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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

PUBLIC MEETING
OF THE
DIRECTORS

Brooklyn Public Hearing
Thursday, June 11, 2026
7:00 p.m.

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

9 Mr. Gupta: Present.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Brandon Mancilla.

11 Mr. Mancilla: Present.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Lauren Melodia.

13 Ms. Melodia: Present.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Sagar Sharma.

15 Mr. Sharma: Present.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Sina Sinai.

17 Mr. Sinai: Present.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Christina Smyth.

19 Ms. Smyth: Present.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Adan Soltren.

21 Mr. Soltren: Present.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Maksim Wynn.

23 Mr. Wynn: Present.

24 Ms. Mitchell: And Chantella Mitchell. I'm present. Let the record show that we do have
25 a quorum. The next meeting of this board will be a public hearing to

comment on the proposed guidelines, June 16th at Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway and 95th Street in Manhattan from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Anyone who wants to comment on the proposed guidelines at a public hearing must sign up to speak. People wishing to speak at the public hearings can pre-register in advance either through our website, nyc.gov/rgb or by calling 212-669-7480 from 9:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Pre-registration ends at noon on the business day prior to each hearing. For those who do not pre-register for the hearings, registration is also available at public hearings from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on June 16th. All of our public hearings will be live streamed and Spanish interpretation will be provided at each hearing. We also accept comments on the proposed guidelines outside of our public hearings. You can submit written, audio and video comments for the board to review through June 16th. Instructions on how to submit these comments will be available on the board's website by e-mail at askatrgb.nyc.gov or by calling the RGB. Our final vote on the guidelines will take place on Thursday, June 25th starting at 7:00 p.m. at El Museo del Barrio, 1230 5th Avenue at 104th Street in Manhattan. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. The public may attend in person or may watch the vote live by streaming it on the RGB's YouTube channel. To find out how, visit the RGB website, call the RGB at 212-669-7480 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Before we proceed tonight, I'd like to go over the rules and procedures for those who are testifying before the board. If you wish to speak, you must confirm with the RGB staff at the registration table located near the entrance of the hall. Speakers will not be called if they have not checked in at the

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

1 cooperation and the board is looking forward to hearing your comments
2 regarding the proposed rent adjustment guidelines. And I will now turn it
3 over for translation. Thank you. So, we'll now start the testimony and
4 we'll start with Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, followed
5 by Senator Stephen Chan, followed by New York City Council Member
6 Shahana Hanif.

7 Mr. Reynoso: Thank you so much. Good evening. I am Brooklyn Borough President
8 Antonio Reynoso and I'm here with a simple message on behalf of
9 Brooklyn tenants. Freeze the rent. While New Yorkers have been
10 struggling more than ever to put food on the table, Mayor Adams raised
11 rents by 12.6% throughout his term, the highest rate increase since the
12 Bloomberg administration. For the past four years, rents have gone up
13 faster than inflation, further squeezing the pockets of New Yorkers when
14 the city should be -- should have stepped up to provide relief. We're all
15 here today because Brooklyn tenants are struggling. It feels impossible to
16 find an affordable home or even afford the home you have. More than
17 half of New York City households are rent burdened, meaning that they're
18 paying over 30% of their rent and about 33% are paying more than 50% of
19 their income to rent. We're talking about hundreds of thousands of
20 Brooklynites, including regulated tenants, who are forced to choose
21 between paying rent on time and affording basic essentials. Evictions are
22 up. Shelters are on the brink. None of it is sustainable. It shouldn't come
23 to a surprise that families who are leaving the city at the fastest rate are
24 people of color, making between \$32,000 a year and \$65,000 a year. To
25 top it all off, President Trump's policies aren't helping. We have wars that

1 are completely unnecessary and illegal that are making costs even higher
2 for families, and federal cuts that are threatening programs that create
3 affordable housing and help keep families in their homes. His economic
4 agenda has resulted in more inflation, more income inequality, higher
5 unemployment and reduced access to public benefits. In fact, after so
6 many increases, what we really should be talking about is a rent rollback.
7 But given -- but on a technical level, it seems like the board is only
8 considering an increase of zero to 4%. So, I call on the Rent like -- Rent
9 Guidelines Board to choose zero for both one and two-year leases.
10 Freezing the rent-regulated units is one of the most important tools we
11 have to fight rampant gentrification and displacement taking our cities.
12 Our communities are counting on you. Thank you and don't forget to
13 spread love is the Brooklyn way. Thank you.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Senator Stephen Chan and the New York City Council
15 Member, Shahana Hanif.

16 Mr. Chan: Good evening. My name is Senator Steve Chan representing South
17 Brooklyn. So, you know, I'm an immigrant coming from humble
18 backgrounds and I've been a tenant of slumlords but yet, I've also been a
19 small property owner. So, I've been on both sides of the fence. And I
20 have -- while I have no rent-regulated apartments currently, I did take it up
21 on myself to not have raised one of my tenants' rent for 19 years and I'll
22 tell you why, because I know she's living on Social Security. I know that I
23 want to provide her with a home that is comfortable. So, as long as I can
24 get by, I took it up on myself to do even better than what the RGB has
25 done in the past. I have not raised her rent for 19 years. But I come from

1 a district of homeowners, people building the American dream. And I
2 understand as a small property owner, how difficult it is with the insurance
3 rising, with the rising cost of utilities, as well as property taxes over the
4 years. And now, maintenance is also going up. So, I understand I can
5 view this from both sides of the aisle. And during the COVID pandemic, I
6 still had to pay my mortgage while nobody paid me rent. So, that was
7 especially hard times. So, you know, while we talk about rent freezes, you
8 know, I also want to talk about property tax freezes and utility cost
9 freezes, as well as insurance cost freezes. You know, who's the, who's the
10 worst landlord in New York City? It is the city of New York. We have
11 thousands of -- thank you. Thank you. We have thousands of units in
12 NY-- in the NYCHA system that are vacant. How about we bring those
13 units back out for our veterans that need it, our seniors, our low income
14 folks? How about that, right? How about -- and -- thank you, I am a U.S.
15 Marine, I am. So, let's bring some housing back to the market. And when
16 the RGB makes the decision, I hope you think with both sides in mind, the
17 -- some small property owners are really struggling. I, for one, I'm barely
18 getting by with my small property. I, I could -- if my property was
19 regulated, I could sure use an increase. Thank you very much.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

21 Ms. Hanif: Good evening members of the board. I'm Council Member Shahana Hanif
22 and I represent Kensington, Park Slope, Gowanus, and surrounding
23 neighborhoods. I'm here on behalf of the rent stabilized tenants. I
24 represent, including residents of 63 Tiffany Place, 270 15th Street, 110
25 Baltic Street and countless others across District 39, to urge you to freeze

1 rents on both one and two-year leases. For nearly one million New
2 Yorkers, rent stabilized housing is the last line of defense against
3 displacement. It allows seniors to age in place, immigrant families to
4 build a future, and working class New Yorkers to remain in the
5 communities they have sustained for generations. Yet, tenants are being
6 squeezed from every direction. The cost of groceries, childcare,
7 transportation, healthcare and utilities continue to rise. Families are
8 cutting back, taking on debt and making impossible choices just to stay
9 housed. Another rent increase would push many closer to the brink. Over
10 the last four years, rent stabilized tenants have endured repeated rent hikes
11 while New York City's affordability crisis has only worsened.
12 Meanwhile, many continue to live with chronic repair issues, neglected
13 maintenance and deteriorating building conditions. Tenants are asking a
14 fair question. If rents keep going up, why aren't living conditions
15 improving? The reality is simple. There is no affordable housing waiting
16 for these tenants if they are priced out. A rent increase today means more
17 instability, more displacement and more New Yorkers at risk of
18 homelessness tomorrow. The Rent Guidelines Board has the authority to
19 provide meaningful relief. It has voted for rent freezes before and the
20 circumsta-- circumstances facing tenants today demand that it do so again.
21 A full rent freeze would keep families in their homes, preserve the
22 diversity of our neighborhoods and affirm that New York City remains a
23 place where working people can afford to live. I urge you to vote for a
24 full rent freeze on both one and two-year leases. Thank you.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. And I apologize in advance if I mispronounce anyone's name.
2 I'll be listening for the correct pronunciation when you come up. So, the
3 next folks I will welcome to come towards the microphone for their
4 testimony are Anello DeGuida, Charlene Davis, Leslie Jones and Kevin A.
5 Jones. Hello?

6 Mr. DeGuida: I just want to say hello to everybody and thank you for coming out here.
7 This is a good thing that should be done. And I understand the landlords
8 and the tenants, they both have their issues but I blame this all on the city
9 and, and the electoral officials. They should do more to alleviate these
10 problems, especially with landlords and tenants, again. The fact of the
11 matter is, and I can contest and I'm sure all the landlords here can contest
12 that over the past 20 years, actually five years, it's been very, very difficult
13 to manage property in New York. A lot of my constituents don't even
14 want to buy or don't even want to manage property. They'd rather leave it
15 open -- not open, they'd rather leave it vacant because aside from this, the
16 ten-- the landlords have issues with trying to remove tenants that are
17 professional tenants, I call them. And along, along with that, and again,
18 I'm not bashing the tenants. I'm not an anti-tenant. I'm just saying, it's not
19 a fair game here and the city should do more to alleviate the problems on
20 both parties, meaning the tenants and the landlords. I think the city -- I
21 mean, my taxes, and I'm sure all -- everybody else here that owns property
22 have gone up 25% in the past two, three years, along with insurance, along
23 with water bill. In fact, the water bill went up three times in the past two
24 to three years. It's, it's, it's very hard to manage property. And along with
25 that, you know, you have tenants that take advantage of the system and

1 they sit there and they don't pay rent for a year and, and the court system is
2 totally against the landlords and it's not fair. So, I think the city is the
3 culprit here. The city should do much, much more to, to alleviate these
4 problems between the tenants and the landlords. It's not the tenants, it's
5 not the landlords. It's the city. What's that? No, no, no, no.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

7 Mr. DeGuida: Can I just say something? They're all bad landlords and I agree.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

9 Mr. DeGuida: Alright. Thank you.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Char-- Charlene Davis, then Leslie Jones.

11 Ms. Davis: Good evening, everyone. My name is Charlene Davis. You would have
12 to turn this way to look at me. I'm in a motorized wheelchair. I'm over
13 here. Hello. I came here because I feel it's very important for my voice to
14 be heard. Too many people that are disabled, that are in wheelchairs
15 cannot afford their rent. You have to decide whether or not you can buy
16 your cancer medication or to pay your rent. These landlords, some of
17 them are great landlords and some of them are not. I think that the board
18 needs to look at it and say to themselves, look, we need to make some
19 changes because you have landlords out there that are slumlords and these
20 slumlords is what's making it bad for everyone else, not only the tenants
21 but for the other landlords that do the right thing. So, I am asking and
22 requesting that you please give us a break. One day, you may be in a
23 wheelchair. One day, you may be someone who has to live on a fixed
24 income and it's not easy. You have people that are eating cat food in order
25 to make ends meet and this shouldn't happen. I shouldn't have to go out

1 and stand on long lines to get food because everything is so expensive.
2 No one really takes the time to think about those that are in wheelchairs
3 that have to depend on other people. It's very hard, it's very difficult and
4 greed is one of the biggest sins. These landlords need to be held
5 accountable for not taking care of their properties. If you took care of
6 your property, then you wouldn't have so much repairs and stuff to make.
7 Vet your tenants better. I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to
8 speak. Thank you so much and please, do not increase these rents. Give
9 us a break.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Leslie Jones. We, we need the microphone, just one moment.

11 Ms. Davis: The mic is here. I have the mic up here.

12 Ms. Jones: Good evening. I'm a 70-year-old small property owner of a six-family
13 rent-stabilized building in Brooklyn. The building has been in my family
14 for over 60 years. I retired last year and find myself struggling more than
15 ever to maintain and operate my building efficiently with the continued
16 rising cost of oil, electric, water, insurance, property taxes and repairs that,
17 yes, some tenants do break up and destroy, as well -- as far as the
18 regulatory requirements, which are causing undue stress and financial
19 hardship for me. I've been supplementing my building with my personal
20 income by maxing out my credit cards, compensate to operate the cost
21 along, along with my children. To date, I owe my April 26th property
22 taxes. I owe \$6,000 in oil bill but I refuse to pay the city because I
23 provided heat for my tenant because I am the good landlord, okay? Now,
24 my tenants pay when they pay. They pay -- they don't pay a late fee. I
25 don't take them to court because I spend too much money in court so it's

1 not worth it. I have decent tenants. I got rid of all the bad ones. The good
2 ones that I do have, I try to work with them. So, I am the exceptional
3 landlord, okay? Now, as far as the city, I would think it's the city's
4 responsibility to pro-- to provide real affordable housing. These tenants in
5 here, you make \$200, \$300, \$400 a week, every two weeks. You're not
6 going to be able to afford the affordable housing that you claim that you're
7 providing, \$1,200, \$1,300. You cannot do that. Zero from zero adds up to
8 nothing but you're promising these people like, oh, we're going to freeze
9 the rent, but where -- how am I going to pay my oil bill? How am I going
10 to pay my property taxes? Now, winter is coming. There's a war going on
11 in Iran and I already notified HPD and my tenants, if you want oil, you're
12 going to have to chip in because I'm not going to be able to supplement,
13 you know, to be fair and honest. Right now, my rents are \$1,100, \$1,200,
14 \$1,400, \$1,500. That's it. And like I said, I collect rent, maybe if I'm
15 lucky, every three months.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Next, please come up, Kevin
17 A. Jones, Humberto Lopes, Isaac Kirk-Davidoff.

18 Mr. Jones: Hi, my name is Kevin Jones. I'm a former president of the tenants
19 association of our Rent Stabilized Building in Washington Heights, Upper
20 Manhattan. I'm here to speak in favor of a rent freeze and to try to do that
21 with some context, some context and nuance. I'm not here to call out
22 avarice and greed. We all recognize those vices in ourselves. We have
23 regulating agencies, guardrails and the focus on the long-term as our
24 foundation. For instance, we have the Public Service Commission that
25 regulates Con Edison's rates for the benefit of the public and for private

1 profit. Home rental and landlord and individual ownership are
2 conservative and long-term by their nature. I think we should seek to
3 understand the complex problem of how housing prices got so high, so
4 unaffordable and out of sync with our incomes and profits, whether
5 landlords or tenants or small owners. We can start, I think, by looking at
6 the new ethos that became so prevalent after the 1970s because I'm old
7 enough to remember that. I witnessed it every-- everywhere in college
8 economics, accounting and banking classes, job interviews, the media,
9 Milton Friedman's col-- weekly column and Newsweek magazine, if you
10 remember. And it was called Reaganomics and supply-side economics
11 and it is the precursor to our current economic regime. A lot of you don't
12 know that or don't recognize we are loo- -- this is the framework. It has
13 always -- and this regime has always hated rent regulation and other
14 regulation. As a practical and pragmatic matter, many business leaders
15 know that their businesses and profits, their employees and their
16 customers need affordable housing, infrastructure, and institutions. A rent
17 increase would be a weak response to help, would be a weak response to
18 help distressed landlords.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Thank you, Kevin.

20 Mr. Jones: Thank you.

21 Mr. Lopes: Hi, I'm Humberto Lopes. I'm a landlord in New York City for over 40
22 years. Thank you. We're going to get the same response back.

23 Ms. Mitchell: We're going to hear from everyone.

24 Mr. Lopes: Okay. We're going to get it back. Most, most of my rents are going to go
25 up. If you give me 2%, the highest tenant's going to pay me for the year is

1 another hundred -- \$150 to \$250 for the whole year of an increase. That's
2 not an increase. My oil went up, the taxes -- this is all a repetitious thing.
3 Your guideline already gave us a proposal back in April of exactly what
4 happened that you should have a minimum of a 5% increase to keep our
5 doors open. So, if you get this [unclear] [00:30:10], it's not enough
6 money. And, and most of these tenants, they get their rent paid by
7 government agencies. 90% of them are paid by government agencies. So,
8 when they get a government agency, it's not coming out of their pocket. I
9 don't understand that. I don't get it. No way. A lot of my tenants get paid
10 by the government. So, their increase is going to get passed on to Section
11 8, to SNAP, all these other agencies that are out there. They're not coming
12 out of their pocket. They still get their check for their food and everything
13 else. So, I'm a little concerned of what people are saying that don't add up.
14 Even my, even my social -- even my senior citizens get their rent paid by
15 government.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Everyone will have their time.

17 Mr. Lopes: So, the, the, the \$150 to \$200 I'm going to get for the 2% increases from
18 the average of my tenant doesn't cover the oil bill that's coming, doesn't
19 cover the water bill that's coming up. It's not happening. It's -- there's a
20 spread. I'm not going to sell it because I worked for it. You'll have no
21 place to live but we're gonna hackle you when you get up here. The whole
22 idea of this, that your mathematics were done in April to tell us a
23 minimum of 5%, so 2% is way below what we're going to have to afford
24 to keep these buildings running. So, the whole idea of this, this, the, the
25 taxpayers will not happen so keep it going.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Everyone will have their time.

2 Mr. Lopes: Oh, we're going to fuck you. We're going to get you. Oh, you're going to
3 see the noise when you come up. So, the whole idea of this, the
4 mathematics to it don't add up by your own standards. Your own
5 standards that you have are already over.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

7 Mr. Lopes: We should be getting 5%.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

9 Mr. Lopes: We'll settle with the 2%.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

11 Mr. Lopes: All these guys are loud and shooting. They didn't allow me to speak. It's
12 not fair.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

14 Mr. Lopes: No problem. We'll wait for them to come up.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Next, Isaac Kirk-Davidoff.

16 Mr. Kirk-Davidoff: Good evening. My name is Isaac Kirk-Davidoff. I'm a proud member of
17 the Crown Heights Tenant Union. I live in Crown Heights with my
18 girlfriend and our two cats in a one-bedroom state rent stabilized
19 apartment. I get paid by the government because I work for the New York
20 City Parks Department. And for the last four years, my boss's rent
21 guidelines board set my rent to increase higher than my wages. Thanks to
22 rent stabilization, tenants can stay in their buildings for decades. They can
23 tell you stories about the rent strike 20 years ago, the time ten years ago,
24 there was a wedding in the backyard, the time their bathroom flooded

1 while they are out of town. We can tell the story of decades of
2 displacement in our neighborhoods.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Isaac, could you pause for just a second? I actually cannot hear the
4 testimony. Everyone will have their time. I really cannot hear him.
5 Thank you, Isaac.

6 Mr. Kirk-Davidoff: Settle down. We can tell the story of decades of displacement in our
7 neighborhoods. In data, that means the RGBs increases since 1990 were
8 over 30% higher than would have been required to maintain inflation
9 adjusted profits because more often than not, this is a board seeking to
10 legitimize the drive for profit, to set terms on how much blood to squeeze
11 from a stone. It's hardwired into the board's law, which asked the board to
12 consider such factors as a prevailing and projected real estate taxes, sewer
13 and water rates, maintenance costs, government fees, cost of fuel and labor
14 costs. Sewer rates are named here but HPD violations aren't. Insurance
15 rates are named but not the number of calls to 311. Real estate taxes but
16 not the number of eviction filings. You're getting a story of years in
17 profits told over our own story of decades and lives. When rent
18 stabilization is under attack, we need this body to do more than it was
19 designed to do. I urge the members of this board to think in the long-term,
20 to change the data you request, for public members to really represent the
21 public interest, not pretend to mediate between tenants and landlords. We
22 need a body that will stand with us, not above us. And if you're thinking
23 of the long-term, think in terms of lives, of neighborhoods, you'll see that
24 we need nothing less than a rollback of rent. As a tenant, I understand the
25 feeling that your job is not to rock the boat, to just say, it could be worse.

1 Last week, one of my neighbors said it. We should just be thankful for
2 what we have. We don't need to call 311. We don't really deserve better.
3 We've all heard this. But tonight, I want to remind you when I say, when I
4 hear this that you're not alone, there's more tenants here than landlords.
5 And if we stick together, we can do more than keep things from getting
6 worse. We can make them better. We can roll back the rents.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Next, I will call Jovian Lopes, Holden Taylor and Salvatore Taormina.

8 Mr. Lopes: My name is Jovian.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Jovian, thank you.

10 Ms. Lopes: Yeah, of course. So, when I first heard the term violation, it sounded to
11 me like it was something egregious and detrimental to a tenant's health, a
12 tenant's, a tenant's well-being in an apartment. But oftentimes, violations
13 could be as simple as a light being out in a hallway or the batteries in a
14 smoke machine being broken or even like the, the little spring thingy in
15 front of a door in the front of a building. So, when I saw a number of 84%
16 of New York City landlords have less than five violations in their building
17 per year, that could be as simple as, like I said, a light being out, you
18 know, or a -- the batteries being out in the smoke detector. So, what that
19 tells you is that majority of landlords do want to work with tenants. They
20 do want a healthy and safe environment. And then to put that into
21 perspective, NYCHA has 600,000 violations, so much so to the point that
22 they changed the name to Open Work Order because the violations were
23 too much. So, us here, I'm not a landlord myself but I represent them, us
24 as landlords, we're here because we want to come to the table, because we
25 want to speak, because we want to find what is compromised.

1 Compromise is half happy. We want to find a common ground. But my
2 main worry is, because things are getting so one-sided, us not being
3 allowed to come to the table is going to leave a power vacuum. That
4 power vacuum is going to be filled by a real Nazi, a real fascist, a real
5 dictator. And then when that time comes, they're not going to want to
6 come to the table. So, we're asking now, as people who do want half
7 happy, to have a seat at the table and speak about these things with us
8 being there. We're against landlords. They belong underneath the gulag.
9 We don't represent that. I, I yield my time.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Holden Taylor.

11 Mr. Taylor: Thank you. I don't, I don't know what that was about. My name is Holden
12 Taylor. I'm here as a member of the Crown Heights Tenant Union, as well
13 as -- shout out, as well as a member of the 9 -- 3940 Prospect Place Tenant
14 Association. We voted unanimously to demand a rent rollback and I'm
15 going to tell you a few reasons why. Rent rollback. Shut up. Can we tell
16 the bald guy to shut up? My two buildings, my two buildings together
17 have 411 open violations right now, including 166 Class C, which means
18 not like what that guy was talking about. Those are immediately
19 hazardous, right? My landlord currently owes HPD \$180,000. A couple
20 of months ago, the city fined him \$2.17 million. In the last two years,
21 there have been eight tax liens put on our two buildings. In the last six
22 years, we've had seven different building managers. In that same time,
23 we've had 11 different supers. And we currently don't have any super,
24 right? During that time, our building has flooded four times, including
25 one summer where there was sewage in our courtyard for four months

1 straight. Shame. Seth Miller [phonetic], my landlord, he makes \$1.3
2 million off of our two buildings each year. So, the ten years that I've lived
3 in those buildings, he's collected \$13 million. And I recently found out
4 that he just, he just bought a new, a new home in Palm Beach. And the
5 way I found out is because I was Googling him and he put his old Palm --
6 he put, he put his old Palm Beach apartment up for, up, up -- listed and it's
7 listed at \$4.75 million. It's advertized to have complete Italian imported
8 porcelain floors. I'm not jealous. Despite all of this, right, despite all of
9 this, my, my landlord has filed 30 non-payment and holdover cases against
10 my TA in the last three years. We've had zero evictions. Our landlord has
11 never hired anyone to clean the interior of our building once in the ten
12 years I've been there. My TA cleans it monthly. My TA put together a
13 garden in the backyard and last month -- a few months ago, my landlord
14 hired goons to uproot every single plant that we planted.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

16 Mr. Taylor: We pour value into our homes and our landlord just sucks it dry like a
17 vampire.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Holden. Salvatore Taormina, then Esteban Giron, then Jude
19 Jean Paul Bernard.

20 Mr. Taormina: My name is Salvatore Taormina. I'm a real estate agent. I'm also a
21 landlord. I specialize in foreclosures and while others will discuss
22 inflation reports and data reports and expenses, I'm here to tell you how --
23 when housing policies collide with economic reality. So, when I walk
24 through foreclosure properties, I don't see a building. I see a dream that
25 failed. I see a family that worked for decades, bought property, paid taxes,

1 maintained the building and believed ownership would create a better
2 future for their children. Then something happened. Expenses rose faster
3 than income. A tenant stopped paying. An eviction dragged on. Property
4 taxes increased, fines piled up and eventually, the numbers no longer
5 worked. Every week, I see the warning signs, rising operating costs,
6 housing shortages, aging buildings, lengthy eviction process and fewer
7 reasons for owners to invest in rental housing when costs continue to rise
8 while revenue is restricted, investment declines, housing quality suffers
9 and housing supply shrinks. What concerns me most is that many
10 proposed solutions seem focused on creating more restrictions rather than
11 addressing the underlying economics. New York has seen this before. In
12 the 1970s when economics stopped working, buildings fell, fell into
13 distress, owners walked away and neighbors paid the price. This should
14 not be about -- this should not be about landlords versus tenants,
15 communities need both. If owners fail, tenants suffer. If tenants suffer,
16 neighborhoods suffer. The warning signs are clear. The question is not
17 whether we can afford to act. The question is whether we can afford not
18 to. I ask the board to look beyond the politics, look at the economics and
19 approve an increase that reflects the reality housing provides every single
20 day. Thank you.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Esteban Giron.

22 Mr. Giron: Good evening, my name is Esteban Giron. I'm a member of the Crown
23 Heights Tenant Union, CHTU, political director of Tenants PAC and a
24 proud rent-stabilized tenant. It's good to see many of you again.
25 Welcome. This is my 13th consecutive year testifying in front of this

1 board as part of the Rent Justice Coalition. Back in 2014 when we joined
2 the coalition, my tenant union was demanding a five-year rent freeze. At
3 the time, policy experts and politicians labeled us as unserious, idealistic
4 and delusional. There had never been a rent freeze before, and the
5 Bloomberg-era rent hikes had left tenants hopeless. Within a year of
6 making that radical demand, tenants got the first of three rent freezes from
7 the De Blasio RGB. That which was not viable was now viable as fuck.
8 And it might have never happened had tenants not spoken it into
9 existence. That's why roughly half of the tenants who have testified over
10 the past week have testified for a rollback. And why, before he ran for
11 office, Zoron [phonetic] was arrested outside of the final vote, also
12 demanding a rent rollback. He knew as we do that it was impossible, that
13 it's -- that's impossible until we make it possible. Now let me be clear, a
14 rent freeze would be a huge win. Those three rent freeze, those three rent
15 freezes we won gave us some room to breathe. But until the rent is
16 actually reduced in a meaningful way, tenants will remain in crisis as we
17 did after all three of those rent freezes. This board and the general public
18 need a true understanding of the extent to which landlords have been
19 overcompensated over the course of decades. I call on this board to
20 commission a study that puts that overcompensation in the context of
21 tenant struggles, our wages, our budgets, the health effects of barely
22 getting by, of ending up in Housing Court, getting verbally abused by
23 some landlord attorney. There are brilliant economists sitting at this table,
24 and so I know this is something doable. To my fellow tenants who will
25 testify tonight, don't forget that we, the tenants of this city, elected a

1 mayor who is listening and who appointed a board who is listening. Go
2 big. Fight for what we deserve. Power concedes nothing without a
3 demand. Tell these folks what you really want, not what you were told
4 was the best that you could get. As for me, I respectfully demand a rent
5 rollback. Thank you.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Jude Jean Paul Bernard, then Khunsa Amin and then Daniel Borrero.
7 Please make your way towards the mic.

8 Mr. Bernard: Good evening every-- good evening, everyone. My name is Jude Bernard.
9 I am a first generation Haitian immigrant. My mom and my dad came to
10 this country legally with a dream. My mom cleaned hotel rooms for that
11 dream. My dad drove a cab for that dream. When I was 25 years old,
12 instead of hanging out and buying sneakers with the money from my job
13 at the telephone company, I worked my tail off working overtime to buy a
14 first property in Bed-Stuy. Fast forward a couple of decades, and my
15 parents' dream came true. I am allegedly a millionaire on paper, you
16 know? But in reali-- but in reality, I have equity, I have equity in a
17 property that makes me look good on a balance sheet but the rents from a
18 decade ago just don't cut, cut it with the continuous expenses.
19 Unfortunately, unfortunately, the math just doesn't math. And I
20 understand that people are suffering and I understand that it's a tough time.
21 But what we really need to do is figure, figure out a way from the math to
22 math, whether it's, it's freezing rents, whether it's freezing property taxes,
23 whether it's freezing expenses. Somehow, someday, we have to find a
24 way to work together and make this work because at the end of the day, I,
25 I now have a decision to make, whether I'm going to pull equity out of, out

1 of my property so that I can cover the -- so that I could cover the, the
2 maintenance that needs to happen or I have to raise the rents. One way or
3 the other, somebody's going to lose. We need to do something better.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Khunsa Amin.

5 Ms. Amin: Hello, everyone. My name is Khunsa and I'm a rent-stabilized tenant
6 living in Crown Heights. I'm also a proud member of the Crown Heights
7 Tenant Union, as well as the Union of Pinnacle Tenants, both of which
8 voted for a rent rollback. Today, I stand before you with 37 cents in my
9 bank account as I await my next paycheck. Yesterday, I had \$1.87 but I
10 had to move \$1.50 to my OmniCard to be able to go to work. Turns out, I
11 had a negative 50 cent balance and I had only \$1 on the card now, not
12 enough to swipe through. I stood there trying to not break down, trying to
13 keep breathing, trying to figure out how money could appear out of thin
14 air so I could go to a job that was barely keeping me alive and together in
15 this world. The other day, my SNAP was cut to \$1.21 a month because of
16 the new draconian rules, as if that is enough to survive, much less be
17 healthy. Every day, the money I make disappears somewhere else, to
18 health bills from years of chronic illness, to Con Ed bills that keep
19 climbing, to repairs that I have to pursue on my own because my building
20 is owned by a slumlord who is charging me \$25.75 for a dilapidated one-
21 bedroom in Crown Heights. \$25.75, let me say that again. I am rent-
22 stabilized at \$25.75 per month. We're now going to get into how this is
23 clearly an overcharge and I am fighting it tooth and nail with my unions
24 and tenant association, and I am not alone in what I describe. I stand here
25 as myself, yes, but also to speak to my neighbors and community who

1 have stories similar to or even horrific than mine. To give any increase to
2 us is, frankly, asking us to die. That is not an exaggeration. That is not
3 hyperbole. It is simple truth. As someone who has been close to that
4 because of these burdens more times than I care to count in my 30 years of
5 life, to only freeze the rent is not enough. It does nothing to solve years of
6 increases in all these areas of our lives while our wages stay the same.
7 The only answer, if the board actually cares about the human lives in this
8 equation, is to roll back the rent starting with a modest 12%, the same
9 exorbitant rate landlord-loving Eric Adams gave us collectively in his
10 sorry stint as mayor. Anything less than a rollback is complicity and
11 suffering of millions of tenants across New York City and we will
12 remember each and every one of you that co-signed. Thank you.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Next, we will have Daniel Borrero, followed by Carol Blake [phonetic]
14 and Lav Bauta. Please make your way toward the mics.

15 Mr. Borrero: So, my name is Daniel Borrero. I've been a real estate investor and
16 landlord since 1989 and I am going to be one of the few people that you
17 may agree with that I think we should have a rent rollback. But I also
18 believe real estate taxes should be rolled back, water and sewer charges
19 should be rolled back, as well as insurance should be rolled back and that
20 should be passed on to the tenants. However, however, this system is
21 broken and this system is broken because of our political leaders. The
22 system is broken. It doesn't, it doesn't give any relief to landlords, nor has
23 it given relief to the tenants. The truth of the matter is that this is a basic
24 economics 101 situation. If you were to lessen the rules that are
25 ridiculously imposing upon developers, and I am not a developer, but I did

1 sit on the Mayor Advisory Board under Bloomberg when we fought, the
2 community fought to change the old brig bet-- on Park Ave -- between
3 Park Avenue and Flushing and Vanderbilt and Claremont, we changed
4 that to, to affordable housing. And one of the biggest things that I fought
5 for, I actually sued the city, was because they didn't want to give any of
6 those properties, those affordable housing to the very same people that
7 stood, that stood there when the community was not so good and now re-
8 gentrification was happening. They wanted to kick those very same
9 people out. There's got to be some common sense and it needs to start
10 with our poli-- political leaders. The system that we have today is not
11 working for either the tenants, nor is it working for the te-- -- for the
12 landlords. We don't work for free and, and landlord should -- rather,
13 tenants should not have to live in a place that landlords are not willing to
14 live in themselves, alright? So, -- but neither, but neither can I work for
15 free. Listen, and I did live in my buildings at one point but I, you know,
16 eventually -- right. But the point is, this system is not working. I didn't
17 forget about any, I didn't forget about anything. I lived, I lived -- again,
18 and I didn't agree with that either. Take care, everyone. Thank you.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Carol Blake. Is Carol here? Okay, Carol, we'll come back. Lav Bauta.

20 Mr. Bauta: Thank you. Thank you to the board. I certainly do not envy you. You
21 have a difficult job. I've watched testimony from the boroughs and there's
22 little I can say that hasn't been. The empty dinner tables, the dying
23 American dream, it's clear that the math of New York City housing is
24 fundamentally broken. But the crisis is much worse. The money owners
25 once relied on to perform costly repairs came from historically low

1 interest rates. Those are now gone. Values are gone. Properties will
2 never appraise at the level of existing loans. You can forget about new
3 money. It's all gone. If the goal is massive losses, bank ownership and
4 resetting basis, then let's continue down this path. But everyone should be
5 aware that this comes with pain, lots of pain. There's a strong likelihood
6 the level of service you have received until now has diminished. But I
7 want you to know that it will only get worse. There's no city agency or
8 nonprofit that can help. In theory, they will. But in execution, they will
9 fall short, simply not enough bandwidth. The root of the issue here is
10 resources. Every property on earth requires some level of resources. It
11 doesn't care where it comes from but it is required. And the properties
12 here in New York require a lot of resources. There's a mandate to freeze
13 the rent but the resources to operate the properties must come from
14 somewhere. Our \$50 billion budget is now \$130 almost, yet everyone is
15 worse off. How? We need to help our fellow New Yorkers. Freeze the
16 rent or provide subsidy for the properties. We believe housing is a right
17 like everyone in the room but we should be funding it publicly as a right
18 and we're not doing that at the moment. We risk losing extremely
19 valuable housing stock that millions depend on. Everyone is fighting for
20 our own interests but let's not lose sight of the fact that we're on the same
21 team. Remember last night, right? Everybody was cheering for a Knicks
22 win. I want everyone in here to win. I want you to win for your own
23 salvation. We don't need a loser to have a winner. That's called a zero-
24 sum game.

25 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

1 Mr. Bauta: It serves all of our interests to win together and it's in the mass.

2 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Rohit Chandan, then Erik Todman and
3 then Danie Pecoraro.

4 Mr. Chandan : Hello, board members. My name is Rohit Chandan. I am also a member
5 of the Crown Heights Tenants Union and I am here to fight for our rent
6 rollback. In 2011, the Court of Appeals in the case Casado v. Markus held
7 that the RGB has a mandate to remedy inequities. The reason I bring this
8 up is the Eric Adams administration did not use independent data for their
9 12% rent hike. It went up past the Consumer Price Index and they did not
10 look at any hardship applications by the DHCR to see how many landlords
11 were suffering. The reason is, there were none. No hardship applications
12 for lack of profit was approved in 2023-2024. Despite this, they still
13 provided a 12% increase. A rent freeze is a step in the right direction but
14 this board has a mandate to remedy the harms by the Eric Adams Rent
15 Guidelines Board and issue a rent rollback. Simply put, a rent freeze is
16 not enough when the rents are already too high. I would urge the Rent
17 Guidelines Board to look at the Consumer Price Index, look at the fact that
18 no landlords have really applied or approved for hardships, and use this
19 data to come up with a fair rent rollback. Thank you.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Erik Todman?

21 Mr. Todman: Is this, is this thing on?

22 Ms. Mitchell: Yes.

23 Mr. Todman: All right, all right. So, I'm Erik Todman. Unlike some of the paid actors
24 that are here today, I'm an actual guy. Hold on, hold on, hold on. I'm not
25 a landlord so don't get it twisted. I actually work with landlords because

1 my dream in being in America here, right, being a first-born Haitian
2 immigrant, I learn from these guys and I work with them in hopes of
3 aspiring to own a property myself. But -- no, no, no, you can't -- you can
4 say boo all you want. I think the problem in this room is a lack of
5 knowledge, right? Most of these people in here who are yelling these
6 things, one, have never done any type of owning of any property, right?
7 They, they've never -- they don't know any basic forms of math to actually
8 understand how to understand, right? So, a lot of these people in here, I --
9 listen, listen, listen, it's okay. Do you own a property? Okay, see, that's
10 the issue here. None of these people have ever been in a position. I'd like
11 to thank the people here who take the time to teach me about owning a
12 building, right? I've been with them for the last year to six months and I
13 honestly, because of them, I would never want to own a property here in
14 New York, right? Now, before -- I don't, I don't, I don't t-- I wouldn't be a,
15 I wouldn't be -- do you own a property? Do you own a property? You
16 cannot answer the question. Most of the people here are paid actors.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Everyone will have their time.

18 Mr. Todman: No, no, no, no, listen, it's simple. If you own a property, raise your hand.
19 You own a property? One out of how many? That's the issue here. And
20 before I leave, I'd just like to say that man, Humberto Lopes, is having
21 something called Landlord for the Day. So, if you feel like you can do a
22 better job, come holler at us. We'll give you one of his hundred buildings
23 and we'll see what you do with it. Thank you for your time.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Danie Pecoraro?

1 Mr. Pecoraro: Hello. Thank you, Madam Chair and to the board. My name is Danie
2 Pecoraro. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. I've been a
3 tenant in the building since 2017, a rent-stabilized tenant the last dozen
4 years. I'm here to call the Rent Guidelines Board to vote for a rent freeze
5 on one and two-year leases. Being in a rent-stabilized apartment has
6 allowed me and my spouse to remain in this city, the city where I was born
7 and raised in, the city my spouse came to for college and career. I'm in the
8 nonprofit field. My spouse is in publishing, both of which have homes in
9 New York and neither of which is particularly lucrative. Without the
10 lifeline of a stabilized rent which has kept our rent under 30% of our
11 monthly income, I don't know if we'd be able to call this city and our
12 neighborhood home, caught between a high threshold for co-ops and a
13 high rate, high-- high-cost and market-rate rent. Surprisingly, with the
14 conversation behind me to my, to my left, there hasn't been a lot in terms
15 of the top-line stats, which I'm sure you're aware of. Landlord profits up
16 30% the past three years, even with those who over-leveraged pre-2019,
17 rents up 12% the last four years. Meanwhile, by my con-- my contrast,
18 my take-home pay has gone up 6% in that time. You know, and, and you
19 don't even have to listen just to me. I mean, I was reading Crain's New
20 York Business. Yes, I'm a tenant who reads Crain's New York Business.
21 I don't have to tell you, noting that Moody's, the, the rating agency, the,
22 the -- yes, the scourge to the left, Moody's saying that the impact of a rent,
23 rent freeze would be limited. To the landlords who are here pre-2019 who
24 over-leveraged, yeah, you made a bad bet. You made a bad bet. There's
25 no shame in that. But the issue is, why do we have to be the ones to bail

1 you out of that bad bet? If there's concern in terms of being over-
2 leveraged, you could work a job like every other working stiff here in this
3 room as a tenant. In conclusion, bottom line here, this rent freeze is not a
4 radical shift. We've seen it before and it's a market correction to make
5 sure we can all stay in the place where we call home. Thank you.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Tami Nelson, then Angeliki Cintron and then Edward Klein.

7 Ms. Nelson: Hi, Madam Chair, members of the board, tenants, landlords, everyone.
8 My mom always taught me that if you're going to state a problem and
9 complain, you should also come with a solution. So, that's what I come
10 with today, in the hopes that we can somehow resolve some of this fury
11 that we all have. I firmly be-- I firmly believe that there are good
12 landlords and good tenants and really bad landlords and bad tenants. And
13 I feel like the good ones should embrace each other and figure this out and
14 somehow govern the bad ones. So, we've heard, we've heard some stories
15 tonight about slumlords, about bad landlords. I want to share some stories
16 with you about tenants. Tenants who, after, after you've spent \$10,000 to
17 renovate a unit and welcome a new person, they come in and trash the
18 unit. Tenants who come in and feel they don't need to pay. They just
19 simply are entitled to a free place to live. A tenant who comes in and
20 doesn't pay, in a recent situation I experienced, a tenant who comes in and
21 doesn't pay, beats his girlfriend to a pulp every day and when you try to
22 evict him, feels it's okay, when you try to evict him, feels it's okay to put
23 his hands on you. Let me leave you with that. Let me talk about my good
24 tenants. Tenants who have lived there for ten, 15 years, who take
25 communal responsibility for the building and we help each other and we

1 work together and their rents are not raised. So, my point here today is, if
2 there are solutions that can benefit the good landlords and the good tenants
3 who love this city and want to maintain really high-quality housing stock,
4 how can we do that and what can the city provide? Can they provide
5 capital, as some of the landlords have suggested?

6 Ms. Mitchell: You will have your time. The board --

7 Ms. Nelson: And some of the landlords --

8 Ms. Mitchell: -- needs to be able to hear the testimony. Continue.

9 Ms. Nelson: Whether it's capital that's gained from the property taxes that we pay that
10 can go out to small and medium-sized landlords to help them maintain
11 their properties, rezoning or the allowance for different uses, mixed uses
12 of our properties, maybe that's a solution.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

14 Ms. Nelson: Thank you.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Angeliki Cintron. And after, we'll have Edward Klein and Christopher
16 Licameli, please make your way towards the microphones.

17 Ms. Cintron: My name is Angeliki Cintron and I'm a teacher and organizer with the
18 Party for Socialism and Liberation and a member of the 1834 Caton
19 Tenants Union, which is a rent-stabilized building in Flatbush. I've heard
20 a lot of logical fallacies coming from the landlords today. Even though we
21 live in a city where the median tenant is rent-burdened, which means they
22 spend over 30% of their income on rent, landlords every year still argue
23 that they're the ones being bled dry, that we as tenants need to pay more to
24 cover their bills. But what landlords treat as a business is our livelihoods.
25 I pay 43% of my paycheck on rent and where does that money go? I can

1 tell you my building is not going towards replacing the faulty boiler that
2 leaves us with chronic water shutoffs every winter. It's not going towards
3 consistent pest control. It's not going towards repairing the elevators,
4 which are constantly broken down. In fact, my landlord is being fined on
5 a daily basis because he refuses to build ramps in our lobby to help people
6 get to the elevator. I have neighbors who wanted to be here today but
7 couldn't because of how difficult it is for them to leave the building. But
8 rather than make the repairs and fix the problem, our landlord is satisfied
9 hemorrhaging money through fines. It's clear to me that these issues were
10 never about not having the money. It's about patterns of calculated
11 landlord neglect intended to force tenants out of their apartments. Okay,
12 now I want to talk to you people. It's incredible that a rent freeze is
13 actually on the table, which is a possibility that only happened because of
14 decades and decades of tenant organizing. But we have to go even further
15 than that and demand a rent rollback. We under-- we have to understand
16 that the system is fundamentally skewed in favor of landlords and it must
17 be replaced. Each year, we're expected to come here and beg and share
18 sob stories in front of this unelected board. They claim they take our
19 testimonies into account but there are no formal systems of accountability
20 to the public. I want us to dream bigger than this. We deserve as tenants
21 to be the ones democratically determining the status of our rents. We
22 deserve a world where housing isn't even a commodity that can be used to
23 generate profit but is a human right guaranteed to each person.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

25 Ms. Cintron: And I hope you'll join me in fighting for that world.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. And before Edward starts, we appreciate
2 everybody coming, and we want to hear everyone's testimony. We cannot
3 hear the testimonies when there's a lot of back and forth so I would just
4 ask that everybody please respect that everyone came out tonight to be
5 heard. Thank you. Edward Klein, followed by Christopher Licameli,
6 followed by Renee Collymore. Please make your way toward the mics.

7 Mr. Klein: Thank you very much. Thank you very much, [unclear] [01:04:10]
8 members of the Board. My name is Edward Klein. I have my own law
9 firm in New York City for the past 36 years, employing 25 members of
10 our society. I've also been a landlord for the last 36 years employing
11 another 20 people in various roles. I want to summarize today some of the
12 city's unfunded mandates, getting to the economics of it and the fact that
13 landlords are forced to pay this each year without any recompense. I, I
14 practice law also, by the way. Thank you. I would like the extra time. I
15 cannot speak over this. I cannot speak over this.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Please continue.

17 Mr. Klein: I cannot speak over this.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Please continue.

19 Mr. Klein: Thank you. Local law 11, the facade law, you must repair your facade
20 every, every, every five years if your building is an excess of six stories.
21 Nobody gets paid anything for that. Local law 97, you're all familiar with
22 that. It's brand new. Environmental law, you must retrofit your buildings.
23 You've got to meet the zero -- I call for extra time. It's not, it's not how
24 you -- not how humans treat each other. Forgive me. It's simply not.

1 With the zero carbon emissions policy of New York City, that has to be
2 met by 1940.

3 Ms. Mitchell: We need to hear every testimony.

4 Mr. Klein: Thank you. Lead paint, landlords must eliminate lead paint as well in
5 every apartment with children, under six, and other units as well. No
6 money is paid for that. Backflow preventer, landlords must install a
7 \$15,000 backflow preventer in every building. No representation, nothing
8 back on that either. Bed bug infestation, the tenant comes in with bed
9 bugs, the landlord has to remove that as well. Air conditioning, this is a
10 big one, ladies and gentlemen. This doozy was just added three months
11 ago by the city council. Every single tenant is entitled to free air
12 conditioning in his house, in his apartment. Yeah. Maybe we should,
13 maybe we should have, maybe we should have free hair shampoo and fast
14 service as well.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

16 Mr. Klein: Every tenant -- ma'am, ma'am, with all due respect, a minute was taken
17 away. With all due respect, I'm entitled to an extra time, really.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

19 Mr. Klein: Real estate taxes, insurance, water and sewer bills, fuel costs, they all go
20 up.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you.

22 Mr. Klein: With all due respect, that is not courteous, ma'am. Half the time was spent
23 with hearing this. We're entitled to be heard as well. It's wonderful,
24 wonderful to give one side the opportunity to chant and they're very happy

1 to hear it but we have to be given the opportunity to speak as well also.
2 When I get --

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

4 Mr. Klein: When I get 40 seconds instead of two minutes, that's disrespectful, ma'am.
5 Total disrespect, ma'am, with all due respect --

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. We have to move on.

7 Mr. Klein: Yeah, yeah, I'm glad you have to move on. Just wanting you to get --
8 [CROSSTALK]

9 Mr. Klein: Happy to hear it, ma'am. Happy to hear it but I'm entitled to finish my --

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. We have to move to the next testimony now. Thank you.
11 Christopher Licameli.

12 Mr. Licameli: My name is Christopher. I am from the Party for Socialism and
13 Liberation. I am also a tenant eviction defense attorney for a legal
14 services organization here in the city. A rent freeze would not be possible
15 without New York City's tenant organized movement. If we win an end to
16 rent hikes, it will only be because of years of struggle by tireless tenants
17 and organizers. The RGB is an unelected body whose only purpose is to
18 protect the lords of the lands, bottom line. Decades of data from the
19 RGB's own self-analysis indicate that we have overestimated the lords of
20 the land's expenses by 1% annually. Because rent hikes compound, this is
21 not a small error. It is a permanent multibillion-dollar theft of wealth from
22 tenants to these leeches on our society. The board has the authority to
23 implement a rollback. They know a rollback is overdue and yet, it has
24 never happened. Year after year, the working-class folks who make New
25 York City run flock to these hearings but we have a right to determine the

1 cost of the city, the, the cost of the city we love is sustained. But we have
2 no real power. We are forced to testify about poor living conditions in
3 front of an unelected board that has voted for outrageous rent hikes for
4 decades. It is time that we fight for strict income-based rent caps, that we
5 repair our public housing after decades of neglect, and that we build new
6 public housing. We are told that if we have issues, to bring them to
7 Housing Court. But if you've ever been there, you know that the judge is
8 elected by a majority advisory council that is pro-landlord, then appointed
9 by a pro-landlord chief judge to uphold laws written by the lords of the
10 land. There is no real justice in New York City Housing Court. The
11 system is designed and working exactly as it is supposed to.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

13 Mr. Licameli: I have a client that is 82 years old, that has over 300 mice in his apartment
14 for 12 years.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

16 Mr. Licameli: Clients that live with mice --

17 Ms. Mitchell: We have to move to the next testimony.

18 Mr. Licameli: -- for 23 years. 68% of the roach -- my clients live with roaches and mice.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Folks, we're going to take a moment to
20 reset and I'm going to re-go over the rules that we went over at the top
21 because I know a lot of folks are here and just got here. Thank you for
22 your testimony. We know a lot of you are here and we want to hear from
23 as many of you as possible in the allotted time. Each speaker will have
24 two minutes to speak. We really cannot hear up here as the board
25 members when there's a lot of speaking. So, we ask that you would please

1 be respectful of everyone who came to speak tonight and allow us to hear
2 because we want to hear from as many people as possible in your allotted
3 two minutes. Thank you. And now we'll have the translation. Thank you.
4 So, I will now welcome Renee Collymore, followed by Judy Martinson,
5 followed by John Tsevdos, followed by Jeremy Kaplan. Please make your
6 way towards the mics if I called your name.

7 Ms. Collymore: Good evening. Thank you. I am Renee Collymore. I'm so glad to be
8 here. And thank you to all of you tenants and landlords alike. My mother
9 came from King Street, South Carolina and she had a sixth grade
10 education and she worked and lived on her family's farm. My father's an
11 immigrant from the British West Indies and he came here to make a better
12 life. They met, they got married and they were able to rub two pennies
13 together to buy a brownstone home in Brooklyn. At the time, I think it
14 was for \$6,000. And when I tell you, when I look over and I see people
15 like this crew right here, and when you say and tell us to sell our homes as
16 a black family, you don't know how hard it is. Somebody got a problem
17 with that? Yes, that's right. Now see, so when you boo the Crown
18 Heights Tenants Union, I've stood with you many times fighting for
19 people's homes, fighting against landlords because in my house, we were
20 taught to make sure that you take care of the tenants more than your own.
21 You --, we take care of our tenants. So, some of you over there have even
22 been to my house, eaten dinner in my house so don't even try to, you
23 know, to act like, you know, all of that. So, I'm here to say, because see --
24 and, and so when you tell a black family, just sell it, just sell it, we -- no,
25 no, excuse me, sir, Mr. Privilege, let me explain, let me explain

1 something to you. When my mother and my father came here, they
2 weren't even given. The banks were not, the banks were not giving black
3 people's loans. I was not as fortunate as some of you sitting in this room.
4 My mother had to scrub the toilet bowls of people like you, Mr. Crown
5 Heights Tenant Union. My mother had to make sure that she had to cook
6 for people like you, just so that she could make \$25 an hour.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

8 Ms. Collymore: \$25 a week.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

10 Ms. Collymore: So, let me explain something to you. So, when you talk that type of talk,
11 that's a lot of racism when you say sell our homes as a black family.

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

13 Ms. Collymore: And when you say sell it, --

14 Ms. Mitchell: We have to move to the next testimony.

15 Ms. Collymore: -- if I sell, sell my house, there are people who will not have a place.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Judy Martinson.

17 Ms. Martinson: Hello, hi, my name is Judy and I am 63 years young. I'm born and raised
18 in New York City and I am here because I love my city. Okay? I love all
19 the different people. I love the different neighborhoods, the different
20 languages, the different nationalities. I live in a rent stabilized building.
21 My landlord, my landlord is a bad landlord. He is number 47 on the 100
22 worst landlords list, which means he's in the top 50. Okay? He has had
23 the building taken from him and put in receivership twice. He filed for
24 bankruptcy and let our building -- we have no super. We have squatters
25 down there. We have a tenant doing the garbage because of the rats

1 outside, the mice inside. We have either cockroaches or water bugs,
2 depending on the season. They don't cohabitate. I am born and raised in
3 New York. I can't move. I can't afford it. I am disabled. I'm not in rent
4 stabilization because I take things for granted. I'm born here and I'm 63.
5 Okay? I'm not out for a free ride. But if you continue to raise the rent like
6 Adams did in the last four years, and my building has become a
7 nightmare. This past winter was cold. Remember when the ice froze and
8 wouldn't melt, we had no heat.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

10 Ms. Martinson: We have seniors on fixed income. We have children with disabilities and
11 learning. We have single mothers.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

13 Ms. Martinson: We have all different races, creeds, colors.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

15 Ms. Martinson: We are coming together. I'm not anti-landlord, although I don't think it's a
16 job.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

18 [CROSSTALK]

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. As we move to the next testimonies, I
20 would ask if everyone could please direct your testimony to the board.
21 And when you finish with your testimony, please make your way back to
22 your seat. Next, next, we'll have John Tsevdos, Jeremy Kaplan and
23 Assemblyman Lester Chang, John Tsevdos, Jeremy Kaplan and
24 Assemblyman Lester Chang, in that order.

1 Mr. Tsevdos: Hello. My name is John Tsevdos. My family and I immigrated here when
2 I was three years old. We are not people of -- thank you, thank you. We
3 are not people of large means. We only own one rent-stabilized building
4 in Brooklyn. At the time, we were able to make money and make a
5 reasonable living. Since 2019 HSTPA laws, we have been devastated. It
6 is extremely hard to raise the rents and turn a profit. While some in the
7 crowd may revel in hearing that, stop and think. If we can't cover our
8 expenses, who gets hurt? Both the tenants and the landlords because we
9 need money for maintenance and upkeep. I also suffered in this past
10 brutal winter with several frozen and busted pipes, causing thousands of
11 dollars in damages. The mayor has promised a rent freeze when the board
12 is supposed to be independent but not a freeze on property taxes, a freeze
13 on water or a freeze on the lunatics in this crowd. Thank you.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Jeremy Kaplan followed by Assemblyman Lester Chang.

15 Mr. Kaplan: So, I'm a, I'm a rent-stabilized tenant for about 15 years. I've gone to a
16 number, I've gone to a number of these hearings and I have to say that this
17 is the worst one that I've seen. The fact that you let tenants who are
18 standing outside -- I was outside for at least an hour. There was elderly
19 tenants waiting outside for over an hour. I almost saw someone faint.
20 And then I see all these landlords. Wow, they showed up for the first
21 time. I've been to so many ones and guess what, 30 landlords showed up
22 and again 150 tenants showed up but there's hundreds of more people
23 outside that you kept waiting outside. It's a disgrace. This mayor is
24 supposed to be a tenant-led mayor. This board is supposed to rectify the
25 situation of the years and years. The Rent Guidelines Board, how was it

1 created? By landlords. Why do you think they have the same
2 representation as tenants? Tenants are two million people. Landlords are
3 a few thousand people. Why is the interest of a few thousand people more
4 important than two million people? If this was a representational body
5 and this is, and this is what Zoran needs to do, this is what we need to
6 really ask for, is a rent rollback first. And, and also, at the bare minimum,
7 it was di-- a disgrace for them to play these theatrics around even talking
8 about a rent increase, because Zoran had never mentioned anything about
9 that at all. He -- many of these people who voted for him were rent-
10 stabilized tenants. And, and guess what, landlords, landlords opposed this
11 administration and oppose this administration right now, currently. And
12 what I find so fascinating is, we're still dealing with these false
13 equivalencies of their profit interest is more important than two million
14 people's homes and it's not the case at all. So, I'm tired, I'm tired of seeing
15 the stats again and again and again, and hearing about their profits. We --
16 everybody knows their profits are great. Everybody knows that New York
17 real estate makes a shit ton of money. So, let's not pretend that they, they
18 bring out a handful of starving landlords.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

20 Mr. Chang: But at the end of the day, most of these people are corporate landlords,
21 like my landlord. My landlord was on the worst landlord list.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Assemblyman Lester Chang,
23 Assemblyman Chang.

24 Mr. Chang: Thank you, thank you. Sorry about that. I'm Assemblyman Lester Chang.
25 I represent South Brooklyn. Please calm down, folks. Let everybody

1 have a chance to talk. I've been a lifelong tenant. I never owned a home,
2 never have. I'm a senior. But also, I represent both sides and I have to
3 thank the Board, all of you sitting in here is a very tough job. I have to
4 thank you very much from the bottom of my heart, sitting here and
5 listening to both sides, for both sides of the, both sides of the aisle. So,
6 what I really want to propose is fairness on both sides because we need
7 landlords, we need tenants because tenants support the landlord.
8 Landlords also invest in their ho-- in, in building their houses. Now, it's
9 not reality, you can't have raises and also at the same time, there's costs
10 also involved too. Just two days ago, water board, the Water Commission
11 Board have increased by 6% for water. And last year, it was about less
12 than 3.5%. So, those costs have to be borne. At the same time, I
13 understand the tenant, like myself, I've been a lifelong tenant, I never
14 owned a home. I know what's like to, to, to rent. And I also, at one point,
15 I didn't have any money but there's a balance on that. And I have to thank
16 the board to think about fairness on both sides. Whatever decision you
17 make, and I hope you just look at both sides of the issue, both landlords,
18 their operating costs and the tenant need to have staba-- stable rental and I
19 have to thank you again. That's all I have to say and thank you for, for
20 listening to my time. Thank you for all.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

22 Mr. Chang: Especially for all of you here, we need balance, we need fairness on both
23 sides, really, we need because both -- you can't have one or the other. You
24 can't have one. So, think about this, folks. We are, we are not enemies.

1 We have to live together as, as a New Yorker. We need both sides. But
2 thank you, thank you again. Thank you.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. The next names I will call up are Ying
4 Chan, Brad Lander and Elisa Jastre-- Jastremski. And again, I ask that
5 you please direct your testimony towards the board and then, make your
6 way to your seat when you're finished. So, Ying Chan, Brad Lander and
7 Elisa Jastremski, please make your way toward the mic.

8 Ms. Chan: Hi. Good evening. My name is Ying Chan. My family owns a rent-
9 stabilized building, 12 unit. Last few years, it's been very difficult to keep
10 up with the expenses. The property tax went up, insurance went up. The
11 maintenance went up a lot because it's a very old building. I, I do work. I
12 work more than 40 hours a week. I work a lot more than you, I'm sure.
13 There are times -- there are months that we couldn't keep up with the
14 expenses. My brothers and I work extra hours to help my parents to pay
15 for the expenses. And I'm really upset that people here are telling me to
16 get another job. I already have a job. You want to buy it? You want to
17 buy a rent-stabilized building that no one is buying? My tenants are not
18 buying, that's why they are tenants. I'm going to ask the esteemed
19 members of the board, please, if you're not going to increase a reasonable
20 rent to help with the housing providers, please consider two different
21 categories of people. The small landlords, they are struggling.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

23 Ms. Chan: There are programs for tenants but no program for the landlords.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

25 Ms. Chan: As -- thank you.

1 Ms. Mitchell: We'll have Brad Lander, then Elisa Jastremski.

2 Mr. Lander: Good evening, Chair Mitchell and members of the Rent Guidelines Board.

3 Thank you for your service and thanks to everyone who came out tonight.

4 Your voice matters. I'm Brad Lander. I'm a candidate for Congress and

5 former New York City Comptroller and Council member. And I'm here

6 tonight because the board's decision matters enormously to the 2.4 million

7 New Yorkers who live in rent-stabilized housing. As former Comptroller,

8 my job was to look at the data and I want to tell you, the data this year

9 points clearly toward a rent freeze. The 2026 Income and Expense Study

10 found that net operating income rose 6.2% from '23 to '24 for buildings

11 with at least one rent-stabilized unit and the share of buildings classified as

12 distressed fell. Despite the shouts tonight, real estate in New York is good

13 business. This is not a sector in crisis. On the other hand, median renter

14 income grew by just 1.8%, adjusted for inflation and more than half of

15 renter households are rent burdened. Two thirds of low-income rent-

16 stabilized tenants cannot make ends meet or just get by. Meanwhile, over

17 the past several years, rents in stabilized buildings have risen nearly 9%.

18 Tenants have absorbed increase after increase. Mayor Mamdani ran on a

19 rent freeze and I was proud to support it as well. The board now has the

20 opportunity, and I believe the obligation to deliver it. For the small

21 percentage of buildings facing genuine distress, the new block-by-block

22 pan -- plan includes valuable new preservation tools, lower property taxes

23 on rental housing, expanding J51, lowering the cost of insurance. That's

24 the right approach, not a broad brush stroke that raises taxes on desperate

25 tenants. I will leave you with this short poem.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

2 Mr. Lander: Our -- you want -- listen to the poem. Our mayor Muslim, our rent freeze,
3 soon Knicks in five, a damn good June.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

5 Mr. Lander: Thank you very much. Appreciate you all. Have a good night.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Elisa Jastremski. We need to hear every testimony. Elisa Jastremski,
7 followed by Matthew Gugliotta.

8 Ms. Jastremski: My name is Elisa Jastremski. I'm an attorney who formerly represented
9 clients in eviction proceedings in Manhattan. I want to begin by giving
10 the board some facts. In 2020, JustFix, a nonprofit that provides free
11 digital tools to help tenants released a report finding that larger landlords
12 were significantly likely -- more likely to own rent-regulated buildings.
13 The da-- the data further showed that corporate owners were listed for
14 89% of union -- units in New York City's buildings registered with HPD.
15 With that context in mind, I want to share some more facts about my own
16 experience in Housing Court. Over my years in housing -- representing
17 nearly a 100 clients, I only had one case in which a landlord was not some
18 form of business entity. I also want to bring up -- I wasn't going to bring
19 this up, but my parents are small landlo-- small landlords and they -- it is a
20 significant burden for them, but you know what? They choose to do that
21 and they could sell their property any time they want for a profit. Now,
22 for my clients that I represented, a 100% of them were individuals and a
23 100, 100% of them were one crisis away from facing eviction. The stories
24 of how they ended up in Housing Court were different but not unique. Job
25 loss, funeral costs, a health crisis, a single working mother trying to pay

1 rent on one income. No one should be one emergency away from
2 becoming homeless. I'm not asking you to solve the housing crisis today
3 but I want you to prevent it from becoming worse. Lower rent means
4 more affordability. The landlords are not the heroes in this story, the
5 people of New York are. This is not just a rent issue. There's a huge
6 wealth disparity issue in this country. What side of history do you want to
7 be on? Do you want to help the wealthy become richer or you want to
8 keep New York -- working New Yorkers in their homes? Do you want to
9 keep children in their households? Do you want to keep -- let seniors age
10 with dignity?

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

12 Ms. Jastremski: Do you want to do what's right? Put people over profit.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Matthew Gugliotta.

14 Mr. Gugliotta: Good evening, Madam Chairman and the board. Thank you for having
15 me. I am the son and grandson of immigrants. I'm born and raised in
16 Brooklyn, Park Slope, South Slope and my grandfather first bought this
17 rent-stabilized building over 40 years ago. We live in the same building.
18 Most of my family has lived there and we want to keep our building. And
19 the tenants that live in our building appreciate the types of landlords that
20 we are. But the fact of the matter is that the affordability crisis is affecting
21 us all. All, all things are up, taxes, gas, utilities, water. And in order for
22 us to maintain a building, we need to have some sort of an increase, 1%,
23 2%, modest increase. But I implore the board, I implore the board to put
24 aside politics and look at the data and actually make a reasonable decision

1 that, that both tenants and landlords can live with. Thank you for your
2 time.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, we will have Tinnyqua Williams, Sophia Hepheastou,
4 Matthew Zemanick and Gregory Tsougranis.

5 Ms. Williams: Good evening. My name is Tinnyqua Williams and I am a Brooklyn
6 resident living in a rent-stabilized housing lottery apartment. Thank you
7 for the opportunity to speak tonight in front of the board. Affordable
8 housing is not an abstract policy for me. It is my home, my stability and
9 the foundation that allows me to keep serving my community. In addition
10 to working full-time in public service, I also take on advising work to earn
11 extra income and I still worry about being priced out of the city I serve. I
12 am also the head of my household and my two young adult children still
13 live with me as they work towards stability of their own. This year, my
14 two year lease renewal increased by 4.5%, raising my rent by more than
15 \$120 per month. That increase comes on top of rising costs for utilities,
16 groceries, transportation and other basic necessities. Housing lottery and
17 rent-stabilized apartments were created to provide long-term affordability
18 and stability but when rents continue to rise year after year, that stability
19 begins to erode. I recently completed my Master's degree while working
20 full-time. Stable housing played an important role in making that
21 achievement possible. I know I am not the only New Yorker whose
22 opportunities and future depend on being able to remain affordably
23 housed. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the board to adopt the
24 lowest possible increase or a rent freeze for lease renewals this year.
25 Thank you for your time and consideration.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Sophia Hepheastou? Is Sophia here?

2 Ms. Hepheastou: Yeah, I'm here. Good evening, members of the board. My name is

3 Sophia Hepheastou. I'm a native New Yorker, born, raised, educated and

4 living here. I also work in the private sector and I and my family self-

5 manage severaly -- several fully rent-stabilized pre-war Bronx buildings

6 that have been family owned and operated for over 40 years. We draw no

7 salary and no dividends. These buildings operate, these buildings operate

8 at a loss and a zero percent increase would make this housing impossible

9 to sustain. Take one building in Tremont, 21 units, fully stabilized, built

10 in 1924. We are legally entitled to about \$29,139 a month but in this low

11 income market, we actually collect closer to \$23,000, roughly \$285,000 a

12 year. I already have a job. We draw -- additionally, our 2025 operating

13 costs exceeded \$345,000. We are operating at a net loss of nearly \$60,000

14 this year alone, and it's not an outlier. Even excluding our mortgage, net

15 operating income is negative. The Bronx showed a negative NOI as the

16 data that your team reviewed. Our costs are fixed and rising. Property

17 taxes alone are nearly \$50,000, over 17% of every dollar we actually

18 collect on a building the city barely has valued at what it is today. They're

19 not going down. Heating bills are over \$46,000, set by Con Ed.

20 Insurance, some of our most economically vulnerable New Yorkers are in

21 the Bronx. Umbrella insurance coverage is no longer financially possible.

22 We cannot negotiate any of these costs. We can't pass them through as

23 our rent increases are capped and there are no market rate apartments to

24 offset these costs. On top of this, tenants for our properties owe us over

25 \$88,000 in unpaid rent, with no remedy in backlogged Housing Court.

1 New York City mandates, the FAIR Act, Lead testing, the 2013 [unclear]
2 [01:38:19] --

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

4 Ms. Hepheastou: -- facade inspections, new stove and slate insulation laws, thousands more
5 --

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

7 Ms. Hepheastou: -- no carve-outs. A rent freeze is unwarranted. These buildings need
8 money. We cannot keep doing this.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Matthew Zemanick, followed by Cregory-,
10 -- Gregory Tsougranis and Sara Lazur.

11 Mr. Zemanick: Good afternoon -- good evening, everyone from the Rent Board and my
12 dear neighbors in Brooklyn, especially fellow tenants. I'd like to address
13 the Rent Board very briefly that there was a heat emergency this evening,
14 that the National Weather Service called in multiple days in advance and
15 there was a lack of mitigation for the severe health hazard, that heat is.
16 Heat is a number one health hazard of climate risk and we deserve better
17 than waiting out in the heat emergency tonight. I ask for not just a rent
18 freeze but a rent rollback because we have, we have paid far too much. In
19 my rent-stabilized building in Flatbush, we've had five days this winter
20 without heat. We've had six weeks --

21 Ms. Mitchell: Pause, pause. Pause a moment.

22 Mr. Zemanick: We've had six weeks with a broken front door --

23 Ms. Mitchell: Hold on just one sec-, just one second.

24 Mr. Zemanick: -- that was un-- -- left unopened, unlocked and HPD took two months to
25 come to us. We've seen rent increases and a reduction in services these

1 last three years, and the most remedial action that this board can give us is
2 not just a rent freeze, but a rent rollback. Housing is a human right. Every
3 Abrahamic tradition faces this and I've never had to give emergency
4 housing aid or food aid to a landlord. Not once in my eight years of
5 ordained ministry have I ever had to give or -- emergency housing
6 assistance or food to a landlord. Those are the facts of my experience. St.
7 Basil of Caesarea, great saint of 300 AD once said, if I have two cloaks
8 and my neighbor has none, I have robbed from my neighbor. And I tell
9 the landlords, if you have 12 units and there are people dying on the street,
10 you have robbed those people of housing. Housing is a human right.
11 Rectify the situation, make good on the commitments you made. Rent
12 rollback now, rent rollback forever until we are all housed, in Jesus name.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Gregory Tsougranis.

14 Mr. Tsougranis: My name is Gregory Tsougranis and I'm born and raised in the Bronx.
15 We left the South Bronx because it was burning. I've spent 20 years as a
16 real estate broker making tenants into homeowners. I've also managed
17 affordable housing units in the South Bronx as a chairman of a not-for-
18 profit. I think I've seen both sides. Now, we can sit here and argue
19 amongst tenants and landlords but I think we're talking about what's the
20 solution. But history, history, history -- what happened, what happened
21 when the Bronx were burning in the Bronx? Can I finish? Can I have a
22 little bit of respect? What they did was they came up with tax incentives
23 through the DEM [phonetic] program and other programs like that so the
24 buildings would be financially viable. Why can't we do that today? We
25 talked about affordable housing. I could talk about some more of my

1 experience where I represent affordable housing landlords, it -- for
2 ownership. But what's the secret to affordable housing today with the
3 programs? They give you 40 years of a tax abatement passed on to the
4 tenant. So, here, we're talking about taxing the land owners to death,
5 making you angry at the landlords because they can't fix their buildings
6 and the end result is going to be, the end result is going to be both of you
7 are going to lose out. They're going to lose their buildings -- can I finish?
8 They're going to lose their, they're going to lose their buildings. You're
9 going to live in squalor. And in the end, the not-for-profits are going to
10 buy your buildings, backed by hedge funds and the small building owner
11 is going to get crushed. So, as elected officials, not as elected officials --
12 you know what? You need, you need to relax because you know nothing.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you.

14 Mr. Tsougranis: Thank you for your time. But --

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

16 Mr. Tsougranis: -- there is distress in the rent statement [unclear] [01:43:33] increase, you
17 will be responsible for the distress.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Sara Lazur, followed by Irene Guanil and
19 Marianne Hunkin and again, we please ask that you address the board with
20 your testimony.

21 Ms. Lazur: Hi there. My name is Sara Lazur and I live on St. Mark's Avenue in
22 Brooklyn and I am also a member of the Crown Heights Tenant Union.
23 And I'm arguing for a rent rollback, please. Like thousands of New
24 Yorkers, I am rent burdened. My rent is a little more than one paycheck
25 and I get paid every two weeks so my landlord currently receives about

1 half of my take-home pay. I have, I have a steady job and I do get salary
2 increases but for the love of God, the increases imposed on us by the
3 Adams administration's RGB have been so big that my income never
4 stands a chance to catch up. This rent burden means that I'm unable to
5 save for retirement, reduce student debt or otherwise build a freaking
6 future. I still count myself as one of the lucky people here because at
7 least, I'm not yet at the brink of homelessness. Our whole lives have taken
8 a rollback over the last, I don't know how many years, and it's only fair for
9 the rent to roll back to compensate for the hardships that previous
10 administrations have placed on middle-class, working-class and poor New
11 Yorkers alike. Rent stabilized tenants do not have assets to refinance or
12 sell off when catastrophe hits. And for decades, we have been enriching
13 landlords, the vast majority of whom have multiple properties, giving
14 them continuous profits even in times of economic crisis. As a member of
15 the Crown Heights Tenant Union, I've seen dozens of rent histories,
16 actually more now, but -- and, and they show how the system has already
17 been stacked against us. Our rents are already inflated, not only because
18 of past RGB votes but also because landlords harass countless previous
19 tenants out of their homes, racking up 20% vacancy bonuses from 1993
20 until 2019, right? And even-- eventually, deregulating half my
21 neighborhood, 300,000 units in New York City total, right? The -- lastly,
22 many landlords in Crown Heights took out large mortgages on their
23 buildings based on a business model of mass displacement and
24 deregulation. Upon buying my building, my landlord --

25 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

1 Ms. Lazur: -- immediately took out a mortgage for double the purchase price.

2 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

3 Ms. Lazur: You're, you're not here, you're not here to bail out their poor financial
4 choices. You're here to make things fair and a 12% rollback would be fair
5 to me. Thank you.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Irene Guanil, followed by Marianne Hunkin, followed by Jonathan
7 Capichano. And please address the board with your testimony. Thank
8 you.

9 Ms. Guanil: I believe we should freeze the rent. I believe we should freeze the rent. In
10 addition to that, you will also freeze property taxes, insurance and
11 everything associated with keeping that property warm, the boilers, the
12 heating system, everything included, the water bills. Where are the
13 landlords supposed to pay for that if we freeze rent? But this is the
14 problem. It's not about landlords and tenants. The vouchers themselves
15 are overpriced and working people cannot afford to compete with the
16 vouchers. So that needs to be looked at. It's not about landlords versus
17 tenants because they've always had a good relationship. And all the
18 tenants that I have, I have a good relationship with. Whether it's a profit
19 or not doesn't matter because that's one person's way of doing their bills
20 versus another. Everyone uses money differently. What one would want
21 to pay all the Jets clothing or the Knicks tickets, nobody's going to tell you
22 to do that. If you want to go shopping at Starbucks, that's your
23 prerogative. But when you come at landlords versus tenants who should
24 have a cooperative relationship and not look at what the legislation has
25 done, we have other issues. So, I encourage you to look at the legislation.

1 I encourage you to lower the vouchers so that those vouchers are
2 competitive with what working people can afford. And then, we can have
3 a conversation.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Marianne Hunkin.

5 Ms. Hunkin: Okay. Hi, my name is Marianne Hunkin and I am here to call for a rent
6 freeze. I live in a rent stabilized apartment at 31 Ocean Parkway. My
7 partner and I are both educators in this city. For the last decade, my
8 partner -- partner has been an elementary special educator in our
9 neighborhood school. Currently, at -- we are at the top end of our budget.
10 With the lease renewal at 3%, we won't be able to afford our rent in a year,
11 maybe two tops. We are two people who are teachers. We are city
12 employees and we cannot afford our rent. We -- additionally, we'd like to
13 start a family and we're having difficult conversations about whether or
14 not we can stay in our neighborhood or start a family, even without a rent
15 in-- increase. As two people who work full time, this is criminal. We love
16 our neighbors and our community and we'd like to start a family, stay in
17 our home and continue to work in our community and for the city. If rent
18 continues to increase at the rate set, this will not be possible. I ask you to
19 consider a rent freeze while the city government figures out how to make
20 this city more affordable for all New Yorkers. All New Yorkers deserve
21 homes that they can afford and the current living sit-- -- housing situation
22 in this city is shameful. There is no reason anyone in this city should be
23 living without a home. It is a human made problem that you can fix. You
24 -- I am asking you to use your power to make housing affordable and

1 accessible for everyone. Housing is a human right and it is every single
2 person on that board's responsibility to make that happen.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Jonathan Capichano. Is Jonathan here? Everyone, we're
4 going to take a ten minute break. We have lots more testimonies to get
5 through. We will restart in ten minutes, ten minutes. Alright, thank,
6 everyone, for their patience. We are about to get restarted. I'll take a
7 moment to remind everyone you will have two minutes to speak. We ask
8 that you direct your testimony towards the board and then return to your
9 seats. Thank you all. Thank you. Jonathan Capichano, followed by Saba
10 Abbas, followed by Greg Bronner.

11 Mr. Capichano: Hi, I'm Jonathan Capichano. I was here about a year ago. Well, not in
12 this building but another one for a landlord-tenant meeting. Some of you
13 know me as the homeless bus operator, took me almost two years to kick
14 some squatters out that took over my property and destroyed it. I would
15 like to ask the rent regulation -- your timer is not on by the way.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

17 Mr. Capichano: Well, I'm not going to be dishonest here. I would like to know what we
18 can do about, you know, helping out tenants by actually kicking out
19 squatters because I had squatters in my property that were destroying it
20 and scaring the living daylights out of people that were disabled. We don't
21 have any -- we're, we're talking about tenant protection rights here but we
22 don't talk about the people that are actually the problem, which people are
23 stealing property, stealing apartments that don't belong in them. And so
24 now -- I'm not, I'm not stealing your wage. But the squatters that are
25 coming into the property, they're scaring the living daylights out of people

1 that are my tenants who are disabled. So, when my insurance goes up
2 because they destroyed the property, I don't want to raise their rents. I
3 didn't raise rents on my tenants for almost 10 years. I just said I worked
4 for the MTA. I was literally sitting right in front of you earlier. So, I was
5 wondering if the Rent Guidelines Board is actually gonna address that
6 problem since, you know, good tenants that are here who actually are
7 paying rent who are struggling, their rents are not gonna go up. I get ta-- I
8 get tax breaks for putting in solar panels so my tenants don't pay
9 electricity. I, I actually haven't tried that but I'm going to now. So, I
10 haven't -- I -- my point is, is that I'm trying not to raise rents because I
11 have people that try to destroy properties so this way now, I can actually
12 help people. I just said I want to help people and you're actually saying
13 not to. My point, my point is, is that we're trying -- some of us that are
14 small-time, like me, I only have three properties. My dream was to
15 actually help people that are disabled. I've been trying to help people on
16 disability for a very long time and I never hear the Rent Guidelines Board
17 actually talk about this. I would love to hear you guys actually bring this
18 up at one of your next meetings where you discuss what to do about the
19 squatter situation and insurance rights, just so I can find some kind of
20 measure to help more people. Thank you.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Saba Abbas.

22 Ms. Abbas: Yes, my name is Saba Abbas. I'm a tenant at 8609 Bay 16th Street. I'm
23 living in this building since 2022. I'm representing Fifth Avenue
24 community to address ongoing concern affecting tenants in our building
25 and community. I'm requesting a rent freeze and improvement to the

1 building condition because many tenants are struggling with raising
2 housing cost while facing serious maintenance safety issues. For a long
3 time, tenants have reported problem including rat, bed bug and roach in
4 the building, requesting for repairs and maintain, many issues that remain
5 unresolved. Tenants deserve a clean, healthy and safe living environment,
6 both inside the building and around the property. In addition, there are
7 security concerns. The building has adequate security measures, including
8 CCTV cameras. And my apartment door is not functioning properly.
9 These are the conditions that make residents feel unsafe. The increasing
10 cost of rent, utility and grocery has faced a financial burden on families.
11 Family residents are unable to save money, meet -- needs or provide
12 opportunity for their children because as much of the income goes to a
13 house rent. Some people are struggling to find affordable apartment and
14 remain in their community. I respectfully request that rent to be frozen
15 and the landlord probably address maintain sanitation and security issue.
16 Tenants deserve safe, stable and affordable housing for freeze on every
17 single thing. Thank you.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Greg Bronner.

19 Mr. Bronner: Good evening. My name is Gregroy Bronner. I own exactly one rent-
20 stabilized apartment. It's a co-op unit. The rent is \$1,600.33. The
21 monthly maintenance is \$1,879. There is no path to profitability for this
22 unit. Beyond that though, I have read the last 20 years of Rent Guideline
23 Board publications and I have noticed that the Rent Guideline Board has
24 an impossible problem, which is that you're tasked with making sure that
25 you preserve housing and at the same time, trying to make it affordable.

1 The issue that you have is that a large chunk of the housing, the housing
2 has become much more disparate as new programs have been created.
3 The pre-74 housing has a situation where a lot of it has no path to
4 profitability except through raises from the RGB. Others will argue that
5 75% of the buildings with rent-stabilized housing can be profitable but
6 that's like saying that 75% of the kids in a preschool can live on a
7 thousand calories a day. It's true but it's a rather solecistic argument
8 because preschoolers don't eat that much. There is no -- should you guys
9 continue a policy of below inflation increases, you put buildings from a
10 spot where they can be replaced to a point where the landlords are
11 essentially just running them off into the ground to a point where
12 eventually, they're just going to throw them back to the city. I live in a
13 building that was one of those buildings before. I live, I live in a building
14 that the city used to own and the city was forced to renovate it and sell it
15 in the housing lottery. I would rather not see this happen again. So, I am
16 saying please give some rent increase because otherwise, you're sending a
17 terrible political message. Thank you.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Steve Flack. Steve, if you're here, please make your way toward the mic,
19 thank you. And then we'll have Angie Langdon [phonetic], followed by
20 Gianna Sansonetti.

21 Mr. Flack: Hey, everybody, Steve Flack. Just for transparency's sake, I have no stake
22 in this game. I live in a one -- two-bedroom co-op with my girlfriend. I
23 have the privilege of living there but I also have the privilege of time
24 tonight to come and speak for my fellow New Yorkers who are overly rent
25 burdened by all this nonsense from the landlords, okay? I live in a great

1 neighborhood. And recently, there was a fire on my block and eight rent-
2 stabilized units went up in flames. And the horror stories I hear from
3 these tenants about the way they were treated by their landlord and now
4 they're out on the street, it's ridiculous. It's ridiculous. The rents in New
5 York are too damn high. I think we've learnt that for many, many years
6 and we got to freeze the rent. I think that's the only path out. And to all
7 the landlords talking about how hard it is to keep, like, the, the -- do your
8 renovations and keep the, you know, all the fixes you need to do, just ask
9 the San Antonio Spurs or some of those bricks from last night. Knicks in
10 five.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Angie Langdon.

12 Ms. Kierman: Hello, I'm Kristen Kiernan [phonetic]. I'm here speaking on behalf of
13 Angie Langdon who was forcefully removed by these various officers
14 along with a man who had been sexually harassing her all evening. He
15 said to her that if he had hit, he wouldn't know where to hit it. He said
16 multiple disgusting, degrading, sexist things to her and the Rent
17 Guidelines Board has a false equivalency between an abuser and the
18 abused. And that's very much, and that's very much the exact situation
19 that we are in as tenants. There is an illusion of democracy here, a false
20 equivalency that this unelected board of bureaucrats get to decide exactly
21 how much these landlords get to squeeze us dry over the last 30 years.
22 They have overestimated the -- how much it costs to keep landlords'
23 income stable by 1%. This is a permanent multi-billion dollar transfer of
24 wealth from us to them and we are forced to beg in front of them, to bleed
25 us dry a little less. It is time that we mobilize. It is time that we organize.

1 We are the people who make this city run. We are the ones who do
2 everything and these landlords come up here and cry poverty. We do not
3 owe this unelected board anything. We should not have to come up here
4 and talk about the unspeakable living conditions that we live under. To
5 beg while they have no accountability to us, so it's a shame. I'm not going
6 to beg for a rent freeze. I'm not going to beg for a rent rollback. I am
7 going to spend every single day for the rest of the year for as long as it
8 takes to build the tenant power that we need. Housing is a human right
9 and I am tired of this false equivalency. I'm out.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Gianna Sansonetti.

11 Ms. Sansonetti: My name is Gianna. I'm a rent-stabilized tenant and a member of New
12 York City DSA's Tenant Organizing Working Group and a member of
13 Tenant Union Flatbush. I'm a young person in New York City and my
14 rent-stabilized apartment is the only way I can affordably live here
15 through organizing with my neighbors against A&E, which is the number
16 one and two worst landlord in the city and working with tenants facing
17 eviction every day for my day job. I know firsthand that higher rent
18 means more working class people being priced out and violently displaced
19 from the communities they built. Landlords are now and not ever entitled
20 to more profits, especially when they are -- there are so many rent-
21 stabilized rent-burdened tenants living in slum conditions. The very
22 structure of the Rent Guidelines Board tells us that landlord interests are
23 equal to tenant interests, that landlords are somehow the party in need of
24 relief. This framing endor-- -- ignores the reality facing the city's 2.4
25 million tenants who live in constant fear of rent increases, eviction and

1 deteriorating conditions. If landlords are not satisfied with the conditions
2 they are operating in, they are welcome to sell their properties. It is not
3 our responsibility to finance property speculation and wealth
4 accumulation. They are the ones who need us. We pay for their repairs
5 through HPD and the taxpayer-funded subsidy programs that they benefit
6 from. The obvious decision is that tenants deserve so much more,
7 including a rent freeze -- freeze. I demand a rent rollback because we
8 cannot accept that our current conditions are just. After three consecutive
9 years of rent hikes, 12% in total, tenants have not seen meaningful
10 improvements in repairs, maintenance or quality of life. A rollback is
11 possible. We saw this in 2022 when the Rent Guidelines Board in
12 Kingston, New York voted to reduce rents by 15%. Every day, we face
13 the inherent maddening contradiction of being a tenant. We are the people
14 who work day in and day out to make this city so incredible. Yet, we have
15 no seat at the table when it comes to who is getting priced out, what types
16 of apartments are being built, who they are for and who gets to profit off
17 the land and the streets that we make, cultivate and maintain, all the while
18 giving away our pay checks to landlords who do not meet basic needs.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

20 [CROSSTALK]

21 Ms. Sansonetti: -- RGB, we do have a semblance of a seat at the table and we are the
22 supermajority who sought to fight tooth and nail to get what we are owed,
23 a dignified and just life. I hope the board can see that our demands are not
24 simple. Thank you.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I just want to do a quick time reminder since we're almost at
2 9:30, just a reminder that if you do plan to testify, you must register with
3 the folks up front at this -- with the staff at the table and you can register
4 until 10:00 p.m. So, just a quick reminder, if you plan to testify, please
5 make sure you're registered. Thank you. I will now call Jessica Lamb,
6 then Denise Clay, Patricia Martinez and Mercedes Salcedo. Please make
7 your way towards the microphones.

8 Ms. Lamb: Hi, my name is Jessica. I'm here as a member of the Crown Heights
9 Tenant Union, DSA's Tenant Organizing Working Group. I am a public
10 defender. Despite that, I'm also one of the half of tenants in this city who
11 spend more than 30% of my income on rent. In fact, I spend 45%. I buy
12 the cheapest groceries I can find. I have a chronic illness and I skip
13 doctor's appointments during times when I'm not sure I can afford the
14 bills. Meanwhile, I've had a broken fridge and freezer in my apartment
15 from the day I moved in. My landlords are nowhere to be found. They do
16 not respond to my repair requests. I don't have a super at all. My requests
17 go ignored and my rent goes up and that is why I'm here to demand a rent
18 rollback. Per this board's own study as you've already heard, the operating
19 income for landlords went up this year, just as it has for the past three
20 years, broadly for decades prior. They do not need your help and we do.
21 A rent increase will do nothing but force tenants to carry even more of the
22 financial burden for our landlords, their investors and their lenders. We
23 pay the mortgages on homes we do not own if the owners pay them at all.
24 We scrape together higher rent for maintenance at its cost while our
25 ceilings cave in, our bathrooms grow mold, our heat doesn't work. We're

1 shuffled from slumlord to slumlord as they cast speculative bets on their
2 ability to make our homes even more unaffordable. And when they lose
3 those bets, they stand before you, asking permission to extract more from
4 us because of their own greed. A rent freeze, a rent freeze will not change
5 the position of tenants. We're demanding a rent rollback because it's the
6 only thing that will. Thank you.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Denise Clay.

8 Ms. Clay: Good evening. My name is Denise Clay. I am here as a tenant of a
9 recently expired 421A building for middle-income tenants in South Slope.
10 I am here on behalf of my tenant association to ask for a zero percent
11 increase or for you to please roll back the rent. Firefighters, public school
12 teachers, social workers, nurses, non-profit employees, public sector
13 employees, retired folks who are on fixed incomes, these are the tenants
14 who pay thousands of dollars each month into my building. Many have
15 lived in the building for dozens of years and I can assure you that we pay
16 our rent every month on time. We, as tenants, keep up our end of the
17 bargain. However, we are met with an owner and management company
18 who chronically neglect the building, who have a history on the record of
19 lying and deceiving tenants about their rent-stabilized status, harassing
20 tenants, illegally asking for more money after leases have been signed.
21 Our elevator has been out of service dozens of times in the last year,
22 sometimes for weeks at a time. There are leaks, tens of thousands of
23 dollars in violations. We often hear landlords say they need a rent
24 increase so they can maintain their buildings. However, in buildings like
25 mine, this is simply not the case. The owners of my building, and I'm sure

1 many other tenants in here tonight as well, have worked actively to
2 decrease their rent rolls for years, warehousing units, a dozen units at
3 highest count for years as they tried to run down the clock of a 421A.
4 Even now that the 421A has expired, there' are dozens -- there's about a
5 dozen units that sit empty. When apartments have gone on the market, the
6 rent is far from affordable. Recently, a one-bedroom apartment in our
7 rent-stabilized building was listed for \$4,100 a month. The rent roll is not
8 the issue in my building. Greed is the issue. Please do not repeat history
9 by voting to give bad landlords like mine who are unwilling to keep up
10 their end of the bargain a raise.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

12 Ms. Lamb: I urge you to do the right thing. Freeze the rent.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Patricia Martinez followed by Mercedes Salcedo and Josefina Nunes.

14 Ms. Martinez: Okay. My name is Patricia Martinez. I live in Sunset Park, and I'm part
15 of Neighbors Helping Neighbors and I'm here to tell you that any increase
16 in rent will have a very negative impact on my economic situation and my
17 daily life. I'm a single mother. I live with my son who is disabled. And
18 on top of that, I have two jobs in order to sustain our daily life. And
19 doesn't matter how much I work and all the effort I put in, the money is
20 not enough. Every month, it's a struggle to keep up with the rent, the food,
21 the basic necessities and just the everyday things that we have to do. The
22 building where I live is dirty and it affects my, like, daily life. Many
23 times, we feel that that condition -- we do not live in, like, a dignified
24 space even though we comply with our responsibilities as tenants. I have
25 also received letters from court, stating that I owe rent but that is not true.

1 So, I am always paying my rent, I'm always on time and this situation
2 causes me anger, it causes me anguish, it causes me stress, anxiety and I
3 do not want to live -- leave the home that I have lived in with -- especially
4 with my disabled son. And my son needs a home that has stability, safety
5 and a place where he feels comfortable and this is why with all due
6 respect, I am asking you to freeze the rent. A fam-- -- working families
7 like mine cannot, cannot take on the increases in rent that more and more
8 pushes to homelessness. We need stability, we need to stay in our homes
9 and we need for the rent to be frozen. Our landlords are using our rents to
10 just get richer and to pay off their bad debts. I'm asking you to freeze the
11 rent.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Mercedes Salcedo, followed by Josefina Nunes and then
13 Jennifer Caroccio Maldonado.

14 Ms. Salcedo: Good afternoon to everyone. My name is Mercedes Salcedo. I live in a
15 rent-stabilized apartment in Sunset Park and I'm a member of Neighbors
16 Helping Neighbors. This evening, I come before you to speak about a
17 situation that is very difficult and painful to understand. The building
18 where we lived had a fire on January 13, 2026 and to this day, the landlord
19 has not lifted a finger to make the necessary repairs. As tenants, we
20 organized and formed a tenant's association of which I am the president.
21 Today, on behalf of our association and together with my neighbors, I
22 want to clearly state, freeze the rent. It's not fair to talk about increasing
23 the rent when there are landlords who don't follow the law or maintain
24 their buildings in dignified conditions. For many years, this landlord has
25 failed to properly maintain the building and now after this fire, we are still

1 waiting for repairs and justice. I am a human being. I deserve to live with
2 dignity, safety and respect. My neighbors and I are fighting, my neighbors
3 and I are fighting not only for ourselves but for all, all working families
4 who need a stable home and decent living conditions. The landlords have
5 neglected our homes for years even when they raised our rents. That is
6 why I'm asking you to freeze the rent now. All working families like, like
7 mine, we deserve dignified conditions and a dignified space to live in.
8 Thank you.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Josefina Nunes, followed by Jennifer Caroccio Maldonado and Courtney
10 Takats.

11 Ms. Nunes: Hello, everyone, good evening. My name is Josefina Nunes and I live in
12 Sunset Park and I'm also receiving support from Neighbors Helping
13 Neighbors. I'm here to tell you -- with my apartment and ask you to
14 please freeze the rent. I've been living in my apartment for more than 20
15 years now. And now, the owner wants to raise the rent. This situation is
16 worrying me extensively. I've been looking for other apartments for
17 months now but I haven't been able to find one because my income is too
18 low and it's not fair. It's unfair for a working person to have to pay so
19 much rent when her income is not enough and she's looking for an
20 apartment. The rents are going up considerably, upwards of \$3,100 for an
21 apartment and that's not fair when someone is living on a fixed income
22 and not making enough of an income. This situation is obviously causing
23 a lot of anguish and stress in my life and all I want to do is remain in my
24 apartment and continue paying my rent and live a dignified life. And for
25 this reason, I ask you to please freeze the rent. Tenants also deserve to

1 have money left in their pockets so that they can also live out their lives.

2 Thank you.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Jennifer Caroccio Maldonado.

4 Ms. Maldonado: I only need two minutes. Thank you. I strongly urge the Rent Guidelines
5 Board to vote for a zero percent increase in rent for one and two year
6 leases. I'm a working mother of two who was born and raised in New
7 York City. I'm also a professor at CUNY, a real job, a mother, a real job.
8 I want to stay and raise my children here. However, the continued rent
9 increases make it so that it's probably not possible. In the past three years,
10 my landlord has raised my rent the maximum they can. My yearly raise
11 does not cover the cost of rent increases, the soaring grocery bills and
12 childcare expenses. We paid more in rent, yet we dealt with repeated
13 interruptions in heat and hot water and mice infestation. When my, when
14 my youngest son was a week old, the heat went out in December. We had
15 to swaddle our children in multiple blankets to keep warm. While
16 cleaning, I found mice droppings in my children's toy bins. Despite the
17 decrease in living conditions, our rent went up the following year but that
18 rent increase did not go toward keeping my children warm. It did not go
19 to keeping them from vermin. The argument that landlords need rent --
20 raise in rent to keep up with the maintenance is just false. The data doesn't
21 support it. Landlords claim they're losing money but they've continued to
22 profit. Again, the data supports they've been making record profits. The
23 landlord treats my children and I as merely income streams. We deserve,
24 as all people in New York do, to have a safe and clean place to live.

1 Housing is a right. It's a human right. So, please protect that right by
2 having a vote of no increase in any of the rents. Thank you.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Courtney Takats.

4 Ms. Takats: Hi. My name is Courtney Takats and I am a rent-stabilized tenant. In
5 conversations with neighbors in my building's tenant association, with
6 members of both my tenant union and others, even with colleagues at the
7 hospital where I work, the consensus has been clear. People are already
8 struggling to pay their rent, forgoing medical care and necessities so that
9 they can keep up. This was the case before Adam's administration and it
10 has only gotten worse after the rent for stabilized tenants cumulatively
11 went up 12% during his tenure. A freeze is the bare minimum the Rent
12 Guidelines Board can vote for to support the millions of stabilized tenants
13 in New York but even a freeze just keeps my neighbors and myself in a
14 stasis of rationing our needs so that we can continue making rent. This is
15 why 65 organizations and tenant associations across the city have called
16 on the board to roll back the rent. Land-- landlords continue to make
17 profit, extracting value from their tenants without putting that money back
18 into their buildings. I talk to people every day who have been displaced
19 from their homes and the neighborhoods they grew up in, raised their
20 children in, built their lives in. I talk to people every day who pay
21 thousands of dollars a month without seeing a dime of that go back into
22 fixing their leaks or ensuring the heat is on in the winter. If the city truly
23 cares about the people who make this city run and give it life, this board
24 will vote for a rent rollback.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Clara Perez [phonetic], followed by Chi Anunwa and Alyssa
2 Williford [phonetic]. Is Clara here? Is Chi here?

3 Ms. Anunwa: Okay. Hi, my name is Chi Anunwa. I'm a rent stabilized tenant in Bay
4 Ridge and I've lived in Brooklyn for over a decade. I'm also a proud
5 member of the Democratic Socialists of America. I'm calling on the Rent
6 Guidelines Board to pass a two year rent freeze because tenants are a
7 majority in this city and it's time we start acting like it. Many landlords
8 will say we can't freeze the rent because they are financially distressed but
9 when I experience financial distress, I am told that it is my responsibility
10 to do a better job of budgeting, that I need to do a better job of saving my
11 money, that I need to start making all my coffee at home. So, why is it
12 that I am expected to deal with the burden of my own financial distress but
13 landlords get to offload this burden onto their tenants? Why do landlords
14 get to sacrifice the basic health and safety of their tenants every day in the
15 name of avoiding financial distress? On a similar note, if I take out a loan
16 I can't afford, I'm expected to deal with the consequences of that on my
17 own. Meanwhile, meanwhile, when my former slumlords in Sunset Park
18 overleveraged themselves by buying property that they hoped to flip for
19 maximum profit, my neighbors and I had to pay the price in the form of
20 poor heating in winter, almost daily power outages in the summer,
21 unchecked mice infestations that went on for months, poor plumbing that
22 often flooded our bathrooms and broken locks on our front door that
23 compromised everyone's safety. So, with that in mind, I'm calling on the
24 Rent Guidelines Board to flip the script for a change and prioritize the
25 needs of millions of tenants in this city over the needs of landlords who

1 are often the architects of their own financial misery. And you can start,
2 you can start by voting yes on a two year rent freeze because people
3 shouldn't have to deal with threats to their health, safety and wellbeing,
4 just so that landlords get to avoid the consequences of their bad bets.
5 Thank you.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Alyssa Williford, Alexis Clements, Audrey Lacy and Antonio
7 Marrero.

8 Ms. Unknown: How are you all doing today? My name is neither of the list that you
9 called but I have to go. But I do have to say this before I go. I get where
10 everybody is coming from. I'm a natural born citizen in this country, in
11 this state. I love New York. I love everybody that's in here right now.
12 But what I need you all to understand is that we're not facing the problem
13 alone. It is not us versus the landlords or landlords versus us. Whether,
14 whether you all believe that or not, that is the case, we're not, we're not
15 paying -- shut up, shut up, listen. We're not, we're not --

16 Ms. Mitchell: We need to hear the testimonies of the names that I called.

17 Ms. Unknown: We're not, we're not, we're not, we're not, we're not, we're not, we are not,
18 we are, we are not the citizens of New York. We're not citizens of New
19 York that understand that everybody that's in this room is here for a
20 reason, right? We're here because we do not agree with what's going on in
21 our state, our climate, our neighborhood, our apartment building. I, I get it
22 --

23 [CROSSTALK]

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. We do have to move to the names that I
25 called.

1 Ms. Unknown: My testimonies are not over, right?

2 Ms. Mitchell: We have to move to the testimonies of the names that I called. Is Alyssa
3 Williford here? Alexis Clements. Thank you for your testimony. We
4 have to move on. Thank you for your testimony. Alexis? Alexis, you
5 have the mic.

6 Ms. Clements: You're taking my time, ma'am. Ma'am, you're taking my time.

7 Ms. Mitchell: We're going to restart the clock, Alexis.

8 Ms. Clements: Thank you.

9 Ms, Mitchell: When you're ready.

10 Ms. Clements: So, I'm a rent stabilized tenant here in Brooklyn and I'd like to speak.

11 Ms. Mitchell: When you're ready, Alexis.

12 Ms. Clements: Okay. Alright, so rent-stabilized apartments are supposed to be
13 affordable. A lot of people say if you're paying 30% of your income,
14 that's affordability, right? That's something we hear a lot. Currently, I did
15 the math this afternoon. I'm paying 62% of my income on my rent
16 stabilized unit, 62, so twice affordability. If you look online, you'll hear --
17 and then like all the other things, right, like electric, gas. You look online,
18 you hear that electric went up by like 9%. My bills used to be 50, like late
19 high 40s, 50. They're all over 60 now. So, that 9% is also a lie. We all --
20 the past three years, the Rent Guidelines Board rent has up gone up 9%.
21 My salary has gone up 3%. So, where is that money coming from, right?
22 That's the fundamental issue, us, tenants are dealing with. Everybody else
23 gets more money out of us, the grocery store, the health insurance, the
24 electric company, the gas company. Where are we supposed to come up
25 with that money when we are losing our jobs and not getting increases in

1 our wages? Me and the millions of other people trying to pull enough
2 money together every month to pay rent, when our wages aren't going up,
3 when people are losing their jobs, and the only voices that the Rent
4 Guidelines Board has been paying attention to are the voices of the
5 owners. I'm one of 137 tenants who signed up tonight to speak. Only 31
6 landlords signed up to speak tonight but they got the floor for the first two
7 and a half hours of tonight. They got every -- I saw the green slips up
8 there. They got every other testimony. There are four times as many
9 tenants who came in here to speak. That is a false equivalence. You guys
10 are giving way too much time to them. It's not -- this is just, like,
11 whatever. I'm saying what everybody else who's a tenant here has been
12 saying. It's not fair, right? You have an obligation to protect tenants, to
13 acknowledge the realities we face. It's, it's time for the Rent Guidelines
14 Board to have accountability to tenants instead of just landlords. Rent
15 freeze or rent rollback, no other option. Otherwise, you're making more
16 people homeless in the city as soon as you make that decision.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Audrey Lacy followed by Antonia
18 Marrero, followed by Judith Douglas.

19 Ms. Lacy: Hi, good evening. I'm Audrey Lacy. I did not know that this is what this
20 was tonight so here we go. I had a few years of peaceful living in my rent-
21 stabilized apartment with preferential rent. Had a lot of issues but the rent
22 was affordable and I made it work. A few years later, Prasad [phonetic], a
23 new owner, purchased the building and used any and every underhanded
24 tactic to remove many hardworking New Yorkers from the building. At a
25 certain point, but about a handful of us older tenants who remain in the

1 building and many of the other apartments were left vacant for ages and
2 eventually renovated to take them out of rent-stabilization. After speaking
3 up about these conditions in the building and attempting to get us
4 organized, I experienced a series of unfortunate events. My heat, my
5 electricity, my water were cut off, unexplained gas leak, raw sewage
6 spewing from my bathtub and bathroom sink, a broken pipe that the
7 landlord refused to fix for 10 months. I showered at the gym. I'm an art
8 ceramics teacher so I need to take a shower every day. The kids will
9 notice. After withholding the rent to get the plumbing fixed, they decided
10 to raise my rent over \$800 a month, the highest possible amount that the
11 Rent Guidelines Board would allow under rent stabilization, effectively
12 revoking the preferential rent. When I recently heard about the record-
13 breaking judgment against the corrupt Bronx landlords, I finally felt sane
14 for the first time in 10 years. I have experienced all of these problems.
15 Every single thing that was listed, it happened to me and other tenants and
16 most of them left but I was put on the blacklist so I can't get a new
17 apartment because you make problems. It's like these landlords have a
18 meeting after work and they just twiddle their little monopoly mustaches
19 and decide ways to make regular everyday workers miserable. It's
20 untenable and it's not fair. I'm encouraged by the priorities of the new
21 administration to stand up for the little guys. I've yet to receive relief and
22 justice for my situation but I'm hoping you'll freeze the rent on behalf of
23 hard-working New Yorkers who make the city run each day. As the
24 saying goes, pressure bus pipes but like our beloved Knicks showed us last

1 night, we will not crumble and we will rise above. Freeze the rent for us
2 everyday New Yorkers. Go New York, go New York, go.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Antonia Marrero.

4 Ms. Marrero: My name is Tony and I'm a HOPE member. Alright, in 2005, my husband
5 and I found a rent-stabilized unit in a 71-unit building. Two years later,
6 Yaiko Weinberger [phonetic] bought the property and immediately opened
7 the basement sewer pipes to harass the porter. You can imagine the
8 mosquitoes. We formed a tenant association and on 07/30/2007,
9 Weinberger invaded our meeting, made threats and then he tried to evict
10 us for the first time. Ten years later, he tried to evict us a second time.
11 Then in April of 2025, we distributed a newsletter where I wrote that you
12 have HOPE's parent organization converts rentals into cooperatives. 17
13 days after we distributed that newsletter, Weinberger tried to evict us a
14 third time. Since 2017, Weinberger has filed for 59 evictions in our
15 building and 69 next door. His portfolio is growing. On May 7, 2025,
16 Weinberger invaded our tenant meeting. He announced that supportive
17 housing neighbors should not call 311 but instead, rely on their
18 caseworkers. Caseworkers? On Juneteenth 2024, I called 911 and NP-- --
19 NYPD discovered the decomposing remains of a beloved neighbor whose
20 social program had great-, greatly neglected her. In 2025, I met a
21 neighbor with the Institute of Community Living who had been without a
22 refrigerator for two and a half years. On April 15th, an Urban Pathways
23 neighbor moved in and his apartment had no electricity and no working
24 kitchen for almost two months. Neighbors are terrified of retaliation.
25 Follow the money. Community Preservation Corporation acquired

1 Weinberger's mortgage when Signature Bank folded. CPC is in joint
2 venture with the related fund management, the same entity attacking
3 Fulton and Elton, Elliott, Chelsea, NYCHA complexes. As [unclear]
4 [02:49:27] tortures our, tortures our neighborhood in, in, in concentration
5 camps, ICE tortures our neighbors in concentration camps, New York City
6 is at the crossroads. Universal dignified housing is the promise of Lady
7 Liberty, free from rent.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

9 Ms. Marrero: Melt the ice. Save Section 9. No increases on any leases. Thank you.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, we'll welcome Judith Douglas, Alyssa Williford, Isabel
11 Munos and Nora Huertero. Is Judith here? If you haven't given testimony
12 yet, can you raise your hand?

13 Ms. Unknown: Are we gonna get to everyone? I'm sorry. I, I signed up, but I have a
14 small child at home so I'm just --

15 Ms. Mitchell: Yes, I understand. We're going in the order that people signed up. I
16 understand, and the board will be here.

17 Ms. Unknown: Okay. Thank you.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Judith Douglas?

19 Ms. Douglas: Yes, I'm here. Alright, so my name is Judith Douglas. I'm a member of
20 HOPE. I'm also a tenant organizer in my building and my building, the
21 management is a slumlord, actually. He's an absenteeism landlord. He's
22 never around. He collects the rent and that's all we know. For the last six
23 months, I've been back and forth in court. And every time I go to court, I
24 have to go back the next month, next month. Today -- last month, I
25 decided I'm done with court. So, the judge told me to come on Zoom. So,

1 this morning, I was on Zoom before I got here. And basically, another --
2 going back to court in July and I am so tired of it. You get rent every
3 month. We get nothing in return and the building is really going down to,
4 like, from ten to zero. HPD is coming next, next week, Wednesday, to my
5 building to deal with the situation. HC already came, like, two weeks ago.
6 I don't believe management is really taking care of the tenants because too
7 oftentimes, they're getting 421-a tax exempt for 40 and 25 years and we
8 get nothing in return. If they have a deficit, they can write it off in taxes
9 so they really don't have any reason to keep going up on tenants' rent. We
10 don't deserve that. And I feel that -- if tenants feel the rent is going up and
11 the work is not being done in the building, it's to just hold back their rent.
12 And I realize this panel is pretty -- some of you are pretty new. And take
13 into consideration everything that the tenants and other family members
14 saying to you and incorporate it into your decision-making tonight because
15 for the last four years under the Adam administration, he make it very hard
16 for us.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

18 Ms. Douglas: Thank you.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Alyssa Williford, Isabel Munos and Nora Huertero? Please make your
20 way toward the microphone if I called your name. Is this Alyssa?

21 Ms. Munos: Isabel Munos.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Is Alyssa here? Okay, go ahead, Isabel.

23 Ms. Munos: Good evening. My name is Isabel Munos and I live in Sunset Park,
24 Brooklyn. I'm a member of Brooklyn Tenants, Tenants United and
25 Neighbors Helping Neighbors. I'm here to share a situation that has

1 deeply affected me and my family. In my apartment and in my building,
2 we have lived for a long time with conditions that are neither dignified,
3 nor safe. During the last two years during the, the winter, we have not had
4 proper heat or hot water. Sometimes, several days would go by without
5 these basis services. We would call the landlord but many times, he
6 would not answer or resolve the problem. The situation has been very
7 difficult, especially because of the cold and it has affected my family's
8 health, peace of mind and stability. We have also had many problems
9 with repairs. Many times, the repairs are not done properly or they're
10 simply not done at all. On important holidays such as Thanksgiving and
11 Christmas, the stove and the oven have stopped working or have had, like,
12 issues. When I need to cook for my family, I have had to find other ways
13 to prepare food. That's not fair for a family that needs to live with safety
14 and dignity. In addition, the building is not cleaned regularly. The
15 hallways are dirty and many times, there is garbage accumulated. Living
16 this way causes worry, stress and sadness because a tenant pays rent and
17 expects, expects the landlord to fulfill his responsibility. For this reason,
18 I'm asking that the rent be frozen. It's not fair to increase the rent when
19 many tenants are still living with serious problems in their apartments and
20 buildings. . This is what we get if we win, stable rent for a stable city.
21 Freeze the rent. Thank you for your attention.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Nora Huertero, Fabian Bravo, Rani Devi and Jennifer Ford
23 [phonetic]. If I called your name, please make your way toward one of the
24 microphones.

1 Ms. Huertero: Hello, good evening. My name is Nora Huertero. I live in Sunset Park
2 and I'm a member of Neighbors Helping Neighbors. I have come here
3 every year during the last nine years and I have come doing the -- and I
4 have come to do the same thing during those last nine years. There has
5 not been any change but there has been an increase in rent. According to
6 the landlord, the increase is necessary to fix the apartments. In the news,
7 people are talking about how badly they're living with like rat infestation,
8 roach infestations and other -- and lacking other basic services. When
9 you're speaking with people, you find out that in their apartments, they're
10 also living with a lack of hot water and lack of heat. The landlord in the
11 building where I live, he doesn't harass me but up to -- even today, I'm still
12 waiting for him to fix my roof because there's a leak due to the radiator.
13 He says that he'll do it when it's hot out but he hasn't called me to make
14 the, the repairs. So, when are you gonna finally listen to us and
15 understand what we're living like with? I don't know if you guys know
16 people that, that have this -- have had this situation or are going through
17 this horrible situation inside their apartments. I invite you to go to some
18 of these apartments of some of the people here talking about the nightmare
19 that they're living within their apartments. What I have not mentioned is
20 that I work so much that I'm basically neglecting my kids. They're good
21 kids but I also know that I have not been present when they have needed
22 me, even though they understand that I have to pay rent. So, what I'm
23 asking for is a rent, rent freeze. No more increase. Thank you.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Fabian Bravo, Rani Devi and Jennifer Ford.

1 Ms. Devi: Good evening, Rent Guidelines Board and friends. My, my name is Rani
2 Devi. I am from Fort Green Park. I have been a tenant in New York City
3 for 27 years now. After witnessing 9/11, I saw the aftermath of what
4 happened and it changed me. Seeing all the destructions and businesses
5 that closed, I made it my mission, I made it my mission to always to help
6 the community. Many years later, by rallying at City Hall, I joined many
7 organizations like Met Council, AARP, Nursing Association, RISES
8 [phonetic] and Fifth Avenue Committee. Through joining these
9 organizations, I learnt that so many people can't afford to pay the rent.
10 Most people's salaries can't afford to pay for all our raising costs. I've
11 spoken to council members, assembly members, and senators about these
12 high rents but that is not enough. Childcare, groceries, our medicine and
13 rent is sky high. Tenants across New York City need help. I urge you to
14 freeze the rent.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

16 Ms. Devi: Thank you.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Is Fabian Bravo here?

18 Ms. Devi: Thank you.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

20 Ms. Devi: Thank you.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Jennifer Ford, Rhakeema Worley and Jennifer Estrada, please make your
22 way up. Is Jennifer Ford here? Rhakeema Worley? Go ahead, Fabian.
23 Thank you.

24 Mr. Bravo: Good evening, everyone. My name is Fabian. I also live in a rent-
25 stabilized apartment in Brooklyn and I'm also a member of Neighbors

1 Helping Neighbors. Enough with the excuses, enough with the objections,
2 all of you know that the moment has come to do the right thing. Freeze
3 the rent. Tenants are worthy of having money left over in their pockets at
4 the, at the end of the month and they also deserve to have stability in their
5 own homes. We're not asking for luxury. We're actually asking to live
6 with dignity without the constant fear of not knowing if we'll be able to
7 make the rent at the end of the month or that we'll be receiving a court
8 appointment or some sort of court case at the end of the month that has no
9 foundation to it. For many years, landlords have completely neglected our
10 buildings. They've neglected our homes and even so, they continue
11 raising our rent and this is not fair. We cannot continue paying for what
12 we are not receiving. Thousands of New Yorkers are coming out and
13 attending the RGB public hearings this year and they're asking the same
14 thing. They're making the same demand, that the rent be frozen. Because
15 stable rent also means stable families, more stable communities and it also
16 means a city that is more fair and just for all. No more excuses. No more
17 increases. Please freeze the rent. What do we want? What do we want?
18 No more rent increases, please.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Rhakeema Worley, Jennifer Estrada, Renette Bradley and
20 Jawan -- Jawayna Budhoo, please make your way toward the
21 microphones.

22 Ms. Worley: Good evening, everyone. My name is Rhakeema Worley. I work in the
23 city and government service for more -- over 20 years. I have lived in 453
24 Hinsdale Street in Brooklyn since January of 2020. I've moved in this
25 very newly constructed building for the past three years. I've served as the

1 tenant leader in the building for 453 Hinsdale, 487 Livonia Ave and 500
2 Livonia Ave. From the very beginning, we have dealt with issues that
3 should never have existed in a new building. Within the first year, we
4 experienced brown water coming from both the kitchen and bathroom.
5 And two and a half years later, our central air conditioning system was
6 completely shut down and have never been up running since. What's even
7 more frustrating from the building staff is they're acting like we never had
8 any central air, making tenants feel like they're making this up. As I look
9 deeper into the situation. I've learnt that Catholic Charities own these
10 three buildings but uses a secondary management company as a face of
11 property. Meanwhile, the tenants are left with -- dealing with consistent
12 delays, existing and unfurnished work -- unfinished work. As I look
13 deeper -- okay, I read that one. And inconsistency and maintaining these
14 buildings is unacceptable.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you.

16 Ms. Worley: Thank you.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Jennifer Estrada, Renette Bradley and Jawayna Budhoo.

18 Ms. Bradley: Hello, good night. My name is Renette Bradley and I'm a part of the Hope
19 Tenant Union, Met Council and a couple of other organizations. The
20 landlords come here year after year and cry and say they don't have money
21 but they found \$2.5 million to back Cuomo. But they don't have money to
22 give us basic repairs. They don't have money to make us live decent but
23 what do they do with our rent money? Is it out for that they went and
24 gambled on, on their loans? That's not my problem. My problem is
25 roaches, hot water, heat, just common decency. Tonight, we came out

1 here to go -- to do a good clean honest rally. We learnt that the landlords
2 came too. We were shocked that they were so deep. You know why they
3 were so deep? They paid 50 actors \$75 for two hours to come out here
4 and be zombies against hard working people. But let me tell you a pattern.
5 We pay our rent, we get no service. Those people came out here and was -
6 - and being zombies and when they told them they didn't want to be a part
7 of their projects, they didn't get paid. Is this a pattern? Is this what it's
8 about? Come on you all. You all know we telling the truth.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony, Renette. Thank you.

10 Ms. Bradley: And thank you. Remember my name.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Thank you, Jennifer.

12 Ms. Estrada: Hi. Okay. Good evening, members of the board. My name is Jenna
13 Estrada and I'm a rent-stabilized tenant at 58 Ten Eyck in Williamsburg,
14 and I've called Brooklyn my home for nine years. I'm here to urge you all,
15 the Rent Guidelines Board to rent -- roll back on rent-stabilized housing,
16 fixing the unconscionable decisions of your predecessors on the previous
17 Rent Guideline Board when they increased rents by 12% over three to four
18 years. While living in New York City, I've known what it's like to spend
19 50% of my income on rent. This rent burden has meant that I've had to
20 make compromises to essential needs. Aside from cutting out on non-
21 essential goods and living on a budget, I've opted out of healthcare visits
22 to use co-pay money for rents, skipping meals towards the end of the
23 month to make ends meet and taking out loans to help pay for like higher
24 education but also to keep up with the costs of living in New York City.
25 Getting a slightly better paying job and moving in with a partner has kind

1 of given me some breathing room but that's not the case for 50% of rent
2 stabilized tenants who can't make ends meet and are currently burdened,
3 rent burdened in rent-stabilized housing. Rent-stabilized housing is
4 probably -- supposed to be affordable but it's not even affordable for half
5 of the people living in them so I don't understand how that works. I'm
6 lucky but millions of my fellow tenants are not. The landlords here and
7 outside of here would have you think that they are struggling but if the
8 rent was rolled back, they would not have to start making compromises. If
9 the rent was rolled back, they would not have to go homeless. That's not
10 the case for tenants if they continue to have to pay what they're paying
11 now or if they in-- -- if you all decide to increase the rent. So, basically,
12 it's time that we stopped button-lining the financial decisions for landlords
13 and stopped treating housing like a commodity when people's lives are at
14 stake. I urge the board to listen to the rest of my fellow tenants who
15 testified here today and I would -- and when they say that an increase
16 would worsen their struggle and their everyday existence, roll back.
17 Thanks.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Jawayna Budhoo.

19 Ms. Budhoo: Hi, good evening. My name is Jawayna Budhoo. I'm a tenant of a rent-
20 stabilized apartment. I have emergency housing voucher that's ending this
21 year. My landlord -- well, I don't really know my landlord but I know my
22 super. He kind of sucks, you know? The apartment had mold in my
23 bathroom, my mail was tampered with, a whole fuck-- -- like, excuse my
24 language but a whole like kind of crime was organized against me in my
25 apartment. I felt unsafe. The super was allowing people in my apartment.

1 I have my ring camera. Police was coming to my apartment looking for a
2 random guy, I guess, that lived there. I got 20,000 people mails coming to
3 my mailbox. I'm not even getting my mail. The only time the super
4 comes is when it's time for inspection. It's really sad because I'm hearing
5 all these people's stories and you know the laws. It's not even supposed --
6 nobody's supposed to even be paying rent. Everything's supposed to be
7 free but since it's not, I feel like things should be made fair. And these are
8 citizens of America and without them, there will be no us and it's not
9 about us but it's about them. That's, that's all I have to say, guys. I don't
10 even know much. Thank you.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next to make their way towards the mic, we welcome Preston
12 Davis, Margaret Gayle, Lee James [phonetic] and Aura Wise [phonetic].
13 Again, that's Preston Davis, Margaret Gayle, Lee James and Aura Wise.
14 Please all make your way towards the mic.

15 Mr. Davis: Good evening. My name is Preston Jackson Davis. I am born and raised
16 in Flatbush and blessed to still call it home. I grew up in a one-bedroom, a
17 rent-stabilized apartment with my parents and sister. While my parents
18 hard work could have afforded us to move to a bigger space, they
19 prioritized saving enough money to give my sister and I the best education
20 possible. They, they chose that over the comfort of our own bedroom.
21 They chose to give us a chance at a better life. I, I still live now in that
22 same apartment by myself and I think on the life that I've been able to
23 have because of their choices, the organizing, the dancing, the mistakes
24 and triumphs that have led me to stand before you all tonight and I'm
25 grateful for my parents for what -- of what they did for me. But I look in

1 this hall tonight and you've heard the stories of people who did not, who,
2 who have not had that chance due to the high rents and ever rising rents,
3 being forced to choose between a roof over their heads or education for
4 themselves or their children or healthcare or their sanity and that is just
5 unacceptable. And so, as for the team members of the Rent Guidelines
6 Board, you all have a choice to make. You can choose to raise the rent for
7 the comfort of landlords who don't have to make these life altering choices
8 or you can choose to give two million of our neighbors a chance to live, to
9 learn, to grow. Thank you for your time.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Margaret Gayle, Lee James, Aura Wise.

11 Ms. Gayle: Good evening, Rent Guideline Board members, fellow tenants and guests
12 alike. It is about freezing the rent. My name is Margaret Gayle, residing
13 six years at 426 61st Street, Brooklyn, New York, sitting Secretary of 426
14 Tenants Association, member of BTU affiliated with Fifth Avenue
15 Committee and Neighbors Helping Neighbors. I am a mother and a
16 grandmother, newly retired, fixed -- living on a fixed income. Tenants are
17 the majority of New Yorkers, many of whom between 2020 and 2023, left
18 New York, choosing to live a quality life opposed to struggling with
19 quantity of overwhelming bills, which rent is the chunk of a monthly
20 budget. We are rent burdened in need of a rent freeze now. Many tenants
21 must have two jobs and what this does to family time is damaging. With
22 landlords, Eric Setting [phonetic], my landlord on the 100 worst landlord
23 list with management to do not repair, patch up, we are forced to call 311.
24 Multitudes of B and C class violations, 426 61st Street, my building is in
25 the EAP program, of which, each time we have to be in court deadline,

1 landlord has a new attorney and we get an adjournment. Landlords are
2 great at manipulating the system. Yes, 426 has their landlord in court.
3 There is power in numbers and strength in tenants organizing. I love my
4 community, its diversity and unity in its standing for our rights. Please
5 hear us, tenants, please. We need your favorable vote to freeze the rents.
6 Thank you for your attention.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Lee James, Aura Wise, Katheryn Bajo and
8 Samantha Bravo. If you're any of those four names, please come towards
9 the microphone, Lee James, Ora Wise, Katheryn Bajo and Samantha
10 Bravo.

11 Ms. Bajo: Hi, thank you. I am Katheryn Bajo. I live at 800 Greenwood Avenue in
12 Brooklyn. I'm a part of Mike Tony's [phonetic] association. I gave a
13 written testimony but I would also like to propose that before approving
14 additional rent increases, I urge the board to consider the number of vacant
15 rent stabilized units throughout the city and the impact that prolonged
16 vacancies have on housing availability and affordability. The solution is
17 to not build new buildings where electrical bills are much higher than a
18 fully electrical building. I -- my building has seven vacant rent-stabilized
19 apartments. I'm a single mother. I asked my landlord if I could move into
20 one of them and he said he's keeping the apartments vacant for emergency
21 purposes. There's a fire in my building two months ago. The tenants
22 above the fire and below the fire had to find their own accommodation.
23 The family with the baby stayed in their apartment, even though there was,
24 like, just everywhere, it was very unhygienic, et cetera. And then the
25 tenants who were below it, they had to find their own accommodation.

1 So, they weren't able to live in the vacant apartments that were on --
2 vacant for emergency purposes. I'm a civil servant with School
3 Construction Authority. My son, he just got into Middle School 51 in
4 Brooklyn and I cannot afford to live near his middle school. This is an
5 ongoing stress for me. But I'm so grateful to be in solidarity with
6 everyone here. Thank you very much.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I'll now welcome, please come forward if I call your name,
8 Claudia Aubourg, Mica Scalin, Phil DiOrio and Nathan Bravo.

9 Ms. Aubourg: Good evening, members of the Rent Guidelines Board. My name is
10 Claudia Aubourg. I am born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, a single
11 mom, full-time school administrator, a working professional with dual
12 Master's degrees. I work more than 55 hours per week and I'm here
13 because even that is no longer enough to keep up. I did what so many
14 New Yorkers are told to do to achieve stability. I pursued higher
15 education, built a career serving children and families and worked
16 tirelessly to provide my -- for my household. Yet, despite all of that, I am
17 still living paycheck to paycheck and struggling to afford the rising cost of
18 simply staying in my home. Each year, rents go up, groceries, medical
19 care, transportation and school supplies all go up too, while wages for
20 working families fail to keep the pace. That gap is not just stressful, it is
21 becoming impossible to manage. These rent increases are not abstract
22 percentage on a page. They show up in our kitchens, our medicine
23 cabinets, our children's backpack and our bank accounts. They force
24 families like mine to make painful choices about which bills can wait and
25 which needs to be postponed. I stress -- the strain takes a toll on my

1 mental and physical wellbeing. No one who works full-time, contributes
2 to the community and does everything asked of them should be forced to
3 live under these kinds of pressures. I'm here tonight, not only for myself,
4 but for thousands of hardworking New Yorkers facing the same reality.
5 We are teachers, school administrators, healthcare workers, transit
6 workers, service employees, parents, caregivers and neighbors. We keep
7 this city running. Yet, many of us are being forced -- priced out of the
8 communities we help sustain. I ask you to see the human impact behind
9 these decisions. A rent increase may look small in a chart but for families
10 already, already stressed thin, it may mean the difference between stability
11 and crisis.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

13 Ms. Aubourg: Thank you.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Mica Scalin, Bill DiOrio and Nathan Bravo.

15 Mr. Scalin: Hi, my name is Mica Scalin. I live with my husband in a rent-stabilized
16 apartment in Bed-Stuy. This has been our home for three years. I've been
17 living and working in New York City for the past 23 years. In that time, I
18 have paid over \$300,000 to this city's property owners. I've had to move
19 10 times in order to maintain an affordable and safe living environment. I
20 have always been employed, yet my salary has never increased at the rates
21 that property owners believe their apartments were valued. Had I been
22 eligible for a mortgage when I first arrived here in 2003, I could have paid
23 it off in full by now. Instead, I have reliably paid other people's mortgages
24 my entire adult life. In 23 years, I have effectively bought a home for
25 someone else while gaining zero stability for myself. Our current

1 affordable rent is already almost double the average monthly mortgage
2 payment in our borough. I want to make it absolutely explicit to the board
3 today that tenants are not freeloaders asking for handouts. New York City
4 renters provide the cash flow that covers the debts of property owners. Do
5 not undervalue this. As a rent-paying New Yorker, I deserve at least the
6 same stability that I provide property owners, knowing that my rent will
7 not increase on someone else's timeline or whim. I implore this Rent
8 Guidelines Board to freeze the rent on both one and two-year leases.
9 Thank you.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Are Phil or Nathan here? Phil or Nathan?

11 Ms. Bravo: I'm Samantha. I think you missed me or I waited --

12 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. Yes, we'll come back to you. Neither Phil nor Nathan are here?
13 Okay. Please come towards the mic, if you could line up at the mic.
14 We've got several names to get through so I just want to get folks as close
15 as possible. Thank you. So, Phil and Nathan, if you could come towards
16 the mic?

17 Ms. Bravo: There is someone else who needs to go as well. You called my name as
18 well.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. Thank you. Again, if I call your name, please come to the mic.
20 Samantha, go ahead. Samantha?

21 Ms. Bravo: Good evening. My name is Samantha Bravo and I am part of Neighbors
22 Helping Neighbors and I live in Sunset Park. Through my work helping
23 members of a community, I hear one simple sentence over and over again.
24 The rent is too high, too damn high. People come asking me for help
25 finding an affordable apartment and those who are already living in an

1 apartment are struggling to keep up with their rent. Not to mention the
2 repairs they need and the harassment that they face by their landlords.
3 Throughout New York City's housing crisis, the decisions of this board
4 have continued to push New Yorkers deeper into poverty by increasing
5 rents. These increases have greatly affected the quality of life of millions
6 of New Yorkers who are already struggling to pay for food, clothing and
7 other basic necessities. It is also impacting the future of young New
8 Yorkers like myself who want to stay in the city that we grew up in. You
9 have heard the stories of hundreds of tenants and the struggles they face.
10 And if you truly understand the pain and hardship that so many New
11 Yorkers are experiencing, then you would know that we are not asking for
12 a rent freeze, we are demanding it. So, I ask all new members of this
13 board and also past members, will you stand with New Yorkers and vote
14 for a rent freeze or you will continue to push hardworking families deeper
15 into a housing crisis? Thank you.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

17 Mr. Bravo-Artero: Hi, my name is Nathan Bravo-Artero [phonetic]. I'm 15 years old and I'm
18 from Sunset Park. I'm here to say that we should freeze the rent. My
19 parents work all the time and they come home late at night and I'm just
20 stuck in an empty apartment building with my cats and dogs. My family
21 comes here year after year, trying to discuss about this problem and yet,
22 we still can't win. Sadly, none of you all have really rolled back the rent
23 or freezed it, not even a slightly little bit. I mean, we are the people, right?
24 This is New York, right? We deserve to have a say in this world, right?
25 Thank you. I mean, think about it. Even our friendly neighborhood

1 Spider-Man can't even pay the rent because it's too high. I mean, come on,
2 he's already busy saving people. What else do you want from him, right?
3 Alright, what I'm really here to say is that one of my friends has been
4 kicked out of their apartment one time. Thank you. Anyways, it's
5 honestly sad because he has nowhere else to live anymore. But now, he's
6 actually doing fine, thanks to, like, his parents' friends and they had to
7 work their butts off just to get back into their shape. Now, who wants a
8 rent rollback? Yes, I, Nathan Bravo, son of Fabian Bravo and Nora, Nora
9 Huertero and sister of Samantha Bravo, I want a rent freeze as well.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Phil?

11 Mr. DiOrio: Yes. Good evening, my name is Phil DiOrio and I am representing the
12 good people of 8501 Fort Hamilton Parkway in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. It
13 is a four story walk up with 50 plus apartments. It is home to low income
14 families, fixed income families, Section 8 families and families with
15 children with disabilities. The tenants of this building have come together
16 to address the outstanding problems caused by the landlord's failure to
17 provide essential, essential services, general maintenance, major repairs,
18 minor repairs, trash collection. Furthermore, the landlord has not paid his
19 debts to his lenders. The mortgage company, the utility companies and he
20 hasn't paid his taxes in the past two years. The landlord, this landlord has
21 been foreclosed upon twice in the past two years. A rent increase will not
22 change his path or the paths of other like-minded landlords who seek to
23 enrich themselves. What a rent increase will do is put further financial
24 stress on families who are already struggling to make ends meet. A tragic
25 irony awaits us. Affordable housing will no longer be affordable. And the

1 families who have made this building their home for the past 20, 30 and
2 40 years will be priced out of the apartment and priced out of their
3 neighborhood and a loving, nurturing community that took so long to
4 build will be no more. Avarice and greed is a poison.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

6 Mr. DiOrio: For the tenants, for the neighborhood and for the community.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

8 Mr. DiOrio: Freeze the rent.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I'll now call Ora Wise, Lee James, Skye Dogen [phonetic]
10 and Nancy Herrera [phonetic]. Please come to the microphone if you're
11 Ora Wise, Lee James, Skye Dogen or Nancy Herrera. If you're on your
12 way up, just say something or I'm gonna move on to the next group.
13 Okay? Jocelyn Fenton, Michael Bailey, Jennifer Nicole Alameda and Jeff
14 Ballerini, please make your way up if you're any of those names.

15 Ms. Fenton: Hi, I'm Jocelyn Fenton. I'm from Flatbush Gardens and I wanted to say
16 that first, we need to roll back and freeze the rent. Those are the things
17 that needs to be done. But I'm gonna switch my focus because everybody
18 has testified about all their buildings and just focused on one thing. What
19 do we define as affordable in New York? It is getting outrageous what we
20 call affordable. People are paying more than 60% of their rent to live in
21 what we call rent-stabilized apartments. The rent lottery apartments, the,
22 the, the terms to get in there are even more outrageous. They build new
23 buildings in working class neighborhoods and then all of a sudden, they
24 say the average rent in that neighborhood is \$2,500 for a studio. What the
25 hell is going on here? Why are landlords getting, getting, getting away

1 with calling new apartments luxury because they went to Ikea and put
2 some fake marble on the table? I am sick of this. New York City is
3 bleeding people. The main perpetrators of all the worst crap happening in
4 this city are these big landlords and we are allowing them to define
5 affordability in an outrageous manner. Who the hell is gonna live here?
6 This -- we got buildings empty, we got new buildings being built in
7 neighborhoods that nobody in the neighborhood can live in and now,
8 you're talking about raising the rent. My rent is over \$2,000 for a crappy-
9 ass Flatbush. I am from Indianapolis, Indiana, originally. The -- and I'm
10 sorry about my language. The shit these landlords get away with in New
11 York City is off the chain. There is no excuse for people not being able to
12 stay in their community and these rents are outrageous for the places that
13 they live in. Freeze the rent, roll it back and check some of these
14 landlords because the shady stuff they're getting away with is inexcusable.
15 Thank you.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Michael Bailey, Jennifer Nicole Alameda and Jeff Ballerini.

17 Mr. Ballerini: Good evening, members of the Rent Guidelines Board and fellow
18 attendees. My name is Jeff Ballerini, an academic advisor for the City
19 University of New York-Queensborough Community College. I'm here
20 today to ask the board to vote for a no-rent increase for units subject to the
21 Rent Stabilization Law of 1969 and the Emergency Tenant Protection Act
22 of 1974, affecting leases commencing between October 1, 2026 through
23 September 3, 2027. In the board's April 16, 2026 Income and
24 Affordability Study, the U.S. Census Bureau's 2023 Housing and Vacancy
25 Survey found that 45.5% of rent-stabilized tenants who do not receive

1 rental assistance were considered rent-burdened and the Bureau's 2024
2 American Community Survey reported 51.6% of all households citywide
3 were rent-burdened, with half of those paying more than 50% of their
4 income in rent. Unsurprisingly, the weight falls most heavily on those
5 who have the least. 80% of households making up to \$50,000 per year are
6 rent-burdened, while 60% of households making between \$50,000 and
7 \$75,000 per year are similarly burdened. Raising the rent on stabilized
8 properties will place a considerably greater economic strain on millions of
9 New Yorkers already struggling to make ends meet and force them to
10 decrease their spending on necessities such as food, education, childcare
11 and healthcare or push them out of the city altogether. In December 2023,
12 the New York Times reported that families making between \$32,000 and
13 \$65,000 per year were leaving the state at the highest rate, while there was
14 a net gain of 15,000 millionaire households moving into New York
15 between 2020 and 2022. When I visited our campus food pantry to donate
16 non-perishable goods, I saw one of my students perusing the shelves for
17 essentials. My cousin, a native New Yorker, left for Florida because
18 despite having gainful employment, too much of his income had to go
19 toward rent. Rather than demanding more from those who have nothing
20 else to give, the city must invest in the repair and increase of affordable
21 housing stock and fund these initiatives by having ultra-wealthy residents
22 pay their fair share in taxes. To solve, to solve the housing crisis, we must
23 skim the cream off the top, rather than scrape the bottom of the barrel.
24 Thank you.

25 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Jennifer?

1 Ms. Alameda: Hello, everyone. Thank you. I'm here to assist. Hopefully, we can end
2 the night with some cheer and hope for the future. I'm here to introduce
3 myself to everyone here. I am your first-generation, federally trained
4 female U.S. President. I represent New York State Government, managed
5 by the Welfare Food Stamp System Administration. I assist in Congress
6 and the White House with the things that are needed, mostly for the poor
7 community as I am a poor community member myself. And I'm here for
8 the future of the children to come, to help balance the things that we have
9 heard tonight. We will be working on those things with me here as your
10 female president. Thank you.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Jennifer. And I've been notified we have the building until
12 11:45 so we'll hear about another hour of testimony. And if I call your
13 name, please come up towards the microphone. Maria Hernandez,
14 Vanessa Figueroa [phonetic], Relique Golson [phonetic] and Saul
15 Lerman-Sinkoff [phonetic].

16 Mr. Bailey: Hello, everyone. I'm Michael Bailey and I'm a resident of the historic
17 neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, New York. Yes, yes,
18 do or die. I'm a housing attorney and a lifelong resident of this city. I am
19 testifying today in support of a rent freeze. The borough of Brooklyn is in
20 the middle of a housing crisis, a housing crisis that has led to mass
21 displacement, crowded shelters and numbers that continue to rise.
22 Although the Rent Guidelines Board didn't create the current climate of
23 the city, they haven't really helped either. There are currently 420,000
24 rent-stabilized units in Brooklyn, hardly enough to house the more than 2
25 million Brooklynites. Rent-stabilized apartments were created to provide

1 housing stability for the working class people of the city but housing
2 stability in New York is no longer a thing. 200,000 black people were
3 pushed out of the city over the last 20 years due to the lack of affordable
4 housing. Federal, state and local policies are to blame. The absence of
5 responsible real estate development, the loss of community control within
6 the local government, coupled with low wages has created an economic
7 environment that few can survive in, let alone thrive in. Gas -- I don't
8 have to preach but gallons of gas for more than \$4, eggs cost \$11 per
9 dozen, and heads of iceberg lettuce for \$7. The cost of living, economics
10 has placed the majority of people in a precarious situation. People
11 shouldn't have to choose food or electricity, rent or insurance.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

13 Mr. Bailey: Thank you.

14 Ms. Mitchell: I'll call once more for Maria Hernandez, Vanessa Figueroa, Relique
15 Golson and Saul Lerman-Sinkoff. Please come to the mic if you're here
16 and I'll move on to the next set of names after. Okay. Thank you. Didier
17 Alvarez, Matt Burdi, Maria B. Lopez [phonetic] and William Bershadsky,
18 yes, please, if you're any of those four, make your way up to the mics.
19 Thank you.

20 Mr. Alvarez: Hi. I got these figures from the RGB 2025 Income and Expenses Study.

21 Ms. Mitchell: And I'm so sorry to interrupt but could you let me know your name?

22 Mr. Alvarez: Didier Alvarez.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Didier.

24 Mr. Alvarez: The monthly net operating income which is the profit that landlords make
25 after expenses rose 6.2% to \$683 per apartment per month in 2024. So, a

1 six-unit building made \$49,000 a year profit. A 20-apartment building
2 would make \$164,000 a year profit. A 40-apartment building, \$328,000 a
3 year profit. So, the argument that landlords cannot keep up with the
4 expenses to operate a building does not hold true because those figures are
5 after expenses, after net operating expenses. But what we also need to
6 factor is that the increase in value of these buildings also continues to rise
7 2% to 5% every year. So, not only is the income of the building rising,
8 but the wealth of the building rises. So, combined, a six-unit apartment
9 building is actually making \$94,000 a year. A 100% rent-stabilized 20-
10 apartment building is making over \$300,000 a year profit. So, it's difficult
11 for landlords to claim that they're hurting or becoming broke running a
12 building in Brooklyn. But easy to say that we, the occupants of these
13 apartments, are struggling and fighting to make ends meet when our wages
14 do not come near close to keeping pace. We need a rent freeze.
15 Landlords will not make as much but they cannot say it's loss or hardship.
16 They will still make more than it takes to run and maintain their
17 properties, still make profit and still have the value of their buildings
18 increase. We're just looking to catch our breath on this treadmill that has
19 no off button.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Matt Burdi, Maria B. Lopez and then, William Bershadsky.

21 Mr. Burdi: Hello, my name is Matt Burdi and I'm a tenant and a member of Full-Time
22 Tenant Union. We organize across a portfolio of more than 200 buildings
23 owned by Watermark Capital Group. Through our outreach, we
24 consistently hear the same stories from rent-stabilized tenants, neglected
25 repairs, deteriorating conditions and management companies that ignore

1 complaints. I'll share one example. Since 2023, I've been advocating for a
2 rent-stabilized tenant in heavily gentrified Williamsburg, Brooklyn.
3 They've recently undergone multiple surgeries and are now recovering.
4 For years, the tenant has struggled to get serious repairs addressed. Only
5 after HPD froze the rent did the landlord begin to make repairs. Even
6 then, the work was incomplete and poorly done. The tenant was pressured
7 to remove 311 complaints and housing violations before repairs would be
8 finished. The landlord filed paperwork claiming work had been complete
9 when significant issues remained unresolved. The tenant is now, to date,
10 on rent -- now up to date on rent and simply wants a safe and habitable
11 apartment. Now, during recovery, they're tracking down handymen, being
12 ignored by management and living through worsening conditions. This
13 landlord has owned the building for more than two decades. This is not a
14 new owner struggling to make ends meet. This is the treatment that some
15 of the few remaining rent-stabilized tenants receive in the portfolio.
16 Neglect and pressure are often used to push long-term tenants out of their
17 homes and nearly 50% of the portfolio, the landlord claims, has been
18 deregulated. At the same time, tenants have already absorbed roughly
19 12% in cumulative RGB increases over the last several years. Tenants
20 have already paid rent increases while basic habitability standards were
21 not met, making further increases unjustified and past increases effectively
22 unwarranted. And I call for a full rent rollback.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Maria?

24 Ms. Unknown: I have Maria Hernandez' testimony.

25 Ms. Mitchell: Okay.

1 Ms. Unknown: Thank you. And it's going to be in Spanish so I'll need one of the
2 interpreters, please. Thank you. Also, what happened to Christina? She
3 left? That's a shame. She's only here for the landlord testimony? Damn.
4 Okay. Hello, my name is Maria Hernandez and I am an older person that
5 is living with a fixed income and is also very limited. I'm here to ask you
6 to please consider the impact that an increase on the rent would have on
7 people like me. Every single month, I do everything possible to cover the
8 basic needs. My check doesn't go up but the cost of living, food,
9 medication and public services and utilities, as well as other basic
10 essentials also go up. I am a patient living with cancer. At my age, I no
11 longer have the opportunity to go out and look for a second job or to make
12 sure that my income goes up so that I can compensate for these increases.
13 I already live on a very fixed budget. If the rent goes up, I simply won't be
14 able to make payment every month. I will be -- I will not have enough
15 money to make the rent. The reality is that I would be faced with making
16 very painful decisions, I would have to decide whether I should buy
17 health-- healthful foods, pay my medication or pay the rent. No one
18 should live like this and be faced with a difficult situation like this one,
19 especially after you've worked your entire life and you've contributed to
20 your community. My home not only represents a place where I live, it
21 also represents safety, represents stability and peace. My fear is not being
22 able to make the payment, my rent payment every month and I lose sleep
23 over this and it fills me with so much unsurety about my future. I ask you
24 to please think of senior citizens, of people living with disabilities and
25 families with low income who are already doing everything and are at the

1 breaking point to stay afloat. Our income does not go up when the rent
2 goes up. The only thing that goes up is our level of preoccupation or
3 worry of not being able to stay in our homes. Please, the rents should
4 remain affordable. Please protect those that are the most vulnerable. For
5 many of us, it is a decision that is laden with a lot of differences between
6 living with dignity or having to face very difficult situations, which
7 obviously, we cannot deal with at the moment. Thank you so very much
8 for listening to my testimony.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. William?

10 Mr. Bershadsky: Hi, I'm William with the Platt-Bouchan Coalition. I would like to say that
11 tenant abuse is out of control and I would like to ask the board to
12 unanimously vote for a 10% rent rollback. Thank you.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Last call for Maria B. Lopez. And could Teresita Aguilar
14 [phonetic], Luz Rosero [phonetic] and Winsome Pendergrass [phonetic]
15 please come to the microphone? Okay. Is Teresita or Luz here? Okay.
16 Adem Alkin [phonetic], Leonard Goodstein [phonetic], Fidele Albert and
17 Phelan Raltray [phonetic].

18 Mr. Goodstein: My name, my name is Leonard Goodstein. I'm a Vietnam vet, 78 years
19 old. I'm a disabled Vietnam veteran. I live on a 100% pension and I can't
20 make the rent anymore. At 78 years old, I cannot even freeze my rent.
21 What is wrong with this? The governor was supposed to raise it so we
22 could make -- freeze our rent. Now, it's not going to happen until 2027. I
23 have a heart condition. I have two heart conditions. I have a congestive
24 heart failure and artery disease. I suffer from cancer from Agent Orange.
25 I can't work no more. I can't lift anymore. I can't even lift the groceries

1 anymore and you're going to raise my rent? It's up to you people to
2 change this. I'm federal and I can't make it. It's wrong and you know it.
3 Now, I came here to be nice but I've been here since 5:30 so I'm already
4 listening to all this garbage. You guys got to make the decision, man.
5 We're getting ripped off and it's enough. It is enough. I've had it with this
6 city. We're playing on the last mayor who was getting kickback from
7 landlords. We have a new mayor now. If some of you come from that
8 mayor, realize it. We need to freeze the rent, at least for a while. It's like
9 our pensions, Vietnam veterans or veterans in whole are based on the
10 country, not based on the city of New York. My grandchildren are here.
11 My children are old enough to be some of your parents and I don't think
12 you're even old enough to be a Vietnam vet. Maybe I'm wrong, maybe I'm
13 right.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you.

15 Mr. Goodstein: But the thing is that, hey man, do us a favor, stop it already. We need to
16 stop.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

18 Mr. Goodstein: This is time to be for the people.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you. Thank you for your
20 testimony. Thank you.

21 Ms. Albert: Goodnight. My name is Ms. Albert. I'm a member of Met Council,
22 Crown Heights Senate Union, Brooklyn Eviction Defense and many more.
23 I'm demanding a rent freeze. In Housing Court, eviction is so goddamn
24 high because tenants are struggling and punishing to make ends meet
25 because the rent is too goddamn high. Since the pandemic, some tenants

1 have not recovered from losing their jobs because of the mass technology
2 where they have robots doing their job, right, that persons used to do
3 manually and that is very hard. I'm one of the tenants that lives in a rent-
4 stabilized building and is struggling to make ends meet, finding it difficult
5 to pay my rent and also to get a job. Landlords are making insane profits,
6 is -- and is not important as people are being evicted from their daily -- as
7 people are being evicted from their homes on a daily basis. Therefore, I
8 am demanding a rent rollback. Thank you.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Phelan Raltray, Adem Alkin, Kenneth Henry [phonetic] or
10 Siena Shundi.

11 Mr. Rivera: Hi there. My name is Johnny Rivera. I'm with Build Up Justice NYC.

12 Ms. Mitchell: I'm sorry, Johnny, did I call your name earlier?

13 Mr. Rivera: I have never heard my name called once --

14 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. We're --

15 Mr. Rivera: -- even though I was signed up early. I was number 88 and here we are,
16 almost midnight and so.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Did you check in at the table?

18 Mr. Rivera: I did.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Okay.

20 Mr. Rivera: And I gave them my testimony. And I have it here in front of me.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. Well, we're going to let Siena go since I called her name and we're
22 going to check for your name now. Can you remind me of it?

23 Mr. Rivera: Johnny Rivera.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Go ahead. What's her name? What's your name? I
25 remember putting it to the side. Please, folks, when I call your name,

1 make sure you come to the microphone. But, Clara, I do have your ticket
2 here in the -- okay. Clara Perez and then you've got -- okay, go ahead,
3 Siena.

4 Ms. Shundi: Can you reset the clock, please?

5 Ms. Mitchell: Yes.

6 Ms. Shundi: Okay. My name is Siena Shundi. I am a single mother, a mental health
7 clinician and the elected president of 38 6th Avenue Tenant Association
8 for B3, a 303-unit rent-stabilized building, one of the first built as part of
9 the Pacific Park project near the Barclays Center. I am here to demand a
10 rent freeze because our corporate landlord continues to take something
11 even more valuable than money from me, my time. Avanath Capital
12 Management is a billion-dollar institutional investor based in Irvine,
13 California. Half of its investments are overseas. Our building was fan-- --
14 was financed by public affordability commitments here in New York City.
15 It's supposed to be a stable home for working New York City families.
16 Instead, Avanath has treated it as an extraction vehicle. Five years of
17 chronic hot water failures, not a month has gone by in the past few years
18 with at least -- not with at least one broken down elevator. There's no
19 onsite superintendent, which is a violation of New York City law, illegal
20 lease clauses, FOB restrictions that locked my own partner out of our
21 home. And when I organized to fight back, they sent me a cease and
22 desist letter, which is illegal. I am a single mother. Every hour I spend
23 fighting my landlord's neglect is an hour I am not with my child and I will
24 never get that time back. This is not a fairness problem. It's a market
25 failure. The market is not correcting Avanath's behavior. Tenants absorb

1 the cost and habitability in time while the owner faces no meaningful
2 consequences, years of open violations, skirting the laws, years of rent
3 increases and outpa-- -- that have outpaced inflation and no accountability.
4 A rent freeze sends the policy signal that rent increases must be earned
5 through performance, not extracted despite neglect. Without that signal,
6 the rent stabilization system stops functioning as a habitability floor. It
7 becomes a financing tool and in this economy, rent destabilization, not a
8 genuine commitment to the families that this housing was built to serve.
9 To --

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

11 Ms. Shundi: Hold on, hold on, let me finish. To those on this board who have spent
12 careers on the public mission of affordable housing, you know that this
13 ho-- -- what this housing was supposed to be.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

15 Ms. Shundi: A vote for freeze is a commitment to that mission and --

16 Ms. Mitchell: Johnny Rivera and then we'll have Clara Perez.

17 Mr. Rivera: Thank you. As tenant organizers, we're Build up Justice, a non-profit
18 organization that provides housing legal services to New York tenants to
19 more -- for more than 50 years. I regularly meet with tenants by different
20 buildings and see serious lack of repairs, unsafe conditions, harassment
21 and rent overcharges. Many of these tenants have spent months
22 complaining. The lady said, time, this is what they lose and never get
23 back. It's never accounted for. It's lost forever. Despite their efforts and
24 their ability to remain good, solid tenants and abiding by law, they get
25 nowhere and at the end result, they have to refer -- go to court and they

1 don't want to go to court. That is the last place. They're very afraid of
2 court, and yet, this is the only place they can go to seek some remedy. I
3 ask this board to please consider the fact that rents are up, profit, though
4 landlords deny it, they're making a profit and the assets are million dollars
5 and over. I jokingly say to tenants, if you want to adopt a poor
6 millionaire, keep paying, keep supporting them because that's what this is
7 all about. Do we want to be a society that supports millionaires over the
8 working class, the majority of the people who have been making this city a
9 great place? We're here. We work. You work. We all work. Landlords
10 make it very difficult for most people. Thank you.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Clara Perez and then if Kenneth Henry, Adem Alkin or
12 Phelan Raltray, please come to the microphones. I'll be calling another set
13 of names next. So, if you heard your name, please come forward.

14 Ms. Perez: Good evening, members of the Board. My name is Clara Perez-Joseph. I
15 am a retired Supreme Court, court reporter. I am a tenant leader now with
16 Neighbors Helping Neighbors and to the Fifth Avenue Committee
17 Umbrella. I demand that you freeze the rent. Tenants cannot afford these
18 high rents. Many tenants work two jobs to barely keep up with rent, food,
19 utilities, childcare, co-pays, transportation, et cetera. While actually
20 paying the rent, they are subjected to poor living conditions such as leaks,
21 mold, vermin, lack of painting, lead and other violations. So, now they're
22 dealing with financial hardship and health issues. Time and time again, I
23 don't know why the board didn't do it today but time and time again, the
24 board instructs the tenant to complain to 311 or HPD. They do that. But
25 HPD is slow to enforce repairs, if at all. You need to hear these conditions

1 as well because you need to make a just decision in good conscience to
2 freeze these rents. For utilities, not everyone qualifies for heat and those
3 that do get a whopping \$50 a year, go figure, no pun intended. The cost of
4 living is so high that a community organization now in east Flatbush,
5 Brooklyn, it's called the Yard. They are offering laundry services to those
6 who can't afford it. We as tenants should not be responsible to do the
7 upkeep and the upgrade of the landlord's property. When they decide to
8 sell it, they get all the profit, not the tenants. That's their business to take
9 care of. The worst hardship that rent increases impose on tenants is the
10 instability --

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

12 Ms. Perez: -- of family life. Parents with two jobs and maybe a single side gig on
13 weekends, have no time with their children --

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

15 Ms. Perez: -- or their education. The stress of not having parents with you and
16 support is detrimental. The anxiety of the family --

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Folks, we have lots of names to get
18 through.

19 Ms. Perez: [unclear] [4:04:02].

20 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I'm going to call your name one time. If I call it, please come
21 up to the mic if you're here or say something if you're on your way up.
22 Katherine Shelfeld [phonetic], Elizabeth McKee [phonetic], Rachel Ann
23 Younger, Elston Lindsey, Gordon Lee. Okay. And if Faith Williams,
24 Bibiana or Devorah Jackson [phonetic] are here, please come up. Go
25 ahead when you're ready, Gordon. Bibiana Mancero.

1 Mr. Lee: Goodnight, good people. My name is Gordon Lee but you can also call
2 me Greg. I am a member of every coalition in the country, including
3 Flatbush Tenant Coalition because their fight is things that should be
4 everyone's fight. Now, I don't -- I'm also asking for rent freeze and I don't
5 want a rent increase because I believe -- I want my constitutional right to
6 stay and my constitutional right to remain. I'll tell you why I like where I
7 live, and it's the same answer to the question of why New York City is one
8 of the greatest cities and why New York State is one of the greatest states.
9 Many reasons, I didn't grow up -- I didn't -- I wasn't born here but I grew
10 up here. I came here on my fourth birthday and yeah, I was a Nixon
11 protester at birth, 06/23/1973. Now, New York City and State is one of
12 the greatest for many reasons. Number one, we have our abortion
13 rights. It's heavily ruled by Democrats. It feels safer. There's no wild
14 animal encounters, no bear encounters that you've been hearing about in
15 the news. And I -- take it for me, I followed the news from age ten. And
16 New York is also one of the greatest because -- well, it has public
17 transportation. It accommodates disabled persons and persons that don't
18 have cars. You know, not everybody has cars. Not everybody can drive.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you.

20 Mr. Lee: Thanks for listening. Good night.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

22 Ms. Mancero: Hi. Good afternoon -- I mean, good evening. My name is Bibiana
23 Mancero. I'm a bold leader with HOPE and I'm also a tenant's association
24 at Rutland plaza, which I'm also a leader. My landlord Robin Lucas Cora
25 [phonetic] is part of the worst landlord list and she's number six. When I

1 moved into my apartment, I started paying \$1,450 and in six months, my
2 rent went up to \$1,963. Mind you, I'll make three years in August. The
3 only reason why my apartment doesn't have any violations is because I
4 have an emergency housing voucher, Section 8. In the year 2016, my
5 landlord got \$92 million from the state. What was done with that money?
6 My neighbors have mushrooms growing from their ceilings. There are
7 four elevators in my building and at one time, all of them were out. Three
8 of them were out for two months and the last elevator was out for over a
9 week. There is sewage shooting out of my neighbor's kitchen sinks.
10 There is countless leaks in the building. There's no security. They
11 wouldn't stand up for the people. Two people have lost their lives in the
12 building by gun violence. Countless people have gotten mugged in the
13 staircases. My home attendant got mugged in the staircase. They stole his
14 chain and bracelet. One guy even got pushed into his apartment and got
15 robbed of his belongings. Could that be because of lack of security and
16 locks? My neighbor even got mugged in broad daylight, 1:30 p.m. on a
17 Saturday. My mail can't be delivered because the entrance stinks so bad
18 from the rat vermin that the mail person refuses to deliver our mail. It's
19 my human right to live in a clean and safe environment and this is far from
20 the case. If my landlord is losing money, why doesn't she open up her
21 books and HUD could help her. So, I ask the board to freeze the rent and
22 roll the increase back. I don't see any reason that my landlord should get
23 any more increases in rent. Thank you.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Bibiana. Are Faith or Devorah here?

1 Ms. Unknown: I'm sorry. Devorah, she had to leave but she couldn't stay so she left her
2 testimony with me to read for her.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. Do you mind if we go to the folks who are here?

4 Ms. Unknown: You just called Devorah name. No, go ahead. No problem. I don't have
5 any problem.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. I'm going to -- again, I'm just going to call the names and if you're
7 here, please say you're here. Selena Viciosio [phonetic], Michelle
8 McArthur [phonetic], Andrew Weiner [phonetic], David Cortez Ramirez
9 [phonetic], Janelle Humphrey [phonetic], Rhiannon Dowling [phonetic].
10 Yes, if you hear your name, please come up to the microphone. And if
11 you want to leave Devorah's testimony, we'll take it so. Okay.

12 Ms. Unknown: No, I would like to read it.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Okay.

14 Ms. Younger: Hi. Hi, my name is Rachel Ann Younger. I grew up in New York City.
15 My parents moved into the apartment that I'm living in 60 years ago in
16 December. In the 80s, the building went mostly co-op with a handful of
17 remaining rent-stabilized units of which I am the youngest tenant. I
18 started off my day today in Housing Court where I was met with three
19 lawyers from the, from the parties that are my -- that, that are playing roles
20 as my landlord and the, the judge, the judge determined that they are
21 absolutely allowed to send the same unlicensed company that has done
22 electrical and plumbing and gas work and stolen my passport and Social
23 Security Card back into the unit and that it's their right. I'm, I'm, I'm -- I, I
24 wanted to point out one of my personal experiences. Well, first -- sorry,
25 I'm a little distracted. First, first, I wanted to speak to -- well, first thing I

1 just wanted to say was that regarding the matter of landlords needing the
2 money to make repairs, I would like to present to you my personal
3 experience which has matched the personal experience of everyone I've
4 met at any or any of these organizations and I've been going to these for
5 some years now, which is that my landlords have spent more money using
6 their employees to prevent providing the repairs and to -- than to actually
7 have done the repairs. And this -- and they are counting on the distress of
8 myself and have ignored violations that have been there for a year,
9 including several pages of violations coming from my apartment alone
10 because the other tenants that I've failed in organizing are afraid of the
11 super.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

13 Ms. Younger: And are afraid. Rent freeze is the bare minimum.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Jean -- thank you. Jean Fulks [phonetic], Jae Waugh. I'm going to go
15 through the folks -- through the names of the remaining people here and
16 then we'll get to you.

17 Ms. Younger: Yeah, but I had a few more seconds I just saw. So, I'd like a few more
18 seconds to the exact timing.

19 Ms. Mitchell: The time was up.

20 Ms. Younger: No, it wasn't. I stopped --

21 Mr. Unknown: That's after the two minutes.

22 Ms. Mitchell: It starts to recount up once the two minutes is up and it also starts to beep.
23 Jean Fulks, Jae Waugh. Yes, when you hear your name, please come up
24 to the microphone.

1 Mr. Waugh: Hi. I'm Jae, a rent-stabilized tenant and a member of Flatbush DSA and
2 Flatbush Tenant Coalition. I'm going to talk in Jamaican first and then I'll
3 translate it to English because I think it's important. Evening, so while
4 rent freeze are the floor because what we really need are rent rollback. If
5 the landlord them so violent with we as random people in here today,
6 imagine what they might do with them tenant then. The landlord them are
7 make record profit even though inflation arise as that the data say. Eric
8 Adams and [unclear] [04:13:48] give the landlord them 12% more in the
9 last four years alone. The tenant them on the other hand not get paid more
10 than one, two or three real job them, the grocery them not go down, health
11 insurance not go down and the subway fare them not -- subway fare not go
12 down but that the landlord them do it to themselves. They not do enough.
13 They have about 60,000 rent-stabilized apartment just sit on empty. If I
14 want investment, then why them I left money out there? Them for rental,
15 the place them, even if the place then rental, the tenant them not feel a
16 shoulder of burden when the, when the landlord them not have -- not need,
17 not need it as according to shown data. While rent freeze are the floor
18 because what we really need are rent rollback. Good evening, rent freeze
19 is the floor, we really need a rent rollback. If the landlords are so bad with
20 us as random people here today, imagine what they do with their tenants.
21 Landlords are making revenue profits despite inflation. That's what the
22 data, the data says. Eric Adams and you all gave them 12% more in the
23 last four years alone. Tenants on the other hand aren't getting paid more
24 than one, two or three real jobs. Groceries aren't going down, the subway
25 fare isn't going down but it's a doing of their own. The landlords are not

1 doing enough. There are almost 60,000 rent-stabilized units sitting empty.
2 If this is an investment, then why are they leaving revenue on the table?

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

4 Mr. Waugh: Bring them online. Even with full occupancy, tenants should not be
5 burdened since the landlords do not need it according to your data.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

7 Mr. Waugh: Rent freeze is the floor. We really need a rent rollback.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Sabine Teyssier, Sabine. Erica Charles,
9 Wendy Share [phonetic]. Let me know if you're on your way. Okay.
10 Yes, I'm just calling the names of the folks that are here. We're going to
11 come back. Absolutely, I hear you all. Just --

12 Mr. Lindsey: Hello, everyone. My name is Elston Lindsey. I'm a rent controlled tenant
13 for 57 years in Crown Heights. My landlord is trying to evict me. My
14 apartment is supposed to be registered with the DHCR. He hasn't
15 registered my apartment so nobody knows I exist, okay? I'm dealing with
16 a cancer issue. This man is trying to evict me. Moving date of my
17 apartment, October 14, 1968, half the people in my building weren't even
18 born and they had no respect for me. Shine Corporation. That's right. I
19 said it. Shine Corporation. You go online, shinecorp.com. You can
20 check out, discrimination against blacks, Hispanics, everybody. They love
21 to bully their tenants. And my biggest fear right now is an apartment that
22 I've been in for 57 years, I'm going to be tossed in the street like a trash.
23 To further harass me, they removed my name from my rent statement and
24 put my late mother's name in. This is now personal, to take a dead
25 woman's name that I buried 19 years ago. And I took care of my mother

1 until I couldn't take care of her no more until she left this planet and I have
2 to be disrespected by somebody who should be in damn jail.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

4 Mr. Lindsey: And rent roll back, nothing. These landlords need to start being in jail.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Please come up for your testimony.

6 Ms. Unknown: Hello. I'm just going to read this. This is from one of Hope tenant
7 members, Devorah. She said my testimony is to make sure tenants are
8 treated the same as landlords, so to speak. If, if this continues to be an
9 uneven, unbalanced playing ground, the scales of what's going on, I say
10 rent freeze. I say take the money out their pockets so, so they'll know how
11 we all feel to worry about how we're going to buy food, how we're going
12 to get our kids to school, buy school clothes, buy books. Stop being
13 greedy and be, and be fair. Help, not take away how we're trying to live.
14 Just you should be ashamed of yourself. You should be ashamed of
15 yourself because you wasn't always a landlord. A lot of them talked about
16 their parents came here and did this and did that, my parents came here
17 and did this and did that. But your parents didn't make it an even playing
18 ground for us. The lady wanted to fight my friend because my friend said
19 to her, if the shoe don't fit, don't wear it. She must have been guilty of
20 cheating her tenants because she wanted to beat me up for no reason. So,
21 I'm just here, I'm just here to speak for my comrade and she says freeze
22 the rent. The only way we're going to have affordable New York is
23 through organized tenants, freeze the rent.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

1 Ms. Charles: My name is Erica Charles, member of the Board and Associate. I am here
2 today to testify about the injustice being taken on tenant in New York
3 City, the greatest city in the world. Instead, only the landlord are profiting
4 from it. My friend refrigerator was not working. The landlord got her a
5 refurnished refrigerator. She had to put a bottle in front of the refrigerator
6 door to keep the door closed. Eventually, she had to buy a new one and
7 continue paying her full rent. The, the landlord did not reduce the rent. I
8 pray -- I pay my rent every month. My landlord said that I am owing back
9 rent. \$1,000, I paid it and it, and it went up again \$1,000. I was so upset,
10 depressed, angry. My, my stove is not working. I told the landlord about
11 it a year ago. I had to take him to court. The case is starting next week.
12 Three of the burners are not working and the one that is working, red
13 flame is coming from -- coming out of it, which leaves my pot black.
14 Rent increase? Absolutely no, no, no. Another tenant pay his rent every
15 month, the landlord told him he is owing \$2,000 back rent.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

17 Ms. Charles: But, but I didn't finish yet.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. We have a few more names to get through.
19 Thank you so much.

20 Ms. Charles: Okay.

21 Ms. Mitchell: If I've called your name already, please come to the microphone.

22 Ms. Teyssier: Thank you. My name is Sabine and I'm a Brooklyn resident and member
23 of my building's tenants union. There are a million reasons why there
24 should be a rent freeze. It is the absolute bare minimum to care for the
25 millions of tenants who are at risk of being displaced, nor severely rent

1 burdened. So many people more eloquent than me have laid out the dire
2 statistics that point to how and why you, as a Rent Guidelines Board, can
3 use your power to support the communities who have built this city by
4 voting for a rent freeze. I'll tell my personal story. My mother
5 fled revolution in her country and moved to the city in her 20s and led a
6 long career of public service here. I was born in the city and have
7 followed in her footsteps. I've worked in public service, including in the
8 public defender's office in the Bronx, where I witnessed how our most
9 marginalized community members were ensnared in the Housing Court
10 and where I was spending more than 50% of my income on exorbitant rent
11 in the city. My mother is now a senior and disabled. When she lost her
12 job during the pandemic, I needed to find a place where she could afford
13 to call home. It was a miracle when we found a rent-stabilized unit that
14 was protected under J51 but the relief did not last long. After moving in
15 four years ago under the Adams administration, our rents increased every
16 year. J51, the program that protected our building is now set to expire.
17 Our landlord has used this to intimidate and displace my neighbors, who
18 are primarily older people of color who have lived in this building for over
19 30 years in a heavily gentrified and otherwise unaffordable neighborhood.
20 Our landlord has threatened to raise the rent by over 400% for the majority
21 of tenants. This is outrageous on its own but especially in light of the
22 discriminatory behavior and crumbling infrastructure we have organized
23 as tenants and faced retaliation. A rent increase would be devastating to
24 my family. I lost my job last year as a result of the administration's
25 funding cuts to social services organizations and have -- and I have student

1 loans to support my elderly, disabled mother. I want to be able to continue
2 to live in the city and contribute to my community. The rent freeze would
3 have a material impact on my life and that of my fellow tenants. I am
4 grateful to be in solidarity with so many community members who are
5 fighting for this rent freeze. You can see how we fight for each other
6 while the landlords fight for themselves and their pockets.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Sabine.

8 Ms. Teyssier: You have the opportunity to join our fight, fight, freeze the rent.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. If you hear your name, please come up.
10 Wendy Scherr [phonetic], Michael Schenk [phonetic].

11 Ms. Unknown: He left.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Jonathan Cohen, Anna Curtin [phonetic] and Dan Mancini
13 [phonetic], Marcela Milt [phonetic] Hayes. Could you just tell me your
14 name?

15 Mr. Cohen: Jonathan Cohen.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Jonathan Cohen. Jonathan, and then we'll come to you.

17 Mr. Cohen: My name is Jonathan Cohen. I'm a recently retired and now rent burdened
18 person who's also a former tenant attorney. And a lot -- some of this has
19 been said before but it's really the crux of it. The -- your own studies
20 show that the landlords have increased profits in almost every year and
21 they have an, an increased profit last year in the current study. And yet,
22 we listen to a bunch of landlords here talking about how poor they are and
23 how rough it is and how tough it is. Profits come after expenses. Maybe
24 expenses did go up. Profits come after expenses. That's the final thing.
25 They are making money. They're making lots of money. Tenants are rent

1 burdened. I worked in Housing Court. I saw people getting kicked out.
2 Poor people who worked hard every day of their lives getting kicked out
3 so these landlords could make more profits. They're making tons of
4 profits. Over the last 20 years, RGB studies show that the landlord's
5 expenses are let -- were increased less than the RGB increases. There
6 needs to be a rollback because the last 20 years have increased rents more
7 than the tenants could afford and more than their expenses. They've been
8 getting over on the system for a very long time. Tenants need a fair break
9 and that has to come now. And what happens when it doesn't happen is
10 that poor tenants literally get evicted and their kids get evicted and they
11 get kicked out on the street. That has to stop. Thank you.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

13 Ms. Hayes: Hi. I am Marcella Milt Hayes and I'm the state assembly member that
14 represents South Brooklyn, the neighborhoods of Sunset Park, part of Bay
15 Ridge and Red Hook. I'm here because it's important as a state official for
16 you to understand what our communities are going through. So, you've
17 heard some testimony from some residents in my district but I want to tell
18 you my personal experience. 223, 225, 227, 23rd Street, three buildings
19 that I helped organize before I went into state assembly, mostly Spanish
20 speaking, monolingual residents, used to paying their rent in cash. One of
21 the tenants came into the office needing help and he had some court
22 papers. Guess what? The landlord had passed away and his adult children
23 had been coming by for months, collecting rent in cash, not paying the
24 mortgage on the property and now, the banks were going to foreclose.
25 None of the tenants had any idea what was happening. It's important to

1 understand that it's not just the corporate landlords that are doing these
2 tricks on our tenants but it's the small ones as well. They are seeing how
3 much money the big landlords are getting and they are using the same
4 tactics and when they can't, they are making up their own. So, some of
5 our tenants have no super, why? Because the landlord can't raise the rent
6 and wants to make more money anyway so he will hire somebody from
7 the neighborhood that will come and take out the trash once a week.
8 We're talking about tenants who are complaining that they have no heat
9 and the super's response, don't worry, sweetie, I'll be right up to keep you
10 warm. It's important to understand the imbalance of power that tenants
11 face and the aggressiveness on which these landlords come after them. I
12 have a building where a landlord redid the whole electrical system. We're
13 talking about a building that's over 100 years old. So, the tenants are
14 paying for that increase. We're talking about changing the fuses from the
15 screws to the switch. So, now this landlord has the power to turn off your
16 whole -- all the power in your apartment and that's what he does to
17 retaliate. He will post a picture of you, the same ID that you used to apply
18 for the apartment and post it at the local train station saying that you didn't
19 pay your rent when you're asking for a new lease. This is just a small
20 snapshot of the issues that these tenants are facing day after day. 2008
21 was the first time I came before this board and I asked for a zero increase.
22 Not expecting to get it but I asked for it because I know that was what,
23 that's what was needed in my gentrifying community back then.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Assembly Member.

1 Ms. Hayes: It is years later and they are asking for the same thing. So, not only do --
2 are they owed a rent freeze, but they need a rent rollback. Thank you.

3 Inv. Mitchell: Thank you, Assembly Member Milt Hayes. Michelle Stamp [phonetic], is
4 Michelle here? Okay, I'm going to recall this group who didn't come up
5 when I called their names. If you're here, please make your way up. Jean
6 Fulks, Elizabeth Mackey, Catherine Shofelt. Thank you. Rhiannon
7 Dowling, Janelle Humphrey, David Cortez Ramirez, Andrew Weiner,
8 Michelle McArthur, Selena Viciosio, Faith Williams, Kenneth Henry,
9 Adem Alkin, Phelan Raltray, Teresita Aguilar, Luz Rosero. Let me know
10 if you're on your way up if you -- Winsome Pendergrass, Maria B. Lopez,
11 Vanessa Figueroa, Relique Golson.

12 Ms. Unknown: She left.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Saul Lerman-Sinkoff?

14 Ms. Unknown: Also left.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thanks. Aura Wise, Lee James, Skye Dogen, Nancy Herrera, Jennifer
16 Ford.

17 Ms. Unknown: She left.

18 Ms/ Mitchell: Thank you. Alyssa Williford and Carol Blake. Did you register at the
19 table?

20 Ms. Sandmann: My name was 29. My name has not been called.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Please come give your testimony and remind me of your name when you
22 get here.

23 Mr. Sandmann: Kyle Sandmann.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

25 Mr. Sandmann: I pre-registered, my number was 29.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Did you -- pre-registration still needs to check in at the table -
2 -
3 Mr. Sandmann: I checked in twice.
4 Ms. Mitchell: -- but I will absolutely check for you. Thank you, Kyle, when you're
5 ready.
6 Mr. Sandmann: Alright. Okay. Before my phone dies, can everyone hear me?
7 Ms. Mitchell: Yes.
8 Mr. Sandmann: Cool, alright. So, I was here last year. A lot of you have changed. Some
9 of you have kind of stayed the same. One of you who stayed the same left
10 hours ago, which is a bit of a shame. I live in a rent-stabilized building
11 and I work two jobs like many of my neighbors do. I live in an A&E
12 owned building in one of the 14 buildings that's included in the \$2.1
13 million settlement that the city made with my landlord earlier this year.
14 Prior to the settlement, the building was part of another settlement with the
15 New York State Attorney General for illegally destabilizing rent-protected
16 and rent-stabilized units. A&E CEO Margaret Braun is 2025's worst
17 landlord, number one. Per the Public Advocate's Office, my landlord is,
18 again, currently literally the worst of the worst. I'm here representing my
19 neighbors and one of the many A&E owned buildings currently also under
20 foreclosure proceedings. The Rent Guidelines Board has now raised the
21 rent five years in a row for rent-stabilized buildings. My rent has gone up,
22 my neighbor's rent has gone up and you've heard testimony all throughout
23 the night from other owners and landlords that they need to raise the rents
24 to make repairs, pay their mortgages, cover the cost of affordable housing,
25 et cetera. My landlords, if they ever deign to show up, would probably

1 make the same arguments. My building is a prime example of why the
2 Rent Guidelines Board should not bend to that pressure, freeze the rent
3 and roll it back if you must. If my rent keeps going up but repairs to my
4 building aren't being made, mortgage payments aren't being made and my
5 neighbors in illegally-destabilized units are not getting their money back
6 from my landlord for years of over payment and we have to go to the city
7 and to court to force them to follow the law, why permit the rents to be
8 raised again? I am for you to roll back the rent for stabilized units across
9 the city as a necessary market correction to artificially induce inflation and
10 most important, as a redress for years of criminality and negligence from
11 the landlords and property management class who have not yet been held
12 accountable.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Kyle and thank you so much to everyone who came to testify
14 tonight. We'll have our final hearing on June 16th. Is there a motion to
15 adjourn?

16 Mr. Unknown: Motion.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Second? Thank you. We're adjourned.

CERTIFICATE OF ACCURACY

I, Gabriela Rodriguez, certify that the foregoing transcript of 2026-057588 for the audio file *June 11, 2026 RGB Brooklyn Public Hearing - Moston, R. (Job ID 756399)* was prepared using the required transcription equipment and is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Certified By



Date: August 10, 2026

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