

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

PUBLIC MEETING
OF THE
DIRECTORS

Bronx Public Hearing
Monday, June 8, 2026
5:00 p.m.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Alright, good evening. I'd like to welcome you all to this public hearing
2 of the New York City Rent Guidelines Board and thank you all for
3 attending. This is the second of four public hearings to consider
4 comments concerning proposed rent adjustments for leases for apartments,
5 lofts, hotels, and other housing units subject to the Rent Stabilization Law
6 of 1969 and the Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974. These
7 adjustments will affect leases commencing between October 1, 2026
8 through September 30, 2027. I will now take roll call. Please respond if
9 present. Arpit Gupta.

10 Ms. Gupta: Present.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Brandon Mancilla.

12 Mr. Mancilla: Present.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Lauren Melodia.

14 Ms. Melodia: Present.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Sagar Sharma.

16 Mr. Sharma: Present.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Sina Sinai.

18 Ms. Sinai: Present.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Christina Smyth. Adan Soltren.

20 Mr. Soltren: Present.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Maksim Wynn.

22 Mr. Wynn: Present.

23 Ms. Mitchell: And Chantella Mitchell. I'm present. Let the record show that we have a
24 quorum. The next two meetings of this board will be public hearings to
25 comment on the proposed guidelines on the following dates and times.

1 June 11th, at the Theater at City Tech, New York City College of
2 Technology, 285 Jay Street in Brooklyn from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., and
3 June 16th at Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at 95th Street in
4 Manhattan from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Anyone who wants to comment
5 on the proposed guidelines at a public hearing must sign up to speak.
6 People wishing to speak at the public hearings can pre-register either in
7 advance either through our website, nyc.gov/rgb, or by calling 212-669-
8 7480 from 9:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Pre-
9 registration ends at noon on the business day prior to each hearing. For
10 those who do not pre-register for the hearings, registration is also available
11 at public hearings from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on June 16th, and from 7:00
12 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on June 11th. All of our public hearings will be
13 livestreamed and Spanish interpretation will be provided at each hearing.
14 We also accept comments on the proposed guidelines outside of our public
15 hearings. You can submit written, audio and video comments for the
16 board to review through June 16th. Instructions on how to submit these
17 comments will be available on the board's website or by e-mail at
18 ask@rgb.nyc.gov or by calling the RGB. Our final vote on the guidelines
19 will take place on Thursday, June 25th, starting at 7:00 p.m. at El Museo
20 del Barrio, 1230 5th Avenue at 104th Street in Manhattan. Doors open at
21 6:00 p.m. The public may attend in-person or may watch the vote live by
22 streaming it on the RGB's YouTube channel. To find out how, visit the
23 RGB website, call the RGB at 212-669-7480 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00
24 p.m. Before we proceed, I would like to go over the rules and procedures
25 for those who are testifying before the board. If you wish to speak, you

1 must confirm with RGB staff at the registration table located near the
2 entrance of the hall. Speakers will not be called if they have not checked
3 in at the registration table. There are Spanish interpreters here today.
4 When registering to speak, please notify the staff if you would like an
5 interpreter. I will try to call several names in advance to let you know that
6 you will soon be called on to speak. If you have materials to distribute to
7 the board, please give them to the RGB staff sitting at the sign-in table
8 near the entrance. I will attem-- I will attempt to alternate speakers
9 between tenants and owners. However, this might -- may not always be
10 possible. Board members may need to briefly step away from the table
11 during the hearing to use the restroom or take an urgent phone call. We
12 will keep the meeting moving given the time constraints because we are
13 eager to hear from all of you. In order to accommodate as many speakers
14 as possible, each speaker will have two minutes to give their testimony.
15 An additional two minutes of speaking time will be given to those
16 speakers who are using interpretation services. To help speakers keep
17 track of their time, we do have a clock here. We will start the clock when
18 you begin speaking. The clock will beep once when the speaker has 30
19 seconds left and will continue beeping when the allotted two minutes are
20 up. If you are still speaking by the end of the two minutes, I will ask you
21 to quickly wrap up your testimony. We expect many speakers and the
22 board wants to hear from as many of you as possible in the limited time
23 we have for this hearing. We understand that it may be difficult to say
24 everything that you want us to hear in just two minutes, but please
25 understand that it is our responsibility to try to make sure that everyone

1 has -- who has taken the time to come here and testify will have a fair
2 opportunity to be heard. Thank you for your cooperation and the board is
3 looking forward to hearing your comments regarding the proposed rent
4 guideline adjustments. And I will now turn it over for translation. Thank
5 you. Alright, we will now get started with the testimony. When you hear
6 your names, please make your way towards the microphone. Apologies in
7 advance if I mispronounce any names. I'll be listening for the correct
8 pronunciation when you come up. Thank you. So first we will hear from
9 Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson. And if Teresa Thompson
10 and Aaron M. Holness could make their way over to the microphones,
11 you'll be after the Borough President. While we wait for Borough
12 President Gibson to come on in, we'll come to Teresa and then Aaron.

13 Ms. Thompson: Okay. Good afternoon.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Good afternoon.

15 Ms. Thompson: My name is Teresa Thompson. I am a working mother. My family rents
16 an apartment in Brooklyn where we are part of the Homewood Gardens
17 Tenant Association. On behalf of my family and neighbors, I urge the
18 Board to please approve a rent freeze on both one and two-year leases.
19 My grandparents first moved to Staten Island in 1945. My wife's great
20 grand-- great grandparents all first moved to the Bronx in the 1890s. They
21 all moved here from harsh conditions in search of a better life. I gave
22 birth to our son in a public hospital here in New York City and we want to
23 also give him a good life as part of the next generation of New Yorkers in
24 our family. But with the current housing affordability crisis, we are not
25 sure that that's going to be possible. We can barely afford our current rent

1 in a building that is very poorly maintained considering how much rent is
2 charged, by the way. And without a rent freeze, we may be forced to
3 leave the city, the only home my son and my wife have ever known. We
4 are grateful for the protection and the welcome we experience in New
5 York City as an LGBTQ family considering the political climate in other
6 parts of our country, but we won't be able to benefit from that protection
7 and welcome anymore if we can't afford a place to live. I realize the
8 housing affordability crisis is complex and many people are negatively
9 impacted, including some owners and some landlords. But as a Christian,
10 I would like to remind any members of the board who are of the Christian
11 faith or another faith where we are required to tend to the needs of the
12 most vulnerable. I would like to remind you that the most vulnerable
13 parties in the housing affordability crisis are not the landlords. They are
14 the tenants. So once again, I ask you to please have mercy and help us by
15 approving a rent freeze. Thank you for your service. May God bless you.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Aaron?

17 Mr. Holness: Hello.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Hello.

19 Mr. Holness: Good evening, board members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.
20 I'm here as a landlord, a small property owner who was watching the math
21 stop working. The numbers are not abstract. Your own rent guidelines
22 board confirms that operating costs for rent-stabilized buildings rose 5.3%.
23 Insurance costs jumped 10.5%. Taxes rose 2.6%. And the New York City
24 Department of Environmental Protection is proposing a 6% water rate
25 increase on top of that. If rents are capped at zero to 4%, someone has to

1 absorb the difference. And that someone is the building owners and the
2 building. Additionally, energy prices are skyrocketing and the interest
3 rates are creeping up, which makes it harder to maintain buildings. And
4 these are not theoretical pressures. These are forces -- these are forcing
5 real decisions about deferred repairs and about whether to keep going at
6 all. And, and as, as we've seen from what happens to the landlord -- if the
7 landlords can't keep going, those of us who remember the Bronx in the
8 1970s will have abandoned buildings, arson neighborhoods hollowed out
9 for a generation, and that, that was the last time that the city pushed the
10 cost onto owners with no relief in sight. A rent freeze sounds protective,
11 but if buildings can't fund maintenance, tenants live with broken elevators,
12 failing boilers and water damage, the freeze becomes the problem it was
13 meant to solve. So I urge you to have a reasonable increase, not a rent
14 freeze. Thank you.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Is Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson back? Okay, we will go to
16 Andrea Ngoulou, Lenocio Reyes, and Reverend Dr. James Fairbanks in
17 that order. So we'll have Andrea first.

18 Ms. Ngoulou: Good evening. My name is Andrea. I live in a rent-stabilized apartment
19 in Prospect Lefferts Garden. I'm also a member of the Homewood
20 Gardens Tenant Association. I'm here because what tenants in my
21 building and neighborhood are living through is not sustainable, not safe,
22 and not dignified. Even though my unit is rent-stabilized, it's being
23 illegally rented out as single-room occupancy. At the same time, our
24 building has black mold, water leaks and frequent loss of hot water. These
25 are health hazards, not minor issues, and my experience is not unique. In

1 our tenant association, about half of our members are dealing with rat
2 infestations, collapsing ceilings and long-term structural neglect. These
3 are people who have lived in the community for 20, 30, even 40 years,
4 elders, working families, neighbors who built the culture and stability of
5 Prospect Lefferts Gardens. Meanwhile, the neighborhood fills with new
6 buildings that none of us can afford, while the homes we've lived in for
7 decades are allowed to fall apart. What was once a community full of
8 trees, dignity, and long-standing neighbors is being hollowed out by
9 landlords who profit from instability and neglect. The illegal single-room
10 leasing in my unit is part of that pattern. It shows how some landlords are
11 already extracting more than the legal rent, while failing to provide even
12 basic living conditions. Tenants are being asked to pay more for less, less
13 safety, less stability, and less respect. We are asking for basic habitability
14 and the ability to stay in the communities we've built. I urge the board to
15 vote in favor of the rent freeze. Thank you.

16 Dr. Fairbanks: Good evening. My name is Jim [phonetic], Reverend Dr. James
17 Fairbanks. And I thank you for your work and hope that you are friendly
18 to our demand for justice-oriented rent freeze. I have been an organizer in
19 the South Bronx since 1970. In the early 70s, a group of tenant leaders,
20 we went to Albany to fight for a legislation called a Warranty of
21 Habitability. Does anyone remember that? The Warranty of Habitability.
22 Thank you. It was simple. Tenants paid rent and landlords provided
23 services. So while I like the idea of the rent freeze, find that necessary,
24 what I have trouble with is another freeze, the freeze of landlord services,
25 the freeze of landlord services, the freeze of landlord services. So I -- my

1 wife told me to bring a bag to the meeting. I don't have written testimony
2 to leave, but she told me to bring this bag and have the board fill it up with
3 money for all of the rent increases we, we have paid for while we receive a
4 freeze on rent services. So I hope the bag is big enough. Thank you very
5 much.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. And is Lenocio Reyes here?

7 Mr. Reyes: Yes. Good afternoon, everyone. I'm just an entrepreneur landlord, just
8 beginning being a landlord. I just want to let everybody know that I'm
9 trying to make the American dreams and, you know, coming to New
10 York, to America and work hard and try to, you know, get a property and
11 see how, you know, we can grow up as an individual and as a business.
12 But after my hard work and saving all the money that I had, I put them
13 into a property. It's a 10 small unit building, has a lot of problem. I'm a
14 handyman. I say, you know, I can do it because I've done it all over the
15 place, but the reality is that it's not what I thought. It's a different world.
16 And I don't want to quit as a landlord, to be honest, because I'm a guy who
17 likes to continue working. And I agree that that's okay to be, you know, to
18 rent -- freeze the rent. That's fine. But what am I going to do with the
19 City? How -- I mean, I need help from the City. Look, increase
20 insurance. The garbage man gave me I don't know how many tickets for,
21 you know, some nonsense stuff. The heat is coming and it's going up
22 crazy. The insurance, my goodness, the insurance industry is crazy.
23 Nobody can control that industry. They just go and say, you know what,
24 you're paying too little, now you're going to pay more. For some -- for no
25 reason. So, how am I going to continue maintaining the building? Yes,

1 I'm agreeing the rent should be freezed, but please, can you tell the City,
2 give the landlord a break? The taxes is really high. I mean, I'm going to
3 have to give up the building. The bank is going to take it out for me. And
4 I'm just starting. That's all I can say. And thank you for listening to my,
5 you know, frustration.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I'll now welcome New York City Council Member Althea
7 Stevens and New York City Council Member Pierina, Pierin-- Pierina
8 Sanchez. Thank you. Are the council members here? Perfect. I think, I
9 think we -- I think I see them. They're here.

10 Ms. Stevens: I'm here. Alright. Good evening, everyone. I'm Council Althea Stevens
11 representing District 16 in the Bronx. That's right. Today, I stand before
12 you, the Board, to highlight the severity of the housing crisis and the
13 urgent need for solutions, keeping New Yorkers in their homes. Every
14 day, constituents come to my office seeking help for food insecurity,
15 evictions unresolved, unresolved building repairs, rising rents. Those are
16 not isolated issues. They are all connected to this housing crisis in the
17 city. The reality is New Yorkers are struggling to keep up with the rising
18 cost of groceries, health care, child care, transportation and other
19 necessities. In the Bronx, where the medium income household is below
20 \$50,000, many families are already facing housing cost burdens. This is
21 why we should come to no surprise when I want -- when I say the rent is
22 too damn high. Our city has been in a housing crisis for years, driven by
23 lack of housing supplies and slow housing production. This is the leading
24 cause for New Yorkers, parti-- particularly black New Yorkers, for leaving
25 New York City -- are leaving New York City. At the same time, we must

1 also acknowledge that many small landlords are facing real financial
2 pressures, just like this, this guy who's standing here. We must come up
3 with solutions that, that are about stabilizing tenants and stabilizing
4 families. We don't want responsible home-- homeowners, small
5 homeowners and small building owners to go under wraps. So as a city,
6 we must come up with a real plan to keep them able to put in the repairs
7 that are necessary so that our -- so my constituents are not living in slum.
8 Too often, the responsibility of addressing shortages in the same
9 community's concentrated development is a handful of neighborhoods
10 place a strain on local infrastructure and resources that allows the avoiding
11 citywide building and solutions. As you deliberate for the rent
12 adjustments, I urge you to consider the realities facing families to ensure
13 that decisions are kept New Yorkers house stabilized and, and a reminder
14 that our communities that these are our homes. So thank you and thank
15 you everyone for being here and showing up and supporting and letting
16 them know that in the Bronx, we stand together, we stand united and we
17 stand and when we win, when we fight, when we fight. That's right.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Council member Stevens. Council member Sanchez.

19 Ms. Sanchez: Good afternoon. Everything plus one to everything my, my neighbor
20 down to the South, Council member Althea Stevens said. Members of the
21 Rent Guideline Board, thank you for having this hearing today. I'm
22 Council member Pierina Sanchez, Chair of the City Council's Committee
23 on Housing and Buildings. I'm here today to urge this board, to urge this
24 board to center the stability of tenants and reject rent increases that would
25 deepen an already devastating affordability crisis. I want to speak directly

1 to one of the arguments we hear every year. That rent increases are
2 necessary because rent stabilized landlords are in financial distress. We
3 have to be honest, nuanced about the data. Most rent stabilized buildings
4 are not in financial distress. What we are also seeing is the consequences
5 of years of over leveraging, especially what happened in the years leading
6 up to the Great Recession and before the 2019 rent reforms. Owners who
7 gambled took on excessive debt, betting they could cash out by pushing
8 tenants out and deregulating apartments. Tenants should not be forced to
9 pay for that failed gamble. The same tenants whose homes, stability and
10 communities were treated as investment opportunities deserve our
11 advocacy. They deserve protection. They deserve to stay in their homes.
12 At the same time, I do want to complicate the narrative. There are those
13 that need help. Some owners do need tools that make real repairs and
14 preserve affordable housing. And that is why I have been at the forefront
15 on the council pushing for smarter res-- reservation policy, including
16 reforms to how we use tools like Article 11. Who gets them? Tens of
17 millions of dollars in tax exemption spent by the city of New York every
18 year. Where are those dollars going and what scopes of work are being
19 implemented to keep tenants stay -- safe? J51 is going to be reauthorized,
20 God willing, at the end of the -- by the end of this year for ten years to also
21 fund fundamental repairs. I wish that this board could consider different
22 treatment -- that could consider treatment of tenant income. I wish the
23 board would entertain more nuanced conversation about pre-1974 rent
24 stabilized buildings versus newer buildings with tax exemptions and
25 higher rents. I wish we could talk separately about small owner occupied

1 rent stabilized buildings. Those would be productive conversations. But
2 in the absence of that nuance, we must be clear about the choice before us
3 today. So today I ask the RGB to recognize the severity of this crisis for
4 tenants, reject the argument that tenants should bear the burden of
5 speculative decisions of the past and vote to protect rent stabilized tenants.
6 Thank you.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Council Member Sanchez. Next, I'll call up Thiago Branco,
8 Valstyle Kirk and Andre Easton, in that order.

9 Ms. Kirk: Good afternoon, everyone. What I want to say is that I noticed that all of
10 you are sitting over there and I don't know what kind of a conscience that
11 you have as far as getting things done and making things get to -- come
12 together and getting it done. But if you have any kind of what they call a
13 Christian conscience or any sign of decency for humanity, in your heart,
14 you're going to take this seriously. Because people are time and time
15 again, I have gray hair, I see people, they look like they're listening, but
16 they're not. You gotta get your grocery list out of your head, really listen
17 to these people. I live in a co-op. I'm an owner. My daughter can't afford
18 to move out, okay? And when things happen like this, the landlord is
19 asking for help and the tenants are asking for help as far as freezing the
20 rent. But after you freeze the rent, are you going to take care of what's
21 going to happen? The rent can't freeze for everyone forever. So, take time
22 to think about this seriously and don't trifle with our lives. I've lived -- I'm
23 born and raised in the Bronx, okay? And this is really serious and I just
24 wanted to stand here and tell you, please take this seriously because if you
25 go home in the comfort of your own home, some of these people are going

1 home to mold, rats, doors that won't lock properly and hallways that are
2 being unmaintained and feces all over the ground. I used to work at
3 Hostos High School and I said the last time that I would step into that
4 school is when they built the precinct right across the street from it and I
5 have not stepped in it, I'm tired, 34 and a half years as an educator. So, I
6 appeal to you to take this seriously, especially when you go home and you
7 feel comfortable in your own home, just know that everybody on the street
8 isn't -- is, is not homeless. There's homeless people living with other
9 people and these other people that's housing them, they're suffering too.
10 Or the money that they could have had is being taken out of their, their
11 lives, like this homeowner was standing up there talking about.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, thank you for your testimony.

13 Ms. Kirk: Okay, thank you. Thank you.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

15 Ms. Kirk: So just take it seriously.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Thiago Branco, Andre Easton.

17 Mr. Branco: Good afternoon, my name is Thiago Branco. I'm right here from the
18 Bronx. I'm from right here in the Bronx. Every year people come here to
19 attack, to attack the RGB, but before blaming this Board, tenants should
20 ask themselves a few basic questions. First one, have you ever pulled
21 your rent history? Second, is there renewal? You just sign an overcharge,
22 and if it is, what are you doing about it? Groups like CASA used to help
23 us navigate housing court, HPD, DHCR. They taught us how to protect
24 ourselves from landlords who cut corners and fudge numbers. Now, they
25 have drifted too much into politics, humped onto the Get Trump

1 bandwagon and stopped doing the work that keeps tenants safe. You
2 remember this? You remember this handout, right? You stopped doing
3 that. RGB and Mr. Sultan [phonetic] will agree, you know that landlord's
4 financial claims can be taken at face value. They massage their reports
5 and still insist they're broke. Until you conduct real audits, you're not
6 going to get honest compliance. I'm going to finish with this. Last
7 December, I won a rent overcharge case. My rent was rolled back \$240.
8 The ACR also ordered the landlord to refund me \$18,000, which I applied
9 towards future rents. She's still refusing to give me a new lease, but that's
10 fine. My rent is gonna stay frozen at \$1,100 till the cows come home.
11 This happened because I took it upon myself to learn how rent
12 stabilization works. I decided to fight for my right to have a home. So, to
13 all the tenants in the audience, especially the rent stabilized ones, I'm
14 gonna say this to you. A roof over your head is your responsibility. Race-
15 baiting politicians, Mamdani, [unclear] [00:34:26] community leaders,
16 none of them are gonna pay your rent. They couldn't care less if you end
17 up on a park bench on Park Avenue. Once you stop parroting their
18 narratives and start using your own brain, you'll realize that the RGB is
19 not your enemy. The real enemy is the willful ignorance of your rights
20 and responsibilities. It's you.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Is Andre Easton her? Next we'll hear from Andre Easton.

22 [CROSSTALK]

23 Mr. Easton: Good evening. My name is Andre Easton. What's up, you all? I feel like
24 you all might know me. I am a husband, a lifelong Bronx resident, the son
25 of Jamaican immigrants from Wake-- Wakefield in the Bronx and I am a

1 candidate for New York's 15th congressional district here in the Bronx.
2 And I, I don't take that lightly, right? We're in a situation of crisis in
3 District 15 where one in third -- one in three people in District 15 are
4 spending more than half of their income on rent. And this creates a toxic
5 environment not only in the household but in our communities where we
6 are seeing increased violence large-- largely due to the stress that people
7 face in trying to keep a roof over their heads. And we are in a
8 monumental time at this moment where because the New Yorkers have
9 fought and New Yorkers have organized, we could potentially see a rent
10 freeze for two year leases in this city. Absolutely, clap it up for that. And
11 we are in a position where the, the stabilized units, the landlords are
12 claiming that they have to increase rents because their costs have
13 increased even though the RGB's data alone reveals that this is not true.
14 That the cost of their-- the operating costs do not meet the-- they do not
15 run parallel to the revenue that they have generated in this past year. And
16 in this moment we need to be clear about what our socialist solutions are.
17 The problem is capitalism. Capitalism states that if you make, whatever
18 money you make this year needs to be more than you made last year and
19 next year needs to increase and increase and increase. And as a result,
20 housing is treated as a commodity, something to make profit off of. And
21 we have to put forth socialist solutions and we need to take the profit out
22 of housing. Housing should not be something that is speculated on and
23 that's why we're saying that if you are in a position where you cannot
24 afford to maintain the properties that you own, that you are-- that the
25 working-class people are living in, then you should not have those

1 properties. That should be returned to the public in the form of public
2 housing so that we can take the profit motive out and people can have
3 dignified housing that they deserve. The, the hard working people in the
4 Bronx deserve to have dignified housing that is not traded as a speculate
5 -- speculative commodity. Thank you.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I'll call for Bronx Borough President Vanessa L. Gibson if
7 she's here. And then we'll go to Rosanna Garcia and Alexander Ruiz.
8 Rosanna and Alexander, come on up.

9 Ms. Garcia: I'm here to talk to the tenants anyway. Hi everyone, my name is Rosanna.
10 I live in the Bronx. I'm an organizer and a social worker and I am sick and
11 tired of paying more than 30% on rent. Who else is tired of paying more
12 than 50% on rent? Right. In the Bronx, an apartment, one bedroom
13 apartment is \$2,400. That's ridiculous. And the median income is
14 \$42,000. Who can afford that? Right. As Andre said, one in three
15 households cannot afford their living, right? More -- they're paying more
16 than 50% of their income. So that means living paycheck to paycheck.
17 Who wants to live paycheck to paycheck? Right. So this is un--
18 unsustainable. I am a rent-stabilized tenant and I believe that we should
19 have public housing with rent, rent that is maxed at 20% of your income.
20 Right. Who wants to pay 20% of their income only on rent, right? You
21 can afford so many things. And under capitalism, you cannot have that
22 because these landlords, they're never satisfied with their profits, never.
23 Only socialism can bring us housing for everyone. Dignified housing
24 repairs for everyone. So -- and how do we get socialism? The same way

1 that you have all organized to make the possibility of a zero% increase a
2 reality. So we can do it. Thank you.

3 Ms. Ruiz: So likewise, I'm here to speak to the tenants, the individuals who organize
4 every day, the ones who show up, the ones who live with the mold, live
5 with the rats, live with the cold water, the no heat in the winter, right, the
6 individuals who endure and suffer. We've seen forms of this body
7 consistently, right? De Blasio, we had a rent freeze. After de Blasio, we
8 saw at least 26% increases on two-year leases, 26% since 2017, 2018.
9 Shame. Disgusting. The only time we got a concession was when there
10 was a global pandemic, right? And the grace is given to the landlords.
11 The grace is given to the owners. But when we can't afford rent, when we
12 can't afford to feed ourselves, to sustain ourselves, to live that dignified
13 life that we're supposed to, there's no grace given on to us. There's never
14 any concessions given on to those who are hungry. Those who need to
15 sustain themselves. I was born and raised in the South Bronx, born in
16 Lincoln Hospital, a block away from here. Lived in NYCHA, lived in rent
17 stabilized, currently live in rent stabilized. And I'm not expecting for the
18 manifestation of this board to change in the next eight years and to then
19 say, you know what, here's another 12% increase, right? So whatever
20 concessions they give us now, whatever myth they say that landlords
21 cannot afford to maintain these buildings is a disgusting lie. It shouldn't
22 be possible that within 26%, we still have mold in our apartments. We
23 still have heat. We're still missing heat. There is no hot water. We don't
24 have the conditions we want to live that dignified life. And like Mr.
25 Easton said, if you cannot afford to own the tenants' building, then you

1 should not own the building at all. The individuals who have roots in
2 these communities, individuals who have been there for 20, 30 years, since
3 family members come in and out of these buildings should be owning the
4 buildings. It makes no sense that my grandmother's been living in the
5 same apartment for the last 30 years. And she herself is now concerned
6 about rent rising because the management company changed, right? You
7 walk all along the Grand Concourse, there are the same owners giving the
8 same bullshit conditions, the same mold, the same roaches. It's disgusting.
9 And the only way we can reform that is by taking ownership of our
10 buildings. Not only should we ask for a freeze, that's the bottom line. A
11 rollback really is what we should be asking for. But moving, moving
12 beyond a rollback, tenants should own the units in which the roots they
13 have cemented in, not the landlords.

14 Ms. Mitchell: I will now welcome Mehjab Chowdhury, D. Patricia Jewett, and Diana
15 Finch.

16 Mr. Chowdhury: Hi everyone, I'm Mehjab. And I wanted to talk about the conditions of
17 living in the Bronx, right? All the working class people know what it's
18 like to live in the most exploited county in the entire country, right? One
19 in three people in the Bronx, as my comrades have said, pay more than
20 50% of their income in rent. And what does that actually get us, right? It
21 gets us buildings that are so old that they're burning down every year.
22 Last year, there were 27 fires. The year before, it was 16. And the year
23 prior, it's 12, right? Every year, it gets worse. Every year, it gets worse.
24 Our people are dying, okay? Our children are breathing in smoke, and our
25 homes are collapsing, right? I grew up in an apartment in Norwood where

1 the landlord wouldn't fix the tiles. There were mold within the wall, and I
2 was breathing that in growing up, right? My father's hard-earned money
3 paid for that. Was that worth that money that he paid, 50% of his income?
4 It was not, right? The greed of a parasitic owner class is robbing us of our
5 wealth. And only a socialist alternative can create solutions to problems
6 created by capitalist greed, right? We're human beings. We deserve
7 homes that are safe, affordable, and dignified, okay? And let me tell you
8 something interesting. There's a law called the Fair Housing Amendment,
9 right? It bans the federal government from funding new public housing.
10 Can you believe that we have laws that ban us from creating new public
11 housing? That is insane, right? We need to build new dignified public
12 housing that are not for profit. They don't line the pockets of landlords,
13 okay? And we should not bring more than 20% of our income in rent.
14 That is, like, you know, it's possible. Other countries are able to do this.
15 Why can't we do it, right? Housing is a human right, okay? Housing is a
16 human right, okay? Not a commodity to be traded. We shouldn't be
17 increasing the rent. We should make sure that we're building new
18 housing, okay? Rent rollback, new public housing, we should own
19 everything, not the capitalist class.

20 Ms. Mitchell: D. Patricia Jewett, and then Diana Finch.

21 Ms. Jewett: It's like walking in the stairwell. Alright. Good evening, everyone. My
22 name is Patricia Jewett, and I am a CASA leader. I come here every year.
23 And I need for you guys to understand, I'm not special. We are all
24 suffering. We all have to make judgments as to what bill we're going to
25 pay. I have been living in the same building for damn near 50 years. And

1 for most of the time, the landlord has been trying to evict me. And not
2 because I don't pay my rent, because I pay the rent. But the idea is that if
3 they can push me out, they can double what they get in. But what's so
4 disgusting is that landlords know how to make money. I don't know about
5 these little guys that say they don't know shit. They need to talk to the big
6 owners because the landlords know how to make money. Every time they
7 do some kind of re-- renovation, who pays? We pay. Do they ask us what
8 we need? Hell no. And do they give us quality? Hell no. I had a massive
9 renovation in 2017. The numbers are falling off the building. They put in
10 an intercom system that the first good rain, it stopped working. So from
11 2017 to now, that intercom system that they put in that was brand new,
12 that was part of that massive renovation, ain't work-- working worth a
13 damn. But to add insult to injury, my rent went up \$300 a month. 55
14 units, went up \$300 a month. You do the math. That's a lot of freaking
15 money. We can't eat chicken. We got to eat soup. I have a household of
16 five, three generations. And at night I have to worry, is there going to be
17 an eviction notice on my door? And it ain't because I don't owe rent. It's
18 because they're always trying to figure out a way to put out the tenants that
19 have been there, that they built their building off, they want us out so they
20 can get new blood in. It is disgusting to know that a one-bedroom
21 apartment is \$2,400 a rent-- a month rent. That's disgusting. We built this
22 city, and the city is crapping on us. 32 years I work. I'm a disabled senior
23 with a disabled dependent. A household of three generations, and we can't
24 afford to eat. So when you go home tonight, and you're having what

1 you're having, know that we ain't having. Fight, fight, fight. Housing is a
2 human right.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

4 Ms. Jewett: Fight, fight, fight.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Diana Finch, and then Edward McKoy.

6 Ms. Finch: Hello, my name's Diana Finch. I'm a Bronx rep in the Union of Pinnacle
7 tenants. I live in a non-bankruptcy building still owned by Pinnacle near
8 Pelham Parkway and Bronx Park East. In 2000, I moved in to a ninth-
9 floor apartment in an 11-story Mitchell-Lama building, two blocks from
10 the Botanical Garden, with views all the way to the World Trade Center.
11 It's concrete and fire-resistant, with tenants who are public school
12 teachers, bus drivers, construction workers, carpenters, electricians,
13 nurses, cops, firefighters, airline stewards, local coffee shop and restaurant
14 owners, and generations of families who've lived there since it opened in
15 1962. A few years after I moved in Pinnacle run by a rich real estate
16 manipulator, bought the building and immediately enacted a rollback. Not
17 unstabilized rents, but on maintenance. Pinnacle deliberately let our
18 building and more than 100 others across four boroughs slide into
19 disrepair. Now, roofs leak, elevators and boilers break down, ceilings fall,
20 and repairs are just reluctant patch-up jobs by understaffed, unqualified
21 workers. Without upkeep, infrastructure has aged to where we need city
22 and state agencies to subsidize replacement. Neither landlords nor tenants
23 can afford it. Landlords complain rent-stabilized income doesn't cover
24 costs when those costs have soared because they made the choice to skimp
25 on maintenance while rents rose for decades. My landlord does not live in

1 the Bronx or even in New York City, but on Long Island. He does not
2 invest his wealth in the Bronx, in New York City, or even in the U.S., but
3 in a foreign country on the Tel Aviv bond market. Landlords like mine
4 treat our homes as sources for their personal investment funds, even while
5 they default on multi-million dollar mortgages, get bailed out by Freddie
6 Mac, and rescued by narrow, protective bankruptcy laws. We call on the
7 Rent Guidelines Board to stand for tenants, roll back our rents, and fix this
8 system. Thank you.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Edward McKoy, and then Brenda Irizarry, and Graciela
10 Torres. Is Edward here? Great. Thank you.

11 Mr. McKoy: Good evening, everyone. I believe that if landlords were subject to
12 forensic audits, it would show that the rents currently charged more than
13 cover their maintenance costs. What the problem is, is that landlords want
14 rents to totally cover their mortgage, mortgage costs as well, which allows
15 them to quasi-own properties that they otherwise couldn't afford. If that
16 was found to be the case, then they should be ineligible for the mortgage
17 interest deduction privileges, and as a result, the request for such large and
18 frequent rent increases may disappear. There needs to be more landlords
19 with properties that they can afford in lieu of landlords with properties that
20 they cannot afford. Maybe one property, one landlord, five properties,
21 five landlords. Cost increases affect everyone, but we can't go to our
22 employer and ask for a raise to offset every increase. We can't go to
23 Social Security and ask for a raise to offset said increases. It costs some of
24 us hundreds of dollars weekly, monthly, just to get to work. Landlords get
25 to write everything off. No one goes to work for free. Landlords need to

1 get up off our backs, take their knees off our necks, and their hands out
2 our pockets. Guys, get a real job and pay your own way. And I believe
3 this mayor is better described as a redistributionist. Thank you.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Brenda Irizarry and then Graciela Torres.

5 Ms. Irizarry: Good evening. My name is Brenda Irizarry, and I am a member of CASA,
6 Our Bronx, Met Council, and Tenants and Neighbors. I live at 3215
7 Bainbridge Avenue in the Bronx since 1982. My landlord is Jomel
8 Holding Corp. I am urging the Board for a rent freeze on one and two-
9 year leases. Since 2022, RGB raised rents totaling 12%. Landlords
10 continue to make a profit while many buildings are in disrepair. As a
11 consequence, tenants suffer, compounded with high rents. As a rent-
12 stabilized tenant living on a fixed income, a rent freeze would allow me to
13 continue my lifestyle without cutting back. In closing, many tenants
14 continue to struggle with inflation and the cost of living in NYC, as well
15 as federal cuts to safety net programs. A rent freeze on one and two-year
16 leases would give tenants much-needed relief and allow them to remain in
17 their homes. Therefore, I appeal to the board to vote a rent freeze on all
18 leases. On a final note, I request that RGB commission annual studies on
19 landlords' profits and tenants' budgets, the studies would bring about a
20 fairer outcome for tenants. Thank you.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Graciela Torres, and then we'll hear from Marcella Lopez,
22 and Aleathia Brown.

23 Ms. Torres: Good evening, members of the Rent Guidelines Board. My name is
24 Graciela Torres. I am a rent-stabilized tenant from the Bronx, and I am
25 speaking today on my own behalf. I'm also speaking as an advocate. I

1 work for seniors and tenants on a daily basis. I see how rent increases
2 affect real people, not just the numbers on a paper. I am asking this Board
3 to vote for a rent rollback. I understand that that, that may sound like a big
4 ask, but I want to be very honest. For many tenants, the rent is already too
5 high. Freezing an unaffordable rent still leaves rent unaffordable. At the
6 same time, I am asking for a realistic first step. If the Board is not
7 prepared to vote for a rollback, then at the very least, please vote for a real
8 rent freeze. No increase, no 2%, no 4%, a full freeze. Tenants are tired.
9 Se-- seniors are scared. Disabled tenants are overwhelmed. Working
10 families are doing everything they can and still the rent keeps going up.
11 For many people, even a small increase is not small. It means falling
12 behind. It means choosing between rent, food, medicine, transportation,
13 and basic needs. The, the board is considering increases up to 2%, 4%,
14 6%, I even heard. Those numbers may look small on paper, but for a
15 tenant already living paycheck to paycheck, that increase becomes another
16 burden on top of everything else that they're going through. I also want to
17 say this clearly. Tenants are not always getting better services for their
18 higher rent. Many tenants are still dealing with repairs, mold, heat and hot
19 water problems, elevator issues, unsafe conditions, and landlords doing
20 only the minimum. Some of them don't even answer the phone. If rents
21 keep going up, tenants should be seeing better housing conditions. But
22 that is not what we are seeing. I'm not here to attack anyone. I'm here to
23 ask for fairness, dignity, and common sense. A rollback would give
24 tenants real relief. A freeze would at least stop the bleeding. But another
25 increase will push more people closer to arrears, housing court,

1 displacement, and homelessness. Please listen to the tenants. Please vote
2 for a rent rollback. And if you will not take that step yet, please take the
3 first realistic step and vote for a rent freeze. The rent is too high and
4 Bronx tenants need relief now. Thank you.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Marcelo Lopez and then Aleathia Brown.

6 Mr. Lopez: Good evening, everyone. My name is Marcelo Lopez. I'm a member of
7 the Democratic Socialists of America. I am the president of the Unity
8 Democratic Club. I'm an organizer of the tenants in my building, and I am
9 a lifelong rent-stabilized tenant. See, there's a lot of anger in here, as we
10 can tell, and I think it's very justified. I am here in front of you as many as
11 part of my annual humiliation ritual, one where we all sit here and beg of
12 you to please keep a roof over our heads where we tell you about buildings
13 that are full of rats and roaches, ceilings that are falling down, and heat
14 and hot water that has not been felt since the last time the Knicks went to
15 the finals. So we are all living through a pretty rough economy, and we've
16 all had to make cutbacks. But landlords have been very clear to us that
17 any impact must be absorbed by the tenants and exclusively by the
18 tenants. See, they have been warning us that the Bronx burned because
19 they did not make enough money. And let us think about that for a
20 second. We want no rats. They are okay with us dying, if that means re--
21 recuperating funds. They pay tens of thousands of dollars to different
22 lobbying groups that will go promote false information on little TikToks
23 and pay themselves a million dollars for it. But they have nothing to say,
24 as many people have mentioned, about Signature Bank or about Pinnacle
25 Realty, who put bets, bets on the fact that they could displace people faster

1 than the law would be able to catch up with them. That was their bet.
2 And they expect that the poorest people, like the ones that are here, pay for
3 every single dime. Now, your mandate today is -- sorry, your mandate as
4 a board is that of raising rents or freezing them or rolling them back. But
5 the problem is there is nothing your mandate can do to actually impact the
6 housing crisis. You must freeze the rent because there is no positive effect
7 to raising it. There is not going to be a magical increase that people will
8 just be able to pay more and it'll fix all the repairs that were ignored for
9 decades. None of that is possible. We are asking you to freeze your rent
10 because it, it is what is correct to be able to maintain people in their
11 homes. I ask of you, on top of that, that you take your position as the
12 board, take all of the eyes that are finally on this process and listening to
13 you and looking at you, and use it to give a mandate to the legislature, to
14 the people who can actually enact a change to better our living situation.
15 But I also -- but mostly we are asking of you to freeze the damn rent.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Aleathia Brown.

17 Ms. Brown: I'm Aleathia Brown.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Aleathia.

19 Ms. Brown: So, I am here today on, on another note that I have not heard being spoken
20 about today. I'm not asking about freezing and rollbacks in the technical
21 terms. I'm asking to reconstruct and reset your buttons because none of
22 this is working. There's a system that's being built and it's not like a
23 hurricane that you can't change what's happening in those conditions.
24 These are man-made things built that are really not to benefit humanity or
25 quality of life. So, if there is anything to be asked is to restructure

1 everything. You have economists, you have educators, you have people
2 who go to school for the science of how economy and communities and
3 infrastructures work. And these intelligent people are not being put to
4 good use if this is what you call a system. The system that is broken is
5 really designed only for those in power, not for the vulnerable. And it's
6 really time for us to really unite on two fronts to make it more -- make
7 more sense. I have lived in an apartment for 29 years in a private house.
8 Now, because this landlord could get more by having someone else, I had
9 a ceiling fall over my toilet seconds before I moved from it. Then the next
10 year had the sink -- the ceiling over the tub fall inches away from me as
11 I'm stepping out of the tub the next summer. I then had the ceiling in my
12 living room fall and it looked like a, a, a powder fest with all of the dust
13 and debris. All these things he didn't want to fix because he knew if he
14 made my living conditions horrible, I would be forced to leave. Then he
15 tells me he sold the building and as I'm on my way out, moving my things
16 to a storage unit, supposedly to a new apartment that was going to take
17 another month to happen, I then find out the apartment fell through. I'm
18 homeless and he never sold the building. And this was because he wanted
19 to get more money for the apartment. The system is so broken that people
20 go out of their way to break tenants because they can get more money.
21 Don't do what you can because you can. Do what you should because you
22 will see on your last days on this planet the deeds you did or did not do in
23 silence will come full circle. We are human on both sides of the table and
24 we need to reconstruct, not put rollbacks because none of the rents are
25 affordable. I'm an artist, I give to community every day in different things

1 I do in the arts. I'm a healer. I'm always doing things to make life better
2 for the quality of people that come around me on either side of the aisle. I
3 grew up as a community-based person. It's human first, not money first.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, I'll welcome Marcello Bencivenni, Joshua Santiago,
5 and Lauren Wolf.

6 Ms. Bencivenni: Good evening. My name is Marcella Bencivenni and I am a professor of
7 history here at Hostos. And I am also a rent-stabilized tenant in Crown
8 Heights in Brooklyn. I'm here today, like many before me, to ask you to
9 freeze the rent and help alleviate the affordability crisis that is impacting
10 negatively on too many of us at CUNY and in the city. I want to speak
11 first on behalf of the students I serve. For too many of them, housing
12 insecurity is a real nightmare that impacts not only their, their day-to-day
13 living and well-being, but also their academic success. When my students
14 stop attending classes, most often it is because they have lost their home or
15 because they must attend the court hearings to fight evictions. A recent
16 survey found that 30% of CUNY students face housing insecurity. 20%
17 say that they were unable to pay or had underpaid rent and 6% reported
18 being homeless at some point last year. That is 8,000 young men and
19 women who end up on the streets and cannot complete their studies.
20 Many also live in conditions, as we have heard, that are absolutely
21 unacceptable for a city that prides itself on being one of the richest in the
22 richest nation in the world. CUNY provides dedicated emergency grants,
23 campus resource centers like CUNY Cares and Single Stop and
24 specialized housing partnership to help the most vulnerable students. But
25 it should not be CUNY's responsibility to fix the housing crisis. This is a

1 city's crisis. And it's not just the CUNY students who are suffering.
2 While we lack comparable data on the housing situation of full-time staff
3 and faculty, we all know just how difficult it is to live and raise a family in
4 New York City. Despite the raises in the last contract, the CUNY salaries
5 haven't kept up with housing prices, inflation and other increasing living
6 costs. As a full professor, I am still unable to buy an apartment. And I
7 can only afford to leave and raise my son here because my husband lived
8 in a rent-stabilized apartment when we got married. And if I, a full
9 professor, cannot still fulfill the life I thought I would have when I first
10 entered academia 25 years ago, imagine how hard it is for our part-time
11 students, adjuncts, CLIP and CUNY Start instructors and staff at CUNY
12 who work at a much lower salary level and sometimes without health or
13 pension benefits. I thank you for your time. And as the time comes on
14 June 25th, please vote to freeze the rent.

15 Inj. Mitchell: Thank you. Joshua Santiago.

16 Mr. Santiago: My name is Joshua Santiago and I'm simply here to share my experience.
17 I am a multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and private music teacher. I am a
18 lifelong Bronxite, Bronx-- Bronxite born and raised, nearly completely
19 educated in North Central, save for Hunter College. But nevertheless, a
20 Bronx science graduate and current grad student at Lehman, I've marched
21 the Yankees and Giants ticker tape parades back in 2010 and 2012 when
22 they won their respective games in the All-City High School Marching
23 Band. And hopefully I'll get to watch the All-City High School marching
24 band, watch -- march the Knicks ticker-tape parade when they win the
25 finals. And I'm just here to share my struggle upholding my livelihood

1 after high school. In 2015 I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia, depression
2 and anxiety. In 2022, I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and since
3 then I've struggled to maintain my livelihood while also trying to struggle
4 to maintain work with these conditions. I have not been able to qualify for
5 public assistance for unions or any sort of disability benefits and in my
6 years working, I've averaged less than \$30,000 per year. I stand before
7 you representing the parallels between mental and physical illness, the job
8 market bottleneck, companies inflation of false advertising vacancies for
9 tax breaks, the rise of AI companies replacing creativity and em-- and
10 employment, the remaining millennial population still living at home with
11 their parents and ultimately the inability of mobility due to low income.
12 As I am currently an organizing member of the Bronx and defending
13 tenant rights of our immigrants and of our neighbors, I am continuing to
14 serve the Bronx and as assisting my mother with her own eviction case.
15 By the way I have to speak a little bit about my mother because she is a
16 housing warrior. She has advocated with the Bronx Northwest
17 Community and Clergy Coalition to get the housing built on Creston
18 Avenue back, back way when. She has served this city and the state as an
19 employee of the DMV, which she is currently suffering from
20 fibromyalgia, sciatica, depression, anxiety and she has recently had hips
21 surgery who is -- by thank goodness the mayor's office is helping us with
22 her, with her eviction case. But I am standing here again because like I
23 said, to live in this city is to serve in the city and it would be a shame to
24 continue to push our neighbors further up out of the city and into the --
25 and into Yonkers. I'm here to testify as someone who has been applying

1 for housing inside and outside of the city for over eight years and has been
2 struggling to find a place of my own who do the logistics of my mother's
3 section 8. I'm technically not even supposed to be there, so, I can't say I
4 live with my mother on paperwork. Without my mother I would
5 technically be homeless. I am even allowed to purchase my own car
6 before I can even have an apartment here in the city.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Joshua.

8 Mr. Santiago: So I would not like the rent to climb any higher before either being left
9 homeless or evicted in this city especially because of these racist, sexist,
10 ableist and ultimately classist home distribution practices. I'm not asking
11 for help, I'm asking for credence. Thank you very much.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Lauren Wolf?

13 Ms. Wolf: Good evening. My name is Lauren Wolf, Bronx and Hostos Action
14 Committee and the People's Pantry. I am here because a rent freeze means
15 nothing if NYCHA residents are still being displaced through repairs,
16 RADPAC conversions and decades of deliberate neglect. In the Bronx,
17 public housing remains overwhelming, black and brown families are
18 living through state manufactured instability. When elevators fail and
19 when heat is out, when mold spreads, when repairs take years, that's not
20 management. That's displacement by design. And when RADPAC hands
21 buildings to private managers who push people out through construction,
22 recertification and temporary relocation, that's just gentrification wearing a
23 NYCHA badge. A rent freeze cannot only protect private market tenants
24 while public housing tenants are left to fight privatization, redevelopment
25 and demoli-- demolition alone. If housing is a human right, then public

1 housing residents must be protected first, not last. NYCHA residents
2 deserve the same eviction protections, the same anti-harassment
3 enforcement, the same stability guarantees as every other renter in this
4 city. A rent freeze that ignores NYCHA is not a rent freeze, it's a loophole
5 big enough to push out entire communities. Tonight, I am asking you to
6 stand with all the working class people who have held this city together
7 through every crisis and reside in public housing. In the current city
8 budget discussion, please assign the funding not to Section 8, but instead
9 to protecting and preserving Section 8. Do not privatize, privatize a public
10 good. Do not demolish Chelsea Public Housing nor any other. Freeze
11 rents and freeze privatization too.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Rafaella Abeo, William Botchway, and William Alicea.

13 Ms. Abeo: Good evening, board members. My name is Raffaella Abeo and I'm a rent
14 stabilized tenant. I was born, raised and have lived in the same apartment
15 in the South Bronx my entire life for 35 years. Today, I'm asking the
16 Board to enact a rent freeze for both one-year and two-year leases. As
17 you've already heard in Queens and will continue to hear today, New
18 Yorkers are facing a serious affordability crisis. The cost of food,
19 transportation, child care and everyday necessities continue to rise while
20 wages have not kept pace. For many families, the situation is becoming
21 unstable -- unsustainable. As a former housing paralegal, I saw firsthand
22 how tenants were forced to choose between paying rent and putting food
23 on the table. No one should have to make that choice. A rent freeze
24 would provide much needed relief to working class New Yorkers
25 struggling to stay in their homes. I also want to point out that despite

1 years of rent increases, 12% in the last few years and not to mention
2 landlord profits have gone up 30% in the last three, many tenants have not
3 seen meaningful improvements to their living conditions. In my own
4 apartment, when my sink began pulling away from the wall and causing
5 tiles to fall, the repair was not a real repair at all. Maintenance workers
6 cut up broomsticks, spray painted them white and propped them up --
7 propped up the sink to keep it from collapsing. This is just one example of
8 so many faulty fixes. Stories like mine show that rent increases do not
9 always result in better housing condition for tenants. Landlords continue
10 to receive higher rents while many residents continue to live with
11 inadequate repairs and neglected maintenance. New Yorkers need relief.
12 We need stability. And we need the opportunity to remain in the
13 communities we have spent our lives building. I urge you to vote for a
14 rent freeze on both one year and two year leases. Thank you.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. William Botchway and then William Alicea.

16 Mr. Botchway: Good evening. My name is William Botchway. I'm a housing organizer
17 at the Bronx Defenders and myself, a rent stabilized tenant in Queens.
18 This matter is personal to me because without rent stabilization, I would
19 have no future in the city I was born in, raised in and love so deeply. With
20 rate -- with wages stagnant and the cost of living increasing on all fronts,
21 the people that I fight for every day cannot afford the burden of another
22 gratuitous rent increase. A couple of numerical reminders so we have a
23 sense of the scale we're operating with. NYC is about 8.5 million people.
24 About 70% of households are rentals. Somewhere between 40 to 50% of
25 rentals are rent stabilized, totaling over 1 million units. Those units house

1 about 2.5 million people, about third of the city's population. Every year
2 when it's time to vote on rent increases, the question is whether to
3 prioritize the long term financial stability of those 2.5 million people or to
4 prioritize the short term profits of a few property owners. The most
5 common argument against a rent freeze is that landlord costs are rising, so
6 without a rent increase, they would be unable to maintain their properties.
7 But the conditions many tenants live with tell a different story. Take a
8 look inside the apartments of our clients at the Bronx Defenders, and you
9 will see tenants living with leaking ceilings, crumbling walls, mold, pests,
10 and other serious housing code violations. Meanwhile, landlord profits
11 have increased substantially in recent years by 30% over the past three, yet
12 too often those gains are not reflected in building conditions or repairs.
13 Across the city, there are buildings right now, including down this street,
14 with hundreds of open violations, where tenants are still expected to hand
15 over rent every month, yet they continue to live in unsafe and unhealthy
16 conditions. Rent-stabilized tenants like myself, or Bronx Defenders
17 clients, should not be expected to shoulder the burden of guaranteeing
18 profits for property owners. Every investment carries risk, and housing
19 should not be treated as an exception. It is not the responsibility of the
20 Rent Guidelines Board, the city, nor 2.5 million rent-stabilized tenants to
21 ensure that property ownership is a profitable endeavor, but rather to
22 ensure New Yorkers can remain housed in the communities that they call
23 home. Tenants are in an affordability crisis, and after years of rent
24 increases being used to bail out bad landlord business practices, we are
25 demanding a rent freeze. Thank you.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

2 Mr. Alicea: My name is William Alicea. I'm co-chair of the Bronx Working Families
3 Party of the Bronx. I use any and all pronouns, and I'm a lifelong
4 Bronxite. And welcome to my neighborhood of Mott Haven. I'm not only
5 testifying on my behalf, but also for my disabled mother who is deaf and
6 mute. It is so hard to find truly affordable housing in New York City. The
7 wait lists are hundreds of people long for each building due to the urgent
8 need for housing that's been neglected for too long. My mother lives
9 down the block in dignified housing for once, and in one of the luxury
10 apartments gentrifying this neighborhood, unfortunately, that I grew up in.
11 Every single year she has -- ever since she's moved in, every single year,
12 her rent has increased year after year because of the very decisions of the
13 Rent Guidelines Board. Now, it's my understanding that some of you
14 folks weren't the employees then, but now it's the time to reverse some of
15 the actions of the corrupt Adams administration. A rent freeze is great,
16 but what we really need is a rent rollback. Rents have been increasing
17 nonstop since 2021 post-COVID lockdowns. A freeze now will only lock
18 in the egregious, unchecked cost of living crisis so many New Yorkers
19 that are already drowning. A rent rollback would help stabilize so many
20 families that already have to worry about rising utilities, food, childcare,
21 healthcare, and gas prices. Landlords made investments that were risky.
22 In other words, a gamble. The gamble failed. And you know what
23 happens to us working class folk when we make a bad gamble? We eat
24 the loss. But it sounds like to me, the landlords gambled and they want us
25 to bail them out. Why is it always privatize the gains, but socialize the

1 losses? Well, no more. The Bronx is standing up and won't take the bare
2 minimum. Rent rollback now.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I will now welcome Rafael Monroy-Rojas, Ana Hanesworth,
4 and Nancy Espino.

5 Mr. Monroy-Rojas: Good evening, members of the board. My name is Rafael Monroy-Rojas,
6 and I'm here as a member of both New York City DSA and CASA
7 Community Action for Safe Apartments. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant in
8 Inwood, but up until recently, I lived in the Bronx, and this is where my
9 community lives. As a member of this community, I can tell you that we
10 are all struggling. Myself, I was recently laid off, and much like so many
11 people in this community, we need a rent freeze. Do landlords also
12 struggle? No. This winter, my heating was very low because our boiler is
13 too old. During the winter storms, I slept with a space heater on and
14 several blankets despite having my heater on and I still woke up shivering
15 every day. Despite my neighbors also complaining about the cold, our
16 landlord refuses to install a new boiler and instead keeps the same one that
17 was out of service for repairs at least six times last year. Last month, my
18 stove was leaking carbon monoxide and the firefighters had to come. My
19 landlord then took a month to replace it, and when I finally got a different
20 stove, it was actually a stove older than the one I previously had. My
21 landlord is not using the money to fix the heating or the stove. My
22 landlord is not working hard for a raise. When I got a promotion on my
23 previous job, I had to actually work hard for it. If you're not doing a good
24 job, why should you be ge-- why should you be getting paid more?
25 Landlords are not working hard. They're not being responsive. They're

1 not fixing things in a timely manner. And they're not just not doing their
2 job well, they're using our money to gamble in even more buildings. I
3 don't think your average person should subsidize that lifestyle of waste
4 and greed. Landlords -- landlord profits keep increasing, but our
5 apartments aren't getting better. Our lives keep getting financially
6 insecure. So, freeze the rent, protect tenants and don't bail out landlords.
7 Board members, I ask you on all leases, no increases.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

9 Ms. Hanesworth: Good evening, everyone. I'm speaking to the tenants. My name is Ana,
10 and I'm a socialist and a social worker, and I'm a Bronx resident for most
11 of my life. We all know very well landlords are ignoring the mold in your
12 bathroom, they're ignoring the cabinets that are collapsing, the roaches and
13 ratchets in your apartment, the peeling paint, and the list can go on. We
14 know they are playing games and keeping you waiting for repairs that
15 never come. And where are the landlords meant to make these repairs?
16 They're at these hearings trying to testify that in order to provide bare
17 minimum living conditions, they need to raise your rent. They're not
18 doing the work, they're at these hearings wasting your time. They're
19 saying these repairs need to come out of your hard-earned paycheck. Why
20 should you have to foot the bill for these repairs to the point where you
21 will be priced out of your own apartment? While landlords continue to
22 make a profit over and over and over again, keeping in mind that we live
23 in a borough already where 50% of renters are rent burden, and landlords
24 are turning a profit on these undignified living conditions as it is. These
25 landlords own their property. They wanted it to make it their business to

1 play games with their lives. They chose to do that. Under this current
2 system, it is their obligation to make repairs, to renovate and provide
3 dignified living conditions. It is within your right to continue living in
4 your apartment at an affordable rate. If they truly are as broke as they say,
5 that they can't afford to make rent with-- that they can't afford to make
6 repairs without raising your rent substantially, then we should have the
7 right to seize the building. That's not their building anymore. If they truly
8 are as broke as they say, that's not their building anymore. We should not
9 have to beg and plead for the -- for these repairs from landlords who are
10 perfectly comfortable pretending that you don't exist, that you are just a
11 monthly rent check, that you are just numbers. What if we, working class
12 people, control the housing system, not greedy landlords? What if we
13 unleash the funds of the richest city in the richest country in the world to
14 build brand new public housing? I'm a socialist because this is the future I
15 want to see, dignified and affording housing for all. Thank you.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Nancy Espino.

17 Ms. Espino: I am Nancy, a tenant residing at 1188 Grand Concourse in the Bronx.
18 Within the last two years, tenants have made 400 311 complaints for lack
19 of heat and hot water. Here, tenants are forced to request rent reductions
20 from housing community renewal due to unlivable conditions at 1188
21 Grand Concourse. There are 96 apartments paying rent to this landlord.
22 Tenants have to make HCR request for unlivable conditions for rent
23 reductions because the landlord still refuses to make the building safe and
24 sanitary for us. The tenants have sought lawyers to start an HPD action in
25 housing court for the chronic conditions that plague 1988 Grand

1 Concourse. We are forced to endure no lock on the front door entrance,
2 allowing unknown persons entering at night, sleeping, using drugs, even
3 having sex in the hallways and steps. We are forced to walk on bird feces
4 every day due to bird, birds occupying and dropping feces from the
5 awning on the front entrance. The landlord told the tenant who was, who
6 was pooped on by a bird, this is natural and tell it to the judge, right?
7 There are no cameras in this building. Tenants' packages are stolen every
8 day and security does not ensure we receive our packages. The side
9 entrance is locked forcing seniors and the disabled to enter through the
10 main entrance, which has many steps. In the winter, we endure hardship
11 due to lack of heat in the building. And the landlord also overcharged
12 tenants' rent. The building I'm in is rent-stabilized. Regardless of the
13 status, some tenants, me included, are overpaying rent to the landlord. He
14 overcharged me \$300 for the last year and while enduring these conditions
15 mentioned. And finally, if a landlord is refusing to make the tenants
16 whole by -- while receiving rent from us, why should they be entitled to
17 rent increases? Landlords refusing to make buildings livable for tenants
18 should be exempt from increases. Thank you and appreciate your time,
19 but the Bronx is still burning.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, I will welcome up Sheila Reinhardt Ballard, Amir Zaid,
21 and Laura Lema.

22 Ms. Ballard: Good afternoon, distinguished officials, special guests, and all in
23 attendance. I'm the representative for Ms. Jean Hill, our current president
24 of the Tracey Towers Tenant Association and the 871 apartment residents
25 that reside at Tracey Towers. Rent Guidelines Board, why would you

1 elect to kick us when we are already down? The cost of every human
2 need is rising rapidly. Food, clothing, healthcare, gas, salaries and
3 pensions are being challenged, due to the increases -- the economic crisis,
4 we should be asking for a rent reduction as opposed to an increase. We
5 have serious questions regarding a 28% rent increase for the residents of
6 Tracey Towers. In regard to the moneys appropriated for building repairs,
7 there is no evidence of tangible or visible signs of the repairs. After
8 receiving \$10 million two years ago to be used for a complete overhaul of
9 elevators and building's pointing, where is the evidence that a new
10 elevator system has been installed or work even begun after stalling and
11 residents being trapped in non-functioning, unsightly elevators? The fire
12 department is on speed dial. We request accountability of \$10 million as
13 no work has been started to date. Why hot water continuously shut down
14 for repairs? Boiler problems not resolved. Moneys appropriated for
15 repairs but continue years of inconvenience, after multiple failed attempts,
16 walkway leading to the parking lot, still in disrepair. Driveway and exit
17 entrances are deplorable. This problem still persists, especially hard for
18 handicapped and senior citizens. Residents still unable to safely rent or
19 use their apartments and or community rooms for years because of
20 incessant continuous floods which damages tenant property, community
21 spaces and creates mold. Why? Security. After many years of dialogue
22 and warnings to management to place cameras around Tracey Towers
23 property to enhance safety, moneys given to correct this safety protection
24 issue but never done. Why? Failure to make repairs for which you were
25 given money is unconscionable. You're asking for a raise at a time when

1 the government has decimated the economy to an extent where we can
2 barely survive.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Sheila.

4 Mr. Zaid: Hello. My name is Amir Zaid. First, I wanna say thank you to Andre
5 Easton and his team for sending out the e-mail about this event because I
6 wouldn't have known about it if it wasn't for that. That's great. Thank you
7 for that. But that's also a shame that we don't -- normal citizens and
8 residents don't even know this is even happening right now, right? That's
9 number one. Most of you said what I wrote, so, I'm just gonna go off the
10 top. I worked in commercial banking for about 13 years and you don't
11 even have to have had any financial experience to know what's going on
12 with the economy. So, the fact that the board didn't even start this meeting
13 with, hey, no vote needs to happen because it's done, we're doing it. We're
14 at war, right? We're, we're at war. This whole straight and whole moves
15 thing, oil prices have been going up before that. So, the fact that this isn't
16 something that's just done because of the state of our nation and
17 geopolitics that's affecting it is, is sick. I don't envy you guys up there. I
18 would both love and hate to be in your position at the same time because
19 you have to balance the needs of landlords and the needs of tenants. But I
20 never understood why it's okay to raise the rent every year or two-year
21 lease. If people, people who are educating others on finances, right, are
22 telling you, don't put your money in the savings account, that doesn't have
23 a decent interest on it, invest it, find some investment products, find a
24 good investment package, put your money there. Why did they say that?
25 Because \$1,000, a dollar 10 years ago, five years ago is not gonna be

1 worth the same tomorrow. It's gonna be worth less. So, how does it make
2 sense that it's okay to raise the rent if a dollar yesterday is less tomorrow?
3 It's you guys' duty because you have the privilege of having that seat to
4 serve both sides of it and with great timing to make tough decisions that
5 may affect one side better than the -- more than the other in a negative and
6 positive way. This is the time to freeze the rent because it would be
7 immoral not to. Thank you.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next I'll welcome Laura Lema, Michelle Hemphill [phonetic]
9 and Leslie Enoffe [phonetic].

10 Ms. Lema: Good evening, members of the board. My name is Laura Lema. I'm a
11 rent-stabilized tenant. I live at 190 East 206th Street in the Bronx, that's in
12 Bedford Park. My landlord is Jammer Realty and we've lived in our home
13 for eight years. My husband and I are expecting our first baby in
14 November. We've been preparing for this chapter for some time by saving
15 up whatever we could. But what should be a joyful time when we're
16 confronted with the rising cost of groceries, utilities, insurance and basic
17 necessities, another rent increase will pull us back. Year after year our
18 rent increases, but the quality of our apartment doesn't. We're left
19 questioning whether we should even stay. We wonder if it's easier to just
20 move away like the thousands of working families that do every single
21 year. And this line of questioning hurts. But we're determined to stay if
22 we can. But why is it always so hard? We dream of raising our family
23 here in the Bronx, where I was born and raised. While some aspire to own
24 a house with a white picket fence, our apartment is our home. And we
25 dream of having New York City as our backyard, with access to public

1 transportation, world-class museums and steps away from the Bronx Zoo
2 and the New York Botanical Garden. But most importantly to stay close
3 with family and for work. We've planted our roots here in the Bronx. We
4 don't want to be uprooted. We need to freeze a rent on one and two year
5 leases so that families like mine can stay in New York. Thank you.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Michelle Hemphill, Leslie Enoffe or Enaff. Okay. George
7 Sotiroff.

8 Mr. Sotiroff: Good evening, good evening. My name is George Sotiroff and I've been
9 in the Bronx since 1981. Ladies and gentlemen of the Rent Guidelines
10 Board, I'm not a religious man, so I will not preach a sermon exhorting
11 you to do the right thing and vote for a one year or a two year-rent freeze.
12 What I'm going to do is develop a scenario in which I will assume that no
13 one here, including myself, has a moral compass. However, fear not. I
14 will not demand that you remove the convicted felon from the people's
15 house. I will not demand that you stop the illegal war in Iran. I will not
16 demand that you lift the disruptive tariffs imposed on our Canadian
17 cousins. It is not in your power to accomplish any of these goals. And
18 therefore, in these instances, I demand nothing. Instead, I will only restate
19 the obvious. Under the current Adams administration, rents rose 12% and
20 landlord's profits have risen 30%. Yet, landlords claim to be suffering
21 financial distress. If landlords are suffering distress, just imagine what the
22 rent burdened are suffering. Instead of helping the rent burden, we've
23 been plundering them. There's no excuse for high rents. Landlord greed
24 disrupts our economy. That is not abstract theology. Wealth tends to
25 insulate one against reality. One doesn't need an economics textbook to

1 see that the wealth gap continues to grow. Soon, we will have business
2 without buyers. Why? Under our system, billionaires buy politicians and
3 then rig the economy. Tariffs are causing inflation. The illegal war in
4 Iran is causing inflation. Inflation punishes the poor and punishing the
5 poor is very expensive. Ladies and gentlemen of the Rent Guidelines
6 Board, you cannot protect the system just because it makes you feel safe.
7 Here's the question. Is there anything wrong with shared prosperity? And
8 is there anything more practical? Think about it. So, now I am urging
9 only those of you who have no moral compass to vote for both a one year
10 and a two-year rent freeze, not because it's the right thing to do, but rather
11 because it's the smart thing to do.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Now I will welcome Joanne Grell, Brandon Andujar, and
13 Evelyn Rivera.

14 Ms. Grell: Good evening. My name is Joanne Grell and I am a CASA leader. And I
15 am a rent-stabilized tenant who has lived in the same apartment for the
16 past 24 years. It is the apartment where I raised two children as a single
17 mother. Both graduated college. Today, my daughter is pursuing a
18 medical degree and my son is a Sundance Award-winning filmmaker. But
19 none of those dreams would have been possible without an affordable
20 rent-stabilized home. And today, like most Bronx tenants, I am at the
21 brink of not being able to afford to stay in that apartment. And that is why
22 I am urging the Rent Guidelines Board to approve a rent freeze on one and
23 two-year leases. Every family in this city deserves the opportunity to
24 provide a safe, affordable home for their children so that they can dream
25 big and realize those dreams. Yet, more than half of the Bronx tenants are

1 severely rent-burdened. We have endured years of rising rents, rising food
2 prices, high utility bills, healthcare and insurance cost just to remain in the
3 city that we love. For the last four years, this board has repeatedly
4 considered landlord cost and has responded with historic rent increases.
5 Landlords have also benefited from city programs that provide funding to
6 help them repair their buildings, and often without requiring a repayment
7 of those funds. But who is considering the tenants and our rising cost?
8 Landlords often describe their buildings as distressed, a term designed to
9 garner the board's sympathy, and it's worked, especially in the last four
10 years, to the tune of 12% in profits. Yet, tenants continue to live with
11 broken elevators, inadequate heat and hot water, pest infestations, and
12 other unresolved conditions for years despite rent increases. And who
13 shows concern for distressed tenants and our families who struggle to stay
14 in our homes? In my own building, Con Edison recently posted a notice
15 stating that my landlord owed more than \$5,000 in unpaid utility bills. So,
16 we tenants have the right to ask, where is our rent money going? So, the
17 question before you is simple. Will this board finally protect the people it
18 was created to serve and protect and approve a rent freeze on one and two
19 year leases? I believe that this new and improved board truly will. Thank
20 you.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Brandon Andujar, and then Evelyn Rivera.

22 Mr. Andujar: It's Brandon Andujar.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

24 Mr. Andujar: Yeah. And I just wanted to speak to everybody here. I'm a Bronx
25 resident, I'm 22 years old. It's not very frequent where we see a lot of

1 young people at things like this, and that is by design. Our educational
2 system has taught us to not really care about anything. We are
3 consistently pushed to learn that the Bronx is the poorest congressional
4 district when in fact we are the richest culturally in America. Majority of
5 this country has been built off the backs of people in the Bronx. Over
6 25% of the entertainment industry are people born from the Bronx. Salsa
7 was brought here and pioneered here in the Bronx. Hip hop was brought
8 here and pioneered here in the Bronx. But we're here to talk about rent.
9 So, that's what we're gonna talk about. So, when it comes to the rent, I
10 think we need to start having a bit more of diverse perspectives when it
11 comes to that. I implore all of you to go into communities that are
12 dilapidated. There's all the evidence that there is online to show it. I
13 personally go around New York City where I show everything that is
14 going on. There's videos, everything is there. What is the point of us
15 having social media? Is it for us to not learn and see the struggles of other
16 people so we can better the world? It's though is that people don't check
17 and see these things. Also, the lack of diversity on the board speaks for
18 itself, granted. So, there cannot be diverse perspectives. We need more
19 diversity in these systems in order for people to learn and listen and also
20 for people to grow. We need to freeze the rent. We need to actually lower
21 the rent actually instead of inflating it. It's important and imperative that
22 we actually listen into the voices of the people here because if we don't
23 listen to the voices of the people that are here, our world is going to go to
24 shit. Point blank, period. I want to be able to have a family here in New
25 York, but reality is not going to be the case right now because I won't be

1 able to have a family in New York if we continue to go down this line.
2 We won't. It's not fair. My older brother just moved out of the house and
3 he was 30 years old. 30? You're just now moving out of your mother's
4 house at 30? That's insane. Where's the American dream? Where's the
5 values that this country is built off of? We need to uplift and uphold that
6 and I implore you to look at me because most of the time that y'all were
7 speaking up here, people are looking at their phones, writing something
8 down. These are the voices you need to hear because how else will you
9 learn? Just because you have ears does not mean you're actually listening.
10 You have to actively engage with the people and actually respond. And I
11 have seen some of you do that, so I appreciate that. But also at the same
12 time, you can do that and also be lying to us. So, I implore you to listen,
13 and that's all I have to say. Thank you.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Evelyn Rivera. Then we'll have Jacqueline Altamirano Marin
15 and Benuamin Nortey. Is, is Evelyn here? Perfect. Thank you, Evelyn.

16 Ms. Rivera: Good evening. I'm going to speak in Spanish because I can't speak
17 English well. The reason that I'm here is because there's constant abuse
18 against the tenants in the Bronx. I'm gonna -- I'm going to be for -- it's, it's
19 going to be a year with the landlord of my building. The landlord owes
20 me money. He says I'm the one who owes him money. I've never seen
21 the landlord's face. But he has his people who work there as supers or
22 porters who come and they show their face for him once and then they
23 walk away. Nobody wants to do anything. Sometimes the water doesn't
24 come up. It's -- in the time that I have to work, in that time there's, there's
25 no water, there's not a good elevator, there's a building with drugs and

1 prostitution. So, I'm the president of the tenants' association, trying to fix
2 this building because us poor people have to live in it. We're humans. We
3 need the elevator to go up and down. We have people who are in
4 wheelchairs. And the landlord doesn't show his face when we don't have
5 hot water or when we don't have water at all. He has a super and a porter
6 who don't even clean up the front of the building. But we have to put up
7 with all of this because we're renters. But nobody cares. I care, not only
8 for the building but for the community. We're humans. Rats come out.
9 My husband was bitten by mice. And still I'm in a case where -- I'm still
10 in the case and they have to only come and do repairs when they feel like
11 it. I have a toilet that's supposed to have been repaired and a week has
12 gone by and nobody showed up. How, how can us -- how can we in the
13 Bronx have all these buildings in the same condition and people abusing
14 us? Why are they sending me letters all the time saying that the landlord
15 has fixed the buil-- apartment when he hasn't even started? Every day we
16 receive two or three letters saying that the landlord is saying that he's, he's
17 made repairs. I have to call 311 to find out who sent me the letters
18 because I don't know where they're coming from. It's the city but
19 sometimes the addresses don't even match up.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Evelyn.

21 Ms. Rivera: Thank you very much for listening to me.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Next, I'll welcome up Jacqueline Altamirano Marin, Benuamin Nortey,
23 and Habiha Alcindor.

24 Ms. Marin: Hi, rent board. Sorry, I'm going to figure out how to make this a little
25 higher. Okay, I think that will work. Thank you. Yeah, that's perfect.

1 Thank you so much. Hi, folks. My name is Jacqueline Altamirano Marin
2 and I'm a resident in a rent-stabilized apartment in the South Bronx. And
3 I'm here today to urge you to please freeze the rent. You can walk down
4 any street in the Bronx and see and hear the thriving community and
5 amazing people that make up this borough. That is why it saddens me so
6 much when I hear my neighbor say they are leaving the Bronx because
7 they can't afford to stay in their apartment because of rising rents. I am
8 seeing people having to choose whether to pay rent or buy groceries or
9 shoes for their kids or provide for tias, tios, primos, or abuelitos, or take
10 care of the dozens of expenses associated with living in one of the most
11 expensive cities in the world. We are also paying exorbitant rents for
12 subpar housing. The median household income in the South Bronx is
13 approximately \$35,000. The median average rent in the Bronx spans from
14 \$26,000 to \$40,000 annually. We are tired of poverty being so expensive.
15 More than 40% of my income goes to rent. I have lived in dilapidated and
16 grossly expensive apartments here in the Bronx. I have experienced
17 having no running water in the middle of sweltering July day when my
18 neighbors and I had to go down to the water hydrant to get pots of water
19 so we would have access that day, or wearing my winter jacket indoors
20 and keeping the oven door open because I had no heat in November.
21 Broken elevators causing my elderly neighbors to hike up six flights of
22 stairs, mold, rats, trash heaps. It just proves that large landlords see us as
23 passive income and their tenants as just numbers unworthy of clean water,
24 warm apartments, and a clean, safe space to call home. We feel alone in
25 the Bronx. We rely on each other to get by, but I want more from my city

1 and from my government. I am tired of surviving. I want to thrive. We
2 are drowning trying to keep afloat in what feels like the open sea. At this
3 time, please throw off a lifeline and freeze our rent.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Benuamin Nortey, Habiha Alcindor. Yes, go ahead.
5 Welcome.

6 Mr. Nortey: Good evening, everyone. My name is Ben Nortey. I was born and raised
7 here in the Bronx. I've seen many sides of the Bronx. I grew up on
8 DeKalb and Gun Hill up in Norwood. I was one of the lucky kids to get a
9 scholarship to go to Riverdale Country School in Riverdale. Went to the
10 West Coast for college, and, you know, I loved New York so bad that I
11 had to come back to my home borough here in the Bronx. And now I live
12 just down the street on Sheridan Avenue, right next to Family Court. So, I
13 recently lost my job in the, you know, wave of layoffs that hit the tech and
14 creative industries this past few months. As a 1099 worker, I got no
15 severance. I have no health care benefits. I'm mounting bills, credit card
16 debts, student loans, and despite paying my taxes, you know, going to
17 college, being civically engaged and showing up for my community here,
18 you know, doing everything that a good citizen is supposed to do, I've not
19 been able to collect unemployment benefits, SNAP, EBT, anything. Right
20 now, I'm struggling to afford everything, rents, food for myself, for my
21 wonderful partner, for our Chihuahua, for our cats and fish. You know,
22 even getting a MetroCard or I guess an Omnicard now to go to a job
23 interview I can't even afford because, you know, trains are going up. You
24 know, I've applied to countless jobs since, you know, April, March, almost
25 1,000, I kid you not, and I've only gotten two job interviews and it feels

1 like screaming into a void when I, like, go on LinkedIn or any of these
2 freaking job sites. You know, and that's why I'm here tonight because
3 whether it's the job search or dealing with the powers that be on the board
4 or an office at the local, state, or federal level, I'm just done with
5 screaming into the void. I want help. I want to make our society better. I
6 want to work with my community all behind me to get this shit done. You
7 know, people have said the Bronx is one of the poorest congressional
8 districts in this country. Working people are being squeezed from every
9 direction because of asinine wars of aggression abroad and genocide.
10 Food costs are going up. Electricity is going up. Everything costs more
11 except our wages, and in my case, negative wages. At the same time,
12 many New Yorkers see elected officials like Richie Torres or Vanessa
13 Gibson who didn't even have the decency to show up here for all of our
14 constituents. They listen to exclusively landlords taking fat checks from
15 big real estate, wealthy donors while tenants are told that another rent
16 increase is reasonable along with increases with everything else
17 imaginable. Many of us are also watching families face displacement and
18 hardship here at home and abroad from ICE raids that terrorized
19 communities across the Bronx. A 17-year-old kid in my neighborhood
20 was assaulted by ICE even though he was a U.S. citizen. Puerto Rican?
21 Yeah, still U.S., you know.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Ben.

23 Mr. Nortey: Just one thing, just one thing. Housing should not be a privilege reserved
24 for those who can absorb endless increases and endless austerity for those
25 who literally have the power to decide who gets to live or die. I'm

1 sincerely, sincerely asking you guys to freeze the rent, you know, roll back
2 the rent, do whatever you can to help all of us. Everyone here we're
3 suffering.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Ben. Habiha Alcindor, then Barbara Lopez [phonetic], then
5 Nedelyn Helena Diaz.

6 Ms. Alcindor: My name is Habiha Alcindor, and I live in the Kingsbridge area. The
7 landlord who owned the building in 2017 when I first moved in, charged
8 reasonable rent. Even so, it was difficult to qualify to sign the lease
9 because I had to earn five times the rent. Then he sold the building to
10 Goldmont Realty. They immediately wanted me to pay them a new
11 security deposit. I had to search for my original lease to prove that I had
12 already paid the deposit. Goldmont Realty raised the rent, the maximum
13 amount allowed at every opportunity, and they also demand that tenants
14 make up the difference in their security deposit to match the current rent.
15 They charge a \$50 fee each month rent is late. And they have recently
16 implemented a policy where they report tenants who are late with their
17 rent to the credit bureau, ruining their credit -- tenant's credit. Adding
18 insult to injury, the previous landlord hired a man who came a few times a
19 week to clean the elevator, lobby and hallways. Now, no one cleans these
20 common areas. They are almost always filthy. Every few months,
21 someone gives the building a slight -- a, a light mopping which mostly just
22 smears the dirt around. I attempted to submit a complaint about the
23 unsanitary conditions, but the city doesn't accept input about these criteria.
24 They only had a field where I could complain that the elevator was dirty.

1 The elevator is dirty but, so is the whole building. That's pretty much all I
2 had to say. Everyone else has said a lot more.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

4 Ms. Helena-Diaz: Good evening, members of the Rent Guidelines Board. My name is
5 Nedelyn Helena-Diaz, and I am the co-chair of the New York City Youth
6 Action Board, which is an advocacy group who advocates for youth who
7 have experienced homelessness. I am also a former homeless youth. I
8 just graduated nursing school here at Hostos Community College this
9 month. And, I'm a CityFHEPS voucher holder. I'm here today to support
10 a rent freeze. I started school homeless and in a shelter. I couldn't pay my
11 rent not because -- I couldn't get my own apartment not because I was lazy
12 but because I couldn't afford to rent -- pay rent on my own. Then, when I
13 finally got a CityFHEPS voucher in the shelter the landlord took one
14 month renovating my apartment so that he could charge me the maximum
15 rent that my voucher covers, \$2,300 for a one bedroom, a rent that on my
16 own at this time I would not be able to afford. Meanwhile, I have
17 neighbors paying significantly less rent for larger apartments who have
18 been there for a longer time. It felt like the value of my voucher was
19 determined -- was used to determine my rent rather than the actual value
20 of the apartment. I did everything I was told to do. I went to school. I
21 work hard. I stay focused. I graduated nursing school and I'm now
22 studying for my NCLEX so I could begin my career as a registered nurse.
23 Yet, with every step forward it feels like New York pushes people like me
24 two steps back. How am I supposed to achieve the American dream? The
25 reality is that many young people are trapped in a system where they can't

1 afford to earn too little and they're afraid to earn too much because you
2 can lose your assistance that keeps us housed. If I earn too much, I risk
3 losing my voucher, but I can't stop working because I have educational
4 expenses, transportation costs and other necessities that are not covered by
5 public assistance. How are students, working families, and young adults
6 supposed to build savings, purchase homes, or invest in their futures when
7 rent continues to rise year after year substantially? Housing should be a
8 stepping stone to stability, not a lifelong struggle. For many of us, a rent
9 freeze is not about convenience. It's about survival. It's about having a
10 fair chance to get ahead. It's not about the cost of living. It's not fair that
11 the cost of living isn't equal to minimum wage or the average wage. How
12 is the average person supposed to get ahead? I'm asking the board to
13 consider people like me, young people working hard to contribute to the
14 city, pursuing education, building careers, and trying to achieve the
15 American dream.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Nedelyn.

17 Ms. Helena-Diaz: Thank you.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Next, I'll welcome up Barbara Lopez, Shanae Williams [phonetic], and
19 Miriam Keita. Okay. Barbara, Shanae or Miriam. Okay. Thank you.
20 Okay. I'll go to Emely Rodriguez , then Ana Galvez followed by Jamie
21 Gilliam.

22 Ms. Keita: Hello, everyone. My name's Miriam and I'm a member with Youth
23 Alliance for Housing. My family has moved all over New York City but
24 today, I want to tell you a story about my father and my uncle. My father
25 and my uncle emigrated together from Cote d'Ivoire in West Africa in

1 1987. My father lived in his car for a year and slept on couches before he
2 was able to afford enough money to put a roof over his head. My father
3 moved to Washington, D.C. in 2006 for a job opportunity and for a better
4 quality of life. He lived in D.C. up until his death in 2018. My father's
5 first ever apartment was in Harlem. This apartment was passed down to
6 my uncle who still lives there to this day. My uncle admitted to me
7 recently that he wasn't able to pay his rent anymore, and that he needed
8 my help to pay it. He has poured his heart into this city as a yellow cab
9 driver up until his retirement a year ago. I jumped at the opportunity to
10 help him pay his rent without hesitation. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention
11 that this Harlem building has horrible living conditions. No heat in the
12 winter, no AC in the summer, broken doors that put building tenants at
13 risk, and to top it all off, empty security desks constantly reminding
14 tenants of what should be there. Today, 72% of my uncle's social security
15 check goes towards keeping a roof over his head. 72%. Saying that
16 number out loud makes me sick to my stomach. My uncle is the only
17 surviving family member from Cote d'Ivoire in the United States. My
18 only connection left to my father. He came to this country for a better life,
19 for more opportunities. Just recently, he told me that when he had \$6,000
20 behind on rent, he would lie awake at night with the fear of getting evicted
21 looming over him. He now thinks of moving back to Cote d'Ivoire to start
22 from scratch. I do what I can to pay his rent every month, but that isn't
23 sustainable either. I, like many other New Yorkers, can barely afford to
24 pay my rent. So I ask you, Rent Guideline Board, can you imagine paying
25 1.5 times a New York City rent every month all on your own while living

1 pay check to pay check? Stop making New York City so unlivable,
2 financially prohibitive and unsustainable for its inhabitants. Roll back the
3 rent. Thank you.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

5 Ms. Rodriguez: My name is Emely Rodriguez, and I'm 24, and I'm a member leader with
6 Youth Alliance for Housing. I currently live in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, and
7 my family is from Williamsburg, Brooklyn. I'm born and raised there, and
8 I live in a rent-stabilized apartment owned by a nonprofit. I've watched
9 my neighborhood change drastically over the years and I feel angry. The
10 rent is too damn high and it's been too damn high for a while. The Rent
11 Guidelines Board has the power to stop the cultural genocide that started
12 decades ago in Williamsburg and continues on today with rent hikes,
13 displacement and gentrification of our neighborhood. If my family faces
14 more rent hikes, we will be another Dominican family displaced from
15 Williamsburg which is all we know. It's all I've ever known. And, I
16 deserve to remain in my neighborhood and my parents deserve to age with
17 dignity. What is the Rent Guidelines Board doing about this? Because
18 I've seen a whole lot of nothing. We know there is a dire affordability
19 crisis in this city. The rent is already too high. A rent freeze can stop
20 further harm, but in order to address and heal the harm that has already
21 been caused that people are currently experiencing every day, we need a
22 rent rollback. Thank you.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

24 Ms. Gilliam: Let's go, yeah. Okay. Hello, my name is Jamie Gilliam, and I'm a
25 member of the Youth Alliance for Housing. I'm here today because I'm a

1 Staten Island tenant and the same way the city government neglects to
2 pass tenant protections that actually apply to Staten Island tenants rather
3 than just on paper. The RGP has neglected to hold a hearing in our home.
4 Even though the data shows that we filed nearly 10,000 HPD complaints
5 last year and that nearly 60, that's six-zero% of Staten Island tenants are
6 rent burdened. Though, I live in Staten Island, I attend Lehman College
7 here which is why I chose to come here today with my organization. My -
8 - let's go. My family has lived in our current home for 10 years, 10
9 months and 1 week. I know this because we moved in on my 9th birthday.
10 If our rent was raised, we have no doubt that we would have to leave not
11 only the home I have spent more than half my life in but New York City
12 as a whole. And we don't know anybody in the rest of the state, so New
13 York entirely. I can no longer afford to go to Lehman with an out-of-state
14 tuition. I'm set up to start my social work major in the fall. But I would
15 have to drop out and apply to a new school and new state for the spring
16 semester. Each month, my family already gives the vast majority of our
17 money to rent, especially as our rent was raised by hundreds of dollars in
18 recent years. My sister and I save as much as we can so our disabled
19 senior mother with her fixed income and our brother with his surgical bills
20 and a pregnant partner do not have to. Meanwhile, we continue to, on
21 numerous occasions, be made to pay out-of-pocket to replace entire
22 appliances that came with the units. So, where exactly is our rent actually
23 going? Because it's not going to my housing and it's not even going to
24 New York City. My landlord lives in Florida. This is why, along with the

1 Utilize for Housing [phonetic], I am urging the board to vote for a rent
2 rollback. Thank you.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

4 Ms. Galvez: Good evening, everyone. My name is Ana Galvez, and I am a CASA
5 leader. And I'd like to introduce myself because I see many new faces.
6 I've been coming for many years, and actually I'm pretty hopeful, I have to
7 say. I'd like to begin by saying, I'd like to begin by saying that I received
8 an e-mail that surprised me a lot, from my daughter's school telling us that
9 they're going to give some sort of workshop to help us talk with children
10 at home. And you know what, I am actually going to attend this workshop
11 to tell them that I think she would control herself a little bit better if the
12 landlord actually made good on his repairs. Because of course, due to all
13 the mold in the apartment, we need those new walls. So, I will definitely
14 attend that. And we're here, again, because we're fighting for a rent freeze.
15 There's so many of us here that can no longer continue to pay this rent
16 increase. I'm a single mother, and I've been living in the same place for 10
17 years now. Let me tell you, I had as many as, as many as three jobs at the
18 same time. And it is true, I was able to make good on my rent for some
19 time and I made some money. And I also want something else, the fact
20 that my daughter when she was three, wasn't even able to recognize me
21 because she spent more time with a babysitter than with me and not with
22 her mother. When she finally grew up a bit and started getting older and
23 realized all of the issues we were facing, when she was around eight years
24 old, she started making bracelets so that she could send -- sell them at
25 school and we could make some money off of that. Now she's 14, and

1 guess what, she was given the work permit and she was so happy, she
2 showed up at home stating that she could finally work to help me pay the
3 rent. It is not fair for a 14-year-old girl to have to worry about making the
4 rent payment. And if she's not here today with me, it's because I don't
5 want her to see me cry, and I don't want to make her cry. I think we've
6 cried enough. I beg of you to be aware of this because landlords don't
7 suffer like we do. Thank you so much, and I truly hope that you do the
8 correct thing this time.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. And before we continue with the testimony, I just want to
10 remind everyone, if you want to speak, you do need to sign up and sign up
11 will be until 8:00. So, if you haven't yet signed up, please see the staff in
12 the lobby. Thank you. Alright, now I will welcome up, welcome up Iris
13 LaVergne, Samantha Fernandes, and Justin Liriano.

14 Ms. LaVergne: Sorry. I'm a little emotional just listening to her, because I can relate.
15 Good evening. My name is Iris LaVergne. I reside at 35 East Clarke
16 Place for over 30 -- 23 years. I just want to say I'm a CASA leader
17 myself. I'm here along with all my CASA leaders and members. I'm here
18 this evening to tell you why it's important for us to have a rent freeze. I've
19 been holding on to a rent stabilized apartment by the skin of my teeth,
20 literally. During these two decades, not only have I struggled to pay rent,
21 but I have experienced as well as my neighbors, no heat, no hot water and
22 mice. This is in the winter for 23 years, 23. Every holiday till this day
23 especially during COVID there was no elevator service for an eight-story
24 building, 72 long steps, okay? The eighth floor, up to the eighth floor
25 that's where I live. It was not until last year that after many calls to 311

1 and no action or delay in response from management, we at 35 East Clarke
2 Place decided to organize. Now, during my struggle, I have found myself
3 questioning what bills, and you've heard this, I was one of them, what bills
4 should I pay? Not only does this include the rent but it also included the
5 utilities. And I have to tell you, Con Ed, it's extremely crazy hot and I
6 know you know this. Okay. I also had to decide if I should pay rent
7 because I had medications to pay for, co-pays for health care visits for a
8 Type 1 diabetic person which is my son who's no longer here because he
9 can't help me to pay rent. He had to leave, okay, because he told me,
10 "Mommy, you're not going to struggle to pay rent and take care of me,"
11 okay? I have to say that the last rent freeze did help me tremendously.
12 Not only was I able to pay for both medications and co-pay at that time
13 but I was able to do a decent grocery. Now, lastly, my life to you, to some
14 of you and many -- all of you may be foreign but I dare you, if anything,
15 welcome you to walk in my shoes and tell me that you will not stand here
16 before all of you, okay, to tell me you will not demand a rent freeze for the
17 sake of simply surviving, as I am trying to do. Please consider, you're a
18 new -- you're new members, okay, many of you, consider it for not only
19 for me but all of us here and for many of the Bronx tenants, for many of
20 New York City residents. Thank you.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Samantha Fernandes, Justin Liriano, and then Eustace
22 Adinkwu.

23 Ms. Fernandes: Good evening. My name is Samantha and I'm an organizer with Youth
24 Alliance for Housing. I was born and raised in Central Queens. I've lived
25 at the Caroline Gardens Co-op for 21 years. Many of our families are old,

1 disabled and chronically ill. We are multi-generational. We have raised
2 our families here. People have passed away here. When I was a child, a
3 fire in 2011 displaced half our tenants and the following years enabled
4 financial mismanagement, resulting in foreclosure. Since 2012, we've had
5 366 HPD violations and 244 complaints. A few years ago, a new
6 management company came, and they actually have many buildings in the
7 Bronx and they are based in a Larchmont Westchester. We were very
8 hopeful that maybe we would be able to make installments to make our
9 building better and to figure this out. We have 96 units and they filed 49
10 evictions. Apartments were foreclosed, evicted and put to auction and
11 bought for as low as around \$35,000. In this economy when \$35,000 is
12 roughly a year's worth of rent, how can we afford to lose our homes in an
13 auction when we can be bought out by people who have this cash on hand,
14 when we can be bought out by management companies? Since this new
15 management company and in the last year we still have 118 violations and
16 have had hundreds for the past few years. And in the middle of living like
17 this, they chose to evict us. We are rent burdened and we are paying more
18 than one-third of our income on rent and maintenance. My parents are
19 fixed income and they are doing all that we can to stay housed. This is a
20 record year for people's burdened rent. I love my community. I love
21 Queens and I love my city. My neighbors and I will not be displaced. The
22 generations of families who weave our cultural fabric are being priced out.
23 We do not deserve to be evicted. And at the end of the day, we are
24 surviving in the middle of an affordability crisis and an eviction crisis
25 across the city. People did not bounce back after COVID. People did not

1 bounce back after Eric Adams' rent increases, after this entire year given
2 the national scale of things. The people who built this city who are still
3 here cannot afford a rent increase. I'm asking the board, who do you want
4 to live in this city? Who do you think has been moving into this city and
5 living in this city? Who do you think is displacing us? Did you just hear
6 the tenant who said that their 14-year-old is excited to work because
7 they're paying rent? How many of your children are working to pay rent?
8 How many of your children commit to the household bills? Because our
9 children deserve to stay in school, our children deserve to live in our city.
10 They should not be worried about paying the fucking rent. Are you
11 kidding me? Roll back the rent now. Roll back the rent now.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Justin Liriano.

13 Mr. Liriano: Okay. Good evening. My name is Justin Liriano and I am a member of
14 the Youth Alliance for Housing. I am a born and raised New Yorker
15 having lived throughout uptown Manhattan and the Bronx for most of my
16 life. Currently, I live in a rent stabilized apartment with my grandmother
17 in West Harlem. My grandmother as well as our neighbor in the
18 apartment right next to us have continued to deal with dangerous,
19 collapsing ceilings. This happening in spite of repeated warnings and
20 notice given to our landlord, met with silence, only until the damage had
21 already come to pass. Constant fluctuations in our heating security, water,
22 water coming in and out with little to no notice, an experience all too
23 familiar to my grandmother who's raised entire generations in that
24 apartment, nearly 40 years worth. Her experience is that of many New
25 Yorkers, begrudgingly -- begrudging acceptance of this being the way

1 things just are. Failure to uphold adequate support for repairs all while
2 their rents continue to rise as renters are forced to bear the front of repair
3 costs. However, that is not a reality that needs to remain the same. It is a
4 reality that our current administration must not only address but seek to
5 correct. The Adams administration brought upon a 12% increase during
6 their four-year tenure. It is not enough to demand a rent freeze. We must
7 demand more. New Yorkers are already struggling to stay in their homes
8 with each hike having -- with each hike we have faced, our conditions
9 have only decreased. This is why we must fight for a rent rollback. This
10 city has long since become too expensive for the many New Yorkers
11 living within rent-stabilized apartments. A freeze only pauses the problem
12 that has continued to get worse over time. We have the power to demand
13 more, to hold you, the Rent Guidelines Board, accountable to the nearly
14 2.5 million people living in rent-stabilized apartments. This is why I
15 organize with the Youth Alliance for Housing because I want to stay in the
16 city I love. The rent is too damn high and we need a rent rollback and we
17 need it now. We must protect people, not bricks. Thank you for listening.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, I will welcome Eustace Adinkwu, then Borough, then
19 Borough President, Vanessa L. Gibson, and then Mira Gupta.

20 Ms. Adinkwu: Hi, my name is Eustace Adinkwu. I'm also a member of Youth Housing
21 Alliance. I live in the Butler Houses of the Bronx with my parents,
22 siblings and grandmother. I've been living there for 14 years which is my
23 entire life and trust me, if you were in my shoes, I doubt you wouldn't stay
24 here. I hate knowing my parents are going to have to pay rent. When me
25 and my -- for example, when me and my parents as well my siblings had

1 to shower and bath, when we want hot water there's always going to be
2 cold water. I constantly struggle with this situation and also heat is barely
3 provided in the winter. We always be freezing our butts off and I'm
4 always sick of it. We need this rent to go down and honestly it's already
5 too much for us to handle. I hope you all understand the fact that this is
6 unfair and also unacceptable for people who have been living there their
7 whole life and can only hope for better. That means for everyone and
8 those who struggle and have the same problems as me. We need more
9 than a freeze, we deserve a rent rollback, and this is why I organize with
10 the Youth Alliance for Housing because me, my family, all New Yorkers
11 deserve to live in the city we love without continuing to suffer. Thank
12 you.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Eustace. Now we'll welcome Borough President, Vanessa L.
14 Gibson.

15 Ms. Gibson: Thank you. Thank you so much ladies and gentlemen and thank you to
16 the Rent Guidelines Board and all the residents and tenants that represent
17 our borough. I am thankful to be here and do apologize for the delay.
18 There's a lot going on tonight and certainly in the Bronx but to our chair
19 Chantella Mitchell and the members of RGB, thank you for convening
20 again once again in the Bronx making sure that Bronx tenants, and
21 landlords, and owners have an opportunity to testify here in the South
22 Bronx. We've all said this very collectively that access to safe and
23 affordable and quality housing is a fundamental right and the rent
24 stabilization system is one of the cornerstones of affordable housing in this
25 city. It is proven to be a lifeline for all the renters you see here, low

1 income, fixed income and middle income families. We must make sure
2 that they remain in their homes and we protect our neighborhoods. Over
3 the past several years, we have faced enormous challenges in the area of
4 housing here in the Bronx and the city. Since COVID-19, we've seen
5 nearly 18,000 residential evictions in the Bronx alone, that ain't right. And
6 I am one of the prime sponsors of the historic universal right to council
7 legislation. And so, I know the devastation that families have felt and
8 what they experience when they visit housing court. That's why I've been
9 a part of reforms to housing court. I've been a part of education and
10 outreach with all the advocacy groups here in the Bronx. And
11 unfortunately, we've seen a rise in evictions in Bronx housing court. In
12 addition, I think many know that we face an enormous amount of
13 residential fires in the Bronx and many of our families have been
14 displaced. A lot of the fires are attributed to electrical because we have an
15 ageing system in the Bronx and it's not the tenant's fault. We have to do
16 more to show up as a government and we've seen far too much neglect by
17 some of our landlords as well as government neglect. Government has to
18 hold itself accountable too and I say that as a government official. So,
19 tonight the members of RGB have heard from the Bronx residents. I have
20 a longer testimony that I will share with you but I will just say I
21 understand that the cost of housing is rising. We know that many tenants
22 in the Bronx now are overburdened. They spend more than 30% of their
23 income towards rent and that ain't right. So, any addition to that is going
24 to further their burden in the financial challenges that they're facing. But I
25 do want to make a very important recognition of small landlords because

1 we represent them in the Bronx. Many of them are landlords of color and
2 they are struggling as well with the rising costs. And so I think what lies
3 before you is a question of affordability. Affordability in this city when it
4 means standing up for renters and making sure that this city remains
5 affordable. This is not easy. The tenants that you see here are renters that
6 deserve to stay in their homes. We do not want displacement and we do
7 not want our neighborhoods to change but what we want to do is create the
8 affordability that we know New York families deserve and that is what
9 this administration is talking about but it really is a balance. The proposal
10 that you have before you this evening recognizes that there is a balance.
11 We want to support the small landlords but we have to support renters.
12 We have more renters in this city and more tenants that are living below
13 the federal poverty line. And so, my ask to all of you is to listen to these
14 stories. The testimonies and the terror that many families have endured,
15 displacement, fires, evictions, this is everyday life for many New York
16 families right here in the Bronx and I'm certain that you understand that.
17 And so my job as borough president is to represent everyone and I try to
18 do that as the borough president, but I also know that the voices of renters
19 is not often at the top of this conversation. These are the renters that pay
20 the rent every month, that deserve the services, that deserve to make sure
21 the lights stay on, the garbage is picked up, the elevator works. They don't
22 live in substandard housing as they raise their families. The generations of
23 families that we represent in the Bronx deserve to stay and I appreciate
24 that residents and tenants have shown up from CASA Bronx, from Our
25 Bronx, from advocacy groups because what we are doing is we are trying

1 to empower tenants to know what their rights are. We're trying to ensure
2 that they are living in quality. Quality is a word that we strive for every
3 single day. We cannot live in a city that grows unaffordable that we have
4 helped to build. The immigrants, the unions that have built this city, we
5 deserve to live here.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

7 Ms. Gibson: And as I make decisions, I will always keep them in mind but ask that you
8 really consider all sides of this conversation and make sure that we can
9 keep our city affordable as much as we can. Thank you so much for
10 having me tonight.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Borough President Gibson. Next I will welcome up Mira
12 Gupta, Ann Maltin.

13 Ms. Gupta: How's everyone feeling? Are we still awake? Are we still awake? Are
14 we still alive? Okay, great. Hello, my name is Mira. I'm 24 years old and
15 I'm a member, leader of the Youth Alliance for Housing. I'm a lifelong
16 resident of Harlem and me and my family have withstood the rapid
17 gentrification of my neighborhood. And so I'm here in solidarity with
18 Bronx residents and my fellow tenant organizers to call for a rent rollback.
19 My neighborhood was once filled with block parties and all the local
20 aunties and uncles would be sitting on the sidewalk with their lawn chairs
21 playing their music the moment the sun came out. As I got older, the
22 block parties have stopped and the streets feel far more empty and quiet.
23 The local African and Caribbean small businesses have been replaced with
24 overpriced coffee shops. Boom. Growing up, I saw more and more rent
25 stabilized housing throughout Harlem be deregulated and push out a lot of

1 my black and brown neighbors. Many of the folks I've grown up around
2 have since been displaced. The only reason I have been able to stay in my
3 community, the community I love so much, the neighborhood I grew up
4 in, is because I still live with my family. If faced with the rent increase
5 and therefore increased gentrification, more and more of my neighbors
6 would get displaced. I already cannot afford to live in my own
7 neighborhood on my own and this would solidify the possibility of that.
8 New Yorkers are in crisis. We already cannot afford to stay in our
9 communities. I want to stay in my home and grow old with my neighbors.
10 I want safe, accessible, and permanently affordable housing for everyone.
11 This future is possible and a rent freeze can stop further harm. But like
12 my comrade Emely said, in order to address and heal the harm that has
13 already been caused that people are currently experiencing every day, we
14 need a rent rollback, period.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Anne Malton, and then we'll hear from Andre Walters and
16 Ray T [phonetic].

17 Ms. Mayton: That would be Ann Mayton [phonetic].

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

19 Ms. Mayton: And just give me one second. I just tried to get something to eat. I'm just
20 trying to swallow it down.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Yes. Take your time. Yes, I'll make that announcement while Ann gets
22 ready. Registration closed at 8:00, and you did need to be registered to
23 speak.

24 Ms. Mayton: Okay. Alright. First, I wanna say good evening to everyone. Thank you
25 all for coming out. My name is Ann, and I am a tenant living in a rent

1 stabilized apartment in the Bronx. I've lived there for the better part of 41
2 years. I raised my daughter there. After working for 30 plus years and
3 paying taxes, I now live alone on a modest fixed income. Like many New
4 Yorkers, I'm struggling with the rising cost of living. Food, utilities,
5 transportation, and other necessities continue to become more expensive
6 while my income remains the same. Rent is no exception. Over the past
7 four years, rent stabilized tenants have faced repeated in -- rent increases.
8 We were told these hikes were needed to help building owners maintain
9 their properties. Yet in my building, rents have -- tenants have not seen
10 repairs, maintenance, nor improvements we were promised -- that, that we
11 were promised. Instead, conditions have worsened as rents have risen.
12 No heat in the winter, leaky roofs, broken windows, mold, rodents, just to
13 name a few. Did you forget that children live in these apartments too?
14 Landlords claim that another increase is necessary because older buildings
15 are costly to maintain. Landlords claim that a rent freeze will further hurt
16 their, their pockets, but may -- but, but many aging buildings across New
17 York City remain safe and well cared for. But many -- the problem is not
18 the age of the building, it is the failure of some landlords to maintain them
19 properly. Some continue expanding their portfolio while neglecting
20 existing properties and profiting from higher rents, neglecting the
21 properties that generate that profit. They profit when we suffer. Excuse
22 me. Other, others mismanage their finances and tenants are left to bear the
23 cost. Previous rent increases have brought little to no relief to many
24 tenants. Why should we be asked to pay more when the same problems
25 remain unresolved? We will not be intimidated by landlords who choose

1 profit over humans. For tenants like me, another rent increase is not a
2 minor inconvenience. It threatens my ability to remain in my home and in
3 my community. After 40 years in my apartment, I should not have to
4 worry about being priced out the neighborhood where I have built my life.
5 The truth is we are suffering. People of color are disproportionately
6 becoming homeless, forced, and forced to move out.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Ann.

8 Ms. Mayton: I urge the Rent Guidelines board -- I'm almost finished. I rent the rent -- I
9 urge the Rent Guidelines Board to recognize the reality tenants face every
10 day. We cannot absorb another rent increase. I'm calling for full rent
11 freeze on both one and two year leases, not next year, not someday, but
12 now. Thank you. Thank you for your time. Thank you for your time, and
13 I hope, and I hope your full attention and consideration.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

15 Ms. Mayton: Good night.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Next, I'll welcome Andre Walters, Ray T, and Wadia Perkins [phonetic].

17 Mr. Walters: No justice. No justice. What do we want? What do we need? What do
18 we need? What do we need? Thank you. Thank you. I would like to first
19 thank the Board for arriving on this evening and sitting in and listening to
20 our testimonies as it is very important that you all hear, to listen to what
21 the constituents and the tenants of New York City have to say. I would
22 like to also thank the elected officials who had came out in support of the
23 constituents and the tenants of New York City. It is greatly appreciated.
24 Thank you very much. I would also like to start off by saying my name is
25 Andre Walters, the former youth director of the National Action Network

1 in which I am now a contributing member and leader of the National
2 Action Network, Youth Huddle, and Young Adult, Young Adult
3 Conference. I'm also the former constituents -- former director of
4 constituent affairs for two former city council members as well as a former
5 senator. I'm also the great-great-great-grandson of a former rental
6 property owner dating back all the way to the 1920s right here in New
7 York City. So, I come before you standing on behalf of our communities,
8 I come before you standing on behalf of our communities because for far
9 too long, the rents have been increasing. All the while the rental
10 properties that many tenants live in fall in disrepair, and many rental
11 property owners fail to -- fail and neglect to make the repairs properly,
12 forcing tenants to live in slum-like conditions. Yes, understand the cost it
13 takes to own and operate a rental property. But for decades rental property
14 owners have been profiting off of tenants as well as government rent
15 subsidies without maintaining their end of the lease agreement to maintain
16 the warranty of habitability laws, which mandates them to keep the rental
17 properties safe and in habitable conditions, in which far too many aren't.
18 Continuing to raise the rent guidelines is an assault on tenants and rewards
19 bad rental property owners for the neglect, so please freeze the rent. And I
20 would just like to leave with one example. Yechiel Weinberger took over
21 the rental property in which my family has resided in for well over 50
22 years from John Sheen Jr. [phonetic] and Congo Equities [phonetic] dated
23 back in 2016. The building started going into disrepair once John Sheen
24 Jr.'s son, John Jr., took over the building. And when Yechiel Weinberger
25 took over the building, again, it went into repair -- went into disrepair

1 rapidly. I was very encouraged when Mr. Weinberger first came to the
2 apartment and said that he was the new rental property owner as he had
3 promised to make improvements and make proper repairs. And in fact, he
4 did absolutely none of those things. Instead, I had to go to court multiple
5 times for 10, almost 15 years. I've been in court between Congo Equities
6 as well as, as well as Kingstone LLC trying to get them to make repairs.
7 Now these --

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Andre.

9 Mr. Walter: -- rental property owners feel that they don't have the need to comply with
10 warranty of habitability laws, HPD department of buildings, nor FDNY.
11 They also feel that they don't have, that they don't have to comply with
12 court orders, whether it be interim court orders or orders to correct. And
13 Yechiel Weinberger is one of them. And so, again, I ask that you not
14 increase the rent but to freeze the rent because, again, it -- again, allowing
15 them to increase the rent is rewarding bad behavior to those --

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

17 Mr. Walters: -- property owners who are not standing by the law. Thank you very
18 much.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Thank you so much, Andre. And we're gonna encourage
20 everyone to stick as closely as you can to this two minutes because we
21 wanna get through everyone. Thank you all so much. I will welcome up
22 Ray T., Wadia Perkins and Shadia Simmons-Andre. Is Ray here? Okay.
23 Yes. Come on up.

24 Ms. Simmons-Andre: Good evening, everyone. My name is Shadia Simmons, and I'm here not
25 only representing BCC CUNY Cares, but Lehman as well. I'm standing

1 here today because everyone deserves safe and affordable and dignified
2 housing. This housing -- this month, my rent increased by \$1,000. The
3 month has barely started and this increase has already pushed me into
4 arrears. As I stand here speaking to you, I am worried about whether my
5 landlord is already pro-- pro-- processing the papers to make me -- to take
6 me to court. No tenant should have to live with that kind of fear simply
7 because they cannot afford a sudden and extreme rent increase. What
8 makes this situation even more frustrating is the conditions of my
9 apartment. I have black mold in my bathroom, which is a serious health
10 condition. There have been no, there have been no meaningful upgrades
11 or improvements to my apartment. The rent continues to go up but the
12 living conditions do not improve. I am tired of going back and forth to
13 housing court just to get basic repairs made in my apartment. Tenants
14 should not have to repeatedly fight for their safe and living conditions.
15 Time after time, the issues, the issues are addressed with temporary fixes,
16 patched up under under-- underlining problem. Excuse me. The issues
17 are addressed with temporary fixes, patched up just enough to move on
18 while the underlying problems remain. We deserve real repairs, real
19 solutions, and homes that are properly were maintained the first time. My
20 landlord, Prakash [phonetic], have received fundings which we know
21 publicly there are public funding for our landlords. The funding
22 connected -- the fundings that connected to these programs, yet tenants are
23 still being asked to pay more while living with unresolved maintenances
24 and issues. If public funding and assistance are being provided, the
25 tenants deserve accountability, transparency, and housing that is safe and

1 properly maintained. This should be one of the happiest times of my life.
2 Yesterday was my 44th birthday, okay? And I recently graduated with my
3 associate's degree last week. I worked hard and I made sacrifices and I
4 pushed through challenges to achieve that milestone. But instead of
5 celebrating my accomplishments and looking forward to the future, I am
6 worried about whether or not I'm able to keep up with my rent and
7 maintain in my home.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Shadia. Thank you, and happy birthday.

9 Ms. Simmons: Thank you. People who work hard pursue -- and pursue an education,
10 raises family, and contributes to their communities should not have to live
11 in fear of losing their housing. We deserve homes that are safe. We
12 deserve rents that are affordable and we deserve landlords who invest in
13 their properties and respect the people who live in them.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Thank you, Shadia.

15 Ms. Simmons: Today, I am standing not only for myself -- the -- I'm over? Okay.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Yes.

17 Ms. Simmons: Thank you.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Is Wadia here? Wadia
19 Perkins or Ray T? Okay. We will go to Mercedes Escoto, Madeline
20 Mendez, and after that, we will have Valentine Lopez [phonetic].

21 Ms. Escoto: Well, good evening, everyone. My name is Mercedes Escoto. I'm a city
22 retiree. I retired six years ago, social worker. When I retired, I was
23 thinking that I was gonna have a beautiful retirement time. But what
24 happened? It became a nightmare. I couldn't afford my rent. I was no, no
25 longer working. I was in a lagged in income, and then I started having the

1 worst problems ever in my apartment. I couldn't fix my apartment
2 anymore. My lease said that my apartment was gonna be evaluated every
3 three years for repairs. That never happened. I used to pay it out of
4 pocket myself. But then when I couldn't afford it, once I retired, I called
5 the landlord, I told him, listen, I have an, an invasion of rat, roaches, big
6 bugs, never paid attention to me. I had a request to apply for a credit card
7 so I could make those payments because my mother -- I had my mother
8 which I was also taking care of her, 24 hours home care my mother had.
9 My mother passed last year. I couldn't afford to take care of her. I was no
10 longer receiving the same income that, that I, I had before. So, that
11 literally traumatized me. And then after that, we stopped paying the rent.
12 I, I couldn't afford it. So, landlord took us to court, but we created a tenant
13 association. The tenant association, we all together decided to take the
14 landlord to court. Bronx Legal Services helped us, but we, we won the
15 case. We got half a million dollars. So -- but, anyway, once we got the
16 money, I was so happy because I was thinking with the money, I'm gonna
17 get new windows because all of -- none of the windows in my apartment
18 work. In the summer, I cannot open them. In the winter, I cannot close
19 them. In the winter I have to buy a space heater. And in the summer I
20 have to spend a lot of money in an air conditioning. So, I have a lot of
21 health issues. I cannot afford the cost of living. If I go to my doctor, I
22 have to pay the co-payment. It's either deciding whether I have to pay for
23 my co-payment or my medicine or my doctor visit or pay Con Edison or
24 pay the rent. So, it had, it had -- it have taken such a toll on my health. I
25 suffer -- in 2021, I suf-- I, I suffer, what do you call it, a stroke. I'm not --

1 I wasn't able to go back to work because of that. My memory was done.
2 Well, I had mobility issues as well.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Mercedes.

4 Ms. Escoto: But I beg you, RGB, please don't raise the rent. If, if, if that happens, I
5 will probably end up in a shelter or out in the streets and I really don't
6 deserve that. I worked for the city for 30 years. I really --

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

8 Ms. Escoto: -- don't deserve that kind of situation now that I'm retired. Thank you.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Madeline Mendez, Valentine --

10 Ms. Mendez: Hello. My name is Madeline Mendez. I live at 1185 Grand Concourse up
11 the block, but I'm here to speak on behalf of everybody in my community
12 who mostly are elderly and are disabled and on a fixed income. I am also
13 on a fixed income. My light bill is \$223, which I'm paying off another
14 light bill. Not only that, rent stabled, and when you rent -- raise the rent,
15 you raise HUD to pay our rent. It becomes difficult for all of us. Toilet
16 papers like \$16, \$18? Come on, like, it's a lot of stuff that we have to pay.
17 The food pantry is like two blocks? People can't afford to pay -- buy food.
18 Food is so high now. The tariffs keep going up and, and it's crazy what
19 the president say. What he said is crazy. People who are homeless and
20 don't seek for help are going to jail. That is crazy. What -- you heard a lot
21 of people are struggling. They're trying to stay off the street, become
22 homeless. My landlord is an ass bucket because I've been living in my
23 apartment for years and I'm scared to get beat up by tenants because he's
24 not fixing stuff because water's always going down and everybody's
25 knocking on my door like it's my fault. I have to worry for me not going

1 to jail for protecting myself because my landlord don't fix the things he's
2 supposed to correctly because he hires people that don't know how to fix
3 because he wants to not pay it out of his pocket. I have to watch over my
4 life because one day I told him, you're telling tenants pet-- to petition me
5 out because you don't wanna fix something correctly? I've been dealing
6 with this for years. This is why I take it to court constantly. And then --

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Madeline.

8 Ms. Mendez: -- it's been two years that y'all keep raising the rent. We want rent freeze.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Madeline. Is Valentine Lopez here? Okay. Carmen
10 Guadalupe?

11 Mr. Unknown: Can we do a quick check of interpretation because it's cutting in and out?

12 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. Just one second.

13 Ms. Guadalupe: Sure.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, thank you, Carmen. Are we all good with the interpretation?

15 Ms. Guadalupe: Yes. Yes.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. Thank you, Carmen.

17 Ms. Guadalupe: Sure. Interpretation is not for me.

18 Ms. Mitchell: No -- yes. They're doing the continuous.

19 Ms. Guadalupe: Okay. Okay.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Just checking the earpieces.

21 Mr. Unknown: And, and I think Valentine is here. I'm gonna check outside to see --

22 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. I'll put her to the side. Thank you.

23 Mr. Unknown: You're welcome.

24 Ms. Mitchell: When you're ready, Carmen.

1 Ms. Guadalupe: Thank you. Members of the Board, you've already heard so many things
2 already. I only have one, maybe a couple of things that I have to ask.
3 This is the first time that I come to one of these and listening to my
4 community. This is a new panel. So, my question to the new panel would
5 be, if you've heard all our grievances, how are you gonna be able to
6 support us because you're supposed to be there not only for the landlord,
7 but also for the tenants? And landlords from what I'm hearing have been
8 getting raises for the past, well, within the administration, the Adams
9 Administration, four years consecutively. He has -- he was awarded or the
10 landlords were awarded raises on our rents. So, would you not think that
11 it would be considerate and fair that after four years of them getting
12 consecutive raises to the money that they're getting, that we as tenants
13 deserve some kind of relief, some kind of balance where you hear the
14 atrocities that are going on in these apartments, but the landlords are still
15 getting money? And all they have to say is, well, I don't have enough
16 money to cover the, the repairs. Meanwhile, tenants are telling you a slew
17 of repairs that are needed in their apartments, but they're still getting
18 money. We get nothing. Would it not be fair then to say, listen, hold the
19 ten-- landlords accountable. We've given you money for four years in a
20 row. What have you done with it? Show me what we've been giving you
21 money for. You're asking the tenants to show that they have to pay the
22 rent to stay in the apartment. Show me, as the Board, what are you doing
23 with the money that we're allowing you to get from these tenants? It's a
24 very simple thing. If I'm allowing you to get money, you, you have to put
25 back at least something into these apartments because it's not fair to the

1 tenants that we keep giving our money, money, money, money, and we get
2 nothing in return and have to deal with courts getting evicted because the
3 landlords are not taking -- doing their due diligence to us, for us. And it's
4 only fair that if they're getting from us so much that they can at least give
5 us a little bit to keep us within our apartments in a safe and clean manner.
6 And obviously, that's not happening because we're doing this year after
7 year after year. They get everything, we get nothing. Thank you.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, we'll have Ernestina Vasquez, Jervine Samuel, and
9 Geronimo Jourdain. Are Ernestina or Jervine here? And are we ready for
10 a translation for Ernestina? Thank you.

11 Ms. Ernestina: Good evening. Good evening. My name is Ernestina. I live at 2260
12 University Avenue. I've lived there for 12 years. I've never seen a single
13 time when they've done repairs. I'm here to demand that the rent be, the
14 rent be freeze because we can't pay. The landlords fill their pockets with
15 money and we, the people, are the ones who suffer. And our children
16 suffer with us too. What we want is for the rent to be frozen. What do we
17 want? What do we want? What do we want? It's that we can't pay the
18 rent. We don't have work. Wherever I go, they ask me for my social. I
19 don't have it. I can't work. I have three children in the apart-- in the
20 apartment. And we've suffered. We've gone through so many things that
21 not even the landlord knows how we've lived. You can imagine how
22 we've suffered year after year, day after day with our family. And the
23 worst of it is that the owners raise the rent as far as they want to. We want
24 the rent to be frozen because the people suffer. We're here so that that
25 rental be frozen. We're almost out of our apartments. There's a lot of

1 evictions. All of my neighbors tell me that they're getting evicted. And I
2 always tell them that we have to fight together so that we'll be able to
3 because this war is not just one person, it's the whole people. It's CASA.
4 So, we can't pay that rent that we owe and we're not gonna pay it because
5 there's no repairs being done. We're gonna, we're gonna struggle. We're
6 warriors, and we're gonna fight until that ring gets frozen. CASA. CASA.
7 CASA.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Jervine Samuel? Geronimo Jourdain?

9 Ms. Samuel: Hello, good evening, members of the board. My name is Jervine Samuel,
10 and I live in a rent stabilized apartment. And I've been living in my
11 apartment for over 20 years. And the landlord doesn't make any repairs.
12 We freeze in the winter. We have no heat. A lot of times the elevators go
13 down. We have rats and roaches. He -- since I've been in the building, the
14 building just constantly keeps going down. There's no uplifting of the
15 building. Why should he get a rent, rent increase? He owns a lot of
16 buildings. He's not a small landlord. They keep talking about small
17 landlord. How about these rich land owner -- land own-- landlords own
18 buildings all over? They get increases every year. We need a, a rent
19 freeze of one and two leases, and I'm with CASA. CASA Power. CASA
20 Power. And I believe that we should -- I believe that we should not have
21 to pay these extra, extra rates because of the way these landlords do us.
22 They don't care about us. They don't care how we live. They go home to
23 their cushion homes. I'm not only speaking for me. I'm speaking for all
24 the tenants in my building. There's a lot of tenants in my building that
25 don't -- they're going through the same thing as me. They're not getting

1 repairs and when they do repairs they scrape the stuff, paint over it, and
2 the same conditions come right back. Right now, I'm living with mold,
3 rats, roaches, leaks in my apartment, holes in the wall, they're not doing
4 anything. Why should he get a rent increase? He got buildings all over.
5 When they get an increase, they do not improve our lives. Our lives are
6 not improved.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Jervine.

8 Ms. Samuel: Alright.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Is Geronimo here?

10 Mr. Jourdain: Good evening, the members of the board. Year after year, we give the
11 owners of the buildings a prize. And we think that really there's some
12 landlords who might deserve it but others not because I've heard a lot of
13 complaints about the landlords that they don't, they don't make repairs,
14 that they don't give hot water, that they don't do all of those things which
15 are their obligations. But, yes, they get a prize year after year, just as
16 much those who comply with their responsibility as those who don't. But
17 I really don't think that it's just that those who, year after year, don't live
18 up to the responsibilities get that prize again and again. Another thing is
19 that it's being said that there's 2,000,000 rent stabilized apartments. But
20 really, that rent stabilization doesn't really happen in practice because rent
21 -- because stabilization is something that doesn't move, something that's
22 frozen, something that doesn't go up every year. And, and, and, and, and
23 every year, the supposedly stabilized rent goes up. But why? Isn't it
24 stabilized? If it's stabilized, you're not supposed to raise the rent. It'll be
25 stabilized rent when the rent gets frozen. That's what I think. I don't

1 know. Maybe I'm wrong, but that's what my mind tells me. Another thing
2 is the Department of Buildings of the City of New York many years ago
3 made a law that buildings that are more than five-storey high have to have
4 an elevator. But they don't comply with those requirements. They've
5 refused in recent years the landlords to have elevators in buildings that
6 have more than five-storey. But -- and the other thing is that the -- a lot of
7 landlords start to give you hot water or heat. Well, hot water, no hot water
8 is the whole year, but instead of in October, you have to start to call 311 to
9 get heat because they act like they don't know what's going on and they
10 don't start to give you heat until November. Yeah. Thank you.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Next, we will welcome Octavio Solano, Gabriel Bencosme, and Nilda
12 Pena.

13 Ms. Solano: Good evening, my name is Octavio, I'm a member of CASA and this is
14 my first time being here -- second time being here. I would have liked to
15 have been here more time with you. The reason that I would like to -- I
16 would have liked to have had more time here is that in the 50 something
17 years that I've been here, I've had trouble with the English language, but
18 I've worked for 40 years, I've had -- I've suffered through three operations
19 for cancer, as I said before, and my landlord doesn't even sympathize.
20 And I, I was also being sued for money that I supposedly owed them, I
21 didn't have heat. And then on top of that, the super came in, and said that
22 there was an odor of gas. And then the fire department came, they said
23 there was carbon monoxide. And then they turned off the gas. And now,
24 I'm having heart problems, and I don't know if it's because of the
25 conditions that I am going through. Tomorrow, I have a-- an appointment

1 with the cardiologist, and I don't know if they're going to give me a
2 pacemaker. And all of that, because maybe, because I'm poor, because
3 maybe 20 years ago when I rented the apartment, I was eligible, and
4 Section 8 paid a part of it, but now that I'm not useful to it. And I had,
5 unfortunately, had to make a decision that I went to Section 8 and I asked
6 for a transfer because I want -- don't want to live so high up. And you
7 know that a lot of the tenants who live in the Bronx, our buildings go back
8 to the 1930s. And, and when they're not paying, then they have someone
9 go and set fire to them because we're not blind and we're not deaf. The
10 Bronx is one of the boroughs where there are more fires than anywhere
11 else. I live on the 11th floor, and I've asked the landlord to lower me
12 down to a lower floor because in the past there's been fire. So, I want you
13 -- I want to ask you to freeze the rent because if we were good enough, I
14 want you to freeze the rent because if we were good enough to pay before,
15 and now, if we have a program without pro-- without poor people, there's
16 no programs and the programs are what they -- what fill the pockets of
17 these Bronx landlords.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Next we will have Gabriel Bencosme, Nilda Pena [phonetic], and Mario
19 Navos.

20 Ms. Pena: Good evening. I'm Nilda Pena and I have lived in the Bronx for 24 years.
21 I'm not going to repeat everything that we have already heard here, but
22 yes, as a person who is retired, I do, I do repeat what other people that are
23 in my situation have said. And also we realize we truly need the rent to be
24 frozen because a person living alone cannot pay the rent with the yearly
25 increase that keeps occurring. And I'm not going to reiterate everything,

1 just something that my fellow people here, my fellow residents here have
2 already stated. What do we need? What do we need? So, to all of you we
3 just want to say we wouldn't want to see you in our shoes. But the shoes,
4 but the shoes that you use are comfortable. The homes you live in are
5 comfortable. Your salaries are really comfortable and there's a big
6 difference. But we don't want, we don't want to go back to the times of
7 the previous mayor because in those four years, the rent was increased
8 every year. Now, we need rent freeze. Rent freeze. Thank you very
9 much. Thank you.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Now we'll welcome Mario Navos.

11 Interpreter: Mario?

12 Ms. Mitchell: Gabriel. Yes, go ahead, Gabriel.

13 Mr. Bencosme: Yes. Good, good evening, members of the Board. Good evening all the
14 tenants here. I reside in the Bronx. I am Gabriel Bencosme. I'm a
15 Lehman College graduate, class of 2026, and while I served as a peer
16 mentor for the [unclear] [03:24:38] who we worked collaboratively with
17 CUNY CARES at Lehman College, I have interacted with numerous
18 students who have countless of times cried on my shoulder, have told me
19 heartbreaking stories, which is all under the category of housing crisis.
20 I've met with this one student who unfortunately couldn't attend her last
21 semester due to a housing crisis. For example, she -- based on what she
22 told me, she lived in a studio apartment where it was very unaffordable for
23 her, out of her reach and she had to pay college tuition out of her own
24 pocket because unfortunately, according to the state, she couldn't qualify
25 due to her being paid too much which is very absurd. And this is the mo--

1 most of the cases that I've encountered with the students that I have
2 interacted with. During summer of '25 when I was working for the
3 Dominican Studies Institute, we went to a senior home to hand out surveys
4 to the elderly people there. And one of the elderly people that I've
5 interacted with almost broke my heart because he told me at the age of 86,
6 where he was residing in a living room where the individual that owns the
7 apartment wanted him to be out. But unfortunately, due to scarcity when
8 it comes to looking for affordable apartments, he couldn't qualify. So,
9 what I would like to advise you, members of the Board, is when it comes
10 to students and when it comes to these elderly individuals, how -- why
11 would they have to perpetuate and also go through these unfortunate
12 circumstances while also having to live the way they do? That elderly
13 individual, I know for a fact he did not expect to live the remaining years
14 of his life the way he is right now. The college students that I've met at
15 Lehman College who have had these heartbreaking stories, I don't think
16 they expected to sign themselves up to be students while also carrying that
17 burden on their shoulder whether or not, the next couple of months if
18 they're still going to have a home. So, I please advise you all to please
19 give it an o-- don't give it an oversight. Be very vili-- vigilant of the
20 people in the community because us, of diverse backgrounds, we built
21 New York City and we're going to continue living in New York City.
22 Thank you.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Do we have Mario Navos?

24 Mr. Navos: Morning. Morning. Crazy. Good evening, everyone. My name is Mario
25 Navos, I'm a proud member of the Democratic Socialists of America, a

1 CASA leader. Power. I've lived here in the South Bronx for 15 years --
2 sorry, since I was 15 and I, I canvass my community, I organize my
3 community, I volunteer at a community fridge, I work in a family shelter.
4 And the thing that I heard from all my neighbors, my communities is that
5 we're all struggling. So, last year we decided to organize and elect a
6 mayor who one of the main promises is to freeze the rent. And we are
7 here because we're hoping that you can help fulfill that promise to freeze
8 the rent. This January, one of the coldest and most brutal winters, in re--
9 recent memory, my heat went out, my cold water went out. I was
10 fortunate enough to be able to afford a space heater. In spite of this, I was
11 sick and was out of work for one week. In spite of this, I still had to pay
12 rent that week -- that month. Did I ever get a reimbursement for the space
13 heater? No. Did the rent still get paid? Yes. And I was not one -- many
14 of my neighbors also experienced this as well. We, despite all this, asked
15 to absorb the cost of raising ri-- raising prices and -- sorry. We are always
16 asked to absorb the cost of raising rice -- raising prices. However, tenants
17 are the ones bearing the worst of it. Landlords, however, still receive
18 those checks on time. And then when they don't receive those checks,
19 they take us to court and threaten to evict us. This is why I ask you what
20 the necessary -- why it is necessary to please freeze the rent. Raising the
21 rent will put maybe the nail in the coffin sending many of our New
22 Yorkers and their families and communities to homelessness and
23 displacing our communities. Please, I beg you. Landlords -- if landlords
24 are struggling so much, maybe they should get a job like the rest of us who
25 actually work and take place in a community. Please freeze the rent.

1 Thank you.

2 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, I'll welcome Migdalia Cortes, Magales Peguoro and Lo
3 Anderson.

4 Ms. Cortes: Don't press that button. The mandate is -- my name is Migdalia Cortes.
5 I've been living 30 years in my apartment faithfully paying rent. When I
6 lost my apartment, the landlord also, I was 25 years with him, he would
7 work with me. Then the new one came and the, the notices came. And
8 then, I couldn't find a lawyer. And thank God, when I testified in city hall,
9 someone heard me. This is the mandate that I'm -- they, they got me a
10 lawyer, Mr. Riley [phonetic], the chairman. What's the mandate today?
11 To have compassion. We're not asking for a bag of money for heaven's
12 sake. A lot of these landlords, they have 21 buildings, 10 buildings, 5
13 buildings. They are loaded. We are suffering out here. We're asking for
14 relief for heaven's sake. Let's be the ones to do the right thing. The
15 mandate is have compassion. Be your brother's keeper. You know what,
16 all of us come from community. Would you like to be bounced around an
17 eviction notice in your door? I don't think any of you would like that. It's
18 a horrible feeling. Every time the door would move, I jump up after living
19 30 years in my building. Like I said, I had lost my job. Please have
20 compassion. Please do the right thing amongst the chaos because we're
21 living in chaos, not -- are we? Have compassion for these -- these are
22 families, young people, that instead of looking towards their future and,
23 and going to high school with, with peace of mind, they have to worry
24 about helping out their parents and mixed with their studies. It's a lot of
25 stress. We're just asking for relief. Ain't nobody getting rich over here.

1 We have medical issues. And by the way, do we -- do one of you pay for
2 something and not ex-- not expect anything in return? You should be on
3 the landlords. They are negligent. None of these people should live on
4 the mold. Mold is dangerous in case you didn't know that. Please do the
5 right thing. Be the brother's keeper. Be the RGB that does the right thing.
6 Please.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

8 Ms. Cortes: Sleep well when you make a good decision.

9 Ms. Peguoro: Good evening. My name is Megales Peguoro. I've come because I need
10 you to freeze the rent. We're in CASA to freeze the rent because we live,
11 we live in bad conditions. I live at 12 -- I've lived at 1267 Sheridan
12 Avenue for 12 years. And, and I pay my rent, it's not Section 8 or
13 housing, I pay my rent very well, very well in that house. But I'm
14 disabled. I broke my leg. And I haven't been able -- and I'm in court, I'm
15 in court for rent and, and, and I'm in court because of the rent, and thank
16 God that I came across CASA because I can't live this way. That the walls
17 are falling down on me, I'm a woman who works and I can't pay \$2,000 to
18 live in a studio. And, and, and that landlord doesn't want to freeze the
19 rent, why, if we've worked in this country, if we've worked hard and
20 struggled in this country? And I'm in court, in court. I've never been
21 before the justice system, I'm an honest person. We need these
22 apartments, we don't have a dishwa-- we don't have washing machines.
23 We need repairs. We don't have elevators. We need the rent to be frozen.
24 Goodnight.

25 Ms. Mitchell: I'm going to call up a few names and just come towards the mic. Lo

1 Anderson, Rylan Zahir [phonetic], Sarah Delany, and Socorro Rodriguez.

2 Ms. Anderson: Good evening. My name is Lo Anderson. I'm the student engagement

3 coordinator for a support program for CUNY students in the Bronx, so we

4 serve students here at Hostos Community College, at Bronx Community

5 College and also at Lehman College. And this is officially, though some

6 of you are new appointees, our second date. Our last -- our first date was

7 last year at my very first rent boardlines guide hearing. I served as an

8 intern when I was a student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice with

9 Community Action for Safe Apartments, CASA. And so, when I learned

10 that there was an opportunity for people in our community to look at

11 people who looked like them, who are fighting in housing court, I knew I

12 had to make that connection. And as a person who's been dating you for

13 over a year, I heard your call to diversify the voices that show up in this

14 space. So we came back with our usual folks, but we also brought some

15 students and young people in this space because we're constantly left out

16 of the conversation in housing. I have an eight-year-old son and I'm a

17 tenant of a previous management company that the mayor just attacked,

18 which is called Pinnacle Management. Before my landlord came to do

19 any repairs in my house, which include brown water coming out of my

20 faucet and removing the ability for me to bathe my own son in where he

21 lives, for me to take a shower while I actually meet with students about

22 their housing issues and help them reconcile one-shot deal applications for

23 HRA. It's also students who live in shelter who have to wait up to four

24 months before they even see the physical CityFHEPS housing voucher

25 letter or paper. Have you ever had to look for housing without any proof

1 of your rental subsidy? I can let you know that it's extremely challenging.
2 You're asking us for look to opportunities that are not there. On New
3 York City Housing Connect, there are currently seven options for the
4 Bronx, and there is only one that has AMI offering of 30% and 40%. The
5 rest, the minimum income is \$74,000 and I think that you all know, as
6 people who study this community that that does not match our wages and
7 it's unacceptable to ask someone like us to come back to school, to uplift
8 our community and our families, to then answer us with rent that
9 continues to increase. You are asking for people to move into our
10 neighborhoods who don't want to live with us. There is no one who is
11 making \$147,000 who wants to share a community with me and my
12 neighbors in Hunts Point. And so, we're tired of asking you to have them
13 fundraise for the buildings that you want to maintain in the Bronx. The
14 Bronx is where the most affordable housing projects have gone up, and
15 none of them match the wages that our communities are making.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

17 Ms. Anderson: So, we ask you, please, to freeze the rent and to truly consider these
18 hearings and to annotate the statistical information that is available,
19 because it's unacceptable that 51.5% of CUNY students right now are
20 reporting housing issues. Thank you so much.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Is Rylan here? Is Rylan here? Rylan Zahir? Sarah Delany?
22 Okay. I'm going to call a few names. Please come close to the
23 microphone. Socorro Rodriguez, Linda Seward, and Sarah Pasabongi
24 [phonetic]. Go ahead.

25 Ms. Delany: Good evening. My name is Sarah Delany. I'm a Hostos graduate. I'm a

1 Lehman College graduate. I'm a CASA member and a CASA leader. I
2 learned how to advocate here at Hostos, and I had rent issues when I came
3 out of the shelter coming here, and Hostos helped me. So, I've had a long
4 time practicing this, and I didn't realize so near, yet so far CASA and all
5 that they do. But I've been having problems with my landlord for the last
6 17 years. 2007, I came in here, I started with the problems in 2009. I
7 graduated, went to Lehman, became a nurse. Had no problems when I
8 was working, paid my rent, worked all through COVID. No problems,
9 paid my rent. Then I got injured at work and I was sick, so, that's when
10 my issues started. So this medium range of rent is not what's reflective if -
11 - of our demographic. So, that's unaffordable -- affordable housing, and it
12 should not be what's happening here. My colleague, Lo, she spoke about
13 brown water. I brought this here because this is the sediment that comes
14 out of my kitchen-- out of my bathroom. And my kitchen sink is not
15 working right now, but this is what comes out of my tub. And when you
16 shake it, this is what is here. There's things in here that I don't even know
17 what they are. This is the brown water that comes out of my bathroom.
18 So, this is why it ain't right. But this is what you're bathing in. This is
19 what you're bathing your children in. This is what you're bathing your
20 produce in. This is what you're filling your pots with to cook and or drink,
21 when you may not notice the brown that's there. When I can see this, what
22 about what I can't see? This is what we're living with. Would anybody
23 drink this or live in this or cook in this or wash in this? No, it's not fair.
24 And I also have to say, we have so many different things, mold, rodents,
25 pests, elevators that don't work. But I did notice after the rent rip-off

1 hearings that I saw a big flurry on my building, which is Wave Crest
2 Management, because HPD was on the site. And what I want to see is
3 code enforcement happen, because this is what's, what it's gonna take to
4 get the people that own these buildings to stand up. And when you have a
5 portfolio, that when you're more interested in a portfolio than your tenants,
6 stop doing that. Put people over profits. Put tenants over profits. When I
7 was working, I put my patients over profits. It stands the same. It's not
8 fair. So, I'm asking you to think carefully about what's going on out here.
9 This is what we're living in day to day. And if the te-- if the landlords are
10 having such a problem, then why are they not asking for help? We have
11 state and city programs and if they open their books to state that they're
12 losing money, they can get help. But they're not willing to do that.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Sarah.

14 Ms. Delany: They got 12%. You do not get 12% ROI on any of your investments. So
15 why are they getting 12% and they're not putting back the money into the
16 building?

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

18 Ms. Delany: Stop it.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Are Socorro or Linda here?

20 Ms. Rodriguez: My name is Socorro Rodriguez, and I'm a member of CASA. And I've
21 been going through very difficult situations. There's -- it was a rat plague
22 has been discovered in my apartment and it crawled over my feet and it
23 looked as big as an elephant. [unclear] [03:43:32] and it, it, it grabbed, it
24 grabbed me. It was caught in like, early morning and we can hear it
25 moving around. And I -- and the thing is it just kept like struggling for

1 survival but it was just dying and I'm like how am I supposed to kill a rat?
2 I've never killed a rat and it was just chaos and my daughter is crying and
3 they're just having panic attacks because I've never killed a rat and what
4 am I supposed to do? And I could -- it was -- the only thing that I could
5 do was to kill it.

6 Ms. Mitchell: She has to stop.

7 Ms. Rodriguez: So, what am I supposed to do because it's there and I said I'm gonna have
8 to kill the rat because there's no -- I have no other choice I have to kill the
9 rat. So then, there was another day when the rat was caught in the trap and
10 then I was happened to be walking in the kitchen. And all of a sudden, the
11 rat gets out of the trap and like, jets away. And so, as I'm running down
12 the hallway and then out of nowhere the rat is there and then it just crosses
13 through my feet and then I have no -- but I just like, fall on the floor. And
14 so, then I decided like there's nothing else I can do like if I put a trap or
15 don't put a trap it's just gonna be there, I'm gonna either fall, the thing is
16 gonna come after me, we're going to -- it's gonna attack me and like,
17 there's nothing else to do. So, that day that I fell I had to go to the
18 Montefiore emergency room, and recently I had to go to the emergency
19 room again because the bron-- like, the [unclear] [03:46:14] was so conge-
20 - congested that I just wasn't able to breathe. My, my daughter took me to
21 the emergency room in Pre-- Pres-- Presbyterian over here. So they did
22 all, they ran all the tests and then it's basically my lungs have vi-- a virus
23 and bacteria. They prescribed a treatment which I did but I'm still
24 congested and I'm still dealing with those problems. But the landlord in
25 the building that I live in, he doesn't have a super and I made countless

1 phone calls and countless phone calls and to find out like, you know,
2 especially when I had this rat situation and nothing has occurred. And it's
3 really hard to go through a situation like that where I didn't, like, what was
4 I supposed to do and it's hard and you can't find the help, someone to help
5 you or someone to, like, that you can run to for support when you're going
6 through something as difficult as that. Freeze the rent and let the landlords
7 hire people that are competent in their jobs because they don't do anything.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Is Linda Seward here? Okay. And I'm going to call up a few names.
9 Please come close to one of the two microphones when I call your name.
10 Sarah Pasabongi, Sherene Morris, Maritou Dialto -- Diallo and Fatou
11 Fofana [phonetic]. If any of you are here, please line up close to one of
12 the two microphones.

13 Ms. Seward: Good evening. My name is Linda Seward and I reside in a rent-stabilized
14 building on the Grand Concourse, and I've been there for 42 years. In the
15 past five years, over one million tenants have left New York State and
16 from that over 500,000 have left the five boroughs and the reason is
17 because of high rents and the quality of life issues. In the last four years,
18 rents have gone up between 12 to 15% for a one-year lease and 18 to 21%
19 for two-year leases the most since the Bloomberg administration. We
20 deserve a rent freeze. I am here because tenants deserve and desperately
21 need a rent freeze. Why? Because landlords have become very negligent
22 of their properties and as you know you've seen articles on TV and
23 pictures. My building was one of the articles with the big rat in the
24 woman's apartment, 1777 Grand Concourse. So you know that there's no
25 way that you can deny how we are living. Rent-stabilized landlords, their

1 NOI profit is 6% citywide in addition to another 12% from the previous
2 year. So why are we having to live with no hot water, no heat, with mice,
3 rats, black mold, black mold in my apartment, where it attached itself to
4 my carpet and my furniture, we're living in dirty hallways, holes in walls,
5 leaks from floor to floor to floor. We deserve a rent freeze. My building,
6 which was at one time, one of the best buildings on the Grand Concourse
7 and it has deteriorated tremendously within the last 11 years with this new
8 owner. We can't even get a call to management. You call? No answer.
9 You leave a message, no response. We demand because we deserve a rent
10 freeze. If you check the HPD online portals, you will see thousands of
11 complaints that have been ignored. Alone, two years, my building, over a
12 thousand. Right now, violations, 700 plus.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Linda.

14 Ms. Seward: We deserve a rent freeze. Landlords could care less what HPD has to say.
15 And we know that we can get a rent freeze because it has been done in the
16 past under previous administration of Bill de Blasio. Thank you.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Sarah Pasabongi? Sherene Morris?

18 Ms. Morris: Hello. My name is Sherene, I'm from CASA. I live in a stabilized
19 building at 1777 Grand Concourse in the Bronx, where I lived for 28
20 years. I'm a single mother of four children. This is --

21 Ms. Mitchell: Sherene, could you come a little closer to the mic?

22 Ms. Morris: I'm sorry.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

24 Ms. Morris: I'm a single mother of four children. This is an emergency, we need a rent
25 freeze. My living conditions consist of rats, roaches, flies. My fridge

1 don't work, my intercom don't work, no heat, no hot water. And the
2 repairs are not properly done or unlicensed workers. I feel abandoned by
3 my landlord. They don't respond or I feel like a ping pong ball between
4 landlord's maintenance apartment and the super. I'm stressed mentally and
5 emotionally. Rent is too high for people to be paying. It's not getting paid
6 enough to pay for the land -- to pay the landlords. We demand a rent
7 freeze. I say this because we are raised in the future. We can't raise our
8 children in these living conditions. We can't even call home a home when
9 nothing is being done. This is an emergency, we -- I demand a rent freeze.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Maritou Diallo?

11 Ms. Diallo: Good evening, member of Board. My name is Maritou Diallo. I live on
12 1060 Sheridan Avenue, Apartment 4B. I'm here standing tonight because
13 I'm begging you to roll back the rent. Why? Because for -- I take
14 example for myself. My wrongdoing, what I did wrong -- do wrong,
15 because I encourage my neighbor to do the right thing in case they have a
16 issue -- repair issue or anything related to the apartment is not in a good
17 condition. Everybody deserves to have a good living condition. But
18 anytime my neighbor, they come to me, Maritou, we have this issue, we
19 have this issue. I say, okay, let's call the landlord or call 311. That was
20 my wrongdoing, and I'm the one paying, paying pri-- price for that
21 because the entire building, when I get my rent history, the entire building,
22 I mean, the one has a higher rent than any tenant of my building. So, that's
23 not fair. And I don't understand why. Why, because I encourage people
24 to do the right thing when we have issues. We've been seeking for repair
25 for a year now, until now, the same issue is still there. We have a proof,

1 we have a picture, we have everything. My neighbor, she's here, she
2 cannot speak English or French. She cannot speak out, but she's here to
3 testify. She has so many issues on her apartment, she want me to speak
4 for her. I said no, she has to come to testify. Whatever language she want
5 to speak, they may translate for her to do -- to say. So we, that's why I'm
6 standing here tonight. I'm not going to go far away because I'm not a
7 public speaker. But I'm trying -- I'm going to try my best to make a shot.
8 So I'm here standing tonight because it's now right for me as a tenant
9 because I'm encouraging other tenants to do the right thing when they
10 have an issue, to call 311 or, you know, call the landlord. When you call
11 them, they don't answer. When you call super, no answer. So, we don't
12 know what to do. And then the previous landlord and new landlord, they
13 change the landlord. We don't know who to pay the bill. Almost --

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Maritou.

15 Ms. Diallo: Okay, thank you.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Is Fatou Fofana here? Okay. Yes, we do accept written testimony also.
17 Brian Soriano Mateo [phonetic]. I'm going to call a couple of more
18 names. Please come up to the microphones. Latrell Boddie, Stephanie
19 Acosta [phonetic] and Patricia Charles [phonetic]. So we'll start with
20 Brian. Okay. Well, Latrell.

21 Mr. Boddie: You want me to go, me to go first?

22 Ms. Mitchell: Yes.

23 Mr. Boddie: Okay. Yes, thank you. Good, good evening, my friends. Fellow
24 Bronxites, fellow New Yorkers and mem-- and members of -- respected
25 members of the rent board. My name is Latrell Boddie, political science

1 major and graduate of City College and a current resident of Conquest
2 Village. It's been -- we've been liv-- we've been living there since 2008,
3 me, my mom, and unfortunately, my father, who passed away in 2001. It
4 used to be a special place, but we made lots of friends in that community
5 and we were all contributing in our own way. But after a while, but as
6 time has went on, it's gone, it's gone downhill. And despite this, the rent,
7 despite this the rent keeps incre-- keeps increasing in ma-- in many
8 different ways. It feels like more of an ice age than today. And, and as of
9 right now in Co-, in Conquest Village, it's supposed to be going up \$33.58
10 per, per, per room for two years, and per -- and it should be going up in
11 two years again. This is going to be a problem for as many people living
12 there like our, our senior, our senior citizens. It's both -- and it's getting,
13 it's getting harder for people in general who are living there, everyday,
14 everyday citizens. And it's, it's honestly co-- it's honestly hypocritical
15 considering this, this parasitic system we have, we have going on with
16 these landlords. I mean, after all, I mean, after all, I mean, we've -- yes,
17 thank you. I'm, I'm sorry.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. We'll have Brian Soriano Mateo. Brian, if
19 you're here. Stephanie Acosta. Patricia Charles.

20 Ms. Charles: Good evening, everyone. This has been a roller coaster ride for me. My
21 name is Patricia A. Charles. I'm a NYCHA resident, and I'm 74 years
22 young. I'm a retired educator for special needs, working with children,
23 elders and veterans with disabilities. My daughter was four and my son,
24 an intellectual learner, was two years old when I moved into my
25 apartment. She is now 45 and he is now 40. I worked my way off of

1 public assistance to a graduate, which is -- was one of the oldest in the
2 classroom at the time, to a retiree. I spent many years rallying with
3 CASA, Community Voices Heard, Met, VOCAL, North Bronx Coalition
4 and so many more. My start is with housing corruption. Removing the
5 ceiling rent in 2019 was when I was -- when I reached 55. NYCHA
6 stripped out the ceiling rent and never replaced it to assist seniors
7 struggling to borrow from Paul to pay Peter. No scree or anything to
8 assist seniors on a fixed income. Now I'm going to greed. While still
9 paying my rent, NYCHA tags on more to the rears instead of stopping the
10 amount where it was. I was promised to get situ-- my situation resolved,
11 still waiting for years. I was even approved in 2020, but the money never
12 reached my account. Where did that money go? All of those who found -
13 - were found guilty for corruption being displayed, nothing has been done
14 to reverse their wrongdoings. And as seniors who have paid for thousands
15 of equity into their apartments for many years, keeping our neighborhood
16 safe from generations to generations, seniors are still struggling in court
17 with no legal representation. And we attend these rallies and
18 conversations just to be disappointed year after year. People are killing
19 themselves because they walk in fear and they don't want to live like this.
20 So, we here right now respectfully stand in unity for a rent rollback as well
21 as a rent freeze.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. The next names I'll call to come towards the microphone,
23 Lady Trejo [phonetic], Catherine Perdomo, Ana Rodriguez [phonetic] and
24 Rosanna Colon [phonetic]. Okay. Next set of names, Schylar Mendez,
25 Jose Sandoval [phonetic] and Carmen Rangel [phonetic].

1 Ms. Rodriguez: God bless each and one of them -- of you. My name is Ana Rodriguez. I
2 would like to say that I know that each one of you have a heart. Yes, you
3 do. And I pray to God that God touch each one of your heart in the name
4 of Jesus. We have need. This is -- we are the people. And I know you
5 could be right there now, but you never know when you're going to be
6 here. Okay? You never know. And I know, I know you have compassion
7 and I know you're tired. You want to go home. Yes, we are also. And
8 we're not here to point finger or to -- we're here to, please have
9 compassion with us. Have it in your heart to say, yes, freeze the rent.
10 That's all we need. Okay? May the Lord bless you and think about it .
11 Yes, freeze the rent. God bless you all.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

13 Ms. Perdomo: Good evening, members of the Board. My name is Catherine Perdomo.
14 I'm a Bronx Community College graduate. Also, Lehman College
15 graduate. I'm a DSA member. Also, I'm a bilingual teacher in a middle
16 school here in the South Bronx. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant at 1090
17 Franklin Avenue in Mauritania, where I live since 2010. I share my home
18 with my grandmother, my 85-year-old grandmother. My landlord is
19 James Simoncy [phonetic] of Winn Residential. I'm here to urge the
20 members of the RGB to freeze the rent on both one and two-year leases.
21 I'm, I'm a reliable tenant who consistently pays rent on time and maintains
22 my unit, ensuring predictable cash flow for management. Despite this, my
23 experience demonstrates that rent increases are not being utilized to repair
24 our homes. Currently, my building has 300 code co-violations, 100 of
25 which remain open. In my own unit, I've been reporting a severe rodent

1 infestation. The situation in my bedroom is particularly distressing. There
2 is a hole in the wall where the heater tube is located, which serves, which
3 serves as an entry point for mice also, behind the stove in the kitchen. I
4 even can hear them throughout the night, like having fun like they are in a
5 playground. This activity is constant and disruptive. It's been over a
6 month since my initial report on April 21st, and despite multiple follow-
7 up, follow-up e-mails and 311 reports, I'm still waiting for the
8 maintenance team to address the rodent infestation. Furthermore, these
9 persistent issues, including heat and hot water irregularities, failing
10 painted plaster, water leaks, dirty water coming out of the, the bathroom,
11 et cetera. The -- a broken elevator, have been ongoing for more than 10
12 years. My apartment has only been painted twice during my entire
13 tenancy. These long-standing conditions are unacceptable and violate
14 basic habitability standards. These are maintenance failures that they need
15 to address but they fail to do so because they prioritize profits over tenants'
16 well-being.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Catherine.

18 Ms. Perdomo: And all that time, my landlord raised the rent. Landlord profits have gone
19 up 30% in the last three years. I'm sharing this testimony to highlight the
20 disconnect between rent increases and the maintenance of safe, healthy,
21 and living conditions. Thank you.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Do we have Lady Trejo [phoentic], Rosanna Colon, Schylar
23 Mendez?

24 Mr. Mendez: I don't like to stand up, but we all here today have only one person to
25 blame for not having a rent freeze. And do we know his name? No one?

1 How about the appointed elected mayor? He put them on there. He said
2 that he was going to give a rent freeze. Why are we catering and
3 showboating and telling them life stories? We appointed Mayor
4 Mamdani. He said, he said, I will give you a rent freeze [unclear]
5 [04:06:40]. I'm done.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. I'll call up Jose Sandoval, Carmen Rangel,
7 Marina Metalios and Diosa Perez Cruz [phonetic]. If I -- if you are any of
8 those folks, please come towards the microphone.

9 Ms. Metalios: Good evening, everyone. Thank you for still being here. I'm Marina
10 Metalios.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

12 Ms. Metalios: I'm a rent-stabilized tenant. I live in Stuyvesant Town, East 14th Street,
13 First Avenue, New York City. I'm going to share with you something you
14 might not have heard this evening from tenants. My rent is affordable to
15 me. Why? Because I don't have kids. I don't have debt from college. I
16 don't have debt from graduate school. I don't own a car. I don't have
17 credit card debt. I've always been employed and I've always had health
18 insurance. Now, this profile is unique, I think and impossible or nearly to
19 reproduce. It shouldn't be the reason why someone can stand before you
20 and say my rent is affordable. I look to you so that other people can report
21 just as I have now. My landlord is Blackstone, the largest private equity
22 entity in the world, in the world. They can very easily live with a rent
23 freeze. In my opinion, they can live with the rent rollback. We are 11,227
24 apartments in Stuy Town. That's a robust rent roll. Blackstone doesn't
25 need any kind of increase from you or help from you. You've probably

1 heard testimony about the Moody's findings that here in New York City,
2 most of the landlords will be able to tolerate a rent freeze, no problem. I
3 believe that's true because we are helping make our landlords fat and juicy
4 by the rents we pay. We make our landlords fat and juicy by the increases
5 that you pass year after year after year enough. Please, for this year, a rent
6 freeze and for fat, juicy landlords like mine with a billionaire CEO, rent
7 rollback. Thank you.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I'll now call up Sandra Mitchell, Ondina Reyes [phonetic],
9 Brittany Lanzano and Lena S [phonetic].

10 Ms. S. Mitchell: Shalom. My name is Chaplain Sandra Mitchell and I am an ordained
11 minister of the gospel of Jesus the Christ. I've been here before and I've
12 tried to prick your conscience and your heart about you reap what you
13 sow. And some of the -- those at the previous rent guidelines board, they
14 have been complaining about property taxes and they are crying. So I
15 profess to write. You reap what you sow. Our city is, is, is the epic center
16 of the world. What we do here in New York City, other cities follow
17 through. Please don't destroy our communities, our city and other cities
18 by making the wrong choice. We know that these elected officials only
19 care about their career, but we have put them in office, trusting them, what
20 they said they promised. But you know what, I stand on the promises of
21 God himself. I'm a six-time stroke survivor because of the wrong
22 diagnosis and wrong medication and I have had two strokes in my
23 apartment because of no heat. No heat, no water. And we have pipes
24 bursting through the walls like the Titanic. And now we don't know who
25 we're paying rent to because we have so many violations that they have

1 changed their name. So they split the violations. These shenanigans of
2 these property owners, they are not landlord. The only lord I know is the
3 Lord that keeps me alive. I am getting ready to go back to college, to, to
4 Lehman College, Lehman College, Lehman College. I am proud of
5 Lehman. I'm proud to be able to stand here to say that I am a student. But
6 right now I am displaced from my apartment at 253 East 181st Street by
7 181st Street Ventures Incorporated. We don't even have a name. I am
8 displaced because of the rats. The rats come and talk to me and have a
9 conference with me every day. And there's one particular rat that he has
10 gray in his hair and he sits there and he looks at me like, where's the
11 breakfast? They're not afraid of me. They can feel my fear. And one got
12 on my neck and sat there for a little while. He didn't bite me. But what
13 I'm saying is that, you know, I have a flowery way of talking, but this is
14 not, this is not right. What happens to me will happen to you if you don't
15 make the right choice. Mamdani is not my savior. Jesus the Christ is my
16 savior. He spread his blood. And we are spreading our blood. We are
17 dying in these apartments. We have three deaths. No water. No heat. I
18 had hypothermia and my medical team was telling me, get out of there, get
19 out of there now. But now I'm out of there because of the rats. My cat
20 said, no deal, I'm out.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Sandra.

22 Ms. S. Mitchell: So please, we're demanding a rent freeze. We're demanding for you to do
23 the right thing or it will happen to you.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

1 Ms. Lanzano: Hello. Good evening. My name is Brittany Lanzano. I'm a lead advocate
2 for CUNY CARES. I'm a graduate. I'm a graduate of Hostos. I'm also,
3 right now, currently a Lehman student. Okay, I graduate next year.
4 Alright. I aspire to help the community as the best leader I can be. But I
5 fear I can't focus on this plan because rent is going up and conditions
6 aren't getting better. Okay. I got two children right here. Seven and four.
7 I'm a single mother. Okay. It's very scary looking at that lease every year.
8 Okay. People like me that's in school trying to be like you doing great
9 things for the community, trying to be someone better, I'm fearing my life,
10 how I'm gonna eat? How I'm gonna live? How -- if I'm gonna have that
11 roof over that head because just like rent went up, did our salaries go up?
12 No, right? I just was talking to a lady outside, she said since -- when -- the
13 last time the Knicks was in the finals, rent went up 200%. 200%, that's
14 crazy. I want you to know there's 250,000 students in CUNY. Okay.
15 250,000 students in CUNY and all of -- 25 out of 26 schools is commuter
16 schools. That means that we live in the city. We live here. And how can
17 we go to school full time? I want to graduate. How can we go to school
18 full time and focus without knowing if I got a roof over their head? I don't
19 know that, roof over my head. Do I got to choose to get a meal, go to
20 class or to feed my family and get a roof and make sure that my rent is
21 being taken care of? The subsidies, my, my landlord, he doesn't fix
22 everything on time, but they're allowed. So I have one question for you.
23 Are there eligibility in place for housing conditions before being able to
24 raise rent? Right? Like, is rent automatically raised but salaries aren't?
25 Right? So, are we looking at these landlords asking them, hey, is this, this

1 and this in order? Now you're eligible to raise the rent. That's, that's my
2 suggestion. Thank you so much for your time.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I'm going to call up Ondina Reyes, Lena S, Alyssa Wright
4 and Anderson Contresus.

5 Ms. Wright: Good evening. My name is Alyssa Wright and I am the campus
6 supervisor for CUNY CARES at BCC. Every single day I service
7 students who are constantly going through ongoing housing crisis. For
8 instance, I had about five students this week alone who graduated. They
9 actually walked out with their diploma but they can't even enjoy it because
10 they're worried about losing their apartments and they have court dates
11 afterwards. So, I urge you guys to freeze the rent. Freeze it because we
12 want our students to succeed and do better in life. I'm currently a CUNY
13 student. I go to Lehman College. I'm studying political science to be a
14 lawyer. And, you know, it would be a lot easier to get through school if I
15 didn't have to worry about how I was going to pay my rent. Thank you.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

17 Mr. Contresus: Good evening, y'all. My name is Anderson Contresus. I'm here
18 representing the Bronx at Hunts Point, born and raised my whole life.
19 Also, I'm not wholly here to represent just the Bronx. I'm here to speak
20 about all of New York. I'm getting tired of the fact that when y'all talking
21 about freezing the rent and nothing is done. When I'm getting tired of
22 hearing healthcare is not being helped, I have asthma. I have done three
23 surgeries serving this country. I had lung surgeries back-to-back while
24 being awake. I had nothing to have been done for me. No one has done
25 nothing for me. You guys didn't even freeze the rent during the time. And

1 I have 11 godchildren I take care of all over New York, Queens, Bronx,
2 Manhattan, Brooklyn, Staten Island. You name it, I have them all. And I
3 still take care of them. I have a third of a lung still here breathing. I don't
4 know how I'm still here, I was supposed to be dead. That's what the
5 doctors told me. I had a 70% chance of being dead on the operation table.
6 Yeah, I'm still here, fucking all the odds. But I'm here not just
7 representing to talk about me. I'm here talking about a little testimony.
8 I'm talking about all the -- what the tenants have done. I had two older
9 landlords that were taken out by the people. They haven't fixed nothing. I
10 had to have my dad help me fix the pipe in the ceiling that had been burst
11 and that's sewage water into our own living room. My godmother's house,
12 thank God we had it fixed before then. People broke in. We had nobody
13 to fix the locks in the house. You know what he did, the landlord,
14 previously, last year he did? Use the same lock so the same people could
15 rob her again. They didn't do nothing. We changed the locks ourselves.
16 We had to have the own people who lived in the damn apartment building
17 fix them ourselves. So, I got a little quote -- I got a little, little bar for y'all
18 about the Bronx. The Bronx doesn't need flames to burn. Neglect,
19 poverty and broken promise could get the job done just as well.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I'll now call Perez Rosalba [phonetic], Abdullah Gudiabi
21 [phonetic], Yusuf Sacco [phonetic], Paco Ruiz and Nelson Diaz. I'm
22 gonna call those names once more. Perez Rosalba, Abdullah Gudiabi,
23 Yusuf Sacco, Paco Ruiz and Nelson Diaz.

24 Ms. Unknown: We need the translator.

1 Mr. Diaz: Good evening. My name is Nelson Diaz. Greetings to the members of the
2 board. I'm here in the name of CASA. And we're here with a group of
3 people that come to -- come before you every single year trying to support
4 each other and deal with the rent increases that we deal with every year.
5 As you've been able to tell by many of the stories tonight, they are very
6 diverse. I, of course, include myself among those. And every year we
7 come before you in the hopes that we will get that yes from you that
8 serves as a type of prize letting us know that we won't get a rent increase
9 this year. And every year we leave with a no in our pockets. Today, we
10 would like to ask you to please give us a yes, that you give us, that you
11 give us a yes and a no to the increase, that you throw us a lifeline to deal
12 with these increases, that we can set our heads down on our pillow in
13 peace tonight. I've been paying rent in this country for the past 27 years.
14 I've dealt with every single one of those increases. I'm 63 and practically
15 retired. I can't really deal with these rent increases and face these
16 increases as I was able to when I was much younger. And this is why we
17 asked you this evening to please afford us a, a rent freeze. Much like we
18 heard before, the term stabilize is thrown about a lot, but really our rent is
19 not stabilized, as one of the gentlemen mentioned in the audience earlier.
20 And if you're going to continue increasing the rent, we're going to call it
21 disability. Yes. Why? Because every year it increases, and it's
22 consistently going up, it's stable in that. But there's never a year where it
23 actually decreases. Because if it were to go up and down, we could then
24 call it stabilized. It is -- it's become stable as it goes down and as it goes

1 up. But it's only consistently stable as it goes up. Tonight we beg of you,
2 please freeze the rent. Thank you.

3 Ms. Mitchell: I'm going to do a final call of these names that I called earlier. Please
4 come to the microphone if you're here. Ondina Reyes, Lena S., Jose
5 Sandoval, Carmen Rangel, Diosa Perez Cruz, Lady Trejo, Rosanna Colon,
6 Stephanie Acosta, Brian Soriano Mateo, Sarah Pasabongi, Rylan Zahir,
7 Valentine Lopez, Wadia Perkins, Ray T, Leslie Enoffe, Michelle
8 Hemphill, Barbara Lopez, Perez Rosalba, Abdulla Gudiabi, Yusuf Sacco
9 and Paco Ruiz. Well, thank you so much for everyone who came to
10 testify. Do I have a motion to adjourn? Yes, please. If I called your
11 name, please come up, please come up.

12 Mr. Ruiz: Sorry.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Yes.

14 Mr. Ruiz: My name is Paco Ruiz.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Welcome.

16 Mr. Ruiz: Sorry.

17 Ms. Mitchell: No, take your time.

18 Mr. Ruiz: I mean, take my one minute and 50 seconds. I am with a group called La
19 Juventud Unida por la Independencia. And it means Youth United for
20 Independence. Independence of what? Independence of Puerto Rico.
21 That also means taking care of house here because the Bronx has the most
22 Puerto Ricans out of any borough in New York City. So, what's
23 happening to Puerto Ricans here? I want to backtrack a little bit, actually.
24 Thank you for your time, Rent Guidelines Board, a.k.a. La Junta of New
25 York City, just like we have La Junta in Puerto Rico. Because what

1 people who live -- those of us who live and rent in New York, what we
2 experience is a direct mirror to what we experience on the archipelago of
3 Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans have been leaving our archipelago to come
4 here because we have been displaced from coast to coast, from La Playa to
5 El Yunque, from the Lower East Side to the deepest parts of the Bronx, to
6 Staten Island and Brooklyn and Queens. Nobody here, except for that one
7 lady, was like, yeah, I'm doing good, please increase the rent. So, what on
8 earth could possibly sway your, your, your perspective on, yeah, maybe
9 it's a really good idea to increase the rent. I'm mindful of my time. I'm
10 going to try to get to a couple really key points as quick as possible.
11 Thank you. I'm going to speak directly for a moment to the general public
12 representatives of the board. Tenant representatives, you guys, you know,
13 hopefully you represent the actual interests of the thousands of people that
14 come to every single one of these meetings. Owners, I don't know. I have
15 never imagined that I could ever owned property as someone who grew up
16 in the projects, in the barrio. What does that even mean? So, hopefully
17 you have heard what the people have said and said, and said, and said.
18 General members, I believe that would be Sina Sinai, Lauren Melodia,
19 Brandon Mancilla, Arpit Gupta. Sina Sinai, you apparently belong to a
20 group called the Jain Family Institute. Consider the families that your,
21 your organization may or may not, you know, be representing, what their
22 interests are. You're not necessarily a representative of landlords. You're
23 not a representative of tenants. But you have some kind of background
24 there with families. There are so many families here today. Lauren

1 Melodia, you own a home in Bed-Stuy somewhere. You're apparently an
2 economist. I want to quote you.

3 Ms. Mitchell: And Paco, we're technically past time.

4 Mr. Ruiz: I know, I'm sorry.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

6 Mr. Ruiz: I will, I will wrap. This will be my last, my last bit, truly. Lauren, you
7 said, expanding and implementing rent across the country is the best way
8 to keep landlords and rents or, excuse me, expanding and implementing
9 rent control across the country is the best way to keep landlords and rents
10 in check. You said that in 2021. And then in 2022, you said, given it's
11 importance, it cannot be left to the wins of the private market.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Paco.

13 Mr. Ruiz: Thank you for your time. But just remember what you have been said.
14 Remember the president. Freeze the rent now.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Paco. And thank you to everyone who came to testify. Do we
16 have a motion to adjourn?

17 Mr. Unknown: [unclear] [04:31:36].

18 Ms. Mitchell: Second? Thank you. We'll see you in Brooklyn on Thursday.

CERTIFICATE OF ACCURACY

I, Gabriela Rodriguez, certify that the foregoing transcript of 2026-057588 for the audio file *June 8, 2026 RGB Bronx Public Hearing - Moston, R. (Job ID 756398)* was prepared using the required transcription equipment and is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Certified By



Date: August 10, 2026

Geneva Worldwide, Inc.

228 Park Ave S - PMB 27669

New York, NY 10003