tell me that there is

7   a hardship program. I submitted four years of

8   applications to that hardship program.

9   Each year, it's rejected, not

10   based on the finances that I provide or the

11   spreadsheets or the hundreds and hundreds of pages

12   of documents I have to submit in quadruplicate for

13   each of my units, nothing online, nothing digital

14   in 2025. Don't ask me why. They don't look at any

15   of that. It sits on somebody's desk for eight

16   months. At the end of those eight months, they

17   look at it and they say, you did it in blue ink

18   instead of black ink. You refinanced your house,

19   and it's now in the name of an LLC instead of the

20   name of your wife. That's a sale. I'm like, no,

21   it's not. I own LLC. My wife owns LLC, we still

22   own this property.

23   Another eight months go by,

24   they look at it and they go, "You're right.

25   Actually, that's not a sale. But we lost the

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2 paperwork showing that you bought the house on date

3 that you say you bought the house, rejected." How

4 do I appeal that? Go to court on a $1,300 a month

5 rent, six percent is the most the hardship program

6 will give me.

7   You have several lawyers on

8 stage there. How much do you think an Article 72

9 hearing would cost me? How much would I have to

10 spend on lawyers to get a few hundred dollars in

11 rent increase? The math's not hard. I would be

12 spending decades of rent to get a few hundred

13 dollars more a month. It doesn't make sense.

14 There are no programs.

15   So when tenants come up here

16 and they say there's a program or they talk about

17 NOI five percent being guaranteed, please call them

18 out, at least are in the final order when you say

19 something, encourage our state officials to

20 actually put together a real program, because Even

21 DHCR admits this program does not exist. Thank

22 you.

23   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

24   Pillar de Jesus, followed by

25 Hannah Lawson and Kevin A. Jones. Ma'am?

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2   MS. DE JESUS: Good morning.

3   My name is Pillar de Jesus, and I testified today

4   not only as a tenant, but as a -- tenant advocate,

5   but as someone who has personally experienced

6   housing insecurity, I know what it feels like to

7   fear eviction. I know what it feels like, what it

8   does to your body, your nervous system, your

9   spirit. Housing instability is more than an

10   economic harm. It's trauma. And I speak today for

11   every tenant in the city who is suffering silent.

12   Tenants do not need a rent

13   increase, tenants need a rent freeze or a rent

14   rollback. Every year, this Board listens to

15   landlords' claim that they're struggling yet. This

16   is the only business in New York City where private

17   owners can go to the city to demand guaranteed

18   profits. The facts are clear, new -- your own data

19   shows landlords income increased by 6.2 percent

20   while expenses rose only 4.5 percent. That's not

21   hardship, that's profit.

22   Meanwhile, tenants are

23   drowning. Over 50 percent of rent stabilized

24   tenants are rent burdened. Over hundreds of

25   thousands of housing court cases are pending in New

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2 York, and most tenants are going through that

3 process. Unrepresented. Many are suffering with

4 build -- in their buildings with chronic despair,

5 heat outage, mold, lead, rodents, while landlords

6 cash in and the city fails to enforce its own

7 codes.

8 This psychological harm is

9 real. Housing instability leads to anxiety,

10 depression, chronic stress, and in some cases;

11 suicide. You are not just voting on numbers, you

12 are voting on people's lives. The same landlords

13 who say they can't survive are lobbying for and

14 benefiting from massive policies like City of Yes,

15 which will open floodgates for more high-end

16 development. You are -- they've received billions

17 in public subsidies through 421A, J51, and now

18 485X. They exploit loopholes like the MCIS and the

19 IIs to raise rents and displace longtime tenants.

20 Another thing, you have the

21 legal authority to do a rent rollback. The New

22 York State Constitution, article 17, says, you

23 know, you're obligated to protect the needy, and

24 the way I interpret that you're not doing that.

25 And so, you know, I would hope

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2   the public reserves their right to possibly

3   consider filing an Article 78 if you do file voting

4   in increase. Because in this, in my opinion, the

5   way I read the State New York State Constitution,

6   article 17, you are violating a New York State

7   constitution by not protecting the needy. And your

8   data is showing you that. And the tenants are

9   testifying to that.

10   And I really, really, really

11   want to encourage that the Board considers a rent

12   freeze. I mean, I'd really like to see a rent

13   rollback, but I know it's a lot of numbers that

14   can't be done. But you need to really consider a

15   rent freeze and stop giving the landlords more

16   profits. You're not their bank. Thank you.

17   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you,

18   ma'am.

19   Hannah Lawson, followed by

20   Kevin A. Jones and Dutch de Carvallo. Ms. Lawson?

21   MS. LAWSON: My name is Hannah

22   Lawson, I spoke to you all 10 days ago at the

23   meeting, lobbying for a rent freeze and I have to

24   admit that I made a mistake. We do not need a rent

25   freeze, we need a rent rollback.

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2   As the daughter of a landlord

3   back in California, I was really confused by the

4   statements made by the two landlords who spoke at

5   our last meeting. My dad has always said that the

6   rental income is irrelevant. His real gains come

7   from the equity of the property itself. So when

8   these landlords claim that they were losing money

9   on their properties, I did some research to

10   understand why, and what I found was quite

11   appalling.

12   Let's start with Ron Cohen.

13   Of the 12 buildings I found on the HPD website

14   owned by Ron, only one is rent stabilized with a

15   total of nine units. If he's seeing such a loss,

16   he can raise the rent on the buildings that aren't

17   stabilized and save his breath at these meetings.

18   Or maybe he'd make more rental income if he'd

19   address any of the 193 open HPD violations for

20   mold, mice infestation, roaches, and you guessed

21   it, bedbugs.

22   And Ron is a fellow Fordham

23   alum. How disappointing? His behavior certainly

24   does not represent our alma mater's commitment to

25   the alleviation of poverty, the promotion of

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2   justice, and the protection of human rights, as

3   said in their mission statement.

4   What about Elon Rabinowitz;

5   did you know that Elon only owns one building and

6   it's not even rent stabilized; did you know that

7   he's the vice president of a publicly traded

8   company on the NASDAQ, Datadog Incorporated; did

9   you know that their revenue from 2024 was $2.68

10   billion? That's right, billion with a B. I think

11   Elon can handle a water bill for a five-unit

12   building.

13   If this was down to a majority

14   vote, we wouldn't even need these meetings. And

15   since I've just effectively eviscerated the only

16   two arguments I heard last week for a rent

17   increase, we essentially have a very easy decision

18   to make. So make the right decision. Roll back

19   the rent.

20   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

21   Thank you.

22   Kevin A. Jones, followed by

23   Dutch de Carvallo and Margot Marine (phonetic).

24   Mr. Jones?

25   MR. JONES: Good morning. My

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2   name is Kevin Jones, I'm president of the Tenants

3   Association in a rent stabilized building in

4   Washington Heights. I brought along copies of my

5   remarks with footnotes, and I say without

6   condescension and with respect, that it makes sense

7   that people with -- and their businesses pursue

8   their for-profit interests to the fullest extent

9   possible.

10   It also stands to reason that

11   our public officials, those elected or appointed,

12   have the range of perspective to govern, regulate,

13   levy taxes, create a budget to benefit all of us.

14   For instance, Con Edison is a for-profit utility

15   company, and they're regulated by the Public

16   Service Commission. The rates change charged are

17   based on the reality of ConEd's need for a

18   reasonable profit, and the public's essential need

19   for electric and gas. It's my understanding that

20   this striking of a balance between private and

21   public interest is the reason for the Rent

22   Guidelines Board.

23   We need to question why real

24   estate prices relative to other industries got so

25   high over the decades. It can't simply be a

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2   question of supply and demand. We need to have

3   more transparency in the real estate and finance

4   industries. If we don't, all our work in rezoning

5   and increasing housing supply will be wasted. We

6   need to use our oversight and regulatory tools to

7   curb the dynamics of excessive housing costs. We

8   need more scrutiny of tax cuts and other programs

9   for housing development so that we have money to

10   help landlords who demonstrate their financial

11   distress.

12   We can't help landlords in

13   distress by continuing to raise our rents. We need

14   a rent freeze now. A regulated apartment should

15   yield both financial security for the tenant and

16   reasonable profit for the landlord. Thank you.

17   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.

18   Dutch De Carvallo followed by Margo Marine and

19   Mercedes Escort. Sir?

20   MR. DE CARVALLO: Good

21   morning. My name is Dutch de Carvallo and I'm a

22   lifelong New Yorker, a New York City public school

23   teacher, and I live in rent stabilized affordable

24   housing. And I'm here to tell the Board to freeze

25   the rent.

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2   Year after year, as tenants,

3   we are forced to watch as this inhumane board

4   remains completely dedicated to the fantasy that

5   the landlords are struggling. And I really mean

6   fantasy, because somehow you look at data which

7   shows that landlords had a 12 percent increase in

8   NOI and still you have the audacity to suggest rent

9   increases as high as 7.75 percent.

10   Every indicator of economic

11   instability and suffering are up. The only way I

12   was able to stay in the neighborhood I grew up in

13   as a city worker is because I got off an affordable

14   apartment waiting list. Our ability to live should

15   never be dictated by the luck of a lottery system

16   or a group of people who refuse to open their books

17   and show us their so-called struggle.

18   If these landlords are

19   struggling so badly, they can do what they tell all

20   of us to do. They can get a job, they could even

21   apply for benefits. And I don't mean the kind of

22   benefits that this board hands out to them year

23   after year for no effort. I mean, the kind where

24   you have to go stand in line at a benefits office,

25   wait for hours, and then get denied because you

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2   make 50 cents too much. They can try waiting

3   months for medical coverage and years on affordable

4   housing wait list.

5   And while they do all of that,

6   they can learn what it's like to work tirelessly

7   and never get ahead. They can finally experience

8   what it's like to face a board of people who are so

9   out of touch with reality that they actually look

10   at the millions of struggling New Yorkers, and

11   instead decide that it's the landlords buying $25

12   million penthouses who are having a hard time.

13   It's shameful that you believe

14   that the backbone of this city, the childcare

15   providers, the nurses, the sanitation workers, and

16   the teachers like myself, the city workers, are

17   responsible for lining the pockets of landlords. I

18   can only dream that for once, you have a shred of

19   integrity and choose to help the New Yorkers who

20   actually run this city and not just the ones who

21   profit off of it. Thank you.

22   (Applause.)

23   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Oh,

24   one second ma'am. We're -- a little technical

25   problem apparently,

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2   (Unintelligible cross-talk.)

3   CHAIR APPLE: Great. Thank

4   you.

5   Please, please proceed.

6   MS. MARINE: Good morning to

7   everyone here. My name is Margo Marine. I'm from

8   the Make the Road Organization. I've lived in

9   Elmhurst, Queens for many years with my three

10   children that were born here. And I am a single

11   mother. I have worked tirelessly to have my

12   children progress and go on ahead. And I have also

13   been paying my taxes.

14   For the last 23 years, I have

15   lived in a rent control apartment. And I pay

16   $1,733.50 in rent. But it turns out I lost my job

17   and I am behind on my rent by four months. So the

18   last time I had the help of a vouchers for my

19   children's like aftercare, but they removed it.

20   They got rid of it because they said that they were

21   not receiving therapy or medical treatment.

22   March 13th of this year when I

23   asked them to come and look at the mold that I had

24   in my bathroom that was causing asthma, which

25   severely affects my three children who suffer from

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2 asthma, they posted the papers about the rent that

3 I owe on the outside of my door of my apartment,

4 which my older son saw when he came home from

5 school. At that moment, he called me. He was very

6 anxious. I was trying to console him. I asked him

7 what was going on. My son tells me, "Mom, why did

8 you hide this from me?" I asked him what he was

9 talking about. He said, "Mom, "I'm not going to go

10 to school anymore. I'm going to help you out."

11 And that broke my heart because I did try to hide

12 that from my children because that's what a mother

13 does for her children.

14   And that's why I am here to

15 ask you members of the Board to freeze the rent.

16 Since like me, there are many other people who have

17 either similar or worse situations than mine. We

18 suffered this pain and the anxiety that every year

19 you're going to raise the rent without decent

20 maintenance service to our apartments and

21 tolerating constant humiliation on the Board of --

22 on the behalf -- on the behalf of the landlords.

23   On top of that, we also have added

24 expenses: food, electricity, and our income is not

25 enough. Because of all of this, I had to look for

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2 help and the organization, Make the Road, has

3 provided hope for me, guiding me regarding my

4 rights as a tenant, having lived in the -- in the

5 same place where my children were born during the

6 last 23 years, and that maybe in the future they

7 can see me out on the street.

8   And that maybe in the future they

9 can see me out on the street since I've looked for

10 much help, knocking on doors, asking for money.

11 Today I am here to tell my story because at Make

12 the Road I did have hope, and for you guys to

13 understand what our lives are like. Thank you for

14 listening to me.

15   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Thank

16 you, Ma'am.

17   Mercedes Escorto (phonetic)

18   MS. ESCORTO: Yes.

19   CHAIR APPLE: Stella Rone

20 (phonetic)

21   MS. RONE: Yes.

22   CHAIR APPLE: Next. And then

23 Wally Alpern (phonetic) will follow.

24   Ma'am?

25   MS. ESCORTO: Ready.

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2   CHAIR APPLE: Please.

3   THE INTERPRETER: I'm ready.

4   MS. ESCORTO: Hi, my name is

5   Mercedes Escorto. I live at 1187 Anderson Avenue

6   in the Bronx. My landlord is Equity Emerald.

7   So, I will start, I live in a

8   rent-stabilized building, and my landlord began to

9   remove rent stabilization. He went to court to

10   remove the program, and he lost his case. After

11   that CASA came around, the organization that I am

12   now a current volunteer for, and they explained to

13   us the situation, like how that was being done.

14   Because none of us knew that he was trying to

15   remove the rent stabilization. None of us in the

16   building knew that, none of us were aware of that.

17   CASA helped us organize and helped

18   us establish, what is it called? A rent -- a tenant

19   association. So from then, they referred us to

20   Bronx Legal Services because we explained to them

21   all the repairs that needed to be done and all the

22   damage that the landlord had done to us.   I had

23   been living in my apartment since 2020 with my

24   mother -- well, I've been living in my apartment

25   for 16 years, but I brought my mother over in 2020

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2   when she got COVID. But what's going on?

3   At that time, my mom had a 24-hour

4   home attendance service. Exactly, so with the

5   comings and goings of the doctors, the therapists,

6   the nurses, we -- our apartment got full of

7   bedbugs. I had to ask for help and called a friend

8   to be like; you have to come and get my mom because

9   the home attendant service told me that they could

10   no longer send home attendants because the bedbug

11   situation was completely unhealthy for them. I had

12   to pay $700 for each extermination because the

13   landlord didn't do anything.

14   After that, he doesn't fix our

15   apartments, doesn't paint, the heat is very low

16   during the winter, the same thing with the hot

17   water. I became very stressed. That situation

18   stressed me out incredibly. I got sick. I had a

19   stroke.

20   I was a city social worker for 30

21   years. And when I realized I could not do it

22   anymore because I had to take care of my mother, I

23   continued getting sick because I could not pay for

24   the repairs. I was always the one taking care of

25   the repairs in my apartment. The landlord would

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2   not pay for anything. But once I had the stroke, I

3   could not do that anymore, and I had to retire.

4   The only thing I'm asking of all

5   of you, you guys are basically like the mediators

6   between us and the landlords, I'm only asking you

7   to help us to please freeze the rent for at least

8   two to three years, because that would help

9   everyone's situation. Especially me, because my

10   retirement is based on a fixed income. I don't

11   have enough. So, I beg you, please, please freeze

12   our rent so that I can survive because I am not

13   living.

14   Exactly. And it's not fair for

15   someone like me who spent 30 years of my life

16   working as a social worker for the city, that now I

17   had to be forced to retire and I'm living on a

18   fixed income. It's not enough. Please freeze the

19   rent for us. Thank you.

20   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

21   MS. RONE: Forgive me for being

22   late. I'm never late, but it happened today. And

23   I can't believe you're up to number 13 already.

24   Well, I'm superstitious, but it's okay. I'm here.

25   So I would like to read a quote to

1

2   you from the state comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli,

3   and he says, "New Yorkers tend to have a tough time

4   finding a place where they can afford to live.

5   Housing in New York State is expensive, among the

6   costliest in the nation." Reported by Mr. Di

7   Napoli, and he's the State comptroller.

8   I'm sure the City comptroller

9   feels the same.

10   My question is, what is fair and

11   affordable housing? This term doesn't have a real

12   basis in reality. High rents have drained the

13   pockets and the hearts and souls of hardworking

14   City and State workers. The average vendor on the

15   street has a hard time living. The average

16   sanitation teacher, myself, healthcare workers are

17   being forced to pay rent that they really can't

18   afford. They really can't afford. And it's

19   draining their savings.

20   Okay. Affordable and fair is

21   allowing me to live where I want to, regardless of

22   my status, my age, my race, my finances. We are

23   forced to go through a lottery. Now, when I left

24   you the last time, I gave you an assignment; I

25   don't remember any of you picking it up, but it had

1

2 a packet with an envelope like this. Do any of you

3 -- you can raise your hand; you can shake your

4 head; you can tell me if you've seen it. That

5 means none of you saw it, because I did tell you

6 that I was going to leave it.

7 And I just want to show you the

8 model that this city is built on. The city is

9 built on this model, I'm sorry folks for

10 (unintelligible). And the first part of the model

11 says, it says, first of all, "Paths to accessible

12 housing in New York City." The first part of the

13 model says "private market." And this means many

14 people with disabilities are priced out of the

15 private market due to the high cost of accessible

16 apartments.

17 The second part is the housing

18 lottery. Affordable housing lotteries offer

19 cheaper, accessible apartments. High demand means

20 the costs of success are low. This is

21 discriminatory. I tried this housing lottery.

22 They sent me all the way to Queens. Okay? I gave

23 them all my paperwork only to find out that I

24 didn't qualify.

25 And then they tried to steal my --

1

2   my daughter and I, they tried to steal our picture

3   ID. Okay? I tried Stuyvesant. I didn't have

4   enough time to get into their system, so they

5   knocked me out because I told them to text me or to

6   call me. They did neither. And when I did see it

7   in my email, they knocked me out. That's the first

8   time. The second time they did the same thing.

9   Okay. The third part of the model

10   is section eight vouchers, the section eight

11   vouchers. And that is section eight vouchers cover

12   70 percent of rent. High demand means long wait

13   lists to obtain one.

14   The fourth part is the city

15   shelter. Moving to a city shelter can lead to

16   eligibility for other housing vouchers. The

17   average length of stay is more than one year.

18   Then you have the public housing.

19   NYCHA has about 6,000 fully accessible units in

20   this portfolio. The average wait time is more than

21   two years. Now, these are the models in which

22   we've been trying to survive by. It doesn't fit

23   every tenant. Okay.

24   The model of the lottery that is

25   the worst model I've seen. And if you know

1

2   anything about education and short stories, there's

3   an author called Shirley Jackson, and she wrote a

4   short story called The Lottery. Look up that

5   story, read it, and you'll find out why the lottery

6   isn't a great thing. Okay.

7   CHAIR APPLE: If you could finish,

8   ma'am, please.

9   MS. RONE: Sorry. I'm going to

10 try to talk as fast --

11   CHAIR APPLE: Okay. Thank you.

12   MS. RONE: -- as I can. Okay. I

13 don't qualify for SCRIE or DRIE, I'm not disabled.

14 When I was disabled, the minute I turned 66, they

15 said, you're no longer disabled. How do they

16 determine that? Then when I wanted to challenge

17 them on it, the lady called me and said, miss,

18 don't bother. You're not going to get any more

19 money. Okay? So that was that.

20   I'm 70 years old. I'm living on a

21 teacher's salary, okay? How much more can they

22 take out of my pension before they deplete my

23 pension?

24   And the people, as an aside, the

25 people downstairs told me to tell you, please

1

2   freeze the rent. And I don't even know these

3   people, but this is what's going on. Everybody is

4   saying to you, and I know the mayor and the rest of

5   the politicians got your stronghold. I know they

6   got a stronghold on you, but it's up to you. Okay?

7   And as far as landlords, landlords

8   are predatory, greedy slumlords, okay? And this is

9   a monopoly. You know, everybody's played monopoly.

10   And the purpose of a monopoly is to own as many

11   houses as possible. We do know that. This is the

12   -- at the crest of your problem, landlords own too

13   many houses. I can only live in one apartment, and

14   I could barely live in that. Okay. But they can

15   own --

16   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, ma'am.

17   MS. RONE: Five --

18   CHAIR APPLE: Could you finish?

19   MS. RONE: -- 10 houses, but they

20   can't take care of one. They're stealing from

21   Peter to pay Paul and then feed Simon. And they're

22   biting the hands that feed them. We are the people

23   that make up this city. They get their money from

24   us, and yet we can't get the needed repairs that we

25   need.

1

2   So, I'm asking you to freeze the

3   rent, put a cap on people that are 65 or older, and

4   spare us this headache. And it's going to cost the

5   city big time to try to straighten this problem

6   out. And you are the only ones that can do it.

7   And we are counting on you. We are really counting

8   on you. And --

9   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

10   MS. RONE: Use your HI. Don't let

11   AI rule you, use your HI, your human intelligence.

12   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

13   MS. RONE: Thank you.

14   CHAIR APPLE: Wally Alpern, Paula

15   Rossi, followed by Percy Antonio Solero.

16   MR. ALPERN: Hello. I just want

17   to start out by just saying how much of an honor

18   it's to stand in front of all these tenants who

19   have given such great testimony. As a new resident

20   of this city, I feel very lucky.

21   Last year when you guys chose to

22   increase the rent by five percent and made the

23   mistake of suppressing the tenant organizers and

24   city representatives who decided to protest that

25   you, you know, silenced a lot of powerful people.

1

2   And now the tables have turned and we are seeing

3   tenant power rise in this city and in the State.

4   And soon, those same assembly members, namely

5   Zohran Mamdani and Assembly member Marcina --

6   Marcela Mitaynes, are entering into greater power.

7   And I, you know, I just want to

8   let you know that if you cannot continue to -- if

9   you continue to fail to serve tenants who are so

10   desperate for a rent freeze, so desperate to afford

11   their homes, then soon you will be replaced by

12   people who are willing to do that duty.

13   I hoped to talk directly to

14   Christina today, but it seems that she hasn't

15   bothered to show up. So, I will extend this to all

16   of you and say that you can no longer make snarky

17   comments and talk down to tenants in this city and

18   hope to keep your positions of power.

19   So again, I will urge you, as all the other tenants

20   here have today to enforce a rent freeze on Monday

21   or I'll see your seats lost, so thank you.

22   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.

23   Paula Rossi, followed by Percy

24   Antonio Solero (phonetic), and Christopher Vital.

25   Ms. Rossi?

1

2   MS. ROSSI: Hi, my name is Paula

3   Rossi. The last time I did this, I think De Blasio

4   was in office. And okay -- yeah, my name is Paula

5   Rossi, the last time I did this, De Blasio was in

6   office, and there was a -- I came gigantic room and

7   people screaming, rent roll back, rent, freeze.

8   You know, there was a rent freeze with De Blasio.

9   The only time -- and I think that -- if you can

10 remember back then how mad and angry the people

11 were, they're doing that again. And I definitely

12 think we're going to have new -- a new mayor that

13 is on this issue.

14   You know, the landlord that did

15 speak, I just want to say, you know, when I'm

16 making an investment and it goes wrong -- I mean, I

17 don't have anything really written, but anyway,

18 when it goes wrong, I have to eat it, right. In

19 the stock market if I get a car, it's a lemon, I

20 have to eat that, you know? You don't go into, I

21 mean, you really shouldn't go into real estate

22 thinking you're -- if you're a mom-and-pop real

23 estate place, you know, you're going to be coming

24 one of these guys that have those tall buildings.

25 It's just not possible.

1

2   My landlord, I've been with him

3   for over 35 years. His children have taken over

4   and they really -- they're really just incredible

5   -- horrible is the word. I live on a fifth-floor

6   walkup. I, like I said, I've been there for 35

7   years. When he first bought the building, I've had

8   no repair since he bought the building and slapped

9   some paint on it. So, I just want to note, the

10 people in the same unit as me -- okay, this year

11 it's a $30, they're asking me for $30 more, $30.

12   So, the people below me, I think,

13 are paying $5,000 to the same unit, right? You have

14 to make over $100,000 to live in my tenement on 14

15 Street, it's a fifth-floor walkup. I mean, it

16 sucks. If I had that money, I would never live in

17 my apartment. You know, who lived there? Kids, the

18 NYU kids. I mean, their parents come in August,

19 and then they leave at the end of the year. So, I

20 mean, you have to make something like five times

21 the rent to even talk to my landlord now. So, I

22 mean, who has that kind of money? I just don't

23 understand.

24   I mean, I grew up in New York City

25 on the west side, it was a predominantly Italian

1

2 neighborhood. There was no rent, like -- Rent

3 Guideline Boards, we paid what we could afford.

4   I don't know, the tenant --

5 the landlords didn't seem to be too greedy. I just

6 feel that the rent should be frozen. I don't think

7 it's going to happen with you guys, but I am sure

8 the next time this goes around, maybe you won't be

9 here.

10   But I think it should be frozen

11 because we really -- the landlords are getting so

12 greedy. Yeah, I mean, open my landlord's books. I

13 mean, there's only two rent-stabilized people on

14 14th Street, and he tried to get me to pay extra

15 for he put in new gas meter or something, another a

16 hundred dollars each room, right? But luckily, De

17 Blasio did some sort of hocus pocus, where if more

18 than half of the building is market-rate rent, they

19 can't charge me anymore. Right? So, I -- you

20 know, the greed is just incredible.

21   I don't think you're going to roll

22 back. But anyway, I just wanted to come here today

23 to represent people like me who probably haven't

24 come here because, like, you know, the world is

25 falling apart, you know? And I'm disabled, and

1

2   it's really hard to get here, I know you can do it

3   on Zoom. But you know, people that are sick and

4   disabled, just like they have so many things on

5   their plate, if they just can't come and advocate

6   for themselves. But I'm representing them.

7   So the people that you're going to

8   be hurting are people like me. So look into my

9   eyes. I'm going to be maybe one day unaffordable

10   in my apartment on a fifth-floor walkup. And I

11   have -- I asked the landlord to move down to a

12   lower floor. Yes, you can move down to a lower

13   floor if you pay market rate rent, $5,000 a month,

14   as if it was just, you know, it's just, and every

15   day someone can afford that.

16   I grew up in the city, I love New

17   York City. I think people in my age made the

18   atmosphere of New York City to bring all the people

19   here that love New York City. But it's just

20   turning in -- like even in my building, it's just

21   turning into a turnover. There's no families, it

22   is like parents pay for the kids. It's not a

23   family neighborhood anymore because people can't

24   afford the rent. Anyway, that's it. Thank you.

25   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, ma'am.

1

2   Percy Antonio Solero.

3   MR. SOLERO: Yes. My Name is

4   Percy Solero, I'm a member of the Make the Road

5   organization, where I looked for help to understand

6   my rights as a tenant. I have lived for many years

7   in the -- in Queens County, and I have been renting

8   an apartment for many years, which right now I feel

9   as if I am under eviction due to harassment and

10   threats to wind up out on the street for demanding

11   my rights to have maintenance and also for calling

12   311.

13   I never received any documents

14   from the court. I appeared because I thought

15   something was happening, and I asked them what's

16   going on. They told me that I had an eviction

17   scheduled for June 17th, and I answered, I didn't

18   know anything about that, and that I also had not

19   received any type of document or notification. I

20   was there on the 13th, it was a Friday. So, I sent

21   like some a written letter to the judge so that the

22   judge can understand what I was asking for, and he

23   denied it.

24   I went back on Monday. I went

25   with more information, including documents, showing

1

2   that I am disabled, and that I have -- I suffer

3   from health issues and that I don't know where else

4   to go. For the second time, the judge denied me

5   again.

6   I was looking for a legal aid.

7   And on both occasions, no legal aid went to defend

8   me. I don't know why they're working there. I

9   don't know if it was due to discrimination, I have

10   no idea. But I am not well, I had to go to a

11   psychiatrist, a psychologist, because I cannot

12   sleep. Please, freeze that rent. People do not

13   have enough salary to keep paying for something

14   that keeps going up and up, while the landlords

15   just never want to fix anything.

16   I think you're basically making

17   like a mockery of us, and all due respect to you

18   guys, I hope you find a solution to this problem.

19   Thank you.

20   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

21   Just want to remind everybody, if

22   you want to speak, and we would encourage you to do

23   so, to please sign up so we make sure we get you up

24   here to speak. Thank you.

25   THE INTERPRETER: (Translating

1

2 from English to Spanish.)

3   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

4   Christopher Vital, Julian Dillon

5 (phonetic), and Jacqueline Sweaze (phonetic).

6   Mr. Vital, sir?

7   MR. VITAL: All right. Thank you

8 for your time. In the past, they used to have a

9 representative from DHCR here and what have you.

10 They've gotten rid of that?

11   CHAIR APPLE: Yeah, we don't have

12 them today, sir.

13   MR. VITAL: Okay. Department of

14 Finance, Department of finance to apply for

15 apartment DREE because the city can -- provides

16 programs for people to do rent freeze. I don't

17 know why you guys aren't getting this information.

18 I don't know why you're not getting that

19 information.

20   Before, there were representatives

21 for those organizations during these public

22 hearings that you could go and talk to, and they'd

23 be much more beneficial. So, I don't know why they

24 don't do that anymore.

25   Anyway, I'm clearly outnumbered

1

2   here, but that's all right. It annoys me when I

3   know that there's plenty of programs and things

4   that are offered, and nobody mentions that during

5   the testimony. You know? People should be aware

6   of what's available when the city offers a ton of

7   different benefits to struggling tenants.

8   The other unfortunate thing

9   actually is the city doesn't actually get involved

10   until you're in housing court. If people go to

11   their communities, community boards and what have

12   you -- not community boards, but community groups,

13   they can't help you until there's an eviction

14   notice and what have you. So it causes more

15   stress, even though the city maybe should perhaps

16   intervene before it gets to that level, because

17   there's a huge amount of rent arrears going on in

18   the city.

19   Now, anyway, really quick, last

20   thing. This is your price index of operating

21   costs, correct? What was the average percent

22   increase in costs that you guys came up with this

23   past year? 6.3 percent.

24   Clearly, you're not going to give

25   us a rent raise. That's even going to be close to

1

2   matching that. When was the last time you guys

3   gave a rent increase for one-year rentals that

4   matched or was more than the price index of

5   operating cost percentage of costs increase? It

6   was nine years ago. Nine years ago.

7   Since 2000, it's only happened

8   two times. The reason why everybody's rent,

9   especially if you're a new -- I know there's a new

10   tenant here, is because, for instance, in my

11   building, which is 4311 49th Street in Queens, it

12   is over 90 percent rent stabilized. I'm not like

13   one of these other cool, you know, phones that

14   comes in here and says he's got rent stabilized

15   apartments when he doesn't.

16   But for the buildings I have in

17   Queens where our -- predominantly rent stabilized,

18   I have tenants that have been there for 20 or 30

19   years because we actually did do our job and kept a

20   nice building. We're struggling because you guys

21   keep on making sure that rents don't even match our

22   costs. And it makes me start thinking, why are you

23   guys doing that? Is that just, it's not -- can it

24   actually continue like this, or the businesses are

25   going to fail? Clearly the businesses are going to

1

2   ultimately fail.

3   And the reason why is,

4   unfortunately, I only -- normally I stopped -- I

5   started -- gave up coming to these hearings because

6   I know that you guys never, ever, ever give a rent

7   increase that matches the cost. But I came here

8   because of what happened on Tuesday. And just

9   really quickly, I'd like to just read the Housing

10   for all platform from the Democratic Socialists of

11   America. Trust me, I ain't no MAGA and I hate

12   freaking Trump.

13   But the DSA, Democratic Socialists

14   of America, have a housing platform on their

15   website. You can go see it. And this is what it

16   specifically says. "We seek to counter the dangers

17   we are facing by building on the insurgent tenant

18   movement and further decommonifying housing and

19   land." This can be done through canceling rent,

20   closing eviction courts.

21   Trust me, go to court, get

22   yourself an attorney there. They will give you a

23   free attorney. The free attorney can give you lots

24   of ways to keep making a lease so that it does

25   takes much longer for anybody to even have to

1

2   collect rent.

3   And importantly, as landlords exit

4   the market using State action to acquire private

5   property and transform into public democratically

6   controlled housing, that is the official platform

7   from the DSA, which is our probable future mayor

8   going to be following. So that means NYCHA,

9   they're promotion, pushing for the increase of

10   NYCHA, which by the way, in 2018, thank goodness,

11   Leticia James actually put as the worst landlord in

12   the city. Thank you.

13   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you, sir.

14   Julian Dillon.

15   MR. DILLON: Hi. My name is

16   Julian Dillon, and I work for Memorial Sloan

17   Kettering. While my words today are independent of

18   my employer my ideals align with the concept of

19   improving public health. I'm here to advocate for

20   a rent freeze, or better still, a rent rollback.

21   In recent reports, the US Accountability Office has

22   found that a $100 increase in the median rent is

23   strongly correlated with a nine percent increase in

24   homelessness. Being homeless has a profound impact

25   on people's physical and mental health. The cost

1

2   of increasing rent is bore by all New Yorkers on

3   multiple fronts. People, communities, local

4   businesses are all negatively impacted.

5   Freezing and rolling back the rent

6   means spending less on mental health resources and

7   policing, and improving -- while improving

8   community health. The New York Times recently

9   reported that 78,000 people left New York from 2023

10   to 2024. Another impact of increasing rents. The

11   -- in the most recent primary election that gained

12   global attention is a mandate for affordable

13   living.

14   Freezing the rent is a compromise,

15   and rolling back the rent would be justice. Please

16   do the right thing and improve the lives of the

17   many, rather than lining the pockets of the very

18   few. After this meeting, I'm going to go back to

19   my job and contribute to the cutting-edge cancer

20   research that will impact the lives of millions of

21   Americans. We are the greatest city in the world,

22   and let's live up to that.

23   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. We still

24   have a little bit of time left, and I believe Ms.

25   Sweaze is actually the last speaker that signed up.

1

2   So, anybody else who'd like to sign up, feel, you

3   know, feel free to do so, we'll make sure we get

4   you up here. We have a little bit more time.

5   THE INTERPRETER: (Translating

6   from English to Spanish.)

7   CHAIR APPLE: Please, ma'am,

8   proceed.

9   MS. SWEAZE: Okay. In here?

10   CHAIR APPLE: Yeah.

11   MS. SWEAZE: Okay. The rent is

12   too high. We need rent, freeze. My son and I -- I

13   raise my son all by myself, and we moved here from

14   California. So, we need rent freeze, and we need

15   the rent -- we need the rent board to vote for a

16   zero percent increase this year for us. I'm

17   disabled, and my son helps me. Sometimes when I

18   fall, my son helps me to pick me up and put me on

19   the bed, and give me my medicine.

20   So, I hope you do the right thing.

21   And for my son and I, because my landlord, every

22   time he sees me outside with my son, I ask him,

23   "Here's money do you want for the rent? "And he

24   says, "No, I want you out." So, he wants my son and

25   I out. Where are we going to go? I don't know.

1

2   So -- and I'm disabled, and he helps me. So I --

3   that's all I have to say. Thank you.

4   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

5   We'll take a short break, and if

6   there's others who want to speak, please sign up

7   and we'll let you -- make sure you get up here.

8   THE INTERPRETER: (Translating

9   from English to Spanish.)

10   (A recess was taken.)

11   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Thank

12   you.

13   All right, we're going to get

14   started. Assemblyman, I think you're up. Is it

15   assemblyman or council?

16   MR. EPSTEIN: I think it is

17   assembly for today.

18   CHAIR APPLE: But soon to be.

19   Maybe, likely.

20   MR. EPSTEIN: Maybe or likely, you

21   said that.

22   CHAIR APPLE: Probably. Anyway,

23   I'm sorry. We're going to start again. We have a

24   few more speakers. So, I'm going to call you up to

25   the mic. And we're going to start with Assemblyman

1

2   Harvey Epstein, former board member as well.

3   MR. EPSTEIN: Thank you. Thank

4   you. And thank you to the members of the Rent

5   Guidelines Board to having additional meetings. I

6   know how important this is. As folks may know, I

7   served on the Rent Guidelines Board for five years

8   as a tenant member and was part of the first rent

9   freeze in New York City's history. And, you know,

10   as someone who's a State representative and who

11   sees New Yorkers all over the State, we can see

12   that average day, New Yorkers are struggling every

13   single day.

14   And we know that real wages

15   continue to drop and net operating income continues

16   to go up for landlords. We see in '22 and '23 the

17   consumer price index. You know, we're seeing how

18   that really negatively impacts rent-stabilized

19   tenants. And while their affordability goes down,

20   we see 1.4 percent vacancy rates. We see that New

21   Yorkers continue to struggle.

22   Putting increases on rent

23   stabilized tenants right now would put additional

24   risk of homelessness to those families. We see

25   that. I saw that for the five years I served on

1

2   the Board that every 1 percent increase resulted in

3   additional homelessness. So, your decisions and

4   your actions will have direct impact on regular New

5   Yorkers.

6   We all know that, you know,

7   landlords talk about struggling, but the data

8   doesn't really bear that out. And we look at the

9   data, you know, obviously as a State legislator, we

10   look at the data, and we know that across the

11   board, landlords across the board are not

12   struggling the way that we see tenants are

13   struggling.

14   And so, if you think about a

15   balance of the equities and the interest of New

16   Yorkers, and you think about the two and a half

17   million New Yorkers who are living in rent

18   stabilized tenants living in rent-stabilized

19   apartments, it's really important the way we

20   collectively need to act to protect them.

21   So along with 20 of my colleagues,

22   which I'll hand up, we really -- we need you now

23   more than ever to call for a rent freeze for rent

24   stabilized tenants. A one-year rent freeze would

25   be a really important moment and a message to send

1

2   to all New Yorkers that we see them, that we see

3   that they're struggling, and that they need our

4   support. It is up to you all to make that

5   decision, and as someone who's made that decision

6   before is not easy, but it's critical to make it

7   right now.

8   I encourage you all vote for a

9   one-year rent freeze for rent stabilized tenants.

10   They need it now more than ever. Thank you.

11   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Thank

12   you.

13   Chloe Corby. Thank you, please.

14   MS. CORBY: Do I wait for this.

15   Does it start when I start speaking? Oh, does the

16   timer start when I start --

17   CHAIR APPLE: Yeah.

18   MS. CORBY: Oh. Thank you for

19   having me here today and everyone else who has

20   come. My name is Chloe Corby and I am here also on

21   behalf of the United Seniors Association. My first

22   question is to actually ask everyone in this room,

23   if you were to be asked if you would like to have

24   your rent increased, how many people, if you could

25   raise your hand, would say yes? So, I think the

1

2   census is that not one person raised their hand.

3   Well, okay. Moving forward.

4   Okay. So, you know, if that is speaking in terms

5   of what the people are wanting, then increasing,

6   that shouldn't even be one of the issues. The

7   issues are happening outside. We have an epidemic

8   of homelessness. We have people who are having

9   difficulties putting food on the table. We have

10   issues with our healthcare system. We have now --

11   in the past day, we've had where it's been too hot

12   and you've had elevators and Con Edison not being

13   able to service, and people calling 311, an elderly

14   -- oh, thank you very much. And --

15   CHAIR APPLE: Yeah, keep going.

16   MS. CORBY: Yeah. Oh, okay.

17   CHAIR APPLE: Yeah. Keep, keep

18   going. That's 30 seconds.

19   MS. CORBY: So --

20   CHAIR APPLE: Keep going, keep

21   going.

22   MS. CORBY: So, when you realize

23   that instead of being reactive, I suggest for a

24   proactive approach. We want to develop communities

25   and make this city be better, continue to strive to

1

2   work together. And in order to do that, make sure

3   we discuss that the issues that we are really

4   addressing are the ones that where people's hands,

5   like go up.

6   Schools, if I may say, and in

7   terms of emergency preparedness, we are behind.

8   And it's, you know, instead, we can mail, you know,

9   the COVID we were getting the test that were

10   expired by two years. How about we mail, instead,

11   something where everybody can read and have the

12   accessibility of even be able to come here to

13   understand what the issues are, and to know where

14   -- who our designated representatives are, know

15   that they are constituents, have the ability to

16   speak and then foster and engender the right

17   conversations because we're not having them now.

18   Instead we keep coming back to this, you know,

19   drawing board, it seems, right? Because -- and

20   that needs to -- that needs to end.

21   There should be accessibility.

22   And we can mail instead and say in terms of, you

23   know, when there's a power outage or something, to

24   have these schools, which people know and it's in

25   every vicinity. And have that specific council

1

2   member district inform their constituents so they

3   also know who they can speak with if, you know,

4   there are issues. And prepare those schools with

5   the, you know, necessary things, because, you know,

6   water, basic, when it is a travesty. It's hard to

7   watch; we see it every day.

8   And now we want to -- instead

9   these people who are servicing this city are --

10   like how are they even, you know, living here? So,

11   they're servicing, and then their commute here is

12   -- they're going to leave, and then who is going to

13   be collecting the garbage, which is piling up in

14   masses, bringing -- all of this is, you know, kind

15   of leading into -- it evolves into something that

16   becomes worse. Our foundation needs to be solid.

17   We need to support this city, show

18   the people that they matter, that we can be better

19   and better together. Thank you.

20   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you very much,

21   ma'am. Thank you.

22   CHAIR APPLE: Sheila Rone?

23   MS. CORDY: Oh. Sorry.

24   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

25   MS. CORDY: Oh, thank you.

1

2   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Sheila

3   Rone? Oh. Oh, you went -- you went, I'm sorry.

4   Oh, let -- that's okay. Oh, I'm sorry. We have a

5   speaker that hasn't gone. Let that -- Ricardo

6   Silva? Let Ricardo come first. Yeah. Yes. And

7   then we'll let you finish, and then it'll be it.

8   Sir, ready?

9   MR. RICARDO: Thank you. Good

10   morning. Thank you so much. My name is Ricardo

11   Aka (phonetic), I work at Make the Road New York,

12   the largest member-led organization in New York

13   that fights for the rights of immigrants and

14   working-class people of color, including rent board

15   tenants who many of you see here.

16   I grew up in Bushwick, Brooklyn,

17   in a rent-stabilized apartment, a block away from

18   Maria Hernandez Park, where my parents still

19   reside. However, Bushwick has been quickly getting

20   gentrified. I've seen my friends who I went to

21   high school with, and neighbors be displaced to the

22   high rent increases.

23   When I moved out of my parents at

24   the age of 24, I wanted to continue living in

25   Bushwick because I love the vibrancy that immigrant

1

2   communities bring to the neighborhood. I grew up

3   with Puerto Rican, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Mexican

4   and black neighbors. Together, our cultures are

5   what make up what people love about Bushwick.

6   I wanted to continue to live

7   there, but I couldn't afford it. I could not

8   afford to live there. Due to the constant rent

9   increases in greedy landlords, who have

10   successfully evicted and displaced the neighbors

11   that I grew up with.

12   I was able to luckily find a rent

13   stabilized apartment in Ridgewood 10 years ago.

14   Not too far from Bushwick and close to my parents.

15   Yet Richwood is also quickly getting gentrified

16   too. I am afraid that if rent increases continue,

17   my parents will be forced out of their home, be

18   displaced, and I -- and will -- I will not be able

19   to live close to them. I am also afraid for me, if

20   the rent increases continue, how much longer will I

21   be able to afford to live in my apartment? Will I

22   be forced out of my home too and my neighborhood?

23   That is why today I'm here to call

24   for a rent freeze on behalf of my parents, my

25   community members, and the tenants on Make the Road

1

2   and myself. The time for a rent freeze is now.

3   Thank you so much.

4   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. Thank

5   you.

6   All right Sheila, we'll let you

7   have a second. But we ask you to be brief please.

8   You're our last speaker, so come on up. Yes.

9   MS. RONE: Me? My name is not

10 Sheila.

11   CHAIR APPLE: Oh, you're not

12 Sheila, I'm sorry. Oh, I'm sorry.

13   MS. RONE: And don't yell it out

14 either. Okay. I just want to say, you know, I

15 know this is hard on you guys. And I know you got

16 an albatross around your neck. You didn't create

17 this problem. You didn't. But I'm hoping that

18 through your negotiation and your arbitration that

19 you'll help solve the problem because this is our

20 quality of life. Okay?

21   And landlords get the lion's share

22 of our money. And what I mean by that is, we pay

23 for air conditioning that we don't use all year

24 long, parking, garage space. And now they're

25 putting Tesla chargers in garages. We pay for

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2   pets, some cases repairs. One time we had to pay

3   for a light bulb because I couldn't find it at a

4   hardware store. The same light bulb. Late rent

5   fees. New lease fees. Like I told you, they

6   charged me $500. I'm fighting to get my money back

7   because I found out it was illegal.

8   New leases; I have to pay for a

9   new lease. I have to pay a surcharge on a lease,

10   is -- I don't know if that's legal. I have to

11   check that out. Then there's gas and electricity.

12   There's now a new apartment insurance on parquet

13   floors. They want you to pay for that. And other

14   miscellaneous items. And these other items that

15   are killing us along with rent.

16   So, I'm just asking you to really

17   take your time. You've listened to the people, you

18   didn't do your homework because you didn't read

19   what I gave you guys. So I'm giving it to you

20   again.

21   CHAIR APPLE: Please.

22   MS. RONE: Okay. Whether you --

23   whether you want to read it or use it as toilet

24   paper, that's your business. But think of the

25   people when you do this. Okay? You guys are good

1

2   guys, and I know you. I just hate that you're

3   burdened with this task of trying to solve this big

4   problem. Thank you so much. And I promise if you

5   have another one, I won't be late.

6   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

7   MS. RONE: Okay?

8   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you. We

9   actually thank you so much. We have --

10   MS. RONE: Let's solve this

11   problem. Roll the rent back --

12   CHAIR APPLE: Leticia --

13   MS. RONE: -- don't split the

14   lease --

15   CHAIR APPLE: Leticia, I think we

16   need -- we'll need translation. Okay, please.

17   MS. RONE: I got this for you

18   guys.

19   MS. LETICIA: Thank you. Thank

20   you. Good Morning, it's still before 12:00. Thank

21   you. My name is Leticia, I'm a member of Make the

22   Road Organization. I've lived many years, more

23   than half my life in this country. And I lived in

24   the apartment since I arrived to this country.

25   It's a family apartment like generation after

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2   generation, and I'm there now. My son, my

3   33-year-old son was born there. I'm a single

4   mother who had my son progress and I'm very proud

5   of that. I keep working and I keep paying taxes.

6   I've lived in the -- in a rent

7   control apartment in a building that was created --

8   erected in 1974. So, there have been several

9   occasions and there actually continue to have -- we

10   continue to have several occasions where there is

11   constant damage and things that need repair in the

12   building, and including the ceiling that fell on me

13   in my bedroom at 2 o'clock in the morning.

14   And knowing my rights, I called

15   311. The police arrived, the firefighters as well.

16   And that was all done to make me feel harassed, not

17   from the owners, because the owners don't even know

18   how the employees work. It's their employees who

19   come and bother us and don't do the repairs the

20   right way when you come and tell them that there's

21   a problem in your apartment.

22   I have continuously asked for them

23   to fix the windows in my apartment, which they

24   don't do, and I have to continuously talk to them

25   and everything, and I wind up paying for it. I'm

1

2   not going to do it. I'm not going to give you the

3   pleasure of it, but we also cannot live under

4   conditions where we have cockroaches and that I

5   have to pay for someone to paint my apartment when

6   that's their responsibility to provide maintenance

7   in the apartments.

8   Because if they don't provide

9   continuous maintenance to their buildings, to the

10   apartments, the apartments are basically just going

11   to crumble down. And that's going to cost a lot

12   more later on. I'd like to live well, I like that

13   for everything to be clean and organized.

14   And about three weeks ago, I asked

15   them to come and fix a new leak that had just

16   occurred in the bathroom as well. And what

17   happened, just for that job, there were five people

18   that came to fix it. And I was working alone in my

19   home. And one of them screamed so loudly at me

20   that for me to be quiet, and he -- because he

21   wanted to prove or confirm that what I was telling

22   him was going on was actually true. And I told

23   him, "With all due respect, you are never coming

24   inside my apartment, and you have to learn how to

25   respect me."

1

2   And I informed the office that

3   there were five employees in my apartment that were

4   not doing a really good job the way they were

5   supposed to at fixing the problem, thinking that I

6   did not know what my rights were, and that they

7   just wanted to trace through the different rooms

8   going from like the kitchen to the bedroom, from

9   the bedroom to the living room, different rooms.

10   And they became very aggressive.

11   It's not fair that when I ask for

12   my rights to be respected, that they just basically

13   do a little patch job with like a little band aid,

14   and that's the entire job. It's not fair. I'm

15   asking for our rent to be frozen. So, I, like many

16   tenants in my building, we are suffering all these

17   situations, including broken windows, a situation

18   with the hot and cold water that, when you're

19   showering, it's either hot or cold, it's not

20   balanced out.

21   And there's a ton of other

22   complaints, not just mine. Including the other

23   tenants that live there. They treat us bad, they

24   scream at us, they don't treat us right. And I

25   tell them, "Learn your rights. You should know

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2   them." The super should have lost his license as a

3   super, but now they have all their licenses posted

4   on the wall where 50 years ago they didn't have

5   that. Oh, and the building belongs to Royal

6   Associated.

7   And I ask for you to pay attention

8   to that apartment, to that building, specifically

9   Apartment 22. And the building is located at 3742

10   84th Street. I am not going to continue like that.

11   The window is broken and I have a crack in my

12   window that's like this long and I have to put a

13   plastic on it, which looks horrible, but I'd rather

14   it look horrible and you can see it from the

15   outside that it looks horrible so that people can

16   see how we live. Thank you for your attention.

17   CHAIR APPLE: Thank you.

18   With that, we have no more

19   speakers. So, we're going to adjourn. I ask for a

20   motion to adjourn.

21   MALE 1: Motion.

22   CHAIR APPLE: Second?

23   MALE 2: Second.

24   CHAIR APPLE: Great. Well, thank

25   you all very much for being here today. Thank you.

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2   (Whereupon, the proceedings were

3   concluded.)

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2   STATE OF NEW YORK)

3   SS.

4   COUNTY OF NEW YORK)

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7   I, MARC RUSSO, a Shorthand

8   (Stenotype) Reporter and Notary Public within and

9   for the State of New York, do hereby certify that

10   the foregoing pages 1 through 65, taken at the time

11   and place aforesaid, is a true and correct

12   transcription of my shorthand notes.

13   IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have

14   hereunto set my name this 27th day of October,

15   2025.

16   *Marc Russo*
                    ----
17   MARC RUSSO

18
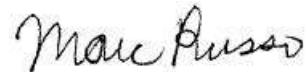
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21

22

23

24

25

Concordance

Concordance

Concordance

Concordance

37:17
block 55:17
blue 11:17
Board 1:3,
2:3, 3:4,
3:6, 5:8,
5:10, 5:23,
6:10, 7:10,
7:15, 7:24,
10:6,
10:16,
13:14,
15:11,
18:22,
19:24,
20:3,
20:22,
21:8,
23:15,
23:21,
47:15,
49:2, 49:5,
49:7, 50:2,
50:11,
53:19,
55:14
Boards 37:3,
42:11,
42:12
body 13:8
books 11:3,
11:4,
20:16,
37:12
bore 46:2
born 22:10,
24:5, 60:3
bother 31:18,
60:19
bothered
34:15
bought 12:2,
12:3, 36:7,
36:8
break 48:5
breath 16:17
Brian 2:13
brief 57:7

bring 38:18,
56:2
bringing
54:14
broke 23:11
broken 62:17,
63:11
Bronx 25:6,
25:20
Brooklyn
55:16
brought 18:4,
26:1
budget 10:3,
10:4, 18:13
build 14:4
building
17:5,
17:12,
18:3, 25:8,
25:16,
36:7, 36:8,
37:18,
38:20,
43:11,
43:20,
44:17,
60:7,
60:12,
62:16,
63:5, 63:8,
63:9
buildings
14:4,
16:13,
16:16,
35:24,
43:16, 61:9
built 29:8,
29:9
bulb 58:3,
58:4
burdened
13:24, 59:3
Burger 2:14
Bushwick
55:16,
55:19,

56:1, 56:5,
56:14
business
13:16,
58:24
businesses
18:7,
43:24,
44:1, 46:4
buying 21:11

< C >
California
16:3, 47:14
call 4:5,
5:20, 6:4,
8:7, 12:17,
30:6,
48:24,
50:23,
56:23
called 6:2,
6:6, 9:9,
23:5,
25:18,
26:7, 31:3,
31:4,
31:17,
60:14
calling 5:11,
39:11,
52:13
canceling
44:19
cancer 46:19
cap 33:3
car 35:19
care 26:22,
26:24,
32:20
Carvallo
15:20,
17:23,
19:18,
19:20,
19:21
CASA 25:11,

25:17
case 25:10
cases 14:1,
14:10, 58:2
cash 14:6
causes 42:14
causing 22:24
ceiling 60:12
census 52:2
Center 10:21
cents 21:2
certainly
16:23
certify 65:9
challenge
31:16
change 18:16
channel 5:19
charge 37:19
charged
18:16, 58:6
chargers 58:1
Charmaine
2:15
cheaper 29:19
check 58:11
checked 6:2
childcare
21:14
children
22:10,
22:12,
22:19,
23:1,
23:12,
23:13,
24:5, 36:3
Chloe 51:13,
51:20
choose 21:19
chose 33:21
Christina
4:19, 34:14
Christopher
34:24, 41:4
chronic 14:4,
14:10
City. 29:12

Concordance

claim 13:15, 16:8

clean 61:13

clear 13:18

Clearly 42:1, 42:24, 44:1

clock 6:20, 6:21, 6:22

close 3:19, 43:1, 56:14, 56:19

closer 3:14, 8:17

closing 44:20

Co-research 2:13, 2:14

cockroaches 61:4

codes 14:7

Cohen 16:12

cold 62:18, 62:19

colleagues 50:21

collect 45:2

collecting 54:13

collectively 50:20

color 55:14

comes 43:14

coming 35:23, 44:5, 53:18, 61:23

comings 26:5

commencing 4:3

comments 3:8, 3:22, 5:5, 5:7, 5:9, 7:10, 8:1, 34:17

Commission 18:16

commitment 16:24

communities 42:11, 46:3, 52:24, 56:2

Community 10:21, 42:11, 42:12, 46:8, 57:1

commute 54:11

company 17:8, 18:15

complaints 62:22

completely 20:4, 26:11

compromise 46:14

comptroller 28:2, 28:7, 28:8

Con 18:14, 52:12

concept 45:18

concerning 3:22

concluded. 64:3

condescension 18:6

conditioning 57:23

conditions 61:4

Coned 18:17

confirm 5:24, 61:21

confused 16:3

connecting 9:5

consider 3:8, 3:22, 15:3, 15:14

considers 15:11

console 23:6

constant 23:21,

56:8, 60:11

constituents 53:15, 54:2

Constitution 14:22, 15:5, 15:7

consumer 49:17

continue 6:23, 7:12, 34:8, 34:9, 43:24, 49:15, 49:21, 53:1, 55:24, 56:6, 56:16, 56:20, 60:9, 60:10, 63:10

continued 26:23

continues 49:15

continuing 19:13

continuous 61:9

continuously 60:22, 60:24

contribute 46:19

control 22:15, 60:7

controlled 45:6

conversations 53:17

cool 43:13

cooperation 7:24

copies 18:4

CORBY 51:13, 51:14, 51:18,

51:20, 52:16, 52:19, 52:22

CORDY 54:23, 55:1

correct 42:21, 65:11

correlated 45:23

cost 12:9, 29:15, 33:4, 43:5, 44:7, 46:1, 61:11

costliest 28:6

costs 10:20, 19:7, 29:20, 42:21, 42:22, 43:5, 43:22

council 48:15, 54:1

counter 44:16

counting 33:7

country 59:23, 59:24

COUNTY 39:7, 65:4

Court 8:13, 9:1, 12:4, 14:1, 25:9, 39:14, 42:10, 44:21

courts 44:20

cover 30:11

coverage 21:3

COVID 26:2, 53:9

crack 63:11

create 18:13, 57:16

created 60:7

Concordance

crest 32:12
critical 51:6
cross-talk. 22:2
crumble 61:11
cultures 56:4
curb 19:7
current 9:8, 25:12
cuts 19:8
cutting-edge 46:19

< D >
dad 16:5
damage 25:22, 60:11
dangers 44:16
Danielle 2:14
data 10:19, 13:18, 15:8, 20:6, 50:7, 50:9, 50:10
Datadog 17:8
date 12:2
daughter 16:2, 30:2
day 9:2, 38:9, 38:15, 49:12, 49:13, 52:11, 54:7
days 15:22
De 8:9, 10:12, 12:24, 13:2, 13:3, 15:20, 17:23, 19:18, 19:20, 19:21, 35:3, 35:5, 35:8, 37:16
deal 9:18

decades 12:12, 19:1
decent 23:19
decide 21:11
decided 33:24
decision 10:18, 17:17, 17:18, 51:5
decisions 50:3
decommonifying 44:18
dedicated 20:4
defend 40:7
definitely 35:11
del 5:15
demand 13:17, 19:2, 29:19, 30:12
demanding 39:10
Democratic 44:10, 44:13
democratically 45:5
demonstrate 19:10
denied 21:1, 39:23, 40:4
Department 1:9, 41:13, 41:14
deplete 31:22
depression 14:10
designated 53:14
desk 11:15
despair 14:4
desperate 34:10
determine 31:16

develop 52:24
development 14:16, 19:9
DHCR 11:6, 12:21, 41:9
Di 28:6
dictated 20:15
different 42:7, 62:7, 62:9
difficult 7:20
difficulties 52:9
digital 11:13
Dillon 41:4, 45:14, 45:15, 45:16
Dinapoli 28:2
direct 50:4
directly 34:13
Director 2:12, 2:13, 2:14, 8:13
Directors 1:7, 2:3
disabilities 29:14
disabled 31:13, 31:14, 31:15, 38:1, 38:4, 40:2, 47:17, 48:2
disappointing 16:23
discrimination 40:9
discriminatory 29:21
discuss 53:3
displace 14:19
displaced

55:21, 56:10, 56:18
distress 19:11, 19:13
distribute 6:10
district 54:2
doctors 26:5
document 39:19
documents 11:12, 39:13, 40:1
doing 14:24, 35:11, 43:23, 62:4
dollars 12:10, 12:13, 37:16
Dominican 56:3
Donald 10:3
done 15:14, 25:13, 25:21, 25:22, 44:19, 60:16
door 23:3
Doors 5:16, 24:10
Doug 1:18, 2:4, 3:4, 5:1
down 17:13, 34:17, 38:11, 38:12, 49:19, 61:11
downstairs 32:1
drained 28:12
draining 28:19

Concordance

drawing 53:19
dream 21:18
DREE 41:15
DRIE 31:13
drop 49:15
drowning 13:23
DSA 44:13, 45:7
Due 29:15, 39:9, 40:9, 40:17, 56:8, 61:23
during 24:5, 26:16, 41:21, 42:4
Dutch 15:20, 17:23, 19:18, 19:21
duty 34:12
dynamics 19:7

< E >

easy 17:17, 51:6
eat 35:18, 35:20
echoey 8:16
economic 13:10, 20:10
ecosystem 10:2
Ecuadorian 56:3
Edison 18:14, 52:12
education 31:2
effectively 17:15
effort 20:23
EHRLICH 2:7, 3:9, 3:13, 3:17, 4:10, 4:11

eight 11:15, 11:16, 11:23, 30:10, 30:11
either 9:8, 23:17, 57:14, 62:19
El 5:15
elderly 52:13
elected 18:11
election 46:11
electric 18:19
electricity 23:24, 58:11
elevators 52:12
eligibility 30:16
Elmhurst 22:9
Elon 8:9, 10:11, 17:4, 17:5, 17:11
email 5:11, 30:7
Emerald 25:6
Emergency 4:1, 9:6, 53:7
employees 60:18, 62:3
employer 45:18
encourage 12:19, 15:11, 40:22, 51:8
end 7:1, 11:16, 36:19, 53:20
ending 9:8
enforce 14:6,

34:20
engender 53:16
English 8:5, 41:2, 47:6, 48:9
enough 24:1, 27:11, 27:18, 30:4, 40:13
entering 34:6
entire 62:14
entrance 6:12
envelope 29:2
epidemic 52:7
EPSTEIN 48:16, 48:20, 49:2, 49:3
equities 50:15
Equity 16:7, 25:6
erected 60:8
Escort 19:19
Escorto 24:17, 24:18, 25:1, 25:4, 25:5
Especially 27:9, 43:9
essential 18:18
essentially 17:17
establish 25:18
estate 18:24, 19:3, 35:21, 35:23
Everybody 32:3, 32:9, 40:21, 43:8, 53:11
everyone 7:22, 22:7,

27:9, 51:19, 51:22
everything 7:20, 61:1, 61:13
evicted 56:10
eviction 9:3, 9:17, 13:7, 39:9, 39:16, 42:13, 44:20
evictions 9:5, 9:15
eviscerated 17:15
evolves 54:15
Exactly 26:4, 27:14
excessive 19:7
excuse 9:14
Executive 2:12, 8:13
exist 12:21
exit 45:3
expect 7:14
expenses 13:20, 23:24
expensive 28:5
experience 21:7
experienced 13:5
expired 53:10
explained 25:12, 25:20
exploit 14:18
extend 34:15
extent 18:8
extermination 26:12
extra 37:14
eyes 38:9

Concordance

< F >

face 21:8
faces 10:4
facing 9:3,
  44:17
facts 13:18
fail 34:9,
  44:1, 44:2
fails 14:6
fair 27:14,
  28:10,
  28:20,
  62:11,
  62:14
fall 47:18
falling 38:1
families
  9:21,
  38:21,
  49:24
family 38:23,
  60:1
fantasy 20:4,
  20:6
far 32:7,
  56:14
fast 31:10
fear 13:7
federal 10:4,
  10:5
feed 32:21,
  32:22
feel 33:20,
  37:6, 39:8,
  47:2, 47:3,
  60:16
feels 13:6,
  13:7, 28:9
fees 58:5
fell 60:12
fellow 16:22
few 12:10,
  12:12,
  46:18,
  48:24
Fheps 9:20

fifth-floor
  36:5,
  36:15,
  38:10
fighting 58:6
fights 55:13
file 15:3
filing 15:3
final 5:13,
  12:18
finally 21:7
Finance 19:3,
  41:14
finances
  11:10,
  28:22
financial
  19:10,
  19:15
find 5:19,
  29:23,
  31:5,
  40:18,
  56:12, 58:3
finding 28:4
finish 31:7,
  32:18, 55:7
firefighters
  60:15
first 8:7,
  8:12,
  29:10,
  29:11,
  29:12,
  30:7, 36:7,
  49:8,
  51:21, 55:6
fiscal 9:8
fit 30:22
Five 3:7,
  3:20,
  12:17,
  32:17,
  33:22,
  36:20,
  49:7, 50:1,
  61:17, 62:3
five-unit

  17:11
fix 26:14,
  40:15,
  60:23,
  61:15,
  61:18
fixed 27:10,
  27:18
fixing 62:5
floodgates
  14:15
Floor 1:11,
  38:12,
  38:13
floors 58:13
focus 9:4
folks 29:9,
  49:6
follow 24:23
followed 8:9,
  10:11,
  12:24,
  15:19,
  17:22,
  19:18,
  33:15,
  34:23
following
  45:8
food 23:24,
  52:9
footnotes
  18:5
for-profit
  18:8, 18:14
forced 20:3,
  27:17,
  28:17,
  28:23,
  56:17,
  56:22
Fordham 16:22
foregoing
  65:10
Forgive 27:21
former 49:2
forward 7:24,
  9:20, 52:3

foster 53:16
found 16:10,
  16:13,
  45:22, 58:7
foundation
  54:16
four 11:4,
  11:7, 22:17
fourth 30:14
freaking
  44:12
free 44:23,
  47:3
freeze 10:6,
  13:13,
  15:12,
  15:15,
  15:23,
  16:1,
  19:14,
  19:24,
  23:15,
  27:7,
  27:11,
  27:18,
  32:2, 33:2,
  34:10,
  34:20,
  35:7, 35:8,
  40:12,
  41:16,
  45:20,
  47:12,
  47:14,
  49:9,
  50:23,
  50:24,
  51:9,
  56:24, 57:2
Freezing
  46:5, 46:14
French 9:14
Friday 39:20
friend 26:7
friends 55:20
front 33:18
fronts 46:3
frozen 37:6,

Concordance

37:10,
62:15
full 26:6
fullest 18:8
fully 30:19
Furman 10:21
future 24:6,
24:8, 45:7

< G >
gained 46:11
gains 16:6
garage 57:24
garages 58:1
garbage 54:13
gas 18:19,
37:15,
58:11
gave 28:24,
29:22,
43:3, 44:5,
58:19
generation
60:1, 60:2
Genesis 2:8,
4:6
gentrified
55:20,
56:15
germane 7:10
gets 42:16
getting
26:23,
37:11,
41:17,
41:18,
53:9,
55:19,
56:15
gigantic 35:6
give 6:10,
6:16, 12:6,
42:24,
44:6,
44:22,
44:23,
47:19, 61:2

given 6:18,
10:19,
33:19
giving 15:15,
58:19
global 46:12
goings 26:5
goodness
45:10
gotten 41:10
govern 18:12
grants 9:18
Great 8:22,
9:17, 22:3,
31:6,
33:19,
63:24
greater 34:6
greatest
46:21
greed 37:20
greedy 32:8,
37:5,
37:12, 56:9
grew 20:12,
36:24,
38:16,
55:16,
56:2, 56:11
group 20:16
groups 10:20,
42:12
guaranteed
12:17,
13:17
guessed 16:20
Guideline
37:3
Guidelines
1:3, 3:4,
3:6, 5:6,
5:14, 8:2,
18:22,
49:5, 49:7
guiding 24:3
Gupta 4:12
guys 24:12,
27:5,

33:21,
35:24,
37:7,
40:18,
41:17,
42:22,
43:2,
43:20,
43:23,
44:6,
57:15,
58:19,
59:1, 59:2,
59:18

< H >
ha 7:23
half 37:18,
50:16,
59:23
hand 7:11,
29:3,
50:22,
52:1, 52:2
handle 17:11
hands 20:22,
32:22, 53:4
Hannah 13:1,
15:19,
15:21
happen 37:7
happened
27:22,
43:7, 44:8,
61:17
happening
39:15, 52:7
harassed
60:16
harassment
39:9
hard 12:11,
21:12,
28:15,
38:2, 54:6,
57:15
hardship

11:7, 11:8,
12:5, 13:21
hardware 58:4
hardworking
28:13
harm 13:10,
14:8
Harvey 49:2
hate 44:11,
59:2
head 29:4
headache 33:4
Health 1:9,
40:3,
45:19,
46:1, 46:6,
46:8
healthcare
28:16,
52:10
hear 3:16,
7:7, 7:15,
7:20
heard 7:23,
17:16
hearing 3:6,
7:16, 7:17,
8:1, 10:24,
12:9
hearings 3:7,
3:21, 5:5,
41:22, 44:5
heart 7:6,
23:11
hearts 28:13
heat 14:5,
26:15
Heights 18:4
Hello 10:14,
33:16
help 6:19,
11:2,
19:10,
19:12,
21:19,
22:18,
23:10,
24:2,

Concordance

24 : 10,
26 : 7, 27 : 7,
27 : 8, 39 : 5,
42 : 13,
57 : 19
helped 25 : 17
helps 47 : 17,
47 : 18, 48 : 2
hereby 65 : 9
hereunto
65 : 14
Hernandez
55 : 18
hide 23 : 8,
23 : 11
High 19 : 1,
20 : 9,
28 : 12,
29 : 15,
29 : 19,
30 : 12,
47 : 12,
55 : 21,
55 : 22
high-end
14 : 15
history 49 : 9
Hoberman 2 : 13
hocus 37 : 17
home 23 : 4,
26 : 4, 26 : 9,
26 : 10,
56 : 17,
56 : 22,
61 : 19
homeless
45 : 24
homelessness
45 : 24,
49 : 24,
50 : 3, 52 : 8
homes 34 : 11
homework
58 : 18
honesty 10 : 24
honor 33 : 17
hope 15 : 1,
24 : 3,

24 : 12,
34 : 18,
40 : 18,
47 : 20
hoped 34 : 13
hoping 57 : 17
horrible
36 : 5,
63 : 13,
63 : 14,
63 : 15
hot 26 : 16,
52 : 11,
62 : 18,
62 : 19
hotels 3 : 24
hotline 8 : 24
hours 21 : 1
house 11 : 18,
12 : 2, 12 : 3
houses 32 : 11,
32 : 13,
32 : 19
Housing 3 : 24,
8 : 13, 9 : 1,
10 : 2, 13 : 6,
13 : 9, 14 : 1,
14 : 9, 19 : 5,
19 : 7, 19 : 9,
19 : 24,
21 : 4, 28 : 5,
28 : 11,
29 : 12,
29 : 17,
29 : 18,
29 : 21,
30 : 16,
30 : 18,
42 : 10,
44 : 9,
44 : 14,
44 : 18, 45 : 6
HPD 16 : 13,
16 : 19
huge 42 : 17
human 17 : 2,
33 : 11
humiliation

23 : 21
hundred
12 : 10,
12 : 12,
37 : 16
hundreds
11 : 11,
13 : 24
hurting 38 : 8

< I >
ID 30 : 3
idea 40 : 10
ideals 45 : 18
Iis 14 : 19
illegal 58 : 7
immigrant
56 : 1
immigrants
55 : 13
impact 45 : 24,
46 : 10,
46 : 20, 50 : 4
impacted 46 : 4
impacts 49 : 18
important
49 : 6,
50 : 19, 51 : 1
importantly
45 : 3
improve 46 : 16
improving
45 : 19, 46 : 7
Including
40 : 1,
55 : 14,
60 : 12,
62 : 17,
62 : 22
income 13 : 19,
16 : 6,
16 : 18,
23 : 24,
27 : 10,
27 : 18,
49 : 15
incomes 9 : 23

Incorporated
17 : 8
increase
10 : 19,
12 : 11,
13 : 13,
15 : 4,
17 : 17,
20 : 7,
33 : 22,
42 : 22,
43 : 3, 43 : 5,
44 : 7, 45 : 9,
45 : 22,
45 : 23,
47 : 16, 50 : 2
increased
13 : 19,
51 : 24
increases
20 : 9,
49 : 22,
55 : 22,
56 : 9,
56 : 16,
56 : 20
increasing
19 : 5, 46 : 2,
46 : 10, 52 : 5
incredible
36 : 4, 37 : 20
incredibly
26 : 18
independent
45 : 17
index 42 : 20,
43 : 4, 49 : 17
indicator
20 : 10
industries
18 : 24, 19 : 4
infestation
16 : 20
inform 54 : 2
information
8 : 23, 9 : 1,
40 : 1,
41 : 17,

Concordance

41:19
informed 62:2
inhumane 20:3
ink 11:17,
11:18
insecurity
13:6
inside 61:24
instability
13:9, 14:9,
20:11
instance
18:14,
43:10
Instead
11:18,
11:19,
21:11,
52:23,
53:8,
53:10,
53:18,
53:22, 54:8
Instructions
5:9
insurance
58:12
insurgent
44:17
integrity
21:19
intelligence
33:11
interest
18:21,
50:15
interests
18:8
interpret
14:24
interpretatio
n 6:19
INTERPRETER
8:4, 25:3,
41:1, 47:5,
48:8
intervene
42:16

investment
35:16
involved 42:9
irrelevant
16:6
issue 7:11,
35:13
issues 40:3,
52:6, 52:7,
52:10,
53:3,
53:13, 54:4
it'll 55:7
Italian 37:1
items 58:14
itself 16:7

< J >
J51 14:17
Jackson 31:3
Jacqueline
41:5
James 45:11
Jennifer 8:8,
8:10
Jenny 8:12
Jesus 8:9,
10:12,
12:24,
13:2, 13:3
job 20:20,
22:16,
43:19,
46:19,
61:17,
62:4,
62:13,
62:14
Jones 13:1,
15:20,
17:22,
17:24,
18:1, 18:2
JORDAN 2:6,
4:15, 4:16
judge 39:21,
39:22, 40:4

Julian 41:4,
45:14,
45:16
justice 17:2,
46:15

< K >
Keep 6:20,
7:10,
34:18,
40:13,
43:21,
44:24,
52:15,
52:17,
52:20,
53:18, 60:5
keeps 40:14
kept 43:19
Kettering
45:17
Kevin 13:1,
15:20,
17:22, 18:2
Kids 36:17,
36:18,
38:22
killing 58:15
kind 20:21,
20:23,
36:22,
54:14
kitchen 62:8
knocked 30:5,
30:7
knocking
24:10
knowing 60:14

< L >
lady 31:17
land. 44:19
landlord
16:2,
19:16,
25:6, 25:8,

25:22,
26:13,
27:1,
35:14,
36:2,
36:21,
37:12,
38:11,
45:11,
47:21
landlords
8:24, 11:2,
13:15,
13:19,
14:5,
14:12,
15:15,
16:4, 16:8,
19:10,
19:12,
20:5, 20:7,
20:18,
21:11,
21:17,
23:22,
27:6, 32:7,
32:12,
37:5,
37:11,
40:14,
45:3,
49:16,
50:7,
50:11,
56:9, 57:21
language 7:11
largest 55:12
Last 3:7,
3:20, 16:5,
17:16,
22:14,
22:18,
24:6,
28:24,
33:21,
35:3, 35:5,
42:19,
43:2, 47:1,

Concordance

57:8

Late 27:22, 58:4, 59:5

later 61:12

LAURIE 8:8, 8:11, 8:12, 8:18, 8:22

law 4:1

Lawson 13:1, 15:19, 15:20, 15:21, 15:22

lawyers 12:7, 12:10

lead 14:5, 30:15

leading 54:15

leads 14:9

leak 61:15

Learn 21:6, 61:24, 63:1

lease 44:24, 58:5, 58:9, 59:14

leases 3:23, 4:3, 10:1, 58:8

least 12:18, 27:7

leave 29:6, 36:19, 54:12

left 6:23, 28:23, 46:9, 46:24

Legal 8:23, 9:6, 14:21, 25:20, 40:6, 40:7, 58:10

legislator 50:9

lemon 35:19

length 30:17

less 46:6

Leticia 45:11,

59:12, 59:15, 59:19, 59:21

letter 39:21

level 42:16

levy 18:13

license 63:2

licenses 63:3

life 27:15, 57:20, 59:23

lifelong 19:22

light 58:3, 58:4

likely 48:19, 48:20

limited 7:16

line 20:24

lining 21:17, 46:17

lion 57:21

list 20:14, 21:4

listen 10:24

listened 58:17

listening 24:14

listens 13:14

lists 30:13

little 8:16, 8:17, 21:24, 46:24, 47:4, 62:13

live 5:18, 19:23, 20:14, 25:5, 25:7, 28:4, 28:21, 32:13, 32:14, 36:5, 36:14, 36:16,

46:22, 56:6, 56:8, 56:19, 56:21, 61:3, 61:12, 62:23, 63:16

lived 22:8, 22:15, 24:4, 36:17, 39:6, 59:22, 59:23, 60:6

lives 14:12, 24:13, 46:16, 46:20

living 25:23, 25:24, 27:13, 27:17, 28:15, 31:20, 46:13, 50:17, 50:18, 54:10, 55:24, 62:9

LLC 11:19, 11:21

loans 9:18

lobbying 14:13, 15:23

local 46:3

located 6:1, 63:9

lofts 3:23

long 30:12, 57:24, 63:12

longer 26:10, 31:15, 34:16, 45:1, 56:20

longtime

14:19

Look 11:14, 11:17, 11:24, 20:6, 21:9, 22:23, 24:1, 31:4, 38:8, 50:8, 50:10, 63:14

looked 24:9, 39:5

looking 7:24, 40:6

looks 63:13, 63:15

loopholes 14:18

losing 16:8

loss 10:4, 16:15

lost 12:1, 22:16, 25:10, 34:21, 63:2

lot 15:13, 34:1, 61:11

lots 44:23

lotteries 29:18

Lottery 20:15, 28:23, 29:18, 29:21, 30:24, 31:4, 31:5

loudly 61:19

love 38:16, 38:19, 56:1, 56:5

low 26:15, 29:20

lower 38:12

luck 20:15

luckily 37:16, 56:12

Concordance

lucky 33:20

< M >

Ma'am 13:1,
   15:18,
   21:24,
   24:16,
   24:24,
   31:8,
   32:16,
   39:1, 47:7,
   54:21
mad 35:10
MAGA 44:11
mail 53:8,
   53:10,
   53:22
maintenance
   23:20,
   39:11,
   61:6, 61:9
majority
   17:13
MALE 63:21,
   63:23
Mamdani 34:5
Manager 2:15
mandate 46:12
MARC 65:7,
   65:18
Marcela 34:6
Marcina 34:5
Margo 19:18,
   22:7
Margot 17:23
Maria 55:18
Marine 17:23,
   19:18,
   22:6, 22:7
market 29:15,
   35:19,
   38:13, 45:4
market-rate
   37:18
market. 29:13
masses 54:14
massive 14:14

match 43:21
matched 43:4
matches 44:7
matching 43:2
mater 16:24
materials 6:9
math 12:11
matter 54:18
mayor 32:4,
   35:12, 45:7
MCIS 14:18
Mclaughlin
   2:12
me. 62:1
mean 15:12,
   20:5,
   20:21,
   20:23,
   35:16,
   35:21,
   36:15,
   36:18,
   36:20,
   36:22,
   36:24,
   37:12,
   37:13,
   57:22
means 29:5,
   29:13,
   29:19,
   30:12,
   45:8, 46:6
Meanwhile
   13:22
median 45:22
mediators
   27:5
medical 21:3,
   22:21
medicine
   47:19
MEETING 1:5,
   5:3, 15:23,
   16:5, 46:18
meetings
   3:21,
   16:17,

   17:14, 49:5
member 34:5,
   39:4, 49:2,
   49:8, 54:2,
   59:21
member-led
   55:12
members 7:9,
   23:15,
   34:4, 49:4,
   57:1
Memorial
   45:16
mental 46:1,
   46:6
mentions 42:4
Mercedes
   19:19,
   24:17, 25:5
message 51:1
meter 37:15
Mexican 56:3
mic 7:3,
   8:17, 49:1
mice 16:20
microphone
   6:7
mics 8:16
million
   21:12,
   50:17
millions
   21:10,
   46:20
mine 23:17,
   62:22
minute 31:14
minutes 6:16,
   6:17, 6:24,
   7:1, 7:21
miscellaneous
   58:14
mission 17:3
mistake
   15:24,
   33:23
Mitaynes 34:6
mockery 40:17

model 29:8,
   29:9,
   29:10,
   29:13,
   30:9,
   30:24, 31:1
models 30:21
mold 14:5,
   16:20,
   22:23
Mom 23:7,
   23:9, 26:3,
   26:8
mom-and-pop
   35:22
moment 23:5,
   51:1
Monday 5:14,
   9:8, 34:20,
   39:24
money 9:14,
   16:8, 19:9,
   24:10,
   31:19,
   32:23,
   36:16,
   36:22,
   47:23,
   57:22, 58:6
monopoly
   32:9, 32:10
month 9:11,
   9:13, 12:4,
   12:13,
   38:13
months 11:16,
   11:23,
   21:3, 22:17
Morning 3:3,
   13:2, 18:1,
   19:21,
   22:6,
   55:10,
   59:20,
   60:13
mother 22:11,
   23:12,
   25:24,

Concordance

26:1,
26:22, 60:4
Motion 63:20,
63:21
move 38:11,
38:12
moved 47:13,
55:23
movement
44:18
Moving 30:15,
52:3
MS 8:11,
8:18, 8:22,
13:2,
15:20,
15:21,
22:6,
24:18,
24:21,
25:1, 25:4,
27:21,
31:9,
31:12,
32:17,
32:19,
33:10,
33:13,
35:1, 35:2,
46:24,
47:9,
47:11,
51:14,
51:18,
52:16,
52:19,
52:22,
54:23,
55:1, 57:9,
57:13,
58:22,
59:7,
59:10,
59:13,
59:17,
59:19
multiple 46:3
Museo 5:15

myself 21:16,
28:16,
47:13, 57:2

< N >
Name 8:12,
11:19,
11:20,
13:3,
15:21,
18:2,
19:21,
22:7, 25:4,
35:2, 35:4,
39:3,
45:15,
51:20,
55:10,
57:9,
59:21,
65:14
namely 34:4
names 6:5
Napoli 28:7
NASDAQ 17:8
nation. 28:6
near 6:11
necessary
54:5
neck 57:16
need 10:19,
13:12,
13:13,
15:14,
15:24,
16:1,
17:14,
18:17,
18:18,
18:23,
19:2, 19:6,
19:8,
19:13,
33:1,
47:12,
47:14,
47:15,

50:20,
50:22,
51:3,
51:10,
54:17,
59:16,
60:11
needed 25:21,
32:24
needs 53:20,
54:16
needy 14:23,
15:7
negatively
46:4, 49:18
negotiation
57:18
neighborhood
20:12,
37:2,
38:23,
56:2, 56:22
neighbors
55:21,
56:4, 56:10
neither 30:6
nervous 13:8
net 49:15
Next 24:22,
37:8
nice 8:11,
43:20
Nine 16:15,
43:6, 45:23
No. 4:21
nobody 42:4
NOI 12:17,
20:8
non-payments
9:9
None 25:14,
25:15,
25:16, 29:5
nonpayment
9:3
normally 44:4
Notary 65:8
note 36:9

notes 65:12
nothing 11:13
notice 42:14
notification
39:19
number 9:7,
27:23
numbers
14:11,
15:13
nurses 21:15,
26:6
NY 1:12
NYC 1:9
NYCHA 30:19,
45:8, 45:10
NYU 36:18

< O >
o'clock 7:17,
60:13
obligated
14:23
obtain 30:13
obvious 10:1
obviously
50:9
occasions
40:7, 60:9,
60:10
occurred
61:16
offer 29:18
offered 42:4
offers 42:6
Office 2:15,
20:24,
35:4, 35:6,
45:21, 62:2
official 45:6
officials
12:19,
18:11
Okay 3:15,
3:16, 8:7,
8:18, 8:22,
27:24,

Concordance

28:20,
29:22,
30:3, 30:9,
30:23,
31:6,
31:11,
31:12,
31:19,
31:21,
32:6, 32:8,
32:14,
35:4,
36:10,
41:13,
47:9,
47:11,
52:3, 52:4,
52:16,
55:4,
57:14,
57:20,
58:22,
59:1, 59:7,
59:16

old 31:20
older 23:4,
33:3
once 6:22,
21:18, 27:2
One 9:18,
16:14,
17:5,
21:24,
26:24,
30:13,
30:17,
32:13,
32:20,
35:24,
38:9,
43:13,
52:2, 52:6,
58:2, 59:5,
61:19
one-year
43:3,
50:24, 51:9
ones 21:20,

33:6, 53:4
ongoing 9:21
online 11:13
open 5:16,
11:3,
14:15,
16:19,
20:16,
37:12
opened 11:3
operating
42:20,
43:5, 49:15
opinion 15:4
opportunity
10:15
order 6:14,
12:18, 53:2
Organization
22:8, 24:2,
25:11,
39:5,
55:12,
59:22
organizations
41:21
organize
25:17
organized
61:13
organizers
33:23
others 7:10,
10:22, 48:6
out. 23:10,
47:24
outage 14:5,
53:23
outnumbered
42:1
Outside 5:4,
6:1, 23:3,
47:22,
52:7, 63:15
oversight
19:6
overt 7:9
owe 9:13,

23:3
own 11:21,
11:22,
13:18,
14:6,
32:10,
32:12,
32:15
owned 16:14
owners 6:13,
13:17,
60:17
owns 11:21,
17:5

< P >
P. 28:2
p.m. 5:15,
5:17
packet 29:2
pages 11:11,
65:10
paid 37:3
pain 23:18
paint 26:15,
36:9, 61:5
paper 58:24
papers 23:2
paperwork
12:2, 29:23
parents
36:18,
38:22,
55:18,
55:23,
56:14,
56:17,
56:24
Park 55:18
parking 57:24
parquet 58:12
part 29:10,
29:12,
29:17,
30:9,
30:14, 49:8
particularly

10:8
passes 10:3
passion 7:6
past 41:8,
42:23,
52:11
patch 62:13
Paths 29:11
Paul 32:21
Paula 33:14,
34:23,
35:2, 35:4
pay 9:19,
9:21,
22:15,
26:12,
26:23,
27:2,
28:17,
32:21,
37:14,
38:13,
38:22,
57:22,
58:1, 58:2,
58:8, 58:9,
58:13,
61:5, 63:7
paying 22:13,
36:13,
40:13,
60:5, 61:1
pending 14:1
pension
31:22,
31:23
penthouses
21:12
per 9:13
percent 12:5,
12:17,
13:19,
13:20,
13:23,
20:7, 20:9,
30:12,
33:22,
42:21,

Concordance

42:23,
43:12,
45:23,
47:16,
49:20, 50:2
percentage
43:5
Percy 33:15,
34:23,
39:2, 39:4
perhaps 42:15
person 5:17,
52:2
personally
13:5
perspective
18:12
Peter 32:21
pets 58:2
phones 43:13
phonetic
17:23,
24:17,
24:20,
24:23,
34:24,
41:5, 55:11
physical 7:9,
46:1
pick 47:18
picking 29:1
picture 30:2
Pilar 10:12
piling 54:13
Pillar 8:9,
12:24, 13:3
place 5:14,
24:5, 28:4,
35:23,
65:11
plastic 63:13
plate 38:5
platform
44:10,
44:14, 45:6
played 32:9
Please 4:6,
6:10, 7:21,

8:10,
12:17,
22:5, 25:2,
27:7,
27:11,
27:18,
31:8, 32:1,
40:12,
40:23,
46:15,
47:7, 48:6,
51:13,
57:7,
58:21,
59:16
pleasure 61:3
plenty 42:3
pockets
21:17,
28:13,
46:17
pocus 37:17
podium 6:7
police 60:15
policies
14:14
policing 46:7
politicians
32:5
portfolio
30:20
positions
34:18
possible
6:14, 6:15,
7:16, 18:9,
32:11, 36:1
possibly 15:2
posted 23:2,
63:3
poverty 17:1
poverty-level
9:22
power 34:3,
34:6,
34:18,
53:23
powerful 34:1

predatory
32:8
predominantly
37:1, 43:17
prepare 54:4
preparedness
53:7
Present 4:6,
4:9, 4:11,
4:16, 4:18,
4:24, 5:2
president
17:7, 18:2
prevented
9:15
preventing
9:5
prevention
9:17
price 42:20,
43:4, 49:17
priced 29:14
prices 18:24
primary 46:11
private
13:16,
18:20,
29:13,
29:15, 45:4
proactive
52:24
probable 45:7
Probably
37:23,
48:22
problem 22:1,
32:12,
33:5,
40:18,
57:17,
57:19,
59:4,
59:11,
60:21, 62:5
procedures
5:22
proceed 5:21,
22:5, 47:8

proceedings
64:2
process 14:3
profit 13:21,
18:18,
19:16,
21:21
profits
13:18,
15:16
profound
45:24
Program
10:21,
11:7, 11:8,
12:5,
12:16,
12:20,
12:21,
25:10
programs
9:24, 10:5,
11:2, 11:5,
12:14,
19:8,
41:16, 42:3
progress
22:12, 60:4
promise 59:4
promotion
17:1, 45:9
properties
16:9
property
11:22,
16:7, 45:5
proposed
3:22, 5:6,
8:1
protect
14:23,
50:20
protecting
15:7
Protection
4:2, 10:21,
17:2
protest 33:24

Concordance

proud 60:4

prove 61:21

provide 8:14,
8:23,
11:10,
61:6, 61:8

provided 24:3

providers
21:15

provides
9:18, 41:15

psychiatrist
40:11

psychological
14:8

psychologist
40:11

Public 1:5,
3:5, 3:7,
3:21, 5:4,
5:17, 9:22,
14:17,
15:2,
18:11,
18:15,
18:18,
18:21,
19:22,
30:18,
41:21,
45:5,
45:19, 65:8

publicly 17:7

Puerto 56:3

purpose 32:10

pursue 18:7

pushing 45:9

put 12:20,
33:3,
37:15,
45:11,
47:18,
49:23,
63:12

Putting
49:22,
52:9, 58:1

< Q >

quadruplicate
11:12

qualify
29:24,
31:13

quality 57:20

Queens 22:9,
29:22,
39:7,
43:11,
43:17

question
18:23,
19:2,
28:10,
51:22

quick 42:19

quickly 44:9,
55:19,
56:15

quiet 61:20

quite 16:10

quorum 5:3

quote 28:1

< R >

Rabinowitz
8:9, 10:11,
10:14, 17:4

race 28:22

raise 14:19,
16:16,
19:13,
23:19,
29:3, 43:1,
47:13, 52:1

raised 52:2

range 18:12

rate 38:13

rates 18:16,
49:20

rather 46:17,
63:13

reactive
52:23

read 15:5,
28:1, 31:5,
44:9,
53:11,
58:18,
58:23

Ready 25:1,
25:3, 55:8

real 12:20,
14:9, 16:6,
18:23,
19:3,
28:11,
35:21,
35:22,
49:14

reality
18:17,
21:9, 28:12

realize 52:22

realized
26:21

really 10:3,
15:10,
15:12,
15:14,
16:3, 20:5,
28:17,
28:18,
33:7,
35:17,
35:21,
36:4,
37:11,
38:2,
42:19,
44:9,
49:18,
50:8,
50:19,
50:22,
51:1, 53:3,
58:16, 62:4

reason 18:10,
18:21,
43:8, 44:3

reasonable
18:18,

19:16

reasons 10:2

received
14:16,
39:13,
39:19

receiving
22:21

recent 45:21,
46:11

recently 46:8

recess 48:10

record 5:2

Reed 2:6,
4:15

referred
25:19

refinanced
11:18

refuse 20:16

regarding
8:1, 24:3

regardless
28:21

registration
5:24, 6:3

regular 50:4

regulate
18:12

regulated
18:15,
19:14

regulatory
19:6

rejected 11:9

rejected.
12:3

relative
18:24

remains 20:4

remarks 18:5

remember
29:1, 35:10

remind 7:3,
40:21

remove 25:9,
25:10,
25:15

Concordance

removed 22:19
rent-stabiliz
ed 9:10,
10:1, 25:8,
37:13,
49:18,
50:18,
55:17
rental 16:6,
16:18
rentals 43:3
renting 39:7
rents 14:19,
19:13,
28:12,
43:21,
46:10
rep 11:1
repair 36:8,
60:11
repairs
25:21,
26:24,
27:1,
32:24,
58:2, 60:19
replaced
34:11
Reported
28:6, 46:9
Reporter 65:8
reports 45:21
represent
16:24,
37:23
representativ
e 41:9,
49:10
representativ
es 33:24,
41:20,
53:14
representing
38:6
research
16:9, 46:20
reserves 15:2
reside 55:19

resident
33:19
resources
9:6, 46:6
respect 18:6,
40:17,
61:23, 62:1
respected
62:12
respectful
7:8
respond 4:6
response.
4:7, 4:13,
4:20, 4:23
responsibilit
y 7:22,
61:6
responsible
21:17
rest 32:4
resulted 50:2
retire 27:3,
27:17
retirement
27:10
revenue 17:9
review 5:8
rezoning 19:4
RGB 5:11,
5:18, 5:19,
5:24, 6:10
Rican 56:3
Ricardo 55:5,
55:6, 55:9,
55:10
Richwood
56:15
rid 22:20,
41:10
Ridgewood
56:13
rights 17:2,
24:4, 39:6,
39:11,
55:13,
60:14,
62:6,

62:12, 63:1
rise 34:3
rising 10:20
risk 49:24
roaches 16:20
Road 22:8,
24:2,
24:12,
39:4,
55:11,
57:1, 59:22
Robert 2:7,
4:10
rodents 14:5
Roll 4:5,
17:18,
35:7,
37:21,
59:11
rollback
13:14,
14:21,
15:13,
16:1, 45:20
rolling 46:5,
46:15
Ron 16:12,
16:14,
16:22
RONE 24:19,
24:21,
27:21,
31:9,
31:12,
32:17,
32:19,
33:10,
33:13,
54:22,
55:3, 57:9,
57:13,
58:22,
59:7,
59:10,
59:13,
59:17
room 35:6,
37:16,

51:22, 62:9
rooms 62:7,
62:9
rose 13:20
Rossi 33:15,
34:23,
35:1, 35:2,
35:3, 35:5
row 11:4
Royal 63:5
rule 33:11
rules 5:22
run 7:17,
21:20
RUSSO 65:7,
65:18

< S >
salary 31:21,
40:13
sale 11:20,
12:1
sanitation
21:15,
28:16
save 16:17
savings 28:19
saw 23:4,
29:5, 50:1
saying 32:4,
33:17
says 14:22,
28:3,
29:11,
29:13,
43:14,
44:16,
47:24
scheduled
39:17
school 19:22,
23:5,
23:10,
55:21
Schools 53:6,
53:24, 54:4
SCHWARTZ 2:5,

Concordance

4 : 17 , 4 : 18
scream 62 : 24
screamed
61 : 19
screaming
35 : 7
SCRIE 31 : 13
scrutiny 19 : 8
seats 34 : 21
Second 1 : 11 ,
21 : 24 ,
29 : 17 ,
30 : 8 , 40 : 4 ,
57 : 7 ,
63 : 22 ,
63 : 23
seconds 6 : 23 ,
52 : 18
section
30 : 10 ,
30 : 11
security
19 : 15
seeing 16 : 15 ,
34 : 2 , 49 : 17
seek 44 : 16
seem 37 : 5
seems 34 : 14 ,
53 : 19
seen 29 : 4 ,
31 : 1 , 55 : 20
sees 47 : 22 ,
49 : 11
send 26 : 10 ,
51 : 1
Seniors 51 : 21
sense 12 : 13 ,
18 : 6
sent 29 : 22 ,
39 : 20
serve 34 : 9
served 49 : 7 ,
50 : 1
Service
18 : 16 ,
23 : 20 ,
26 : 4 , 26 : 9 ,
52 : 13

Services
6 : 19 , 9 : 6 ,
25 : 20
servicing
54 : 9 , 54 : 11
set 65 : 14
seven 3 : 21
several 6 : 4 ,
8 : 7 , 12 : 7 ,
60 : 8 , 60 : 10
severely 23 : 1
shake 29 : 3
shameful
21 : 13
share 57 : 21
Sheila 54 : 22 ,
55 : 2 , 57 : 6 ,
57 : 10 ,
57 : 12
shelter 30 : 15
Shirley 31 : 3
shit 9 : 14
short 31 : 2 ,
31 : 4 , 48 : 5
Shorthand
65 : 7 , 65 : 12
Shot 9 : 18
shouldn't
35 : 21 , 52 : 6
show 5 : 2 ,
20 : 17 ,
29 : 7 ,
34 : 15 ,
54 : 17
showering
62 : 19
showing 12 : 2 ,
15 : 8 , 40 : 1
shows 13 : 19 ,
20 : 7
shred 21 : 18
sick 26 : 18 ,
26 : 23 , 38 : 3
side 37 : 1
sign 40 : 23 ,
47 : 2 , 48 : 6
sign-in 6 : 11
signed 7 : 18 ,

47 : 1
silenced 34 : 1
silent 13 : 11
Silva 55 : 6
similar 23 : 17
Simon 32 : 21
simply 19 : 1
single 9 : 22 ,
22 : 10 ,
49 : 13 , 60 : 3
Sir 10 : 13 ,
19 : 17 ,
19 : 19 ,
34 : 22 ,
41 : 6 ,
41 : 12 ,
45 : 13 , 55 : 8
sits 11 : 15
sitting 6 : 11
situation
25 : 13 ,
26 : 11 ,
26 : 17 ,
27 : 9 , 62 : 17
situations
23 : 17 ,
62 : 17
six 12 : 5
slapped 36 : 8
sleep 40 : 12
Sloan 45 : 16
slumlords
32 : 8
Smyth 4 : 19
snarky 34 : 16
so-called
20 : 17
social 26 : 20 ,
27 : 16
Socialists
44 : 10 ,
44 : 13
Solero 33 : 15 ,
34 : 24 ,
39 : 2 , 39 : 3 ,
39 : 4
solid 54 : 16
Soltren 4 : 22

solution
40 : 18
solve 57 : 19 ,
59 : 3 , 59 : 10
somebody
11 : 3 , 11 : 15
somehow 20 : 6
someone 13 : 5 ,
27 : 15 ,
38 : 15 ,
49 : 10 ,
51 : 5 , 61 : 5
Sometimes
47 : 17
son 23 : 4 ,
23 : 7 ,
47 : 12 ,
47 : 13 ,
47 : 17 ,
47 : 18 ,
47 : 21 ,
47 : 22 ,
47 : 24 ,
60 : 2 , 60 : 3 ,
60 : 4
soon 6 : 6 ,
34 : 4 ,
34 : 11 ,
48 : 18
Sorry 29 : 9 ,
31 : 9 ,
48 : 23 ,
54 : 23 ,
55 : 3 , 55 : 4 ,
57 : 12
sort 37 : 17
souls 28 : 13
space 57 : 24
Spanish 8 : 3
Spanish. 8 : 5 ,
41 : 2 , 47 : 6 ,
48 : 9
spare 33 : 4
speaker 6 : 15 ,
6 : 22 , 47 : 1 ,
55 : 5 , 57 : 8
Speakers 6 : 1 ,
6 : 12 , 6 : 15 ,

Concordance

6 : 18 , 6 : 20 ,
7 : 6 , 7 : 14 ,
8 : 8 , 48 : 24 ,
63 : 19
speaking
6 : 18 , 6 : 21 ,
7 : 1 , 7 : 13 ,
51 : 15 , 52 : 4
specific
10 : 18 , 54 : 1
specifically
44 : 16 , 63 : 8
spend 12 : 10
spending
12 : 12 , 46 : 6
spent 27 : 15
spirit 13 : 9
split 59 : 13
spoke 15 : 22 ,
16 : 4
spreadsheets
11 : 11
SS 65 : 3
stabilization
4 : 1 , 25 : 9 ,
25 : 15
stabilized
13 : 23 ,
16 : 14 ,
16 : 17 ,
17 : 6 , 18 : 3 ,
19 : 23 ,
43 : 12 ,
43 : 14 ,
43 : 17 ,
49 : 23 ,
50 : 18 ,
50 : 24 ,
51 : 9 , 56 : 13
Staff 2 : 11 ,
5 : 24 , 6 : 11 ,
7 : 2
stage 12 : 8
stand 20 : 24 ,
33 : 18
stands 18 : 10
start 6 : 21 ,
16 : 12 ,

25 : 7 ,
33 : 17 ,
43 : 22 ,
48 : 23 ,
49 : 1 ,
51 : 15 ,
51 : 16
started 44 : 5 ,
48 : 14
starting 5 : 15
State 12 : 19 ,
14 : 22 ,
15 : 5 , 15 : 6 ,
28 : 2 , 28 : 5 ,
28 : 7 ,
28 : 14 ,
34 : 3 , 45 : 4 ,
49 : 10 ,
49 : 11 ,
50 : 9 , 65 : 2 ,
65 : 9
statement
17 : 3
statements
16 : 4
status 28 : 22
stay 20 : 12 ,
30 : 17
steal 30 : 1 ,
30 : 2
stealing
32 : 20
Stella 24 : 19
Stenotype
65 : 8
stock 35 : 19
stop 7 : 13 ,
15 : 15
stopped 44 : 4
store 58 : 4
stories 31 : 2
story 24 : 11 ,
31 : 4 , 31 : 5
straighten
33 : 5
streaming
5 : 18
Street 1 : 10 ,

5 : 16 , 24 : 7 ,
24 : 9 ,
28 : 15 ,
36 : 15 ,
37 : 14 ,
39 : 10 ,
43 : 11 ,
63 : 10
stress 14 : 10 ,
42 : 15
stressed
26 : 17 ,
26 : 18
striking
18 : 20
strive 53 : 1
stroke 26 : 19 ,
27 : 2
stronghold
32 : 5 , 32 : 6
strongly
45 : 23
struggle
20 : 17 ,
49 : 21
struggling
13 : 15 ,
20 : 5 ,
20 : 19 ,
21 : 10 ,
42 : 7 ,
43 : 20 ,
49 : 12 ,
50 : 7 ,
50 : 12 ,
50 : 13 , 51 : 3
Stuyvesant
30 : 3
subject 3 : 24
submit 5 : 7 ,
5 : 9 , 11 : 12
submitted
11 : 7
subsidies
14 : 17
subsidy 10 : 5
success 29 : 20
successfully

56 : 10
sucks 36 : 16
suffer 23 : 1 ,
40 : 2
suffered
23 : 18
suffering
13 : 11 ,
14 : 3 ,
20 : 11 ,
62 : 16
suggest 20 : 8 ,
52 : 23
suicide 14 : 11
super 63 : 2 ,
63 : 3
superstitious
27 : 24
Superville
2 : 15
supply 19 : 2 ,
19 : 5
support 8 : 23 ,
10 : 5 , 51 : 4 ,
54 : 17
supposed 62 : 5
suppressing
33 : 23
surcharge
58 : 9
survive
14 : 13 ,
27 : 12 ,
30 : 22
SWEAZE 41 : 5 ,
47 : 1 , 47 : 9 ,
47 : 11
system 13 : 8 ,
20 : 15 ,
30 : 4 , 52 : 10

< T >
table 6 : 1 ,
6 : 3 , 52 : 9
tables 6 : 11 ,
9 : 1 , 34 : 2
taken. 48 : 10

Concordance

Concordance

39:19

< U >

ugly 10:3

ultimately 44:2

unaffordable 38:9

understand 7:5, 7:19, 7:21, 16:10, 24:13, 36:23, 39:5, 39:22, 53:13

understanding 18:19

unfortunate 42:8

unfortunately 44:4

unhealthy 26:11

Unintelligible 3:10, 22:2, 29:10

unit 36:10, 36:13

United 51:21

units 3:24, 11:13, 16:15, 30:19

Unrepresented 14:3

until 42:10, 42:13

urge 10:6, 34:19

urgent 10:8

using 45:4

utility 18:14

utilizing 6:19

< V >

vacancy 49:20

vendor 28:14

verdict 10:15

vibrancy 56:1

vice 17:7

vicinity 54:1

video 5:7

violating 15:6

violations 16:19

visit 5:19

VITAL 34:24, 41:4, 41:6, 41:7, 41:13

volunteer 25:12

vote 5:13, 5:18, 17:14, 47:15, 51:8

voting 14:11, 14:12, 15:3

vouchers 22:18, 30:10, 30:11, 30:16

< W >

wages 49:14

wait 21:1, 21:4, 30:12, 30:20, 51:14

waiting 20:14, 21:2

walkup 36:6, 36:15, 38:10

wall 63:4

Wally 24:23, 33:14

wanted 31:16, 37:22, 55:24, 56:6, 61:21, 62:7

wanting 52:5

wants 7:15, 47:24

Washington 18:4

wasted 19:5

watch 5:18, 20:3, 54:7

water 17:11, 26:17, 54:6, 62:18

ways 44:24

website 5:10, 5:20, 16:13, 44:15

week 17:16

weeks 61:14

welcome 3:5

west 37:1

WHEREOF 65:13

Whereupon 64:2

Whether 58:22, 58:23

who'd 47:2

whom 9:2

wife 11:20, 11:21

Will 4:2, 4:5, 5:9, 5:14, 5:16, 6:1, 6:4, 6:12, 6:15, 6:18, 6:22, 6:23, 7:1, 7:12, 7:18, 12:6, 14:15, 19:5, 24:23, 25:7, 34:11, 34:15, 34:19, 44:22, 46:20, 50:4, 56:17, 56:18, 56:20, 56:21

willing 34:12

wind 39:10, 61:1

window 63:11, 63:12

windows 60:23, 62:17

winter 26:16

wish 5:23

within 65:8

without 8:24, 18:5, 23:19

WITNESS 65:13

witnesses 8:8

word 36:5

words 45:17

work 9:4, 9:24, 19:4, 21:6, 45:16, 53:2, 55:11, 60:18

worked 22:11

worker 20:13, 26:20, 27:16

workers 21:15, 21:16, 28:14, 28:16

working 3:12, 27:16, 40:8, 60:5, 61:18

working-class 55:14

Concordance

world 37:24, 46:21

worse 23:17, 54:16

worst 31:1, 45:11

Worth 1:10

wrap 7:2

written 5:7, 35:17, 39:21

wrote 31:3

< Y >

Year 9:8, 10:7, 11:9, 13:14, 20:2, 20:22, 20:23, 22:22, 23:18, 30:17, 33:21, 36:10, 36:19, 42:23, 47:16, 57:23

years 10:7, 11:4, 11:6, 11:7, 21:3, 22:9, 22:14, 24:6, 26:1, 26:21, 27:8, 27:15, 30:21, 31:20, 36:3, 36:7, 39:6, 39:8, 43:6, 43:19, 49:7, 50:1, 53:10, 56:13,

59:22, 63:4

yell 57:13

yield 19:15

York 1:2, 1:12, 3:6, 9:16, 13:16, 14:2, 14:22, 15:5, 15:6, 19:22, 28:5, 29:12, 36:24, 38:17, 38:18, 38:19, 46:8, 46:9, 49:9, 55:11, 55:12, 65:2, 65:4, 65:9

Yorker 19:22

Yorkers 21:10, 21:19, 28:3, 46:2, 49:11, 49:12, 49:21, 50:5, 50:16, 50:17, 51:2

yourself 44:22

Youtube 5:19

< Z >

zero 47:16

Zohran 34:5

Zoom 38:3