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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
RENT GUIDELINES BOARD

PUBLIC MEETING
OF THE
DIRECTORS

Manhattan Public Hearing
Tuesday, June 16, 2026
5:00 p.m.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Good evening, everyone. I'd like to welcome you to this public hearing of
2 the New York City Rent Guidelines Board and thank you all for attending.
3 This is the last 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: Here.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Sina Sinai?

17 Ms. Sinai: Present.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Christina Smyth?

19 Ms. Smyth: Here.

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. We also accept comments on the proposed guidelines outside

1 of our public hearings. You can submit written, audio, and video
2 comments for the Board to review through today, June 16th. Instructions
3 on how to submit these comments will be available on the Board's website
4 by e-mail at askatrgb.nyc.gov or by calling the RGB. Our final vote on
5 the guidelines will take place on Thursday, June 25th, starting at 7:00 p.m.
6 at El Museo del Barrio, 1230 5th Avenue at 104th Street in Manhattan.
7 Doors open at 6:00 p.m. The public may attend in person or may watch
8 the vote live by streaming it on the RGB's YouTube channel. To find out
9 how, visit the RGB website, call the RGB at 212-669-7480 between 9:00
10 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Before we proceed, I would like to go over the rules
11 and procedures for those who are testifying before the Board. If you wish
12 to speak, you must confirm with RGB staff at the registration table located
13 near the entrance of the hall, and that is, even if you pre-register, please
14 make sure you've signed up with the staff. Speakers will not be called if
15 they have not checked in at the registration table. There are Spanish
16 interpreters here today. When registering to speak, please notify the staff
17 if you would like an interpreter. Can everybody hear me? Okay. I will
18 try to call several names in advance to let you know that you will soon be
19 called on to speak. If you have materials that you'd like to distribute to the
20 Board, please give them to the RGB staff sitting at the sign-in table near
21 the entrance. I will attempt to alternate speakers between tenants and
22 owners, but this is not always possible. Board members may need to
23 briefly step away from the table during the hearing to use the restroom or
24 to take an urgent phone call. We will keep the meeting movin-- moving
25 given the time constraints because we're eager to hear from all of you. In

1 order to accommodate as many speakers as possible, each speaker will
2 have two minutes to give their testimony. An additional two minutes of
3 speaking time will be given to those speakers who are using interpretation
4 services. To help speakers keep track of time, we do have a clock, and we
5 will start the clock when you begin speaking. The clock will beep once
6 when the speaker has 30 seconds left, will continue beeping when the
7 allotted two minutes are up. If you are still speaking at the end of your
8 two minutes, I will politely ask you to wrap up your testimony. We expect
9 many speakers tonight, and the Board wants to hear from as many of you
10 as possible in the limited time that we have for the hearing. We
11 understand that it may be difficult to say everything that you want for us to
12 hear in just two minutes, but please understand that it is our responsibility
13 to try to make sure that everyone who's taking the time to come out today
14 has a fair opportunity to be heard. Thank you for your cooperation and the
15 Board is looking forward to hearing your comments regarding the
16 proposed rent adjustment guidelines, and I will now turn it over for
17 translation. We will have New York City Council Member, Harvey
18 Epstein, followed by Christopher Natoli, followed by Monique Dana.

19 Mr. Epstein:

Hi, everyone. How you -- how are you all doing? How are you feeling
20 out here? So, for folks who don't know me, my name is Harvey Epstein. I
21 sat on the Rent Guidelines Board for five years as a tenant representative.
22 I was an assembly member before I got elected to the council. And, you
23 know, prior to that, I was a tenant's lawyer. I have a long history in
24 movement work and really here to talk about the needs that low-income
25 tenants have for our rent freeze. There's a long history of looking at the

1 cost of living in New Yorkers and seeing that 50% of tenants are paying
2 more than 30% of their income on rent. You know, we see about a third
3 of tenants are paying more than 50% of their income towards rent. We see
4 eviction numbers going up across the board, across our City, and we are
5 living through a housing crisis. Once that person is kicked out of their
6 rent stabilized apartment, their lives fall apart. And we've seen it happen
7 when I represented tenants in housing court to try to prevent evictions,
8 when I was an assembly member and changed the law in 2019 to, to
9 protect tenants and we see it today. And evictions continue to go up
10 today. So, along with 22 of my colleagues, we, we are submitting a letter
11 today to the Rent Guidelines Board, asking you to encourage you to
12 demand that you do a one and two-year rent freeze for New -- the tenants
13 of New York City. And I was proud to be a part of the first rent freeze
14 ever in New York City, where we were able to get the one-year rent
15 freeze. We have an opportunity to have this historic moment to support
16 what Mayor Mamdani is talking about, the affordability crisis, to do a one
17 and two-year rent freeze. It is the opportunity that New Yorkers need. I
18 can't tell you how many times in my district where I represent 170,000
19 people who talk about not being able to afford to continue to live in their
20 neighborhood. Can't tell you how many times I've walked across in my
21 neighborhood and heard the crisis that we have of affordability. You have
22 an opportunity to help 2.5 million people. I hope and demand that you do
23 the right thing for all of New Yorkers. Thank you.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Council Member. Christopher?

1 Mr. Natoli: Alright. Good evening. My name is Chris Natoli or Christopher Natoli,
2 and I work as a tenant organizer. In my work, I've been to hundreds of
3 rent stabilized buildings in Upper Manhattan and South Brooklyn, and I've
4 spoken with countless tenants over the years. I've seen inside lots of
5 apartments and heard about their struggles to get repairs, about legal
6 struggles with their landlord, and about struggles to pay rent. I'm here to
7 demand a rent rollback. In other words, a rent reduction. I know that, I
8 know that the preliminary ranges you voted for are zero to 2% and zero to
9 4%, which don't include negative adjustments but you should be aware, I
10 know many of you are new on the board, you should be aware that these
11 ranges are not legally binding. Also be aware that you could re-vote on
12 the ranges, which the board did last year. So, a rollback is still legally
13 possible and I think it's necessary in order to address the affordability
14 crisis tenants are living in. Tonight, you'll hear many stories from tenants
15 across the borough about how they're struggling to pay rent. In past years,
16 I've heard all sorts of people, from immigrant workers, to nurses, to
17 teachers, to veterans, maybe you've heard many of these people in the past
18 hearings this month, all struggling to make ends meet. Many people work
19 multiple jobs. As a result, parents don't even get home in time to say
20 goodnight to their kids. Older siblings have to take care of younger
21 siblings. Seniors are forced to cut back on groceries. As you listen to
22 tenants' testimonies, ask yourself, will a rent freeze help their situation, or
23 will it only keep things the same? What will actually help the tenant's
24 situation, a rent freeze or a rent rollback? I'm going to ask you to write
25 this question at the top of your notebooks or your notepads so you can ask

1 yourself after every tenant testimony, what will actually help this tenant's
2 situation, a rent freeze or a rent rollback? I, I sincerely would like you to
3 write this at the top of your notepad so you can think about it every time a
4 tenant testifies about how hard it is to make ends meet.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Christopher.

6 Mr. Natoli: What will actually help this tenant's situation, a rent freeze or a rent
7 rollback? Thank you.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

9 Mr. Natoli: Thanks.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Next, I will welcome Monique Dana, followed by Kathleen Kelly and
11 Adrian Milton. Please make your way to the microphones. Monique
12 Dana, followed by Kathleen Kelly and Adrian Milton.

13 Ms. Dana: Good evening. We keep hearing the same words, affordability, stability
14 and housing justice, and owners want the same things tenant wants. But
15 how can a housing system be called stable when operating costs rise faster
16 than rents year after year after year? Affordability isn't a slogan, it's a
17 balance sheet. Good evening, Chair and members of the Rent Guidelines
18 Board. My name is Monique, I'm a small property owner and I'm
19 speaking for small property owners across New York City. Every year,
20 your Board puts together the PIOC compiling actual operating costs from
21 buildings across New York. I pulled the last 10 years of reports.
22 Annually, increases -- costs have gone up 5% to 6% every year,
23 compounded to 64% over the last decade, and rents have gone up 18% to
24 31%. While that is significant, it's not enough to cover a rising costs.
25 Everybody wants an affordable New York, but I don't know how I'm

1 supposed to pay my costs when my rents can't keep up with expenses.
2 These are costs, and the expenses are taxes, insurance, utilities, labor, and
3 maintenance. They're not my choice, they're required costs necessary to
4 keep housing safe. For this year, your study shows costs going up 5.3%,
5 and you've preliminary-- preliminarily voted on zero to 4%, and
6 everybody, all the tenants are asking for freezes and rollbacks. I
7 understand that, but again, I need to pay my bills and I need at least, my,
8 my costs have gone up more than 5.3%. My real estate taxes alone, which
9 are my largest single expense, have gone up 8% this year and the last
10 several years. My insurance went up 28%, so again, I ask, how are the
11 owners supposed to pay these rising costs when rents don't go up to keep
12 pace? So, I implore, implore the Rent Guidelines Board to please institute
13 a 2% and a 4% increase as you've possibly proposed. Thank you for your
14 time.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Is Kathleen here, Kathleen Kelly?

16 Ms. Kelly: Yeah.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Kathleen, when you're ready.

18 Ms. Kelly: Hi, thanks for the opportunity to speak. I'm just going to quick run
19 through the stats that you've heard already that are from RGB themselves.
20 Sorry, between 2023 and 2024, the NOI revenue remaining after operating
21 costs are paid increased 6.2% for buildings containing rent stabilized units.
22 After adjusting for inflation, NOI rose 2.2%. Rental income increased an
23 average of 4.8%. Percent total grew at -- income grew an average of 4.9.
24 And operating costs rose an average of 4.2% between '23 and '24. Rents
25 went up 12% during the Eric Adams administration and this amount

1 compounds. Former RGB Executive Director Timothy Collins has shown
2 that rent increases authorized over time have gone beyond what was
3 needed to keep landlords whole. His analysis since 1999, RGB approved
4 increases were over 30% higher than what would have been required to
5 cover operating costs and maintain inflation adjusted NOI. These
6 increases compounded over time, driving enormous increases in rent. As
7 a New York City Hospital social worker, I focused on treating patients and
8 their families' trauma, advocating for patients that lived in most often
9 substandard housing and NYCHA apartments in need of repair. I also had
10 to advocate for seniors, families, and the disabled whose landlords were
11 trying to force them out of their rent stabilized apartments. The ACE
12 study, Adverse Childhood Experiences, is a longitudinal and quantitative
13 research project demonstrating that unstable and safe housing and
14 homelessness indicates significant exposure to toxic stress from adverse
15 events such as abuse, neglect or household dysfunction. And I'm like --
16 children are more likely to experience chronic health conditions, lack of
17 access to education, mental health problems, and frequent medical or
18 emergency care use. As a DC 37 union member, I was also at the city
19 hospital there for my fellow union members who had come to work each
20 day to maintain the facility and provide support for the patients.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Kathleen.

22 Ms. Kelly: Many were homeless themselves. I'm asking not just for a 0% increase in
23 one and two year leases, but based on the statistics, to look at a rollback.
24 [unclear] [00:18:10].

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Kathleen. Adrian Milton. After Adrian, we'll have Gabriela
2 Azevedo, Bee Cuilin [phonetic], and Anne Greenberg. Please make your
3 way toward the microphones.

4 Mr. Milton: Hi, my name is Adrian Milton. I own a small rooming house on East 3rd
5 Street in East Village. We have not had a rent increase in 17 years. In
6 that time, my insurance has gone from \$8,000 to \$23,000. The tax has
7 gone from \$6,000 to \$24,000. And there are many other increases in fuel
8 and all of that. I'm at the point where now rents range in that building
9 from \$357 a month to \$518, and both of them in between somewhere. It's,
10 it's untenable at this point. If I have to sell, somebody's going to buy it,
11 turn it into a townhouse, and 12 people will lose their home. So, I think in
12 fairness, we should get an increase to make up for all the time we haven't
13 had an increase. And, and the reason the insurance is so high, the
14 insurance company says, rooming houses only contain sort of unseated
15 people and, you know, there's more danger of fire and all of that. Every
16 one of my building works. Three of them make very large amounts of
17 money. And I don't resent that, but I'm saying they're capable, and all the
18 others are also capable of some sort of increase. And I, and I know that
19 most -- there's a difference between small landlords and large landlords.
20 My landlord is -- owns 80 buildings. I rent stabilized, but the apartment
21 next to me, which is smaller, just went for \$6,000. So, I know he's not
22 hurting, but I am. Most small landlords are hurting very badly. So, I
23 would hope that the Board would take all of this into consideration.
24 Thank you.

25 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Gabriela Azevedo?

1 Ms. Azevedo: Hi, everyone. My name is Gabriela. I've lived in rent stabilized
2 apartments in Brooklyn for most of my life. My mom, an immigrant from
3 Brazil, still lives in the same rent stabilized apartment in Park Slope where
4 I was born. Because of that apartment, I was able to attend great schools
5 and grow up surrounded by parks and libraries, even as my parents
6 struggled to make ends meet. Today, she continues to work as a preschool
7 teacher at an excellent local school. I now live in a rent stabilized
8 apartment in Crown Heights with my partner and two roommates, an
9 apartment that is somehow priced at near market rate. The relative
10 affordability and stability of these apartments have made it possible for me
11 as a first generation working artist with student loans to build a life in this
12 incredible city where I was raised. And yet, even with these protections,
13 rents continue to rise beyond what working class people and artists
14 without trust funds can afford. While I'm grateful for my housing, I don't
15 understand how the rent for our stabilized apartment got this high,
16 especially given no capital improvements have been made to the building.
17 That said, our apartment's rental history has a few murky gaps that I don't
18 have the time, money, or energy to look into, so every month we pay what
19 we're charged. For the record, I pay more than 50% of my income, well
20 over it. An additional rent increase this year would be devastating,
21 especially given the neglected state of the apartment and the building. Our
22 building is owned by Seth Miller, a mainstay on the public advocate's
23 worst landlords list who owes over \$2 million in fines to our City. There
24 are repeated issues with trash accumulation, pests, rats, unsolved leaks,
25 and many more. Many of my neighbors have been forced into rent strikes.

1 I know I'm not alone in this situation as a tenant. Even with regulation,
2 our rent has consistently gone up by nearly 100 year -- \$100 each year.
3 Rolling rent back would allow rent stabilization to serve its original
4 purpose in a City facing ongoing housing and affordability crisis. I want
5 to be able to stay in the City and borough where I was born, to make art
6 here, to work here, and continue to build community. For the sake of
7 young artists and working families who make this City the incomparable
8 cultural center that it is, I urge you to enact a rol-- rent rollback this cycle.
9 Thank you so much for your time.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. I will now welcome Bee Cuilin. And apologies if I
11 mispronounce any names. I'll look forward to hearing the correct
12 pronunciation when you come up is Bee Cuilin here, followed by Anne
13 Greenberg, and then Ethan Gussow. Go ahead, Anne, when you're ready.

14 Ms. Greenberg: Thank you. My name is Anne Greenberg. I'm a senior citizen living in
15 Peter Cooper Village, and I'm on the Board of the Stuyvesant Town-Peter
16 Cooper Village Tenants Association. This is at least my 13th year
17 testifying, so maybe I'll get lucky and maybe all tenants will get lucky.
18 You have made this an historic moment. Although you squandered the
19 opportunity to make it more momentous by voting for a rollback, you may
20 regret that after hearing from tenants. But never before has a rent freeze
21 for both one and two-year leases been on the table. It's overdue and
22 millions of tenants deserve it. We are the majority of the City. So, what's
23 indisputable? My neighbor Kathy Kelly quoted you some statistics, your
24 statistics, I was going to quote them, I won't repeat them, but NOI, they're
25 doing okay. 12% increase from Mayor Adams, big deal, and every tenant

1 here feels that pain. Tim Collins for years has been saying that landlords
2 have been more than made whole, and I'll just bring up the issue of MCIs.
3 The ones from before 2019 especially continue to inflate our rents. I have
4 a \$120 a month MCI in my rent forever, and the later MCIs will outlive
5 me because I'm not going to live another 30 years. What you decide to do
6 will make or break millions of lives. All of you have accepted that
7 responsibility by being on the Board. So, I call on you to hear the voices
8 of the embattled tenants to do the right thing, to do the historic thing,
9 freeze the rent for one and two-year leases, but better yet, reconsider and
10 roll the rent back. Thank you.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Ethan Gussow, followed by Cynthia Allen, Jenny Arthur, and
12 Andy Humm. Can you hear me now?

13 Mr. [Unknown]: We can hear you. It's just you got to wait for the name after everybody
14 [unclear] [00:24:44].

15 Ms. Mitchell: Is Ethan Gussow here?

16 Mr. Gussow: Hi, Ethan Gussow. Nobody's denying that people are hurting and that
17 affordability is a major issue, but that includes small landlords as well.
18 Your know costs are going up and rents have not taken -- not have come --
19 have not come close to covering those costs. I mean, if, if we're going to
20 talk about a rent rollback, why isn't there a real estate tax rollback? Why
21 doesn't the state subsidize rents? I mean, if we're talking about all these
22 ideas, landlords are part of the community too, and they need to have the
23 ability to, you know, make repairs, keep the buildings in order, and make
24 some small profit. So, all I want to say is that, there are many stories out
25 there and I understand and I'm very sympathetic, but landlords are part of

1 this community too and they need to be taken care of and not be ignored.
2 So, I think there needs to be 2% and 4% increases.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Cynthia Allen, followed by Jenny Arthur, followed by Andy
4 Humm. And if you're able, please line up at the microphone or make your
5 way near the microphone. Cynthia?

6 Ms. Allen: Yes.

7 Ms. Mitchell: When you're ready.

8 Ms. Allen: Okay. Hi, my name is Cynthia Allen, and I'm a member of Tenants &
9 Neighbors. And I've lived at Riverton Square, which is in Harlem for 30
10 years. And my landlord, unfortunately, is A&E. Like over half of New
11 Yorkers, I find myself to be rent burdened. I pay 60% of my income on
12 rent. And because I spend so much on rent, I'm having difficulties
13 affording my diabetes medications as well as the supplies. If your rent
14 freeze, if you freeze the rent, my rent will still be unaffordable, which is
15 why I'm asking for a rent rollback. A&E currently has over 100 C-class
16 violations, which is due to them failing to maintain the property. Where
17 we are? When they purchased the property 21 years ago, they got a 30-
18 year tax break. And I see that that has allowed them to purchase other
19 properties. And just last year, they purchased the property for \$116
20 million, which is actually on East 87th Street. So, while they're doing that,
21 the Riverton is getting worse and worse. At one point, Riverton was
22 considered the Pearl of Harlem. Now, we are considered the ragtag of
23 Harlem. So, they constantly tell us that they don't have money but they
24 do. They're now having the workers come out of their pockets to, to
25 purchase supplies to try to upkeep the property. So, right now --

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Cynthia.

2 Ms. Allen: I disagree with A&E. They do not deserve an increase.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Jenny? Is Jenny Arthur here?

4 Ms. Arthur: That's me.

5 Ms. Mitchell: When you're ready.

6 Ms. Arthur: Hi, my name is Jenny Arthur. And, you know, I've been thinking for the
7 past week, like, how do I plan? How do I -- what am I writing down about
8 why I can't afford my rent? It's -- I can't afford it. My rent has gone up
9 \$300 since I moved there in 2019. My career ended in COVID. All of my
10 bills have increased. I have a one bedroom, so I can't get a roommate. I
11 don't -- I have very few options. I have no savings. I don't have
12 healthcare. And if I -- I was thinking, what was -- one thing I could say if
13 I didn't spend over 50% of my income on rent is I could participate in the
14 local economy. Like, I cannot afford to go out to eat. I can't afford to buy
15 anything. I have three rescue animals that I have to pay for. So, I just -- I,
16 I can't think of any other reasons other than it's completely unaffordable
17 and it just isn't working. And please, at least freeze the rent.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Andy, Andy Humm?

19 Mr. Humm: I'm Andy Humm, representing tenants in 1,000 apartments in London
20 Terrace Gardens in Chelsea. I'm here to oppose a rent freeze. We demand
21 a rent rollback now. All, all the public officials who are going to come
22 here for a rent freeze were here last year and the last four years arguing for
23 freezes and all we got was increases. So, the thing to do, if you object to
24 those increases, is roll back those Eric Adams increases. The, the, the
25 mayor of New York, the City of New York controls very little in the

1 affordability agenda, property taxes and this. The, the -- you -- those are
2 the two ways a mayor has a chance to institute affordability. Everything
3 else has to go through Albany. You've got a tremendous opportunity here.
4 Since 1969, you've never done a rollback, never. Kingston, New York did
5 a 15 -- Kingston, New York did a 15 % rollback and it was upheld by the
6 Court of Appeals. So, what are you waiting for? I'm 72 years old. My
7 rent at London Terrace stabilized, takes up 70% of my Social Security
8 check. I have, I have some other savings that I -- you know, that I manage
9 to live on, alright? Not a lot. I, I, I get by. I don't -- I'm not able to save
10 anything beyond that. But, you know, if, if you don't do this, you know,
11 obviously, am I -- I was shocked when you put a range of zero to four. I
12 mean, why didn't you do a range of like minus two to plus two and you
13 could do the freeze in the middle if you were going to do it, but you
14 should be doing a rollback. You're alarming us. And if Mayor Mamdani
15 doesn't at least deliver on a freeze, he's finished.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Andy. The next names, the next names I will welcome are
17 Pablo Zevallos, Renzo Fabian Moyano Condia, Eugenie Dubnau and
18 Vivian Kuo. Please make your way toward the microphones. That's
19 Pablo Zevallos, Renzo Fabian Moyano Condia, Eugenie Dubnau and
20 Vivian Kuo.

21 Mr. Zevallos: Sorry, was I next?

22 Ms. Mitchell: If you're any of those four names, go ahead and let -- if you let me know
23 your name, we'll move to the next.

24 Mr. Zevallos: Alright. I'm Pablo Zevallos.

25 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

1 Mr. Zevallos: Alright. Good evening. As I mentioned, my name is Pablo Zevallos and
2 I'm a tenant's rights attorney testifying in support of freezing the rent.
3 New York City enacted rent stabilization to guard against what they called
4 speculative and unwarranted rent increases amidst enduring inflation, an
5 acute housing shortage, and proposed cuts to federal assistance in housing
6 programs. Today, we need a rent freeze because while landlords are
7 largely doing well, local inflation is accelerating, the housing shortage is
8 more acute than ever, and the federal government is cutting housing
9 assistance. Between 1990 and 2024, in buildings containing rent
10 stabilized units, landlords' inflation adjusted rental income has increased
11 by 38%, while costs have increased by 31%, facilitating a real net
12 operating income increase of 57%. As has been mentioned before, Tim
13 Collins, a former RGB Executive Director mentioned that from 20 -- 1990
14 to 2025, prior iterations of this Board have approved increases that were
15 7% larger than what were needed to maintain inflation-adjusted NOI. In
16 addition, between 2023 and 2024, NOI increased in 93% of the City's
17 community districts, and the percentage of distressed buildings has
18 declined again. Simply put, landlords' economic indicators neither
19 warrant nor justify a rent increase this year. Meanwhile, many renter
20 families in our City, as you've heard, continue to struggle. Inflation-
21 adjusted average wages for workers in New York City have decreased
22 since 2021, while inflation in our metro area has risen to 5%. Nearly
23 seven-- 70% of the lowest income tenants and nearly 30% of all tenants
24 pay a majority of their incomes in rent. Rental assistance is in short
25 supply, particularly as the federal administration is cutting pandemic era

1 housing vouchers. And with only one in 150 apartments renting for under
2 200 -- \$2,400 being vacant, there is little chance of moving elsewhere.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

4 Mr. Zevallos: These tenants cannot afford an increase. In light of the diverging
5 economic indicators of landlords and rent burden tenants, I urge this Board
6 to freeze the rent.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

8 Mr. Zevallos: Thank you very much.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Renzo?

10 Mr. Condia: Yes, hello. I'm a member of the Union of Pinnacle and Summit Tenants
11 as well as the Northern Manhattan Community Land Trust. Before
12 anything, I want to say that the RGB structure needs, needs to be
13 reevaluated, updated. Why is there equal representation of tenant and
14 landlord interests on the Board when there are so many more tenant lives
15 on the line in so many fundamental ways, while the other side is a small
16 group that argues for increased profit margins? The current housing crisis
17 is due to development done without the community that puts land in
18 private outside hands, leading and feeding off displacement. It's also
19 when the RGB keeps voting for rent increases or opting for that band aid
20 that is a rent freeze. This never-ending onslaught of affordability is
21 displacing us New Yorkers from our own City. Our realities are directly
22 opposed because while one side is in favor of for-profit housing, tenants
23 know it to be an essential right and fight for community control and wish
24 that for-profit owners, whether big or small, find another way to make a
25 living that isn't inherently exploitative like housing is right now. I've been

1 an Inwood resident since the age of three, and the only reason that was a
2 possibility is because it was affordable, and now it's one of the last, if not
3 the last piece of the island that mostly still is. But we're losing land
4 rapidly, and that is due in part to the decisions made by this Board. My
5 neighbors and I have endured pinnacle group as the building owners for
6 years. Access to common areas were severed, an absentee super was
7 installed through cronyism, and an absentee owner and manager that
8 repeatedly rejected adding the necessary names to people's leases ended
9 up displacing many families. Thanks to the Union of Pinnacle Tenants,
10 we learned that we were one of 93 buildings being sold away through
11 bankruptcy court because, and here's the kicker, our rent money, instead of
12 going towards maintenance, repairs, and paying off the mortgage, was
13 going to the pockets of Joel Wiener and to Israel as returns to the investors
14 operating within the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange. Something Summit, the
15 new owning company, does as well. Pinnacle Summit, it's the same thing.
16 The connection couldn't be more direct of displacement here funding
17 displacement and genocide abroad.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Eugenie?

19 Ms. Dubnau: Yeah. Hi, my name is Eugenie Dubnau, and I'm from a community
20 organization, RENA, Riverside Edgecombe Neighborhood Association in
21 Washington Heights. People come -- every Thursday, we're open, and
22 people -- tenants from the community come and complain about what's
23 happening. Mostly, they're complaining about the rents, not even about
24 the rent repairs that they need so badly because what's hurting them most
25 is the rents. So, therefore, I'm asking you, the public members especially,

1 to think about this and to think about the fact that the last three years,
2 tenants have seen a 12% increase in their rent. So, therefore, we need a
3 rollback. This is -- if we freeze it, it'll be unaffordable. It's already
4 unaffordable. Nobody's -- almost nobody signs a one year lease. Most
5 people sign a two-year lease because they're scared that it's going to be
6 even worse the next year. So, therefore, we're asking, please, that you
7 give us a rent rollback. Just one more thing. These exorbitant rents are
8 causing increased homelessness. We know, and I don't have the facts with
9 me right now, but I'm sure you know that homelessness has increased in
10 New York City tremendously over the last number of years, and that's due
11 to the rent increases that the board has allowed to the landlords. Thank
12 you.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Vivian?

14 Ms. Vivian: Hi, my name is Vivian and I'm a member of the Union of Pinnacle
15 Tenants. I live in a building that was owned by Pinnacle Group for six
16 years. My landlord is now Summit as my home was sold by Pinnacle
17 during bankruptcy proceedings. I'm here to explain briefly why a rent
18 rollback is needed. I'm a 100% commission based 1099 wage earner as a
19 real estate agent. I am the embodiment of the New York hustle. As they
20 say in my industry, I can only eat what I kill. That is I only get paid when
21 the client decides to pay me. I am also trying to start a family and become
22 a mother. But given the economic pressure of making ends meet I must
23 put my plans on hold. Because you see since the Fair Act was passed, 40
24 percent of my post tax income goes to rent to one of New York's worst
25 landlords. My income for rental commissions has dropped by over 50%

1 since the Fair Act, yet New York City market rate rents has risen 12%
2 since just last year. My former landlord, Pinnacle filed bankruptcy not
3 because the rental income from tenants like me could not keep up with the
4 operating costs, no. To be clear, the building is sold during bankruptcy
5 generated \$27 million in positive cash flow in 2024 alone. What caused
6 Pinnacle to file bankruptcy was the debt they owed to the bank. Both
7 Pinnacle and the bank were betting on destabilizing apartments across the
8 city. This debt largely originated prior to 2019, but with HSTPA, Pinnacle
9 and the bank's corrupt business model stopped working. The math just
10 isn't mathing for everyday working class New Yorkers. You can help us
11 make it right. We need a rent rollback. Thank you.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Now, I will call New York City Council member Carmen De
13 La Rosa, followed by Timothy Frasca, then Valencia Sherman-Greenup,
14 and then Ginevra Moscati. Please make your way toward the
15 microphones. We'll start with council member De La Rosa.

16 Ms. De La Rosa: Good evening. I'm council member Carmen De La Rosa representing
17 Washington Heights, Inwood and Marble Hill. I stood before you last
18 year with the same urgency with which I stand before you today. Council
19 District 10, the district that I am entrusted to represent, is home of the
20 largest stock of rent stabilized units in the state of New York, numbering
21 over 46,000 units where our residents are in dire need of help. Year after
22 year, my testimony and appeal remain the same. Pre pandemic, many
23 New Yorkers faced significant financial strains due to rent burdens. Six
24 years later, worsened by an anemic -- an economic downturn, inflation,
25 limited job opportunities, and a housing crisis that has reached a breaking

1 point, the rent increases continue unabated. Let's run through some of the
2 facts. The majority of the population of Washington Heights and Inwood
3 is rent burdened, continue -- contributing to 30% of their pretax income to
4 rent. Our office sees an average of 90% of our constituent cases dealing
5 with housing and security in some capacity. This has always been the case
6 and it remains the case since I became the council member in 2022. The
7 system by design is inequitable. The most impacted communities look
8 like mine, with about 70% of rent stabilized households being households
9 of color. This overlaid over the reality that black and brown families
10 continue to move out at higher rates due to the sheer unaffordability of this
11 city, makes it clear how significant this crisis is. Financial insecure--
12 insecurity forces my constituents to make hard decisions to feed their
13 family or pay exorbitant rents. The common discourse of landlords is
14 about rising prices, which makes it attainable for them to continue
15 making necessary repairs to their buildings. This should, should
16 absolutely preclude renters -- this argument precludes renters from the
17 calculation.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, council member.

19 Ms. De La Rosa: Tenants have nothing to do -- have nothing to win from this. Tenants do
20 not have building that they can sell off when it's no longer profitable for
21 them to recoup their funds.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

23 Ms. De La Rosa: We are a home of a sizable older population and elders on fixed incomes.
24 Let me just go to the end since I will submit my testimony to you.

25 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

1 Ms. De La Rosa: Today, I stand before you joining the voices of tenants in my district and
2 across this great borough and city at large calling on you to do the right
3 thing or in the case of this, of this board, the bare minimum, which is to
4 freeze the rent. As you will hear tonight, tenants want -- hold on one
5 second. I'm a council member elected by my district. Give me one
6 minute to finish my last sentence. Thank you very much. There is only
7 one right answer here and I say to you, in the spirit of collaboration with
8 our mayor, the right answer tonight is to freeze the rent. It is what our city
9 needs and it is certainly what our tenants deserve. Although they want a
10 rollback and I stand with them in that petition, tonight we are asking you
11 to finally, finally do the right thing and freeze the rents. And don't ever
12 grab a microphone from me ever again.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Timothy, when you're ready.

14 Mr. Frasca: My name is Timothy Frasca, and I'm a rent stabilized tenant at 41 Park
15 Terrace West in Inwood, part of a complex that comprises two addresses
16 on that street and two more on Seaman Avenue. For the -- at least the last
17 three years, the owner or owners have left numerous vacated apartments
18 empty. The one directly above me, a studio next door, and a two bedroom
19 across the hall have been kept off the market for months or years. Just on
20 my wing alone, the owners have left at least \$200,000 in income on the
21 table and uncollected rents from the rest of the complex must run too
22 much more. No one can tell me why. I have asked repeatedly. Is
23 Blackstone our secret landlord? Nobody knows. Or if they do, they're not
24 saying. The idea that these owners would demand an increase from me
25 while voluntarily giving up huge sums in rental income is a bad joke.

1 They could earn plenty of money from normal management of their
2 property instead of hoarding it. The building is becoming a little eerie and
3 feels -- almost feels like a haunted house. If anyone were to be assaulted
4 in the hallway, who would hear it? Last summer, a young man slept on a
5 bench across the street from us in Isham Park, got up every morning, and
6 went off to work while the building I live in remains half full. I don't
7 know if this conduct is illegal but it is certainly immoral. It is a perversion
8 of the right to own housing property at all. Do not reward their antisocial
9 behavior with an increase of any amount. Thank you.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Is Valencia Sherman-Greenup? Valencia?

11 Ms. Sherman-Greenup: I'm a lifelong resident and owner of a pre 1974 building in Harlem.
12 Over two-thirds of my 26 apartments are rent stabilized. These rules
13 affect my bottom line and the future of affordable housing in my
14 community. Over the past 20 years, the average household income in
15 Harlem went from \$26,000 to \$94,000. Despite promises to address
16 affordability, Harlem is being rapidly gentrified. Rent stabilized units are
17 less than half of our city's rentals. Property tax abatements to increase
18 stabilized units while suppressing stabilized rents leaves the largest
19 portion of rentals completely unregulated and has limited effect on
20 affordability. In the past 30 years, the city has lost over 138,000 stabilized
21 units. Developers often receive long term tax benefits in exchange for
22 setting aside a small percentage of affordable units, and those apartments
23 are often registered at substantially higher rents than older stabilized
24 housing. The median rent of newly registered stabilized apartments in
25 2024 exceeded \$3,000 per month. In contrast, the median rent I received

1 is approximately \$1,500. Although I cannot deregulate my existing
2 apartments, newly created units can become market rate once rents and
3 tenant incomes reach a certain level. In addition, new developments
4 increase surrounding property values and taxes. In 10 years, my building's
5 assessed value rose from under \$450,000 to over \$700,000, while rental
6 income constrained by regulation remained largely the same. My 100-
7 year-old building requires substantial and costly maintenance. In the past
8 three years, Con Ed. raised my annual charges from \$32,000 to nearly
9 \$44,000. When operating costs rise faster than rental income, owners are
10 forced to increase rents on market rate units, defer improvements, and
11 consider selling, often leading to conversions, redevelopment, and the loss
12 of naturally affordable housing. Approximately 65% of the city's rent
13 stabilized apartments are located in older buildings like mine. We play a
14 critical role in preserving affordability, yet we are treated as part of the
15 problem rather than part of the solution. Over the last decade, annual rent
16 adjustment averaged around two percent for one year leases and four
17 percent for two year leases. While these increases seem modest, they are
18 insufficient to keep pace with rising costs. I urge the Board to avoid a rent
19 freeze on pre 1974 rent stabilized housing, which risked undermining the
20 very housing stock that is most affordable going forward.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

22 Ms. Sherman-Greenup: I encourage the Board to consider separate policies for older
23 stabilized buildings and newer developments. They're not like us.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Ginevra Moscati? Ginevra Moscati. When you're ready.

1 Ms. Moscatti: Hi, RGB. My name is Ginevra, I'm here to demand a rent rollback and a
2 study on landlord overcompensation. My landlord is Barry Guthrie
3 [phonetic], and the property manager of my building is Strivers LLC.
4 Like over half of New Yorkers, I am rent burdened. I spend over 50% of
5 my monthly take home for my primary job on rent. With a fulltime job, I
6 was barely able to squeeze out the 40 times yearly income demanded by
7 landlords. And note that I said primary job. In order to keep up savings
8 and to just stay afloat through medical emergencies, I've taken up multiple
9 jobs. I adjunct through the CUNY's community college system. I cat sit,
10 and I tutor. I have a PhD. While I work multiple jobs, the income -- the
11 RGB's income and expense study found that from 2023 to 2024, net
12 operating income increased by 6.2% citywide following large increases in
13 prior years. Rental income rose 4.8%, outpacing operating cost increases
14 of 4.2%. In the past four years, my landlord's income has risen by 12%.
15 12% percent and yet, my landlord has had 511 HPD complaints opened
16 against him in the span of the last three years with a 186 apartments. I just
17 lost my place. If I did any of my jobs this fucking poorly, I wouldn't have
18 a job. Any of them. I walk a tightrope to pay my rent. My rent is barely
19 affordable now. If you do not freeze it, let alone roll it back, it will be
20 fully unaffordable. And I am but one individual in a sea of housing crisis.
21 Study from the Community Services Society so that among low income
22 rent stabilized tenants, 66% struggle to make ends meet, 83% have little to
23 no savings, and 55% could not likely cover a \$400 emergency expense.
24 For immigrant communities, rising rents compound the risk of
25 displacement in a context of increased immigration enforcement. For

1 victims of domestic violence, housing instability increases the threat of
2 abuse as people are forced to stay in unsafe homes. Who, who amongst us
3 isn't seeing rising costs? The tenant wages have decreased 4%.
4 Unemployment is high and the cost of living has gone up --

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

6 Ms. Moscatti: Landlords -- prominent pop landlords only make up about 2% of the
7 landlord landscape, while tenants make up 70%, and it is egregious that
8 the RGB weighs them both equally.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, I will welcome public advocate Jumaane D. Williams,
10 followed by Anne Korchak, Jenny Laurie, and Maria Cortes. Please make
11 your way toward the microphone.

12 Mr. Williams: Before I start, I just gotta say the Knicks did it in five. I gotta really just
13 say that. Peace and blessing, love and light to everybody. My name is
14 Jumaane Williams, public advocate for the City Of New York. Thank you
15 to the chair and the members of the RGB for holding this hearing. For
16 decades, the City Of New York has faced a housing affordability crisis
17 with skyrocketing rents, a shortage of affordable units, and a rise in
18 evictions, particularly in communities of more color. It is in this context
19 that New York City and New York State has seen losses in populations
20 with the city seeing 12,200 and fewer residents in 2025 than the previous
21 year. When asked families and individuals leaving the city point to a lack
22 of affordability as one of the primary reasons for their migration. In the
23 city of renters, over 50% of New Yorkers are rent burdened, paying 30%
24 more of their income on rent, which rent -- with rents reaching record
25 breaking highs early this year, including a median rent of \$5,000 in

1 Manhattan. This should come as no surprise. The rent is too damn high.
2 Yeah. We know that many building owners, including owners of non-
3 profit buildings are also feeling the strain with rising insurance costs and
4 unequal tax sweep -- tax property systems and rising utilities. The Rent
5 Guidelines Board 2026 income and expense report found that citywide net
6 operating incomes increased 6.2% representing the third consecutive year
7 of NOI increases. When broken down by borough and among buildings
8 with different proportions of rent stabilized units, the number increases.
9 From the five boroughs the Bronx was the sole borough to report a
10 decrease NOI of 0.1%, with NOI falling in four neighborhoods. The
11 Bronx and Manhattan also saw the highest share of financially distressed
12 properties amongst buildings with more than 50% of units stabilized. NOI
13 increased from the citywide 6.2% to 4.0% in buildings with more than
14 80% of units been stabilized. That number dropped down 3.5%. And
15 finally, in buildings fully rent stabilized, NOI dropped down to 2.4%. I
16 raised these numbers because I recognize the Board faces a difficult task
17 of balancing affordability and, and cost of living hardships with the real
18 need to address rising operating costs and the necessary maintenance of
19 aging housing stock. Yet, I would urge the board to consider the past four
20 years of consecutive rent hikes totaling increase of 12% to 17.5%
21 respectively for one or two-year leases, which occurred simultaneously
22 with rising unemployment and a stagnation of wages. Almost finished.
23 There is no historical precedent for the Rent Guidelines Board enacting a
24 multi tiered approach to setting rents for buildings across our city. But the
25 data we have tells us that many properties can absorb a rent freeze,

1 especially those owned by large real estate corporations. New Yorkers on
2 the other hand cannot wait for relief when many already struggle to stay
3 afloat. As I believe, rent freeze would allow us the time and opportunity
4 to address disparities and further provide relief to tenants forgoing any
5 additional rent burden on struggling New Yorkers. In the meantime, the
6 administration has to work to do their best to help those buildings that are
7 struggling. But I have to say this, both primarily black, brown, and
8 immigrant, tenants are suffering. Also primarily small, black, brown,
9 immigrant homeowners. We are pitting them against each other for no
10 reason. They can unite, get a rent freeze, and ask the government to
11 provide the help that they need. But these tenants cannot solve the
12 problems that are happening for the, the, the buildings -- the small portion
13 of buildings that NOI hasn't increased. The least we can do is a rent
14 freeze. Thank you so much.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, public advocate. Is Anne Korchak here?

16 Ms. Korchak: Yes.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Anne Korchak?

18 Ms. Korchak: Yes. Yes.

19 Ms. Mitchell: That's Anne Korchak.

20 Mr. Williams: Maria Cortes.

21 Ms. Mitchell: We'll go -- is -- if Anne is not here we'll go then to Jenny Laurie.

22 Ms. Korchak: What did you say [unclear] [00:55:03].

23 Ms. Mitchell: Anne --

24 Ms. Korchak: I have to find my --

25 Ms. Mitchell: Okay.

1 Mr. Williams: Okay.

2 Ms. Mitchell: Maria, when you're ready.

3 Ms. Cortes: Good afternoon, everyone. Good evening. My name is Maria Cortes, and
4 I am a member of Se Hace Camino Nueva York, Make the Road New
5 York, and I've been a resident at 870 Bedford Avenue in Brooklyn now
6 for more than 27 years. I live in a rent stabilized apartment but I am
7 fearful that I may be displaced because of the fact that there might be rent
8 increases on the horizon. And this is why I'm here before you today to
9 share my story as a tenant and to ask all of the members of the RGB to
10 please make sure to freeze the rent for both one and two-year leases. To
11 live in this apartment and to maintain its upkeep has always been a
12 challenge. I am the last Latina tenant living in my building in a
13 neighborhood that has suffered both displacement and gentrification. And
14 thank goodness that as a member and leader of an organization that
15 continues to fight for its rights and for the protection of many tenants, and
16 thank goodness to my perseverance and my courage, I come before you to
17 continue complaining and to demand what the law should be giving me.
18 And that is why I continue to live at 870 Bedford Avenue. So, I am the
19 last tenant of all the former ones that lived at this apartment this -- at this
20 building with eight apartments. The owner has done every single thing in
21 order to remove me from the premises, from not completing all of the
22 repairs that I asked for, to denying me all sorts of service, even so much as
23 offering me money as well as harassing me because stating that I have not
24 paid the rent. During the winter, the heat is not enough. And at the
25 moment, my stove is barely working. Even though I've already been

1 complaining to my landlord now for the past three months, he won't
2 correct the issue. At the moment, I don't have a lease. He has not
3 renovated my lease in the past six years, but I am fully aware of my rights.
4 By calling 311 and by also going to court, I have received legal assistance,
5 and that is why I'm still here. And even though 30% of my income goes
6 directly to paying my rent, I always pay on time.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Anne Korchak, followed by Jenny Laurie,
8 followed by Gladys Puglia, followed by Andres Mares Muro.

9 Ms. Korchak: In 2026, we've repeatedly heard city agencies explain that rising costs are
10 making it difficult to cover operating expenses. In January, the
11 Corporation Council urged the federal bankruptcy judge to block the sale
12 of the Pi-- Pinnacle portfolio, arguing that the rents were too low to sustain
13 the operating expenses. In spring, the Department of Environmental
14 Protection justified a 6% increase in water and sewer rates by explaining
15 that the cost imposed on the agency had risen dramatically. Most recently,
16 HPD announced a nearly 30% rent increase for the Mitchell-Lama
17 Development in the Bronx. The HPD commissioner stated that current
18 rents are not covering operating costs. Small property owners have been
19 making the same argument for years. Sponey [phonetic] testified before
20 this board in April. Individual owners have shared their experiences and
21 submitted written testimony and have shared their fiscal realities. We
22 have said the same thing. Operating costs continue to rise and the rental
23 income -- income fails to keep pace, yet the warnings are often dismissed.
24 If city agencies can acknowledge that revenues must cover expenses then
25 the same principle must apply to the pre 1974 rent stabilized housing. Old

1 buildings cannot be maintained, repaired, staffed, insured, and operated
2 when costs consistently outpace income. The reality is simple. When
3 expenses rise, revenue must rise as well. That is true for city agencies,
4 Mitchell-Lama Developments, and old rent stabilized buildings alike. We
5 urge the Board to recognize this reality and approve rent adjustments that
6 reflect the actual cost of operating and preserving New York City's old
7 rent stabilized housing stock.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Jenny?

9 Ms. Laurie: Hi, my name is Jenny Laurie. I'm the executive director of Housing Court
10 Answers. We provide support -- thank you -- and legal information to
11 tenants and landlords without attorneys from information tables in the
12 city's housing court and from a hotline. Most of the folks we talk to are
13 tenants. Most are facing eviction for non-payment of rent. Our services
14 focus on eviction prevention and our high volume light touches we get
15 about 200 calls or requests for services each day. Housing court answers
16 supports a rent freeze for the one and two-year lease renewal rates. A low
17 income rent stabilized tenant with an affordable rent or close to affordable
18 is less likely to actually get evicted even when they fall behind on the rent
19 and get sued in housing court. The city has a right to counsel law and has
20 robust programs to help with rent arrears. Low and moderate income
21 tenants face chronic income instability, a condition that will get worse
22 with pending cuts to snap and Medicaid programs. Rent stabilized tenants
23 can get assistance with back rent because they have a right to a renewal
24 lease, an easier path to getting repairs and can add a roommate or family
25 member to their household. Non-payment filings and calendar cases have

1 gone down slightly. Filed motions, OSCs or Orders to Show Cause
2 especially are going up, and executed evictions are going up. Delays in
3 HR processing of public assistance in one shots might be to blame for the
4 increase. Regardless keeping the rent stabilized stock as affordable as
5 possible for the majority of low income tenants who call those apartments
6 home is key to preventing cases in housing court and ultimately evictions.
7 Thank you.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Gladys? Gladys?

9 Ms. Puglia: Good evening, everyone. My name is Gladys Puglia. And for the past 25
10 years, I've been living at 1406 Putnam Avenue in Bushwick in a rent
11 stabilized apartment. I am a member of Make the Road New York, and I
12 will be giving you my testimony as a tenant that recently lost her
13 apartment despite the fact that her apartment is rent stabilized. I hope that
14 my testimony serves as an example of what happens with -- when rent
15 increases occur. And this is why I would like to direct myself to the
16 members of the RGB. Please freeze the rent. Our resources are not
17 enough to make rent payments. And this is what happens with people who
18 get displaced like me. Even though I've always had stable employment,
19 the rent increases have affected me tremendously over the years especially
20 in these last years, where I've had a lot of health issues and where the price
21 of groceries continues to rise. Little by little, I fell behind on my rent
22 payments, but at the same time, I was also suffering because of the fact
23 that the RGB had made rent increases, significant rent increases over the
24 last administration. I lived in this apartment with my two children and I
25 was paying nearly \$2,000 a month, an amount that required me to pay the

1 majority of my income in order to cover the monthly rent. I tried to pay
2 all of my debt -- all of the back debt, but of course, my health took a turn
3 for the worse and it deteriorated. And like everyone else, I had extra
4 expenses to cover. For some time, I was able to stay with my daughter
5 because she had some room in her apartment. But then later, I had to seek
6 out my own home. And this is what happens when we don't have enough
7 resources. You can't find an apartment. Now, I'm renting a room, and this
8 is all that I can afford. The rents continue to climb and the quality of life
9 of New Yorkers continues to worsen.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, I will welcome Andres Mares Muro, JP Biamby, Kate
11 Biernat, and Danielle Smith. If you heard your name, please line up or
12 make your way toward the microphone. Thank you.

13 Mr. Muro: Hi. You can check me off your list. I'm Andres.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

15 Mr. Muro: I want to invoke today the name of a brother, Mike McKee. Some 80
16 years ago, in his fourth state of the union address in 1944, Franklin Delano
17 Roosevelt proposed that the nation recognize and implement a second bill
18 of rights, a set of social and economic guarantees. Roosevelt argued that
19 the political rights guaranteed by the constitution and the bill of rights,
20 including but not limited to freedom of speech, religion, assembly, et
21 cetera, had, "proved inadequate to assures equality in the pursuit of
22 happiness", that to really exercise one's first bill of rights, other rights
23 needed to be in place. Among these are, and this is Roosevelt, the right to
24 a useful and remunerative job, the right to adequate medical care, the right
25 to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness,

1 accident and unemployment, the right to a good education, and guess
2 what, the right of every family to a decent home. Now, now in the
3 present, under this irrational economic system where a roof over one's
4 head still isn't a human right but a commodity for profit that a renter must
5 lease, and I'm gonna give you factoids you already heard, in a city where
6 67% of households are renters, where the median rent, rent went from
7 \$1,641 in 2023 to \$3,616 this year, where in New York, in the metro area,
8 more than half spend about 33% of their income on, on rent on average,
9 and a substantial share spend over 50%, where experts generally consider
10 a household spending more than 30% of income on housing to be cost
11 burdened, keeping in mind that 50-70% of our rent goes not to small
12 landlords but to large corporate LLCs, and where 40% of New Yorkers
13 planning to leave the state cite, "cost of living, including rental cost as the
14 reason why they're splitting tenants --

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Andres.

16 Mr. Muro: -- especially working class people of color still remaining in the city must
17 assert again, counter to the current Trump -- give me a moment.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Andres.

19 Mr. Muro: -- that adequate, livable, guaranteed housing is a human right." Towards
20 that vision, I join in demanding that the RGB vote for a rent rollback.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. JP? JP?

22 Mr. Biamby: Hi. Good evening, members of the board. My name is JP Biamby, and
23 I've been a tenant in Harlem for the past 28 years. Never testified at the
24 Rent Guidelines Board hearing before, but I feel the effects of my rent
25 going up every couple of years. So, I came here to ask for one simple

1 thing, and that is a zero percent increase. But after hearing the testimony
2 of some of the other tenants, I think I wanna agree with them and say, you
3 should actually roll it back. I'm sure you know -- I'm sure as you already
4 know, New York City tenants, they've endured continuous rent hikes
5 without seeing meaningful improvements to our buildings. And I'm sure
6 you know that's completely unacceptable, and more importantly, it's
7 obviously unsustainable. While landlords get regular increases, they
8 routinely fail to perform basic maintenance, leaving our buildings in
9 constant disrepair. Now, for me personally, it's reached to the point where
10 I have to take my landlord to court just to get basic repairs done that are
11 required by law, like, simply painting my apartment once every few years
12 or providing adequate heat in the winter. Now, just to avoid wasting my
13 own money and losing precious time out of my own work day, instead of
14 going to court to fight for the law -- to fight for what the law and my lease
15 already guarantees, I've just resorted to painting my apartment myself.
16 Now, to add insult to injury, when I pay higher electricity bills in the
17 winter time for space heaters, the dilapidated windows in my apartment
18 can't even keep in all the extra heat that I'm paying for. Now, the city is
19 actually responsible for enforcing these laws yet the burdening expense
20 continues to entirely fall on the tenants. Why is that?

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, JP. Thank you for your testimony. Kate?

22 Ms. Biernat: Hi. My name is Kate Biernat. I am a proud New Yorker, a performing
23 artist, and somebody who's trying to survive in this city for the last 17
24 years. I grew up here on a dream as an adult and I'm so grateful that New
25 York is my home. And I'm so grateful that I found affordable housing.

1 But here's the problem. My rent has been raised by \$800 over the last
2 eight years. And as a performing artist, that is not sustainable. Cost of
3 living is not matching what we are -- cost of living increases are ex--
4 exponential and I have, and I have some things written down, but my
5 corporate landlord, 44th Street LLC Development, has gotten almost a
6 30% cumulative net profit in our rent over the last three years, which is
7 insane to me, right, when we have not been seeing more, more things
8 working for tenants. And as an artist, I wanted to bring some artist
9 statistics to the conversation. New York City's creative sector generates
10 \$110 billion in local economic impact, and drives a tourist industry worth
11 \$74 billion annually. And Broadway alone contributes \$14.7 billion to the
12 New York City economy, and supports 97,000 local jobs. And Broadway
13 attendance outpaces combined attendance of all ten professional New
14 York City sports teams, including the Knicks, the Yankees, the Mets, the
15 Giants, and the Jets. Yes, that's right. The arts are not a luxury. They are
16 an economic engine. And we are losing the people who power that
17 engine. Since 2019, the city's population of dancers has fallen by 19%,
18 actors by 8%, composers by 7.6%. The Lower East Side and Chinatown
19 have lost nearly 50 per--, -- 56% of their artist population since 2013.
20 Creative workers in New York now earn 23% less than the national
21 average after adjusting for cost of living, a gap that has widened from 15%
22 just a decade ago. While rents keep climbing, 60% of artists make under
23 \$25,000 a year. More than half have no financial safety net at all,
24 including myself. I have zero savings.

25 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Kate.

1 Ms. Biernat: Artists don't just decorate the cities. We define them. We are what makes
2 New York worth living in, and worth, and worth the \$74 billion tourist
3 industry spend to visit.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Kate.

5 Ms. Biernat: A city that prices out artists doesn't just lose its soul, it loses its economy.
6 Roll back the rent. The data is on our side.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

8 Ms. Biernat: Let us stay home.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Danielle Smith? Danielle Smith.

10 Ms. Smith: Hi, my name is Danielle Smith, and I am a rent stabilized tenant at 21
11 Magaw Place, that's in Washington Heights, and my landlord is 21 Magaw
12 Associates, LLC. I came here to urge the members of the Rent Guidelines
13 Board to freeze the rent on both one and two-year leases, but similarly,
14 hearing other people's testimonies, it's clear that what's really needed and
15 possible is a rent rollback. I've lived in Uptown my entire 14 years in
16 New York City, but in the past six years especially, I've found myself
17 moving more and more frequently as I've been priced out of my
18 apartments. Finding a rent stabilized apartment last summer was an
19 incredible improvement to my quality of life, and for the first time, I got to
20 experience what it felt like not to be rent burdened. I'm a labor organizer
21 by trade, a job that I love, but one that I've accepted is not going to make
22 me rich anytime soon, and even just signing my most recent lease renewal
23 and doing the math and sort of calculating what I'm going to have to give
24 up the next year to now afford my rent, but also, like, how soon it will
25 soon be that I am rent burdened again, made it really clear how -- what

1 might seem like small increases or people describe as small increases
2 quickly render these apartments unaffordable. Renters need a chance to
3 catch our breath, and even with the rollback, to have the chance to invest
4 in our own lives and to build for the future instead of having to scrape by
5 and figure out what we'll need to cu-- cut to afford the rent every year.
6 Landlords have been able to raise rents year after year, but we have not
7 seen those same increases in our wages or our wealth, and the city has
8 only grown less affordable for us workers. I've lived in Uptown in New
9 York City because I love it here, and I have no intention of leaving.
10 Please freeze, or even better, roll back the rent so that me and other
11 working class New Yorkers, the people this city needs to run, actually
12 have the choice of staying in our communities. Thank you.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, I will welcome Neli Ordinola, followed by Leticia
14 Pazmino, followed by Cara Polte, and then Maria Taveras. Please make
15 your way toward the microphones. We'll start with Neli.

16 Ms. Pazmino: I'm a little short, so let me go. Okay. Good evening, good evening,
17 everyone. My name is Leticia. I live at 37-42 84th Street in Jackson
18 Heights, Queens. My apartment is rent stabilized. I am part of Make the
19 Road, and organi-- -- a non-profit organization that helps the community
20 understand and know their rights in Queens. And it's an area where I have
21 lived more than half my life. So, I am here to share my story as a tenant
22 and also to ask the members of the Rent Guidelines Board to freeze the
23 rent for the leases that are one year as, as well as the ones that are for two
24 years. So, I'm a single mother, I'm a worker and I am proud to have a
25 wonderful son. The -- and -- yeah, and as passed -- as the times -- as the

1 years have passed, my apartment has progressively deteriorated due to the
2 lack of maintenance. A few years ago, a horrible leak came down and
3 ruined my furniture, my carpets, my rugs, my television, just as I was on
4 my way to work. At that time, I didn't know who to ask for help and I also
5 did not know about my rights. I only spoke with the person that was, like,
6 in charge of the building who basically just told me that the problem had
7 to do with the roof. And then in January of 2019, at 2:00 in the morning,
8 it was pure winter and the temperatures were below zero. The ceiling in
9 my apartment fell down on us while we were sleeping. I was suddenly
10 woken up by the noise and it was in the dark. And as I tried to get out,
11 debris fell on me. It fell over my head, on my back and on my right
12 shoulder. I was lucky that none of the furniture fell on my head when all
13 of this was coming down. I have photographic proof of all of this.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Gracias, Leticia.

15 Ms. Pazmino: So, the building is from 1974 and it has lead and it also had a lot of like
16 dust and powder that came down. So, when everything was coming down,
17 all of that powder and dust was just coming down and you're breathing it
18 in.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Gracias, Leticia.

20 Ms. Pazmino: Sorry, sorry.

21 Interpreter: It's okay.

22 Ms. Pazmino: But I didn't know my rights then, but I know my rights now. And I just --
23 there was another child that was born in my house and basically in
24 Memorial Day, there was another like ceiling issue that came down and

1 basically it's due to the lack of maintenance and lack of repairs, [unclear]
2 [01:23:39].

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

4 Ms. Pazmino: Thank you.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Neli, Neli Ordinola. Neli Ordinola.

6 Ms. Ordinola: Yeah, okay. My name is Neli and I live in Queens and I'm a member of
7 Make the Road New York. I live in a rent stabilized apartment and I'm
8 here to share my story and ask the members of the Rent Guidelines Board
9 to freeze the rent. So, I've lived for in Corona, Queens for more than 30
10 years with my family. I -- for many -- for much of that time, I have been
11 the sole financial support of my home and I have dealt with the costs of
12 like a, a roof, a ceiling -- well, a roof over our head. Now, I am ill and
13 hurt because of how much I have been working because I am a seamstress
14 and I have injured my -- the -- my main hand that I use for my job and on
15 all these years of my work, it was within this field. Now more than ever,
16 it's really important for me to have access to survi-- like, survival services,
17 which include, like, food programs and health programs and help for my
18 rent. Every year it's not fair that people like us, the working class, and
19 many times when we have few hours to work within a week, we don't
20 have enough, we don't earn enough to cover our rent, and yet every year
21 we have to pay an extra percentage more in, in rent increase. And that is
22 why I'm asking you all from the Board to freeze the rent. The rent
23 increases don't help, or don't fix, don't repair the abuses that the landlords
24 do against us. They don't provide maintenance for the apartments when
25 you ask them to repair a damage, and many times you yourself have to

1 buy the paint and the materials to paint and to fix things in, things in the
2 apartment to be able to live, like, with dignity, since most of them just, just
3 take the rent money. And I have had to do that many times, but yet you all
4 sitting there don't really know what goes on within renters' lives. I hope
5 you all -- you guys in the Board are listening, and please stop the abuse
6 committed by the landlords with increase -- with the increases of rent. I
7 am the voice of those who do not have a voice, and I'm asking you to
8 freeze the rent.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Gracias, Neli. Cara? Cara? Cara? Cara Polte? Cara Polte?

10 Ms. Polte: Hello. I'm over here. Hello. Over here, sorry.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Sorry, Cara. When you're ready.

12 Ms. Polte: Hello, my name is Cara. I am an adjunct for CUNY. I'm a tenant, I'm a
13 tenant organizer and I'm one of the co-founders of East Harlem Tenant
14 Union. I've lived in my, I've lived in my rent stabilized apartment in East
15 Harlem for five years. My rent has increased by \$200 a month since I've
16 moved in, but the conditions of the building have only worsened. Two
17 years ago, my neighbors and I launched a rent strike that lasted over a
18 year. Some of my neighbors are still on rent strike today. The strike
19 followed decades of disrepair, landlord neglect, and hazardous living
20 conditions like leaks, mold, pest infestations, broken plumbing, electric
21 systems, blocked emergency exits, and a lack of heat and hot water.
22 Before our rent strike, we tried being diplomatic and we sued him. He
23 quit paying on the buildings the following month. The court then replaced
24 our landlord with another corporate slumlord known as Colliers
25 International. And these issues are ones that span across this entire

1 portfolio. This is nearly 40 buildings and all of them are in East Harlem.
2 My downstairs neighbor doesn't even have a sink in her bathroom.
3 Another neighbor of mine doesn't even have a floor. I kid you not, he
4 does not have a floor. He lives on the ground floor. It's just plywood.
5 This poor landlord narrative asks us to sympathize with the real estate
6 holding companies, private equity firms, and LLCs whose portfolios span
7 continents. There is no accountability mechanism in place to ensure that
8 my rent check is going to the building that I live in. Raising my rent or
9 even freezing the rent without addressing my repairs or the repairs of my
10 neighbors or any tenant is theft. I am paying to have a safe, mold-free
11 place to live with heat and hot water and that is the bare minimum. It is
12 not right that landlords demand more while I continue to go with less. In
13 any other situation, this would be recognized as theft. I am asking the
14 Rent Guideline Boards to do something unprecedented, do something
15 historical. This is going to greatly impact the lives of millions if you roll
16 back the rent. Housing, housing must be treated as a community resource,
17 not a commodity that necessitates profit. Our communities are stronger
18 and safer when everyone has access to decent, stable housing.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Cara.

20 Ms. Polte: We must treat people as people, not as problems that cost money.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Maria Taveras. Maria Taveras.

22 Ms. Taveras: Good, good evening to all. My name is Maria Taveras. I am a member of
23 the Tenant and Neighbor Association and I also am a community activist.
24 I've lived in Washington Heights for 42 years with my four sons. My
25 landlord's one of the worst, A&E real estate. I am here to demand a

1 rollback. Like over half of the New Yorkers, I am a rent burden. I spend
2 50% of my income on rent every month because I spend so much on rent.
3 I haven't been able to afford, due to the fact that I have two years, I do not
4 have a stove because I got a third degree burn because the floor was not
5 leveled. And my son got stabbed in 2016 in that building because the
6 landlord did not have secured the door from downstairs so anybody could
7 just walk in there and did that. And then I got robbed. My son was there
8 kidnapped in that apartment. That was another thing because the landlord
9 fails to file security. I've been living in that apartment with stabilization. I
10 still have the doorknob since that building was built. Most of the things I
11 grow myself and I buy it because I have my four sons. I'm a single mom
12 and I'm also a parent advocate. I advocate for parents in ACS. I want my
13 kids to have a good living, to know that they don't have to go to the
14 streets, that they'll have a safe home. So, I do what I can, what is in my
15 need. But I shouldn't have to do that when I'm paying rent. And those are
16 things that the landlord's supposed to keep up. They say they want to put
17 up the rent because they're fixing the thing. What are they fixing? They're
18 not fixing nothing. They're infested with rats. I had to get a cat to get rid
19 of the rats. Do you understand? And there's a lot of things that they do
20 there that they ask for rent, the MIC, whatever, the hike. But they don't
21 fix. They don't fix the building. They don't. We have the community. I
22 have -- we plant our neighborhood. We clean there because I also work
23 the parks and the parks. We clean the building. We have days, one
24 weekend, I clean and I scrub the floors and the halls because he doesn't

1 clean. They don't have the porters. They don't have the people to clean
2 there. Do you understand? And we're stabilized --

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

4 Ms. Taveras: Okay. And they say that we have rent stabilized there. But the people that
5 have rent stabilized maintain their apartment better than regular people
6 that are just new. Why? Because we appreciate that we have that rent
7 stabilizer. So, we try to also keep where we live--

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

9 Ms. Taveras: Good.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Next, I will call Jose Tur, Seth Foss, New York Assembly -- New York
11 City Assembly -- New York State Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal and
12 Ilan Rabinovitch. Is Jose here? Jose Tur? Please come up when I call
13 your name. Please come to the microphone. Jose Tur, Seth Foss. Then
14 we'll have Assemblymember Linda Rosenthal.

15 Mr. Tur: Ready?

16 Ms. Mitchell: Yes.

17 Mr. Tur: My name is Jose Tur. I take care of 45 rent stabilized apartments in
18 Washington Heights that my grandfather built his life around. He fled
19 Cuba with nothing. The regime took everything his family built. He
20 worked as a building porter for eight years and bought his first building
21 here in 1979.

22 Ms. Mitchell: I would ask that we need to be able to hear everyone's testimony. The
23 Board can't hear. Thank you.

24 Mr. Tur: He cared for it himself for the next 45 years. Last October, he died at 99,
25 killed by a tenant who had not paid rent in five years. That tenant left the

1 apartment destroyed with the little savings we have. I could not make it
2 safe to live in. A home that should hold a family now sits dark and empty.
3 A few weeks ago, I told you my situation was the best case you'll ever
4 hear and I meant it. 45 apartments, not one violation, no mortgage, I live
5 in the building. I do most repairs with my own two hands. If the numbers
6 don't work for me, they work for no one. My grandfather watched the city
7 nearly destroy itself in the 1970s. Buildings abandoned, blocks burning
8 because owners couldn't afford to keep them standing. Now, we are going
9 backwards. He taught me one thing above all, how to persevere. I am
10 trying, but no one can persevere against a law that makes it impossible to
11 care for the buildings he trusted me with. So, I'm asking you directly,
12 don't freeze the rent. Give the people who keep these buildings standing
13 enough to keep them safe. Give the people who keep these buildings
14 standing enough to keep them safe and let that empty apartment hold the
15 family again. Protecting owners like me is how you protect tenants.
16 Thank you.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Seth Foss? Is -- Seth Foss, when you're ready, Seth.

18 Mr. Foss: Good evening, my name is Seth Foss. I'm a rent stabilized tenant in 510
19 East 13th Street. I've lived there for 14 years and I helped also organize
20 my building, building tenants association in 2021 after the building was
21 bought by David Tennenbaum. As, as a. as a, a landlord, he also owns
22 hundreds of stabilized apartments and, and manages the subsidies that he
23 also helps, helps hold back. I'm here to urge the Board to freeze the rent
24 on both one year and two-year leases or roll it back. Rent increases don't
25 buy repairs. Under my -- under this owner, a 311 complaints jumped

1 249% over the prior landlord and the violations piled up for almost every
2 single, for almost -- almost none were certified or ever fixed. But what he
3 does is calculated. He lets conditions rot, he manufactures debts, he sued
4 me for the rent that I've already paid and then, and then, and then blocked
5 the subsidy that was also trying to be paid and then sued me for that. He
6 keeps, he keeps it just inside the lines of the law and that's why I bring --
7 brought him -- brought my own harassment case against him. He's filed at
8 least 18 cases against the tenants in this building since 2021, some of us
9 two, three or four times. And this is why the Board should, should, should
10 hear and the city should -- why -- this is what, this is what the Board
11 should hear and the city -- then the city will pay for a lawyer to defend me
12 when the -- when he drags me into court. But when I try to stop the
13 harassment myself on my own, the system is built to, is built to cushion
14 the tenants in, in crisis but not to the landlords who are manufacturing it.
15 The rent increases only rewards, only rewards them and for 14 years, a
16 rent freeze let me keep fighting for my home instead of being priced out of
17 it. One million New Yorkers voted for this, please deliver it and no one --
18 and for one and two-year leases. Thank you.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Seth. Is Assemblymember Rosenthal here? Welcome.

20 Ms. Rosenthal: Thank you. Hi, good evening, I'm Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal.
21 I'm the chair of the Assembly Committee on Housing. I also represent the
22 Upper West Side, parts of Hell's Kitchen and the 67th Assembly District.
23 I'm glad the -- to have the opportunity to speak at tonight's hearing. It's
24 clear as day, New Yorkers are struggling to stay financially afloat in the
25 Big Apple. Donald Trump's deadly and dangerous policies at the federal

1 level are striking New Yorkers where it hurts the most, in their
2 pocketbooks which is why there has been a resounding call for a rent
3 freeze this year. So, let us count the reasons why. Last year to mark
4 America's 249th birthday, congressional Republicans voted to
5 dramatically slash healthcare and snap benefits for millions of New
6 Yorkers. In 2025, residential evictions rose by 11.8% in buildings with
7 rent regulated units. The average unemployment rate increased by 5 -- to
8 5.2%. Cash assistance caseloads rose by 7.4. And inflation is currently
9 crushing New Yorkers in the grocery aisle. And according to the RGB's
10 own data, 49% of rent stabilized tenants said they could not make ends
11 meet or are barely getting by. Dramatically raising the rents on New
12 Yorkers, especially when, according to the RGB, rent stabilized tenants
13 have a median income of \$60,000, is a recipe for disaster. That is why this
14 Board cannot afford to treat this year's vote like business as usual. This
15 moment demands we do everything possible to protect people from an
16 unforgiving federal government that is waging war on low-income people.
17 We must also understand that raising the rents on people who can barely
18 afford it will increase homelessness. And as we know, finding affordable
19 housing for low-to-moderate income people at a time when the vacancy
20 rate is so low is near impossible. At the city level, the new administration
21 has announced a program for landlords that would allow a one-time
22 vacancy to reset that will impact nearly 300,000 apartments, even if there
23 is an RGB rent increase. At the state level, we're working diligently to
24 rein in insurance costs, which, which I know account for a little more than
25 10% of landlords' expenses according to the RGB.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Assemblymember.

2 Ms. Rosenthal: I -- can I just finish? I also suggest we investigate how to provide
3 property tax relief to mom-and-pop property owners who have rent
4 stabilized units. Lastly, we do not have to aid and abet Donald Trump's
5 war on New York's social safety net by imposing rent hikes on those who
6 can least afford it. In fact, history and our consciousness beg us not to.
7 Thank you.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Assemblymember. Next, we'll have Ilan Rabinovitch,
9 followed by Andrew Betz, followed by Paolis Urena.

10 Mr. Rabinovitch: Thank you. I would love to someday be in a position where New York is
11 able to freeze the rent. Unfortunately, we have a lot of elected officials
12 that keep voting for things that raise costs and make it difficult to do so.
13 But I do want to remind everybody why we're here. We're not here to
14 complain about housing conditions, although when they are abhorrent, it is
15 bad, and I'll be the first to report a building to HPD or DOB or another
16 agency. If you want help with that, happy to assist. This is not the rent
17 rip-off hearing. This is the Rent Guidelines Board hearing. The law asks,
18 the law asks the board to meet annually and consider very specific things.
19 The economic condition of the real estate industry, including such factors
20 as taxes, costs of sewer, water, maintenance, fuel, labor costs, availability
21 of financing, and vacancy rates. I want to remind you that less than a
22 week ago, we had Flushing Bank go through a merger in which they,
23 again, one of the last few available banks for rent stabilized properties, left
24 the city and said we will no longer be doing that. They got rid of their rent
25 stabilized portfolio. So, when people here say take another loan, there's

1 nowhere to actually take that loan from. I have applied for a hardship
2 exemption. The program does not work. I have opened my books. Look,
3 if buildings are in poor condition, we should fix them. If tenants are
4 having hardship, we should use SCRIE, DRIE, section eight, every other
5 assistance program in the book to help them out. The point of this Board
6 is not help, is not to -- is, is not to be a social program. It is to look at the
7 economics of the city, and your own studies have shown that the costs
8 have gone up. The Water Board just used a deck that, honestly, I could
9 scratch out their name and write my own, and it would be my own
10 financial situation. They got 6%. Con Ed, risk-raiser rates as well.
11 Tracey Towers just decided that 30% increases were needed to cover
12 mortgages and other expenses. Not repairs. The HPD commissioner
13 specifically said none of this money will go to repairs. It will only go to
14 operating the building. That's the situation many small property owners
15 are in. If we don't like it --

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

17 Mr. Rabinovitch: -- Linda Rosenthal is right there. She can fix it.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Andrew Betz. Is Andrew here? Andrew Betz, followed by
19 Paolis Urena.

20 Mr. Urena: Hello, my name is Paolis Urena, and I'm a member of the Tenants &
21 Neighbors. I've lived in Washington Heights for the past five years. My
22 landlord is A&E Real Estate. So, you know, I'm here to ask for -- I'm here
23 to demand a rent rollback. I work, I work anywhere from 50 to 65 hours a
24 week. Any free time that I have, I spend running personal errands or
25 holding out for more gigs. Roughly 40% of my income goes directly to

1 rent. Life often has to take a backseat to work in order to keep the roof
2 over, over my head. I, like many New Yorkers, am rent burdened. With
3 all the time I spend working and commuting in the, in the city, one would
4 think that reaching home base would provide a sense of relief.
5 Unfortunately, this is not the case. A&E Real Estate valued at nearly \$4
6 billion, and ranked number one worst landlord in New York City, refuses
7 to sufficiently maintain its properties. From top to bottom, this building is
8 marred with leaks, cracked walls and chipped paint. It's infested with
9 mice, rats, and roaches. Fire damage from a year ago remains ignored in
10 my apartment. A&E is an incompetent property manager who does not
11 deserve to be rewarded with yet another rent increase that will inevitably
12 and assuredly be squandered. A rent freeze would not increase
13 affordability in this city. Roll back the rents and reinvest in New Yorkers,
14 the same New Yorkers that pro-- provide the culture that this city -- that
15 makes this city great, and the one -- and that the landlords profit off of.
16 Thank you.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Paolis. Last call for Andrew Betz.

18 Mr. Betz: Yeah, that's me. First of all, I live in a stabilized unit. I am humbled by
19 all of the people who are speaking up and advocating who do not have the
20 protections of stabilization. So, I know that there is risk involved in that.
21 I appreciate everyone speaking up. I am, I am also an artist in the city. I
22 live at 40 Saint Nicholas Place. Our building is managed by Friedman
23 Management. There are absolutely systems in place for us to have issues
24 addressed in our building. Unfortunately, those systems are often not in
25 much better condition than the building itself. Now, while those systems

1 get up to speed, I mean, we can, we can feel parts of New York getting
2 better, right? It's becoming -- please see the Knicks. But as those systems
3 are catching up, renters need the opportunity to catch up as well. We are
4 not here to maintain and clean a playground for the rich. And I say that,
5 and I say that as an actor. We are happy to provide services but this city is
6 for everyone who lives here. I humbly ask, if you cannot maintain your
7 building, that you sell it. Alright. We can, we can let the market work in
8 our favor in that way. So, finally, I believe I stand with Northern
9 Manhattan Improvement Corporation, who is our tenant advocator and
10 organizer. I'm with my building's tenant association. I stand with them in
11 calling for not just a rent freeze, but a rent rollback. When renters, when
12 renters can catch up, the city can soar, so roll back to speed forward.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. And before I call the next group of names, I just want to make
14 another quick reminder. If you're here and you haven't checked in at the
15 front desk, check-in is open and registration is open until 8:00 p.m. You
16 must register in order to speak. So, even if you've pre-registered, just
17 make sure you check-in with the staff at the front desk. Thank you. So,
18 next I will call Maria Fernanda, Fernanda Perez, followed by New York
19 City Council Member Gale Brewer, followed by Ramon Garcia and
20 Ginerva Shay. If you could make your way toward the microphones.
21 Thank you.

22 Ms. Perez: Good afternoon to members of the Board and everyone that's present. My
23 name is Fernanda Perez. I'm a member of Make the Road New York, and
24 I live in a rent stabilized apartment. I'm here to demand a, a, a rent freeze
25 -- a total rent freeze, because the economic situation for working families

1 in this city is just un--, -- it's just not sustainable. An increase in rent is
2 unjustifiable when the landlords are refusing to invest in their buildings,
3 and they just want to and assume that they're going to just charge these,
4 like, luxu-- luxury rental prices for apartments that are deteriorating and
5 that are old. My personal experience shows that paying your rent on time
6 does not guarantee a dignified living space. In 2022, when my father gave
7 me the con-- -- the lease, the landlady preferred or -- preferred to just take
8 me to court to deal with, like, a whole legal battle instead of, like,
9 acknowledging my right of succession. So, I had to find the help of a
10 lawyer that finally, in December of 2023, gave me the lease that was
11 legally -- that legally correspond -- belonged to me. Later, in 2024, while I
12 was paying my rent month to month without fail, I spent entire winters
13 freezing and I had to constantly call 311 because they would turn off the
14 heat and the hot water. And it's not fair living, living in this way.
15 However, the increases continued. So, in 2025, upon renewing the lease,
16 they tried to then give me an illegal lease with certain charges and fees and
17 conditions that did not apply to me, forcing me to find legal help again
18 with Make the Road New York in order to stop this economic abuse. But
19 notwithstanding these housing abuses, also tenants are also suffering the
20 impacts of inflation. And to ask us to pay more when our salaries are not
21 increasing is basically pushing us directly to eviction and to potential
22 homelessness.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Gracias, Fernanda.

1 Ms. Perez: E-- every time that I have raised my voice to demand that the department,
2 that the department be worth what I pay, the landlady's response has been
3 harassment, screaming and threat.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Gracias, Fernanda.

5 Ms. Perez: There's more. I just would like to ask the, the Board directly. Should we
6 pay more rent to then be harassed, humiliated and screamed at in our own
7 homes? Would you approve an increase in rent for services that don't
8 work for an apartment without heat in the winter and that it's not even
9 legally registered for the -- in the city?

10 Ms. Mitchell: Gracias, Fernanda. Thank you for your testimony. Council Member
11 Brewer, when you're ready.

12 Ms. Brewer: Thank you. I'm Gale Brewer, City Council Member for the Upper West
13 Side and parts of Clinton.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

15 Ms. Brewer: Thank you. The Rent Guidelines Board, the guidelines are zero to 2 % for
16 a one-year lease and two -- zero to four for a two-year lease. This upper
17 limit does not sufficiently alleviate tenants' financial burden. After four
18 consecutive years of rent increases, the two million New Yorkers, in
19 stabilized apartments cannot afford anything short of a rent freeze. New
20 Yorkers and Upper West Side residents have spent the past year
21 confronting exorbitant costs. According to several surveys, medium rent
22 on the Upper West Side increased 8.5% between 2019 and 2024 and just
23 recently, just recently, rents on the Upper West Side non-dormant two-
24 bedroom apartments increased 7.7% in a month. Largest month-to-month
25 ever increase. Significant in Manhattan where renters account for 75.7%

1 of households, that's a lot. Rent in Manhattan rose 7% from last year and
2 that's up to \$5,125 per month in the month of May medium. That's an all-
3 time high available listings fell by 21%. We are getting killed on the rent.
4 The consequences are the following. Eviction Lab has tracked 113,000
5 filings over the last 12 months, 37,000 in 2026 alone, and we know that
6 the majority of the tenants are rent burdened, a third spending more than
7 half on their rent. In our office every single day, people are coming in
8 with eviction issues and housing issues as you can imagine. To help meet
9 this need, we have a housing clinic, we have all the ways but we cannot
10 solve the problems through constituent services alone. We work on
11 SCRIE, we work on DRIE, we thank the state legislature for helping us
12 move SCRIE from \$50,000 to \$75,000 a year. That's fabulous news but it
13 doesn't solve the problem. The Rent Guidelines Board has to provide
14 broad-based relief. Unlike benefit programs that require tenants to
15 navigate a complex application process, we just need to have a zero rent
16 increase. Now, I know small owners have legitimate freezes concerns. I
17 own a building. I know where are the financials, but they often face
18 different economic realities than larger landlords that is important
19 particularly with respect to property taxes and operating costs. And I
20 know that that is an issue that has to be addressed with a different way of
21 calculating property taxes but the Rent Guidelines Board's own research
22 shows the overall financial stability of rent stabilized housing and it shows
23 that the inflation adjusted net operating income for rent stabilized
24 properties increased 2.2%. The Board also found that inflation-adjusted
25 sales prices increased by 20%.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Council Member Brewer.

2 Ms. Brewer: Thank you very much.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Ramon Garcia, then we'll have Ginevra Shay, Alicia Singham Goodwin
4 followed by Manhattan Borough President, Brad Hoylman-Sigal.

5 Mr. Garcia: Hello, my name is Ramon Garcia. Since 2010, I have consistently worked
6 one fulltime job and at times additional part-time jobs. In fact, I worked
7 one fulltime and two part-time jobs for five years straight. My workload
8 is hefty, but as a math educator for adult learners, I'm paid decently. So,
9 there's no reason to think that I would need to dig elbow-deep in street-
10 side trash cans for recyclables to cash out. But I have and I do because
11 collecting cans is a vital means of survival in an environment of profit
12 over all else, where landlords always concoct some reason to justify
13 raising rents. It's grimy time cash for the odd bits of city life, train fare, a
14 bag of rice, and a shirt for my son. I wonder if landlords, the landlords
15 like Goldmont Realty Corporation, who own the 83-unit rent stabilized
16 building in Flatbush where my son and I live, collect cans on the streets
17 too. To explore this question, I will share my monthly savings and ask
18 that you compare it to the landlord's. Please. Post-rent and bills, here's
19 what my son and I have left over for the last six months. \$135, \$27, \$93,
20 \$56, \$36 and \$65. Now, let's see it, landlords. Show us your money.
21 Arguably, my cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic circumstances perfectly
22 explain with predictive exactitude my earning potential and corresponding
23 difficulty with savings. Yet an alternative argument just might be that the
24 rents are too goddamn high. Throughout this year, I will earn \$52,229 and
25 pay \$2000 -- \$20,760 in rent for a decrepit one-bedroom. That's roughly

1 40% of my total income, not including bottles and cans. Now, if the rents
2 are rolled back, would landlords have to collect cans? Imagine that,
3 landlords and tenants scraping around side by side. Maybe then landlords
4 might recognize the unrelenting toil of the tenant burdened by rent that is
5 still exorbitant even though it's stabilized. Maybe then we'd be seen as
6 people and not just peopled avenues to excessive wealth. In closing, we
7 ask that you roll back all rents.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Ginevra?

9 Ms. Shay: Good evening. My name is Ginevra Shay. I'm a rent stabilized tenant. I
10 live in Alphabet City. I've lived in my apartment for five years. I've
11 returned to the neighborhood where my maternal grandfather, my poppy,
12 lived as a young boy. Housing is a fundamental right. Every New Yorker
13 should be able to live in dignity. Therefore, I am asking for a rent
14 rollback. The Manhattan Borough President has said Manhattan and New
15 York City are facing a full-blown affordability crisis, arguably the worst in
16 our city's history. In March of 2025, this RGB published a study which
17 found that from 2022 to 2023, building owners remain profitable with an
18 average revenue after expenses at 12%. New York tenants block study
19 shows an average profit of 30%. Over five years, my rent has increased
20 15.5%. This is abominable. According to a study called from Current
21 Population Survey, wages have decreased an average of 3.2% from July
22 2022 to May 2026. One of my old jobs was just posted at 11% decrease.
23 As an artist, artists have seen a record decrease of 39% in sales over the
24 past six years. I also work more than fulltime as a 1099 grant writer for
25 artists, arts non-profits, and affordable housing non-profits. With the

1 recent loss of health care subsidies, my monthly health insurance has gone
2 up to \$500 a month. Since 2020, food costs have gone up 25 to 30%, and
3 my student loans are in repayment. Like many working class Americans,
4 my financial picture has changed dramatically over the past three years.
5 Everything I make goes towards basic costs of living and debt repayment.
6 This is insane. We need immediate relief now. Myself and many New
7 Yorkers are one unexpected medical bill or job loss away from becoming
8 homeless. I'm asking once again to roll back the rent. Meet this historic
9 moment. Thank you.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Alicia?

11 Ms. Goodwin: Good evening, members of the board. My name is Alicia Singham
12 Goodwin. I live in West Harlem, where I've been a rent stabilized tenant
13 for ten years. My partner and I are new parents to a six-month-old. It's
14 getting close to bedtime, and we pay one-third of our hold -- household
15 income in rent, which is unsustainable for us. I am here to call for a rent
16 freeze on one and two-year leases. All leases, no increases. Rent
17 stabilization has really shaped my life in New York City. It is what has
18 given us the stability to be able to start thinking about having -- starting a
19 family, setting down roots, and it's actually really beautiful. Being in a
20 rent stabilized apartment building means that I know I'm going to be there
21 for decades. My kid is going to grow up in the apartment that we're in,
22 and all of my neighbors also know that, and so it lets us really invest in
23 our relationships with each other. We've all gotten to know each other, we
24 help each other out. My next-door neighbor in the building already had a
25 kid. When she found out I was pregnant, she sent over her crib and baby

1 clothes and toys so that we could use them. Now, she just had another
2 baby. We sent it all back across the hall, and I really hope that we get to
3 stay friends and our kids get to grow up as friends, but if we get priced out
4 of our apartment or if they do, that ruins everything that we've been
5 building together, and so we really need a rent freeze. That is what will let
6 families like mine stay in New York. Thank you.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Now, we'll have Manhattan Borough President Brad
8 Hoylman-Sigal.

9 Mr. Hoylman-Sigal: Good evening, and thank you, members of the Rent Guideline Board,
10 especially the chair and the executive director, and thank you Symphony
11 Space. Can we give them a round of applause for hosting us? As you
12 well know, affordable housing is our city's most pressing public policy
13 issue. Manhattan's average rent hit \$5,711 a month as of January, and just
14 yesterday, it was announced that the median rent has hit an all-time high
15 of \$5,125. More than 60% of Manhattan residents are renters. Nearly
16 one-half of households are rent burdened, and a quarter or more are
17 severely rent burdened. The rental vacancy rate at a historic low of 1.4%
18 leaves renters with almost no options to move when they can't afford their
19 rent increases. Tenants need a rent freeze this year. There are almost one
20 million rent stabilized apartments in New York City, an invaluable source
21 of affordable housing. I'm thrilled that you, the Rent Guidelines Board is
22 considering a rent freeze. Now is the time to enact it. To protect tenants
23 and address our housing crisis, we have to use every tool available. That's
24 why, in my role as Manhattan Borough President, I've said yes to all the
25 housing development proposals across my desk in the last six months,

1 recommending approval of applications that will build 1,400 new units of
2 housing in Manhattan, including 560 permanently affordable units. My
3 office is deeply committed to supporting efforts by tenants and advocates
4 to organize for dignity, respect, and improve living conditions. They need
5 support for government. That's why I'm pleased to announce that just this
6 week, I appointed a Director for Borough Tenant Organizing, who will be
7 on the ground in buildings and community centers and neighborhoods
8 across Manhattan. Our borough organizer will work with tenants and
9 CBOs throughout the borough to organize a Manhattan Tenants Union,
10 helping tenants to learn their rights and connect them to each other and the
11 resources, our office and the city can deploy for them. Let me just close
12 with this, which is, for the last four years, the Rent Guidelines Board has
13 increased rents above what tenants can't afford. Another rent increase this
14 year would risk further displacement. I urge you to thus, freeze the rent
15 for rent stabilized tenants. Thank you very much.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Borough President. Next, I will welcome Josefina Ventura,
17 Alice Nora, Susanna Pearlman [phonetic], and Kenny Schaeffer. Again,
18 that's Josefina Ventura, Alice Nora, Susanna Pearlman, and Kenny
19 Schaeffer. Please make your way toward the microphones.

20 Ms. Ventura: Good evening. My name is Josefina Ventura, co-chair of Riverside
21 Ethical Neighborhood Association in Washington Heights. Actually, we
22 are having extremely difficult economic times due to the fact that income
23 has not risen up faster than rent in New York City. We're experiencing
24 salaries or time reductions in our jobs. Average wages in real time are
25 declining, and tenants are spending larger portions of their net income in

1 rent, medical bills, medication. The cost of food are putting out -- we are
2 putting on our table is skyrocketing. The monthly cost of electricity and
3 gas are getting high. What about transportation? Tenants are, are, are rent
4 borne throughout New York City, paying between 30 to 50% of their net
5 income in rent, not counting the cost of supporting their families,
6 especially single mothers that I call champions. What about our senior
7 citizens that have fixed -- has -- have fixed incomes and a lot of benefits
8 reduction due to the budget cuts? Landlords are having huge profits.
9 Otherwise, they would not be buying and operating buildings in New York
10 City. Part of the money they collect in rent are not backed into the
11 building to improve and repair the units. Rent stabilized tenants cannot
12 afford more increases. Increasing our rents will add more homelessness to
13 the actual housing crisis we already have. Many renters have fallen
14 paying their rent, then taken to Civil Court, ending up losing their homes
15 while others have to make difficult trade-offs between rent, food, medical
16 care, trans-- -- transit fare, and other necessities. And I have a question for
17 the, the -- for you. During the last, the, the what -- during the last past
18 four years of May-- -- former Mayor Adams, we have averaged 12%
19 increases in rent. So, why do we have to approve another penny in rent
20 increases to the landlord? We did really need a rent rollback this time.
21 Thank you.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Alice, when you're ready.

23 Ms. Nora: My name is Alice Nora. I have been a tenant in Hamilton Heights for 13
24 years and have lived in the same rent stabilized apartment since 2013. My
25 lease renews on 1/12/2026, making this vote pivotal for my future as a

1 resident in this neighborhood and this city. I am here today alongside
2 fellow Tenants & Neighbors to urge this Board to vote for a zero percent
3 rent freeze on all upcoming leases, but urge for a roll, roll -- rent rollback.
4 Currently, I spend 44% of my monthly income just to keep a roof over my
5 head, making me severely rent burdened. The basic cost of living in New
6 York City has skyrocketed, and working class renters cannot absorb the
7 financial strain. What makes the burden even harder to bear is my
8 landlord and management company routinely ignore requests for basic
9 repairs. Over the past several winters, my fellow tenants and I have
10 endured weeks without heat and hot water with no communication from
11 management. Their neglect has also forced me to cover costs that should
12 have been their responsibility. I've had to purchase a new refrigerator
13 after they refused to replace an aging unit that could no longer maintain
14 safe temperatures and caused my food to spoil. In the last three years
15 alone, my building has suffered a major fire that caused significant
16 damage to multiple units, many of which remain unrepaired. The building
17 has also experienced two pipe bursts that flooded my apartment. Due to
18 the lack of response from the superintendent, landlord, and management, I
19 had to call the fire department myself. The resulting damage to my
20 apartment has still not been repaired. Despite the repeated rent increases,
21 my building was placed on the Alternative Enforcement Program or AEP,
22 because of the number of violations and complaints filed with the city.
23 That reality makes it clear that rent increases are not being used to
24 maintain or improve housing conditions, but rather to protect landlord
25 profits. If you approve another rent hike this year, it will force families

1 throughout my community, neighbors I have come to know, care for, and
2 look after to make the impossible choices of remaining in their homes. I
3 urge you to consider the human cost of this decision and vote in favor of
4 the rent freeze that Mayor Mamdani campaigned on and that tenants
5 across the city desperately need.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Nora.

7 Ms. Nora: Thank you for your time.

8 Ms. Mitchell: We'll go to you, Kenny, and again, Susanna Pearlman, if you're here,
9 please make your way to the microphone. When you're ready, Kenny.

10 Mr. Schaeffer: Good evening. My name is Kenny Schaeffer. I'm a rent stabilized tenant
11 and a lifelong resident of the Upper West Side. Thanks to that, so
12 welcome. I'm a member of Met Council Action and chair of our board of
13 directors, and I work as a tenant lawyer with Legal Aid Society. When I
14 first got to the Queen's office 20 years ago, clients who had to move, could
15 find a new apartment for six or \$800 a month. Those days are a distant
16 memory, thanks largely to compounded RGB increases year after year,
17 which drove rents to the record levels we see today. Almost everyone,
18 except maybe Pen -- Kenny Burgos and his benefactors agrees that rents
19 are too damn high. By almost everyone, I don't just mean Mayor
20 Mamdani and the people who elected him, but even Governor Hochul,
21 who said as much in her State of the State address earlier this year. When
22 the volume is too loud, we lower it. When the lights are too bright, we
23 lower them. What do we do when the rents are too high? When Eric
24 Adams took office, when Eric Adams took office in 2018, there was
25 already a chronic and acute affordability crisis. We called for rent freeze,

1 but instead got seven more years of compounded increases. So, if you just
2 rolled back the rents to their 10 -- 2018 levels, you would only be
3 restoring an already unacceptable status quo. Meanwhile, landlords are
4 making out like bandits. According to a 2026 income and expense study,
5 owners' net operating income averages 36.4% industry-wide, 36 cents of
6 every rent dollar going into their bank accounts. By contrast, when natural
7 -- national grocery stores took advantage of the supply chain crisis to raise
8 their net operating income from 6% to 7%, the Federal Trade Commission
9 opened an investigation into price gouging. We hear anecdotal sto--
10 stories and unsworn testimony about struggling owners, but under the rent
11 stabilization law, any landlord who isn't making a fair rate of return, if
12 they open their books, they can get a special hardship increase on top of
13 what the RGB orders for one million households. But a fair rate of return
14 under the statute is defined by law as 5%, not 36.4%. Thank you.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Kenny. Next, I will welcome Micha Kay, David Wang,
16 Anthony Gargiulo, and Emma Rezac. Yes, Micha Kay, David Wang,
17 Anthony Gargiulo, and Emma Rezac. When you're ready.

18 Ms. Kay: Hi, my name is Micha. I live in a rent stabilized one-bedroom whose rents
19 increased more than \$500 since 2019, and to address the myth of the
20 small-time landlord bronzing properties over 6,000 apartments, so
21 obviously advocating for a rent rollback. I have no, I have no doubt that, I
22 have no doubt that each of us has felt the economic weight of the post-
23 COVID world. So, the burden of inflation should not fall on us tenants
24 when landlords have increasingly made record profit these past years
25 either hoarding stabil-- stabilized apartments or charging nearly triple for

1 voucher from voucher recipients. Landlords are the ones that need to be
2 responsible for the rising costs of inflation. Everybody, especially
3 politicians during elections, talks about the millionaire tax or the
4 billionaire tax, but nobody's past it. Tax the rich and make them pay for
5 quality, affordable housing. Every month, one in three New Yorkers faces
6 the choice of more than half their rent of their income going to rent,
7 leaving them scrounging for groceries and transportation. That's why we
8 need housing based on community necessity, not corporate profit. The
9 only solution is to take the profit out of housing. When housing panels are
10 controlled by landlords only concerned about lining their pockets, it leads
11 to the housing affordability crisis we got now. So, we need a government
12 that'll treat these high rent prices like the public health crisis it is. And
13 fearless representatives who create policy truly for the public, like
14 removing the federal ban on public housing construction that's existed for
15 decades and passing the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act that gives
16 tenants the first right to purchase in the communities they were born and
17 raised in, okay? Not absentee landlords out of state or out of the country.
18 Drastic times call for drastic measures. We demand radical action for this
19 crisis in radical organizing. And I'm going to say this, when evictions
20 were at an all-time high in the 30s, it was the communists who coordinated
21 rent strikes and mobilized to un-evict tenants back inside faster than
22 landlords could kick them out of their homes.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

24 Ms. Kay: Okay? This is what created the rent control legislation and the RGB that
25 we have right now.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

2 Ms. Kay: We need that energy in that organization. We need a rent rollback. Rent
3 rollback! Rent rollback! Rent rollback! Rent rollback! Rent rollback!

4 Ms. Mitchell: David Wang?

5 Mr. Wang: Hi, my name is David Wang and I am a youth member at CAAAV
6 Chinatown Tenants Union. I'm currently a freshman at Hunter College
7 and I have lived in Chinatown my -- for my whole life. I currently live, I
8 currently lived in a rent stabilized apartment and I want to add on to what
9 other tenants have said about freezing the rent and by sharing my own
10 story. I want to advocate for the rent freeze since I've been through a lot
11 of conditions and problems in my own household, such as large amounts
12 of pests like cockroaches, rodents, and bite bugs, plus no running water
13 and leaking ceilings. My family works hard for the increasing rent, and I
14 also try to support them by using the money I've saved from my summer
15 job to help pay the rent. It makes me very sad to see my apartment fall
16 apart while the rent has been increasing. My, my mom works night hours
17 and up to 12-hour shifts as a caretaker to pay the rent. My sister, who is
18 also a student, has also had to work part-time to be able to make ends
19 meet. I want to be able to support my family when rent is increasing and
20 I'm trying to work more so I can support paying the rent. Landlords are
21 not taking initiative to re-- repair buildings even though we are paying
22 more for what we're living in. It is up-- upsetting to see so many other
23 tenants struggle with unfair living conditions with such high rent. I want
24 to reiterate the tenants that have been testifying. We do not want any
25 more rent increases and we are demanding a rent freeze now. We also

1 demand for landlords to maintain our apartments to make sure that the rent
2 we pay goes towards our housing and not landlord debts. Ten dem --
3 tenants demand no increases on all leases.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Anthony Gargiulo? Is Anthony here? When you're ready.

5 Mr. Gargiulo: In nature's grand scheme of gree-- -- in, in nature's grand scheme, greed is
6 natural, greed is good, but maximizing profits by withholding heat is a
7 form of social injustice the RGB can stop. If un-- -- it's, it's
8 unconscionable that the lack of adequate heat year after year in some New
9 York City apartments still exists. The board can present -- the board
10 possesses the remedy to solve this problem by freezing rents until no
11 apartment in New York is without the legally mandated level of heat.
12 Consider the plight of my two aging and disabled neighbors, both --
13 they're both living adjacent to each other. They suffer year after year
14 without sufficient heat due to a heat circulation blockage that's within the
15 wall. Begin -- being in the minority, their plight goes unrecognized. So,
16 they freeze each year because the landlord doesn't want to spend the
17 money for the costly repair. When the board grants rent increases, it's
18 with the expectation the extra money would be used to repair such
19 problems. But the landlords typically, as we know, use the money to
20 renovate newly van -- newly renovate, renovate newly vacated apartments.
21 If you recognize the abundance of heat complaints, you have the power to
22 freeze rents in recognition of the cold many households suffer with. The
23 real-- -- the reality is so pervasive and common that there was a law and
24 order episode based on this very practice. I conclude with my plea to

1 correct this problem by freezing rents in recognition of how many tenants
2 are freezing in their apartments. Perhaps, you--

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Anthony.

4 Mr. Gargiulo: Per-- perhaps you can call this the rent freeze for the frozen.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

6 Mr. Gargiulo: We depend on the Rent Guidelines Board to roll back rents also and
7 reckon in protest of how previous rent increases have not resulted in the
8 repairs.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

10 Mr. Gargiulo: Thank you for your time.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Next we'll have Emma Rehac followed by Carolyn Meckles, Guillermo
12 Perez [phonetic], and Amadou Jagirdar [phonetic].

13 Ms. Rehac: My name is Emma Rehac. I'm the founding director of the Youth
14 Alliance for Housing and I'm a rent stabilized tenant. I was adopted from
15 China and I have been living in New York since I was one year old.
16 Being severed from my cultural heritage and ancestry and then being
17 adopted by an immigrant, New York became my homeland. I am grateful
18 and proud to be a New Yorker and I am here today because I love this
19 city. I love my neighbors and I want to make sure that we, the tenants of
20 New York, the people who make the city run, can just stay in our homes.
21 I live in a rent stabilized apartment in Washington Heights in a building
22 owned by Summit Properties recently auctioned off by Pinnacle Group. I
23 share a lease with two roommates that I met on Facebook. Because in this
24 economy, there are entire internet communities dedicated to connecting
25 total strangers with one another so we can keep a roof over our heads. I

1 am rent burdened, working fulltime and paying 30% of my income on
2 rent. The orphanage I lived in as a baby distributed vaccines without clean
3 needles, giving me hepatitis C. After many years of compounded stress
4 and trauma, I developed fibromyalgia, limiting the kind of work that is
5 accessible to me. I have been living on my own, paying my own rent
6 since I got kicked out of my house at 18 years old. Balancing rent,
7 groceries, and medical care, I am forced to ruminate on every dollar I
8 spend. And today, only the most privileged young people have the chance
9 to have a childhood, to focus on their education, to stay in the
10 communities that we grew up in. And that ain't right. The rent was
11 already too damn high before the increases we experienced under Adams,
12 all the while the conditions of our homes have continued to decrease. Our
13 landlord's incomes are not in crisis. It is our basic need for safe shelter
14 that is in crisis. And the Rent Guidelines Board has continued to prioritize
15 bricks and glass and the pockets of property owners over the working
16 people, the human beings who are now the lifeline of New York.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Emma.

18 Ms. Rehac: The tenants you've heard from throughout these hearings have exercised
19 an enormous amount of bravery. If the rent increases, we will be pushed
20 out of our city. If the rent stays the same, it might stop further harm, but it
21 doesn't really matter because we already can't breathe.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Emma.

23 Ms. Rehac: I hope you will have even a fraction of the bravery my neighbors have
24 shown and make something -- make the choice to do something historic,

1 something that will provide actual relief to the New Yorkers, and rollback
2 the rent.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

4 Ms. Rehac: Rollback the rent! Rollback the rent! Rollback the rent.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Carolyn Meckles.

6 Ms. Meckles: Thank you very much for listening to me as a landlord. I have an 18-foot
7 wide building. It is teeny. We have five tenants. I live in the building.
8 Over the 25 years, I have lived here, we -- the building has never made a
9 profit over the 25 years. Yes, some years we make money, but every time
10 I have a capital repair, a hot water tank, a boiler, a roof, I lose money that's
11 so significant that it only takes four to five years to capture that money
12 back. The only reason why I continue to be a landlord is because I was
13 able to raise my children here and that my husband has a good job. Must
14 year, my -- this year and in every year, my taxes go up 8%. That's
15 Mamdani's fault. That's every mayor in our city's fault. If you want my
16 rent to come down, no problem, freeze my taxes. Freeze my taxes, then I
17 can make and keep my rent level. 25% is ra-- -- is taxes, 25% is
18 mortgage, 25% is utilities. Utilities is in the city's requirements. I have no
19 other thing to say, but if you want the rent to stay flat, then the
20 government has to help the landlord keep it. Fla-- flattening the rent,
21 keeping it frozen just eliminates landlords like me. If you want fair
22 landlords, [unclear] [02:27:00]. Thank you very much for listening to me
23 because if you want to keep rents and keep stabilized apartments out of the
24 big corporations that do freeze out tenants, then you need to give us a rent

1 increase because that's the only way that people like me will survive. 2%
2 rent increase only covers the increase --

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

4 Ms. Meckles: -- in the New York City taxes. Thank you.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Guillermo Perez. We'll have Guillermo Perez followed by
6 Amadou Jagidar and Hannah Mosenthal [phonetic]. Is Guillermo here?
7 How about Amadou? Hannah Mosenthal? Bernhard Helgason.

8 Mr. Helgason: That's me.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Great, come on up Bernhard. And then we'll have T Gonzales followed by
10 Jeannine Cieri. When you're ready Bernhard.

11 Mr. Helgason: Thank you. Thank you, Board. I'm going to make this quick and painless.
12 My name is Bernhard, B-E-R-N-H-A-R-D, middle name Christian, last
13 name Helgason, H-E-L-G-A-S-O-N. I am professionally known by the
14 term Bernmeister, B-E-R-N-M-E-I-S-T-E-R. If any of the good people
15 here or you would like to know more about me, including my academic
16 work, which focuses, among other things, on how to create affordable
17 housing, that is generally available at bernmeister.com. However, I earlier
18 today following your guidelines submitted testimony, written testimony
19 you should have it including my business card. This is a concept called
20 channeled regulation. I'm going to leave with this gentleman my business
21 card so that in case there is any snafu and you don't have it, you can
22 contact me. The situation is a complete and total mess on everything. The
23 good news is I have figured out a way how to make a capitalist plus, qu--,
24 quote -- I'm sorry, capitalist based cost plus approach which create --
25 actually creates affordable housing by improved and better regulation

1 which interjects competition into the elements and that will drive down
2 prices. Obviously, I cannot summarize that here and that is beyond the
3 general scope of -- the immediate scope of the board which is to discuss a
4 rent increase or rollback or a freeze but I would ask you when you get this
5 information to rip it apart, put it back together again and then when you do
6 not find any flaw in this theory that you then consider my testimony to be
7 that of an expert witness. And in my opinion, as an expert witness, if you
8 maintain the same, you're going to wind up with more inflation and that is
9 the greater evil.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Bernhard.

11 Mr. Helgason: So, what we need is a rent roll back.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Is T Gonzalez here?

13 Ms. Gonzalez: Hi, T Gonzalez. I live here on the Upper West side also and I would like
14 to speak to the smaller populations. I understand a lot of people, like the
15 landlords that are smaller landlords, have been, you know, voicing their
16 concerns. However, I do also, just down the street, live at the West Wing,
17 and myself and our other tenants are the West Wing Alliance. We have
18 been battling with our landlord and are still in litigation. We have tried
19 rent, rent withholding. We have 476 complaints right now that are still
20 filed with the city. We have over 276 violations in our building and our
21 landlord has said he's not going to put any money into our building. We
22 still do not have a working elevator. We have one unit. I have 70, 80 and
23 90 year olds on our fifth and sixth floors. And for some reason, nobody
24 can explain to me why the city hasn't stepped in. We're dealing with like
25 HPD attorneys and I'm just bewildered how after three years, we do not

1 have a working landlord or a working elevator. It has driven tenants out
2 of our building. They're warehousing over 25% of our units currently and
3 they're trying to drive out the -- our older seniors who have lived in the
4 building longer than I've been alive and are still rent stabilized as well.
5 And that's putting them in jeopardy. It's elderly abuse. And I do not
6 understand how this continues to happen. The rent should not just be
7 frozen. It needs to be rolled back. We were served new leases with a 5%
8 increase. Those that were deregulated apartments got 15 and 20%
9 increases but people are so in fear of losing their homes that they're
10 agreeing to that ludicrously. So, I ask at the very least just freeze the rent
11 and consider your last decision of not rolling it back. Please do that for us.

12 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Yes. I'm going to make one more announcement that
13 registration closes at 8:00. So, again, if you would like to testify, you do
14 need to register with the staff at the front and you can do so until 8:00.
15 Thank you. So I will now welcome Jeannine Cieri, Mariette Strauss,
16 Frederick Miller [phonetic] and Maren Hurley. If you've heard your
17 name, please make your way to the microphone. When you're ready.

18 Ms. Cieri: I have some documents that I [unclear] [02:33:30]. Today, I am
19 presenting evidence that Penal law 210 and 175 have been violated in the
20 second degree, a class A misdemeanor and third degree, a felony, by
21 landlord Yaaron LLC, owners that have many LLCs and own over 40, 50
22 buildings. I am one tenant. I'm sure this is pervasive through all their
23 buildings. In 2019, owners knowingly lied in New York Supreme Court
24 sworn affidavits to try to sway the judge's opinion in their favor. Yonah
25 Halton and Aaron Jungreis, Yaaron LLC, violated Penal law repeatedly,

1 stating that Yonah Halton was never a member in Yaaron LLC. He was a
2 lowly fired manager. This is important as in December 2018, Yonah
3 Halton filed an MCI with DHCR as owner's agent. member of Yaaron
4 LLC in the affirmation of owner. The work was not completed as
5 affirmed. A 535-page tenant response signed by all 48 tenants showed
6 these lies with evidence. But despite this, DHCR approved the MCI in
7 September 2025. In summer 2024, Yaaron LC -- LLC's managing agent,
8 Judith Stern [phonetic] falsified his term of employ-- employment as
9 managing agent in two separate cases in New York Civil Court. Each case
10 was based on different facts to sway the opinions of judges in his favor. A
11 third degree felony. Owners like ours repeatedly certified completion of
12 HPD violations when they haven't even scheduled repairs. Affirmation
13 submitted to DHCR state, "I further understand that making a false
14 statement herein knowing such statement to be false and they're offering
15 such false statement for filing each Class A misdemeanor pursuant to the
16 Penal law of the state of New York."

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Jeannine.

18 Ms. Cieri: I understand that conviction of a Class A misdemeanor may result in a
19 period of imprisonment not to exceed one year but we don't put them in
20 jail. DHCR rewards them granting their request and the Rent Guidelines
21 Board rewards them with rent increases.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

23 Ms. Cieri: The evidence is there. Do not reward these illegal perjuries' lies. Roll
24 back rents.

25 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Mariette Strauss.

1 Ms. Strauss: Hello, my name is Mariette Strauss. I am a kindergarten teacher and I am
2 the mother of two. I have lived in rent stabilized buildings since 2011 in
3 Harlem, taking a two-year break living in a rent stabilized unit during
4 COVID and then back to a rent stabilized place in April of 2023 when I
5 was seven months pregnant. To say that every building I have been in,
6 actually since 2011, the two buildings that I have been in that are rent
7 stabilized have been so neglected by the owners and the managers. I don't
8 even know how to contact my owners or my managers. I am not saying
9 anything new that you have heard today. What I can tell you is that when
10 I'm on the phone with 311, when HPD comes to my apartment waiting at
11 any time, I don't know, just on a Tuesday and I have to just wait there the
12 entire time, that is time and that is money. I do not have money to pay my
13 rent, to pay for my childcare of my two children in Harlem as a
14 kindergarten teacher, as an educator in this great city that I love. When
15 my now one-year-old started to learn how to crawl, there were dead
16 cockroaches that I had to worry about. Since September, the front door to
17 my building on 116th Street is open to the public. My land-- -- not my
18 landlord, because I don't know how to get a hold of them. At least my
19 manager, who doesn't respond to me, knows this. I say, I left work today.
20 There is someone sleeping in my lobby smoking crack who is unhoused.
21 You tell me that, I'm supposed to call the NYPD to solve this?
22 Absolutely, not. Then this person is also sleeping in our garbage area that
23 has urine and just feces all over it.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

1 Ms. Strauss: So, I am just going to say to you that it is so unethical, it is so unjust to be
2 able to demand this of us when we are living in unsanitary conditions,
3 when our public -- when our mental health is at stake, when our health is
4 at stake and it's not just for me, it's for the future generations of New
5 Yorkers.

6 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

7 Ms. Strauss: Think about this when you make your decision.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Is Frederick Miller [phonetic] here, Frederick Miller? Maren Hurley?

9 Ms. Hurley: Yes. Good evening, members of the Board and thank you for the
10 opportunity to testify today. My name is Maren Hurley Matz [phonetic],
11 and I'm a proud rent stabila-- rent-stabilized tenant in Clinton Hill,
12 Brooklyn. I'm here to urge the members of the board to freeze the rents on
13 both one and two year of leases. Living in a rent stabilized apartment
14 allows me to work, providing free legal assistance every day to low
15 income New Yorkers facing economic justice challenges like frozen bank
16 accounts, wage garnishments and abusive debt collection. I see every day
17 how hard New Yorkers struggle to afford to stay here. And for myself,
18 even with a fulltime job, I still spend more than a third of my income on
19 rent and struggle to pay other bills. Under the previous administration, the
20 RGB raised the rent 12%. My landlord does not deserve another rent
21 increase. Tenants in our building faced weeks without heat during one of
22 the coldest winters on record recently. We are still waiting for mold and
23 water damage remediation after failure to maintain the roof caused a major
24 flood in 2025. They are unresponsive to our complaints and to our
25 complaints to the city. Meanwhile, multiple apartments in the building

1 have been held vacant for years. We deserve safe and affordable housing
2 and landlords are providing neither right now. While the majority of
3 tenants continue to struggle to make ends meet, it should not be tenants'
4 responsibility to bail landlords out. The RGB's increases have been more
5 than what have been required to maintain operating costs for landlords.
6 We cannot continue this exploitation of working class New Yorkers.
7 Freezing the rent is the absolute bare minimum the board can do today.
8 Thank you.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. The next names I will call are Vajra Kilgour, Michael Leahy,
10 Janice Sokota and Ramona Wooden [phonetic]. If you heard your name,
11 please make your way toward the microphone. That's Vajra Kilgour,
12 Michael Leahy, Janice Sokota and Ramona Wooden.

13 Ms. Kilgour: Hi, my name is Vajra Kilgour.

14 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

15 Ms. Kilgour: I'm a rent stabilized tenant. When I came to New York City in 1966, there
16 were what? Three dozen homeless people. There are now close to
17 100,000 people staying in shelters each night. That is the result of a grand
18 social experiment in which it was decided housing will not be treated as a
19 necessity. Housing will not be treated as a human right. It will be a
20 commodity. It will be a source of untold wealth, like an oil well or a gold
21 mine. And I have been coming to these hearings, woman, girl, and old
22 lady, and the small landlords haven't been trotted out until this year for
23 quite a while but now the landlords come, they cry and they cry and they
24 lie and they lie. When people in luxury developments are forming tenant
25 unions because they can't get repairs and their buildings are not being

1 maintained and they are paying rents that are beyond what I could
2 imagine, then we must draw the conclusion that the amount of rent has
3 nothing to do with maintenance. Nada. Nada. Maintenance is an
4 enforcement issue. Maintenance is an enforcement issue. You cannot
5 solve that problem by giving landlords more money. You cannot. I've
6 come here, people have said, I have to choose between food and medicine.
7 And the landlord said, what? They have money for food or medicine?
8 Give it to us. And the RGB says, okay. And then the landlord comes
9 here, property taxes, Con Ed, which is a thief, I grant you. This, that,
10 please, please solve our problems on the backs of the tenants. Solve our
11 problems on the backs of the tenants. Let's not look for any other
12 solutions. Just solve it on the backs of the tenants. Give us money, give
13 us money, give us money, give us money. We don't have their damn
14 money.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Vajra.

16 Ms. Kilgour: Roll the rent back.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Michael Leahy.

18 Mr. Leahy: Hello. My name is Michael Leahy. I'm the tenant of a rent, rent stabilized
19 apartment in Harlem. I'd like to share with the Board some unfortunate
20 news I've received recently. My employer, a multinational billion dollar
21 corporation has decided to reduce my salary by 15%. Because of the dire
22 state of the current job market, I've had no choice but to accept this pay
23 cut. Now, my situation is not unique. In fact, I'm lucky to only face a
24 reduction of income rather than a complete loss of income, like many of
25 my colleagues who have been laid off. The real wages of the average

1 New Yorker have decreased by 0.4%. At the same time, inflation has
2 risen by 4%. So, tell me, why is it acceptable for my employer to reduce
3 my income but completely unprecedented to introduce a rent rollback?
4 Why do we act as if the men and women who own buildings have some
5 divine right to our money? Where is the Board to protect my interests?
6 The cost of necessities has only gone up. So, not only is my income
7 shrinking, the purchasing power of that income is shrinking but my rent is
8 growing. And the increase in rent money, roughly \$200 per month since I
9 moved in, has not gone towards repairs or maintenance. When I saw
10 roaches in my apartment, I had to wait months for them to send an
11 exterminator. I once went nearly a month without a functioning oven. My
12 door does not meet fire safety requirements. I once found myself stuck
13 between floors in my building's elevator, only to find that the help button
14 was not connected to anything. I called the building superintendent on the
15 phone. He told me he was out of town but his son could come by
16 tomorrow and help me get out of the elevator. My building recently
17 changed ownership and during the month of transition, both my current
18 and former owner tried to charge me the rent and the former owner
19 directly debited the money from my account. Now, they no longer owned
20 the building. What were they spending that money on? I have in the past
21 received a past due notice from the electric company telling me the
22 building owner was in violation and asking me, a tenant, to make up the
23 difference. I want to be clear, this is in addition to my own individual
24 power bill. So, if the owner was not paying for the electricity, what
25 exactly were they spending the rent money on? Roll back the rent.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Michael. Are Janice Sokota or Ramona Wooden here? Jan--
2 Ms. Sokota: Hi.
3 Ms. Mitchell: Hi.
4 Ms. Sokota: Hi, I'm Janice, a rent stabilized tenant for 43 years. Here are some of my
5 concerns. Rent increases and heat-- heating costs. Some landlords do not
6 pay for heat due to a grandfather clause from 1968, 1974, thus passing on
7 heating costs to tenants. Under rent stabilization, why do tenants who pay
8 for their own heat pay the same rent increases as those who don't pay for
9 their heat? Why is there no carve out for these grandfathered buildings?
10 Why is it, why is it that no one at the rent guidelines board has ever
11 addressed this? Building, building habitability and repairs. Excuse me.
12 When my roof needed repairs, the landlord brushed off my concerns.
13 Then one day it started raining inside the building. There was -- there
14 were dripping walls, puddles leaking all through the stairwell and in some
15 apartments. It took months of my repetitive screaming to finally get them
16 to fix the roof. Any repairs necessary from a burnt out light bulb to a
17 ceiling cave-in should not require months of wrangling and arguments
18 than only to hear from New York City Housing, excuse me, that I need an
19 attorney. What are we doing here? Why aren't landlords fulfilling their
20 obligations forthright? The whole job of a landlord is to provide housing,
21 a home, a place where people live their lives, a basic necessity. If these
22 landlords can't provide basic functionality in a, in a landlord-tenant
23 relationship, then they should not be in the business of housing. And the
24 New York City Housing Board should not be complicit in allowing
25 landlords to conduct business that adversely affects tenants' lives. Why

1 should tenants have to pay more? We're not getting what's in the signed
2 contract to begin with. In fact, I would like to be paid for the work that I
3 do to keep my building up to code and maintain habitability. And for --

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Janice.

5 Ms. Sokota: -- oddly enough, raising the landlord's property value. 2.4 million rent
6 stabilized tenants want to know where is our relief.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Ramona Wooden. Okay. Last call for
8 Ramona and I will also call up David Chung, Pilar DeJesus, Yun Chen
9 and Shuzhen Liu.

10 Mr. Chung: Hello, my name is David and I am a member of the Party for Socialism
11 and Liberation. While I am not someone that lives in a rent stabilized
12 apartment, I know the struggles of what it means to be a tenant in this city.
13 Every time that the Mayor Adams administration and his RGB increased
14 the rent, my rent increased and so did the rent of millions of other people
15 across the city. How many of you here make \$150,000 or more? Raise
16 your hand. Look at this. No one here does. And that is the median rent.
17 Right now, the median rent that people are paying are \$4,000. So, to be
18 not rent burdened, people would have to make \$150,000 or more. And the
19 people of New York City can no long-- -- cannot afford that. People
20 cannot afford rent increases, they cannot afford the cost of living crisis
21 that is being caused by the war in Iran, the rising costs of oil, the rising
22 cost of food, the rising cost of energy, the rising cost of every single thing
23 that it costs to make a living here in the city. So, as a socialist, I fight for
24 the right for housing for all people, as a human right, not as a commodity
25 that the landlords and the ruling class uses as an investment tool because

1 every single person here deserves to live freely, to live with dignity, live
2 without the, the struggle of knowing whether or not they're going to be
3 able to make it another day in the city. So, if every one of you are ready to
4 fight for a city for all, a city for the people, not a city for the billionaires,
5 then join us, let's fight for a rent freeze. Let's fight for a rent rollback and
6 ultimately let's fight for rent control because we want to control the city
7 and we want to control housing. Thank you.

8 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Pilar.

9 Ms. DeJesus: Good evening. My name is Pilar DeJesus. I just want to take this
10 opportunity to say and I'm from New York. And I'm born and raised here,
11 45 years. So, I have a lot of history and knowledge, especially when it
12 comes to the housing crisis. But not only my history and my, my history
13 knowledge, I also have experience as a professional tenant rights advocate
14 with TakeRoot Justice and part of the Rent Justice Coalition. And I've
15 been doing that professionally for over 10 years. I also per-- personally
16 have been evicted from my home while advocating for tenants. I ran for
17 office and then a lot of other things and I say that all to say is that I have a
18 lot of knowledge and experience and history and I'd like for the Board,
19 especially new members, to really go back, go back to the 80s, go back to
20 9/11, look at the numbers. There's never been a time the Board has ever
21 voted for a negative increase, adjustment and I'm not sure why. I, I, I
22 believe it's not your responsibility not only to think about positive
23 adjustments but to also think and consider negative adjustments because
24 you're looking at data. I'm a little -- also, you know, I've been doing this
25 for a long time. Some of the elected that I know, like Harvey Epstein, Ben

1 Kallos when he was an elected, Jumaane Williams, Gale Brewer, we have
2 been constantly fighting for a rent rollback. So, I'm a little unclear why
3 we only think a rent freeze one and two year is enough. It's not. It's not
4 enough. The tenants need a rollback. And you've heard many reasons to
5 why. Why do we keep rewarding people who are criminals, in my
6 opinion, based on my experience? They are violating court orders, they
7 are violating mortgage agreements, they're vio-- violating HPD
8 enforcement. There's no accountability, but like, my God, I'm broke.
9 Why don't you have them open their books? When tenants have to go
10 apply for a one-shot deal, which is a loan, they have to open and show
11 why they became burdened. So, the landlords, if you're in burden, show
12 us how you became bur-- became burdened. Maybe it was the boats you
13 bought or maybe it was the other buildings you bought. I just don't
14 understand what the Board is scared of when it comes to thinking for a
15 negative adjustment. What are you scared of? Who are you scared of?

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Pilar.

17 Ms. DeJesus: Are you scared of the landlords? What are we scared of, of getting really
18 radical and doing a one-year rollback and a two-year rent freeze? Simple.

19 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

20 Ms. DeJesus: Thank you.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Yun Chen. Yun Chen or Shuzhan Liu?

22 Ms. Liu: This is Mrs. Liu.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Okay. When you're ready, Mrs. Liu.

24 Ms. Liu: My name is Mrs. Liu. I am a member of Chinatown Tenants Union. I've
25 been part of this tenant union for over 20 years and I've lived in

1 Chinatown for 30 years. My name is Mrs. Liu. I am over 70 years old
2 and I've already retired. In my lifetime, I've lived through eight different
3 landlords in my building. The first landlord was fine, the second landlord
4 was the worst. I can count four to five bad landlords in my experience.
5 The type of landlord harassment I've lived with is like this. For three
6 years, my landlord came to my house after I got off my work at the
7 garment factory. And from -- after 10:00 p.m., he would come to my
8 house to harass me and my husband was not at home at the time, so it was
9 just me. It was very frightening. My landlord came to -- came and he
10 threatened me and so the only thing I could do was I came out to the
11 hallway and I called for all the tenants in my building from the fourth
12 floor, from the fifth floor to come support me. Then my landlord was
13 going through offering payouts of \$80,000 to the households in my
14 building. He offered it to ten different households. He came to my
15 household. He offered me \$110,000. But I said no because this is my
16 home and I deserve to stay here. What can you buy with \$110?

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

18 Ms. Liu: I fought my, I fought my landlord. My landlord fights me but I will not
19 go. This is my home. I deserve to be here.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

21 Ms. Liu: I'm here to fight for my home and --

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

23 Ms. Liu: And we need to ensure that our landlords make our repairs.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Yun Chen?

1 Ms. Chen: Yeah. My name is Chen, Yun. I'm a member at Chinatown Tenant
2 Union, a CAAAV. I came here today because rent is just too damn high.
3 Right now in my household, both me and my husband are retired and our
4 combined income is \$1,400 and rent costs \$1,200. This means 85% of our
5 income goes to rent. But in the past four years, our rent has gone up by
6 12%. Because of gentrification, grocery and cost of living in Chinatown is
7 higher than other neighborhoods. We rely on food SNAP -- food stamp,
8 SNAP and OTC for living. These are accepted at supermarkets but it
9 means these stores also price up their price because of gentrification. And
10 us, working class tenants have to shoulder this burden. I asked my
11 landlord to fix the leaks in my apartment. I've been asking for three years
12 and the problem's still not been fixed. The landlord has been renovating
13 the apartments near mi-- near mine and then the dust all flew in my buil-- -
14 - flew in apartment. And I know that the rent increase I paid in the past
15 three years was not used to maintain and repair. But this year, after the
16 Deputy Mayor Leila Bozorg came to visit my home, the very next day,
17 HPD inspected the building and found many, many violations that the
18 landlords ordered to correct. And you know what the super told me?
19 Don't call 311. The deputy mayor cannot visit every tenant's home but the
20 reality is that tenants everywhere experience this problem, especially in
21 Chinatown. The landlord says if the rent is frozen, then they won't have
22 money to make repairs. And this is a lie. This will only encourage
23 landlords to speculate on our home more. So, this is what I'm asking. No
24 increases on all leases. Thank you.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Next, I will welcome Tomas Ortiz, Xiaokeng Zheng, Linda
2 Lin and Wei Lu. That's Tomas Ortiz, Xiaokeng Zheng, Linda Lin, and
3 Wei Lu.

4 Mr. Unknown: Can we get a Spanish interpreter? Thank you.

5 Mr. Ortiz: Good evening, RGB. My name is Tomas Ortiz. I'm a member of the
6 organization, a Tenants & Neighbors and I've been living at 306 116th --
7 East 116th Apartment 3A for 11 years now in Harlem. I humbly ask the
8 RGB to please not make any more rent increases this year and to please
9 look at all of the harassment and issues that many of the tenants are having
10 to face currently in order to remain in their living spaces. So, my family
11 and I have been deeply affected by the lack of repairs that have not been
12 made. Most recently, our refrigerator broke down and all of our groceries
13 actually spoiled, which forced us to have to buy food every single day.
14 The owner has been notified by HPD but has not responded at all and has
15 not made any of the inspections. We have many issues involving the
16 repairs. We currently have roaches and vermin and all sorts of
17 infestations. And during the wintertime, we have no heat and hot water
18 for days. Since September, we've had more than -- we've logged more
19 than 434 violations. My current situation, my current economic situation
20 is much like many of my neighbors. It is very dire. We live check to
21 check. I am currently the sole breadwinner in the home that is working
22 fulltime. And, of course, we have to purchase groceries as well. The
23 utility bills are extremely expensive. We have other expenses. So, it's
24 extremely difficult for us to survive. We humbly ask you to please

1 consider not making any further rent increases so that we are not displaced
2 out of our own communities. Thank you so much.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Gracias, Thomas. Next, we'll have Xiaokeng Zheng, Linda Lin and Wei
4 Lu.

5 Mr. Zheng: My name is Xiaokeng Zheng. I'm a member of CAAAV, Chinatown
6 Tenant Union. I've been in my rent stabilized apartment since 1994, so it's
7 been 30 something years. Okay. So, I have had three landlords since I
8 moved in there. And in 2018, the conditions were so bad and the landlord
9 refused to do any repairs. So, I actually hired people to -- I had to take on
10 the renovation and I spent 20k on this, on my own money, my own labor.
11 And then because I did my own maintenance and repairs, the conditions
12 was actually okay. But then in 2022 -- 2024, when the landlord is trying
13 to sell to someone whose name is Danny Kuo [phonetic], they took him to
14 my apartment as a model unit to look at my apartment to see how well the
15 maintenance was. But you know what he did? Since he bought the
16 apartment 2024, the first thing he did is to start eviction case against me.
17 And actually, Danny Kuo doesn't do any repairs. I've told him to hire
18 exterminators to repair the bathtub and nothing happened. Yeah. So, this
19 is a condition in my apartment. Please take a look. I pay rent on time
20 every month. And as soon as he bought up the building, Danny Kuo
21 wants to evict me and my case is still in housing court. He, he's doing this
22 to make more money on my own home that I've lived for 30 something
23 years and use my own labor and money to maintain. So, my demand is no
24 rent increase on one and two year leases because I have retired and my

1 retirement income is only several \$100 and I cannot -- I can no longer
2 afford more rent increases. Thank you.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

4 Mr. Zheng: I just wanna stress, his name is Danny Kuo. He owns 10 something
5 buildings in Chinatown and he's trying to evict all Chinese tenants in these
6 buildings. Thank you.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Linda Lin.

8 Ms. Lin: First of all, I want to thank the Board for listening to all of our tenants here
9 and their testimony. My name is Linda Lin. I'm a member of CAAAV
10 Chinatown Tenants Union and I have lived in Chinatown for more than 10
11 years. You can say that I live in a building with historical value. It is 200
12 years old. It's an aging building, and my rent is about \$1,300 a month. It's
13 a very small kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, you turn around, it's right there.
14 Rent hikes every year and yet no maintenance are -- is being done to the
15 hallways or my room. When you walk in the hallway, it's like you're
16 walking outside. Rent is the biggest burden in my life. Because of the
17 pressures of paying rent, I have not been able to return to China to visit my
18 mother since 2019. It has been seven years and my mother is now 91
19 years old. She's the person who gave birth to me, who raised me and if it
20 were not for the burden of rent, then I would be able to have her here but
21 my living conditions are not good enough to have her here. Because the
22 cost of living here is so high, my child chose to move out of state for
23 work. As a result, we see each other only once or twice a year. During
24 the day, I work and at night, I think about my mother and I think about my
25 child and I miss them both dearly. The people I love are most far away

1 and I do not have the ability to protect them and it is because rent is the
2 number one burden in my life. We spend more time apart than together.
3 We spend more time missing each other than we are together and yet I
4 cannot stop working because I am close to retirement age. My ability to
5 earn a living is limited and I cannot stop working because then I cannot
6 afford my rent. I demand the Board listen to the needs and the desires of
7 working class people. I demand you to freeze the rent for one and two
8 years. Thank you.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Wei Lu?

10 Mr. Lu: My name is Wei Lu. I'm a member of Chinatown Tenants Union at
11 CAAAV. I've lived in Chinatown for six years and the following are
12 some issues that I care about. Rent is the biggest expense in my life.
13 Right now, both me and my wife are still working. We're both working
14 class and rent takes up more than 30% of our income. I am 68 years old
15 but I do not dare to retire, retire because once I retire I can no longer
16 afford my rent. If I retire, 90% of my retirement income will go toward
17 rent and this will be a really big burden on my life. And there's simply
18 just not enough affordable housing for seniors and I know for a fact that
19 the wait list will take years. Therefore, I hope we have two year rent
20 freeze. Even with the rent freeze, we will not still be able to retire. But at
21 least this will -- the rent increase wouldn't be something I have to worry
22 about constantly. I heard that in the past four years, landlords' income has
23 gone up 30%. Will that hurt landlords that much with if we have a rent
24 freeze? No. But that will take a huge bur-- burden off my shoulder if we
25 can have a rent freeze. Thank you.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Next, I will welcome Magdalena Lopez
2 [phonetic], Jinliang Zhang, Xiaoan Wang and Zhiqun Chen. That's
3 Magdalena Lopez, Jinliang Zhang, Xiaoan Wang and Zhiqun Chen. Is
4 Magdalena here? Okay. Xiaoan Wang?

5 Mr. Wang: Hello everyone, my name is Xiaoan Wang. I live at 36 Ludlow Street,
6 Apartment 7. I'm a member at Chinatown Tenant Union CAAAV. I've
7 lived there for over 30 years. Since 2020, my landlord has tried to
8 illegally force me out. He has filed false legal claims against me and
9 brought me to housing court. He even physically assaulted me twice. In a
10 government record, it shows that my housing is a employee housing but it
11 is certainly not. So, I want to raise a serious question. Why do these
12 systemic loopholes end up benefiting landlords while the burden is
13 shouldered by low income tenants like me? I moved in -- when I moved
14 in, the rent was \$761 and somehow, it went up to over \$1,500. For
15 example, this year my landlord raised my rent by 5.25%. But I know that
16 wasn't what rent guideline board voted on last year. My landlord's name is
17 Chen Zhong Yang [phonetic]. He's the worst landlord in New York City.
18 There's a serious leaking issue. A lot of roa-- roaches, rats, mi-- mice and
19 then he doesn't ever clean or maintain the building. It's really, really dirty.
20 In the past four years, landlords' income went up 30%. I strongly demand
21 two-year rent freeze because rent increase will only encourage landlords to
22 be more greedy.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you. Jinliang Zhang?

24 Mr. Zhang: Hello everyone, my name is Jinliang Zhang. I'm a member at CAAAV.
25 I've lived in Chinatown since 1995, so it's been 31 years now. In a rent

1 stabilized apartment, in the same rent stabilized apartment, when I first
2 moved in, the rent was \$500 and now it's gone up to \$1,200. Even though
3 the rent is high for me, I always pay my rent on time every month.
4 Remember the same Danny Kuo? He bought my building too in 2024.
5 And within three months, you know what he told me? We're all Chinese.
6 I give you \$3,000 and you move out. But I didn't agree because all I
7 wanted is a stable home and continue living there with security. He said I
8 have a lawyer. I will take you to court until you move out. Then he took
9 me, took me to court claiming that I do not live in the apartment that I've
10 lived in for 31 years. This is because he treats our home as a tool to hoard
11 his wealth. Over the past few years, we have serious issues, bathroom
12 leakage, door and window broken, rats, cockroaches everywhere. The
13 refrigerator is broken and the toilet is broken. When we call the landlord,
14 he doesn't respond at all. All he know is to raise the rent and our
15 retirement income is now barely enough to cover the rent. This is why I'm
16 asking for a two year rent freeze and holding the landlords accountable. I
17 know the landlords are not doing repairs not because they cannot afford it.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

19 Mr. Zhang: If he has the wealth to buy off my building, then he has the money to do
20 the repairs.

21 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Next
22 I will call up Zhiqun Chen, Mingxiang Yang, Yuchun Zheng, and
23 Xiaoling Zhang.

24 Mr. Chen: Hello, everyone. My name is Zhiqun Chen. I'm a member at CAAAV. I
25 moved into my apartment in 20-- 2005. I worked as a construction worker

1 and handyman for over ten years and then I got sick, so I could no longer
2 work. My rent is \$1,100 a month. My monthly income is only \$477.
3 This is why I'm asking the government to freeze the rent for the working
4 class people and low income people like me. Landlords must provide
5 adequate heat during the winter and this is why I'm asking Rent
6 Guidelines Board to hold landlords accountable. Because in my building,
7 there's not enough heat and I know that elderly people and children will
8 get sick. I'm also asking basic repairs just like extermination of rats and
9 cockroaches, maintenance -- regular maintenance and cleaning. And
10 when appliance like refrigerator break down, I ask them to replace it.
11 These are just basic necessities for us working class people. And I know
12 that landlord makes a lot more than us. Just in the past four years, I heard
13 that there's a 30% increase. I know that they have the money. They just
14 don't care about the struggles that we have. Even with the rent increase,
15 there were not adequate maintenance and repairs. That's why we deserve
16 a two-year rent freeze. Thank you.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Mingxiang Yang?

18 Mr. Yang: My name is Mingxiang Yang. I live at 125 Madison Street, Apartment 3
19 for decades because I really like New York City, this is a really good place
20 for me. I love Chinatown. I am reluctant to leave New York. It's really
21 easy to get around here. It's easier for me as a senior to talk to my doctor
22 in my neighborhood and then get medical appointments on time. My
23 financial situation isn't great. I rely partially on government assistance to
24 support my basic living expense and my rent is mainly paid by my
25 daughter. Another reason I live with my daughter is this -- at this time, a

1 lot of landlords actually are unwilling to rent to seniors. And at the same
2 time, housing costs continue to rise every year. My daughter is also
3 working class. She's also has a family to raise. So, this -- all the
4 increasing rent, tenants have to shoulder them. For example, in 2025, my
5 rent was \$1,384.80. And in 2026, it increased to \$1,426.35. And that is a
6 lot for me. This is a \$41.54 increase a month. That's about 33%. That's
7 33% and that's a lot for us working class people. And on top of that,
8 electricity, gas, general living cost -- general cost of living are also going
9 up and this is a huge burden for us. My daughter works in a restaurant,
10 and she also has a family and I know that she cannot pay my rent long
11 term. We're asking for a rent freeze to support low income seniors like
12 myself so we can live with dignity and stability.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

14 Mr. Yang: My landlord owns 211 buildings. He doesn't face financial hardship like
15 me. So, that's why I strongly urge Rent Guideline Board to approve a
16 two-year rent freeze. Thank you.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Yuchun Zheng followed by Xiaoling Zhang.

18 Mr. Zheng: My name is Yuchun Zheng. I live at 221 Henry Street. I came with
19 CAAAV today. I came here today to ask for a two-year rent freeze and
20 here is why. I've been in my same apartment in Chinatown for 30 years.
21 In the past 30 years, the landlord has basically never done any, any
22 maintenance or repairs. I've reported multiple types, leaking pipes,
23 peeling paint in the kitchen and bathroom, broken and outdated windows
24 and the stoves are also really, really old. When I asked my super, he asked
25 me to go to find landlord. So, they passed the ball to each other and

1 nobody takes responsibility. So, I ended up fixing everything on my own
2 time, labor and money, and I know that a lot of tenants in Chinatown do
3 the same thing. Even though I'm the one who did all the repairs and
4 maintenance, my rent's still going up. And how is that fair for us working
5 class tenants? And now my landlord is taking me to court to evict me.
6 Last year, he took me to court and he dropped the case himself. But this
7 year, he started the case again. I know, I know that he's doing this because
8 he's trying to push me out so he can rent it to someone who's gonna pay
9 much higher rent. And he specula-- speculate on my home. My landlord
10 owns three buildings. He has money to hire real estate companies,
11 management. He has money to hire lawyers to evict me. And he has
12 money to drag tenants like me to court to harass me. Landlords say they
13 don't have money to make repairs. I want to ask, why do they still need to
14 raise the rent? These court cases and constant harassment has caused me
15 so much stress. It's affecting my sleep, health and ability to focus at work.
16 And nobody should live with a fear like mine. And so I asked the Rent
17 Guideline Board to keep bad landlords in check. And more rent increases
18 will only make my type of eviction worse because it will reward landlord
19 like mine to neglect repairs using these complicated legal court system to
20 push old long term tenants and immigrants, tenants like me out so they can
21 charge a higher rent. So, enough, enough -- enough is enough. We need a
22 rent freeze now. Thank you.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Xiaoling Zhang followed by Changging
24 Zheng and Qiuying Zhang and then Tasha Lincoln [phonetic]. So, next is
25 Xiaoling Zhang.

1 Ms. Zhang: Hello, everyone. My name is Xiaoling Zhang. I'm a member at CAAAV,
2 and I live in Chinatown. I moved into my current apartment in 2020. But
3 last year the landlord began to evict me. I'm really scared and worried,
4 especially because I'm really scared of this legal housing court system as
5 an immigrant. And it is affecting my work and my daily life. I just want
6 to be able to stay in Chinatown and live a, a stable life because housing is
7 a basic human rights. Only with secure and stable rents and no constant
8 fear of being pushed out of my neighborhood, my home will make us feel
9 safe and peace. So, this is why I'm asking two-year rent freeze and thank
10 you for listening my story.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

12 Ms. Zhang: Thank you.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Changging Zheng, followed by Qiuying Zheng and Tasha Lincoln.

14 Mr. Zheng: Hello, everyone. My name is Changging Zheng. I'm a member of
15 CAAAV and I live in Chinatown. When I first came to United States in
16 1993, I worked as a garment worker. And then those factories closed
17 down. A lot of people lost their jobs. After that I worked in other states.
18 And I returned in 2003. I live in one of those apartments that's called
19 single room occupancy. If you don't know what that is, basically, I room
20 with other people. I rent a bed. And in these buildings, the conditions are
21 really terrible. There are water leaks, pest issues everywhere and the
22 landlord actually doesn't -- just doesn't take any responsibility and ignore
23 any repairs needed. In winter there's no heat and I have to call many time
24 before someone will come and check out the problem. In the past, rent for
25 me in these SROs, a bed costs \$15 to \$20 per night. And two years ago,

1 the rent went up \$25 per night -- per bed. And just like that my rent
2 increased by \$150 a month. And I am at a age I should retire but I still
3 have to work in restaurants because rent is just really expensive in New
4 York. And this is a huge burden on me. As someone who is
5 undocumented the fear of ICE raids are just daunting. And I'm really
6 afraid that this will happen to me. And because of that I haven't been able
7 to work recently. And this affect my income and my ability to pay rent.
8 And without legal status, I also cannot assess, assess retirement benefits
9 and social support.

10 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

11 Mr. Zheng: At the same, at the same time the cost of livings keep going up. If rent
12 goes up again and then my, my housing will become even more insecure.

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

14 Mr. Zheng: So, this is why I'm asking for a rent freeze. This will ease the burden --
15 financial burden for immigrant tenants like me.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Qiuying Zhang. Quiying Zhang, followed
17 by Tasha Lincoln then JoAnn Scott, and Karina Ordonez.

18 Ms. Zhang: My name is Qiuying Zhang. I'm a member of CAAAV. I've lived in my
19 apartment for 39 years and my apartment is rent stabilized. Over the past
20 four year, landlord income gone up 30%. This means us tenants have to
21 shoulder their profit. This is really unfair for us working class people.
22 Especially in my building there are 12 household, all long term Chinese
23 tenants like me and the conditions are terrible inside. The landlord
24 actually just doesn't do anything inside the building. It's really poorly
25 maintained. There are rats and cockroaches everywhere, peeling paints

1 and no proper cleaning of trash. But my landlord only did some minor
2 cosmetic work on the facade of the building. And boom, all of us tenants
3 have to pay an additional, MCI, which is Major Capital Improvement. But
4 what about the repairs that we need in our apartments, inside our
5 apartments? We actually never get to enjoy the, the repairs and all the
6 things that we have to do on our own. So, this means there's no excuse for
7 more rent increase because rent increase will only encourage landlords to
8 keep using these loopholes to do more things and speculate on our home
9 to make money. I have to pay rent with my daughter. Only our combined
10 income means that we can stay in our home and now the cost of living is
11 also going up. So, I hope the government play the role that's supposed to
12 so tenants can live in stability. I'm calling for two-year rent freeze and
13 landlords do the repairs as needed. And actually they just do their job that
14 they are responsible for. And this way, us tenants can live in safety and
15 dignity. Thank you.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. If I call your name, please make your way
17 to the mic. Tasha Lincoln, JoAnn Scott, Karina Ordonez, Ann Perryman.
18 If I called your name, come on up to the mic and when you're ready just
19 let me know who you are. Tasha, JoAnn, Karina or Ann?

20 Ms. Perryman: Ann.

21 Ms. Mitchell: When you're ready, Ann.

22 Ms. Perryman: Should I go?

23 Ms. Mitchell: Yes.

24 Ms. Perryman: Okay. Good evening and thank you. I'm Ann Perryman, an Upper West
25 Side renter for more than 50 years and president of the Association of

1 Tenants at Lincoln Towers. I represent the remaining 150 tenants in the 8
2 Lincoln Towers that are co-ops now. I'm here this evening to urge the
3 members of the Rent Guidelines Board to freeze the rents on one and two
4 year leases. May I tell you why? Since the 1960s, we have been part of
5 the rebuilding of the Upper West Side. We've worked here, raised our
6 kids here and through bad times and good, we supported our schools,
7 libraries, performing arts and stores. We're -- we continue to contribute to
8 the civic, religious and, and social life in our community. We were able to
9 do all of this for one main reason, rent stabilization. Rent stabilization
10 enabled us to live and work in this great city. We did have successful
11 careers but our wage earning days are over. We get by on our pensions
12 and social security. Being old, I'm 85, and living on a fixed income is not
13 easy in New York City. We can't afford those Broadway tickets in \$40
14 entrees. On a personal note, I lost my primary care physician recently
15 when he became a concierge doctor, charging \$3,000 a year for the
16 privilege of seeing him. The ACP Realty Group, our landlord, in co-op
17 parlance, the sponsor, treats us reasonably well at Lincoln Towers as they
18 should. They are a large real estate corporation with offices on Park
19 Avenue. They are thriving. And when we die off at Lincoln Towers, they
20 sell our apartments for a whole lot of money. We love New York. We
21 love our neighborhood. We love our Muslim mayor and our Jewish
22 bagels and we just want to live here until we die.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, ma'am.

24 Ms. Perryman: Thank you.

25 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Tasha, JoAnn or Karina, whoever is next.

1 Ms. Ordonez: Good evening. My name is Karina and I am here to testify on behalf of
2 my loved ones who cannot be here to speak for themselves in fear of
3 getting their visas taken away or due to the lingering effects of ICE in our
4 communities, Uptown. In the case of my friend Jonathan [phonetic], his
5 name has been changed to protect his privacy, many young adults and
6 families within Harlem and Washington Heights are living with student,
7 artist or work visas or are undocumented. I've watched Jonathan work
8 tirelessly for students who are in a similar situation as him. I've watched
9 him set up Know Your Rice [phonetic] classes, run spaces for immigrant
10 students and youth, and put together resources for young people affected
11 by ICE. For 22 years, his family lived in an apartment in Washington
12 Heights. It was the only home that they had ever known upon coming to
13 America for a better life amongst their home's -- their home country's
14 financial crisis caused by the very same country that we all live in today.
15 Like many of us, his childhood home served as a beacon of hope and a
16 sanctuary for all those who lived there. However, due to our current
17 President's immigration policies they have left their apartment out of fear,
18 leaving Jonathan there by himself with his student visa. They dream of
19 coming back one day with, with the rising rent as well as the exploitation
20 of undocumented families that many people are all too familiar with. He
21 fears like he will not be able to stay there. Housing should be a human
22 right, especially by those directly affected by the systems that displace
23 them for their countries of origin in the first place. People like Jonathan,
24 those essential workers who dedicate their lives serving the community
25 and the next generation should never have to worry about being displaced

1 once again. As you listen to these testimonies, remember those who have
2 only wanted a better life for their loved ones and who have gone through
3 every extreme to ensure that. Jonathan's family and the families of
4 countless other immigrants deserve to rest. It is your duty to ensure that
5 they can. And as a proud daughter of immigrants ,I ask that for a rent
6 rollback. Thank you.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Karina. Tasha or JoAnn?

8 Ms. Scott: JoAnn.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Yes. When you're ready.

10 Ms. Scott: I guess this is high enough. Yeah. Okay. Good evening. My name is
11 Joann Scott and I am here representing 21 86th Street -- 86th 5th Avenue
12 Tenant Association. After cumulative rent increases of 12% over the past
13 four years, I am here to tell you that we need a rent freeze or a rent
14 rollback. Why? First, personally for me, I am retired and on a fixed
15 income, as are many in my building as well as across the Lenox Terrace
16 Six building complex and we simply cannot afford another increase. With
17 the price of groceries, utilities going through the roof, young people
18 starting out cannot afford even a studio apartment, which is circling \$20 --
19 \$2,000 per month. Many of our residents are city workers and their pay
20 increases over the same number of years are nowhere close to 12%. It is
21 not unusual now for rent stabilized tenants to pay half or more of their
22 income in rent. That is not -- that is now how the system was designed.
23 That is now -- not how the system was designed to be. It was designed to
24 maintain affordability for average New Yorkers. Also, with the number of
25 homeless families and individuals living in shelter somewhere in the area

1 of around 100,000 people, the need for a rent freeze or rollback should be
2 very clear. Landlords are making profits through the roof and tenants are
3 suffering. Our position is this, there is nothing that this landlord or any
4 other landlord that we know of across the neighborhood or across the city
5 who needs a rent increase this year or even next year. The rents have been
6 raised enough over four years to justify, in our opinion, or a rent freeze for
7 the next four years. Seniors, even those on SCRIE with the current cost of
8 living need supplementary support for groceries.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. Thank you. Kevin McAnnerney
10 [phonetic], Sue Seussman [phonetic], Zena Gonzalez [phontic] and Maria
11 Faranole Perez [phonetic]. Please make your way to the microphone.
12 Kevin McAnnerney, Sue Suessman, Zena Gonzalez, and Maria Faranole
13 Perez. If you're any of those names and you're coming up let me know
14 otherwise I'm gonna go to the next group. Okay. Anne Schutzberger
15 [phonetic], Derek James Temprow [phonetic], B. Busse and Brih H
16 Kazmac.

17 Ms. Kazmac: Is this the right? I feel like I'm too tall for this, but thanks. Hi, my name
18 is Brih Harry [phonetic] Kazmac. I live at 23 East 124th Street with my
19 daughter who has a chronic medical conditions. I feel like my apartment
20 is like the non-biblical ten plagues at this point. It's completely corroded.
21 We had a ceiling partially collapsed in our bathroom with water
22 intermittently pouring out for seven months with mold. I went to court.
23 We have 38 violations and my landlord got away with murder. He lied
24 about being at my house when he wasn't, when I put in a contempt,
25 something for contempt. And when they finally agreed to eradicate the

1 mold, they ripped down walls and risers that are over a hundred years old.
2 So, I'm probably standing here now with a asbestosis of the lungs. These
3 are 21 letters from my daughter's doctors. I would just like to read a short
4 expert -- excerpt, please. I am writing in support of my patient Stella
5 [phonetic] and her mom, Brih Kazmac. It is medically necessary and
6 critical for the appalling conditions in their apartment to be addressed.
7 Stella is currently admitted at Cornell's Komansky Children's Hospital and
8 is in significant pain and is at risk for bowel obstruction. This admission
9 is directly caused by the uninhabitable condition of the family's apartment.
10 When we talk about warranty of habitability, that is every tenant's right.
11 And there's so much of us living in uninhabitable apartments. Raising rent
12 and not having a rent freeze or a rent rollback is criminal. And I beg you,
13 I beg you for all New Yorkers to please, please do a rent rollback. And if
14 you cannot do that, please, one in your leases, just, like, fren-, -- rent
15 freeze on one or two year rent leases.

16 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

17 Ms. Kazmac: Sorry, I'm nervous and thank you for listening to me.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

19 Ms. Busee: Hey, y'all. I'm B. Cibe [phonetic] and I'm here on behalf of the 580
20 Tenant Association. I am supposed to be in a rent stabilized unit but the
21 nefarious management company, Big City Realty, gave me a lease at a
22 market rate with no protections. And only after requesting my rental
23 history from the DHCR did I discover that I was being legally overcharged
24 alongside most of my fellow neighbors and tenants in the building. The
25 prices keep going up. And in most cases, we've seen the, the increases

1 have not only been unsustainable but illegal. Some being as high as 8%
2 on units that are supposed to be stabilized. Not only that, but we've seen
3 little to no capital improvements in the building. And the management
4 company allowed the com-- complex to fall into foreclosure so now we
5 have been left to negotiate with the receiver. That is a state realty. So,
6 we're trying to rectify over a decade of neglect and robbery that is for a
7 company that doesn't even manage the building anymore. At this point,
8 we have been forced to strike and we are not planning on paying anymore.
9 And we need more protections and we need a rent rollback on one and two
10 year leases on all leases for rent stabilized units and further protections for
11 tenants that they don't end up in these positions in the first place paying
12 three times the legal amount that they're supposed to be paying.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Anne Schutzberger, Derek James Temprow, Olga Trujillo
14 [phonetic], Melicio Mendoza [phonetic] and Adam Blazage [phonetic].
15 I'm gonna say those one more time then move to the next group. Anne
16 Schutzberger, Derek James Temprow, Olga Trujillo and Melicio
17 Mendoza. Okay. Adam Blazage, Grace Smith, Ann Perryman, who I
18 think we heard from. We have a double. Catherine Mero [phonetic] and
19 Kiana Ziad Campur [phonetic].

20 Ms. Smith: Good evening, and thank you RGB for giving me an opportunity to speak.
21 My name is Grace Smith. I am here with Tenants & Neighbors. I am also
22 producing Where Else Is This Happening? A documentary about the New
23 York City housing crisis. And I am a tenant on East 117th Street in a
24 building operated by HF Realty. I am testifying today because what is
25 happening in my building reflects a broader problem affecting rent

1 stabilized housing across New York City. Legal protections exist on paper
2 but enforcement often fails in practice. My apartment shows signs of
3 irregular and improper rent registration and there are also concerns
4 regarding potential illegal deregulation practices. What makes this
5 especially troubling is that these issues appear to have continued even
6 after the attorney general investigated this landlord portfolio and ordered
7 more than 20 units across these properties to be restored to rent stabilized
8 status. The broader pattern is especially is equally concerning. Since
9 2007, this portfolio has experienced an estimated let -- rent -- net, excuse
10 me, net loss of 134 rent stabilized units, losing 155 units while gaining
11 only 21. One building alone lost 26 rent stabilized units in the past
12 decade. Meanwhile, tenants are living in unacceptable conditions. During
13 the multiple polar vortex winters, my building experienced long durations
14 with no heat and no hot water. Over 20 complaints were filed to HPD.
15 The property received also a violation for failing to post required rent
16 stabiliza-- rent-stabilization information in common areas, yet it also has
17 been found listed online as a condo development. At least one-third of the
18 building is currently vacant with those units reportedly delisted when
19 management took over the property in 2005. I'm calling on the Rent
20 Guidelines Board to commission annual studies examining both landlord
21 profits and tenant household budgets. The board cannot make informed
22 decisions by looking at only one side of the equation. From what many
23 tenants are experiencing, landlords have continued to generate significant
24 profits while housing conditions deteriorate and residents struggle to keep
25 up with the cost of living.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

2 Ms. Smith: A freeze prevents conditions from getting worse financially for tenants but
3 it does not address the years of increases many tenants have already
4 absorbed while living in poorly maintained buildings.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

6 Ms. Smith: This is why I support a rent rollback. In addition to any rent action that is
7 to be done a period of auditing and enforcement has to be done by HPD
8 and DHCR.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

10 Ms. Smith: We need these landlords and these properties to be revised. We are
11 organizing. The media is reporting but these loopholes keep getting
12 abused. I am so sorry for going over my time. Thank you, RGB.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Catherine Mero, Adam Blazage, Kiana Ziad Campur, Kristina
14 Maria Lopez. If I called your name please come up to the microphone.
15 Any of those names.

16 Ms. Lopez: My name is Kristina Maria Lopez, and today marks two years and 41 days
17 since my grandmother died and I'm still advocating for my rent stabilized
18 tenant rights instead of being able to grieve in peace. Why? Because I'm
19 a rent stabilized tenant in a co-op conversion that my family has lived in
20 since the 70s. Prior to conversion near, near here in Morningside Heights
21 on 111th Street on Broadway, where I've had a bedroom my whole life
22 and my landlord has refused to provide my lease renewal. When I
23 submitted rent stabilized succession documentation shortly after my
24 grandmother died in May 2024, my landlord began a holdover eviction
25 that's still ongoing. The person you see here is not the same person who

1 had to call the suicide hotline after I dealt with private investigator
2 harassment after litigation already began. I know my rights now thanks to
3 the Upper Manhattan Tenant Union and the Goddard Riverside Law
4 Project. The stress of landlord led adjournments in my housing court case
5 has become a normal part of my life. Landlords like mine leave repairs
6 off not just for years, but for decades. They push lease riders that rent
7 stabilized tenants are not bound to as an intimidation tactic. They expect
8 us to not know our rights and not fight for quality of life in our homes.
9 There's less than a handful of rent stabilized families left in my 51 unit co-
10 op conversion filled with shareholders. Tenant repairs are ignored while
11 real estate listings often list units as having the lowest maintenance fees in
12 the area when selling to potential buyers and the cooperative as having
13 healthy financials. One of the last vacated rent stabilized units was bought
14 by someone who was already a shareholder, now a co-op board member.
15 Amongst the many HPD violations is one for lack of proper notice
16 regarding rent stabilization law. I'm tired of living like there's a million
17 dollar target on my back because of real estate speculation, the treatment
18 of housing as a commodity and gentrification in my neighborhood. I urge
19 you to freeze or roll back the rent because this will help prevent the
20 further displacement and mistreatment of generational working class
21 tenants of color like myself from the neighborhoods our families have
22 called home for decades. I paid my rent on time, in my name, on my
23 account for years, only for my landlord to block my rent payments and act
24 like they've never heard of me when it came time to provide my
25 succession lease.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

2 Ms. Lopez: I am the last Afro-Latina rent stabilized tenant left in my building in a
3 neighborhood that was once filled with many more people like me. Our
4 elders deserve to age in peace and our young people deserve to grow up
5 with a sense of belonging. We've been here and we're still here. Thank
6 you.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Alan Harris, Chaplain Warren Riley [phonetic], Isaias Gulty
8 and Soledad Heron [phonetic].

9 Mr. Harris: Isaias Gulty, or he can --

10 Ms. Mitchell: Either one, just let me know.

11 Mr. Gulty: You can go ahead.

12 Mr. Harris: Go ahead.

13 Mr. Gulty: Go ahead.

14 Mr. Harris: Alan Harris.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Alan, when you're ready.

16 Mr. Harris: I'm a tenant at 122 East 76th Street. My wife, my wife and I are 50 year
17 rent stabilized tenants. Our landlord is Lenox Hill Hospital. In 1969, they
18 bought the building for \$1 million. If they can get the last two remaining
19 tenants out of the building, the building will be valued at \$95 million.
20 They don't pay any taxes. They, they bought the apartment from, from
21 taxpayers, real landlords and now they don't pay -- it would be \$2 million
22 this year. So, the taxpayers of the City have to pick that up. They, they
23 just -- they, they don't abide by the mixed use variance of the building.
24 They, they hold seven -- they, they -- from 1969 to 1989, they squatted
25 hospital offices in the building. In 1989, they applied for a mix -- use --

1 mix use building. It was granted even though they had a legal status in the
2 building and they don't maintain the -- and, and -- as they're obligated to,
3 to rent any apartments. In fact, they haven't rented an apartment since
4 1969. It's -- we're -- I'm currently in court fighting against eviction. It's
5 just a -- I feel like I'm dealing with outlaws and there is, there, there is no,
6 there is no recourse. There's, there's no way to depend on as any outcome
7 as being, you know, just. Here we have a board that governs the rentals of
8 people but there's nobody governing the landlords. So, it, it just, it just
9 doesn't seem something that can be wholeheartedly swallowed whole.
10 Well, that's four seconds.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Alan.

12 Mr. Harris: You're welcome.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Isaias?

14 Mr. Guly: Isaias Guly, I want to thank the R-, RGB for your time and I want to go
15 ahead and just read this small note that I wrote. Good evening. My name
16 is Isaias Guly and I'm a rent stabilized tenant from the Bronx. Before
17 considering any rent increase, I ask the Rent Guideline Board to first
18 address the thousands of tenants who may already be paying illegal rent
19 due to the rent overcharge, inaccurate apartment registrations and years of
20 weak enforcement. I also ask the Board in New York State to open the
21 books and require greater transparency from the landlords who claim
22 financial hardships. If landlords are seeking rent increase based on losses,
23 the losses should be independently verified. The public deserves to know
24 the true financial conditions of these buildings before tenants are asked to
25 pay more. Many landlords have benefited from tax breaks, tax

1 abate­ments, preferential rent programs and other public subsidies. At the
2 same time, tenants have seen apartment deregulation, destabilization or
3 removed from affordability protection before proving rent increase. The
4 State should verify whether landlords are accurately reporting their
5 finances and whether public benefits are being used as intended. For
6 years, some landlords have registered apartments with DHCR at rents, at
7 rents that tenants later discover were inflated and based on questionable
8 increases. Too often, these registrations are accepted without meaningful
9 reviews and the burden falls on the tenant to uncover decades of rent
10 history that fight complex legal battles. I am particularly concerned about
11 the impact of immigrant communities, including undocumented New
12 Yorkers. Many tenants face language barriers, fear, fear for retaliation and
13 lack of access to legal assistance. As a result, some are afraid to challenge
14 illegal rent increase or report housing violations. This allows unlawful
15 practices to continue affecting individuals like myself and many others
16 who simply want to, who, who simply want to live in a safe, stable and
17 affordable housing. Before approving --

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

19 Mr. Guly: Before approving higher rents, the City and the State should strengthen
20 oversight, investigate and rent overcharge, audit questionable registration,
21 verify landlord financial claims and hold bad actors accountable.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

23 Mr. Guly: Tenants deserve the confidence that their rent are being paid, it's legal and
24 it's -- and they're asking for -- as being asked to pay for more legally
25 tenants being paid today.

1 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Isaias.

2 Mr. Guly: Anyway, again, I want to thank you all for your time. I know it's kind of
3 late, but please consider us that we're here and really ask to -- ask the
4 landlords to open the books. Maybe it's something that we need to go
5 ahead and do because like somebody else said, you guys are just listening
6 to one side, right, but let's financially --

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

8 Mr. Guly: When, when I went to my apartment, I had to show paperwork.

9 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Isaias.

10 Mr. Guly: The same way the landlords want more money. Let's open their books.

11 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

12 Mr. Guly: Alright. Thank you.

13 Ms. Mitchell: Last call for Chaplain Warren or Soledad Heron. Sandra Jean Bart, Royal
14 Rivas, Trina Semorile, and Mary Anderson. Please make your way up to
15 the microphone. I'm going to call that group one more time. Sandra Jean
16 Bart, Trina Semorile, Royal Rivas and Mary Anderson. When you're
17 ready.

18 Ms. Semorile: I'm Trina Semorile. I live in Hell's Kitchen. People without homes will
19 not quarrel with their leaders. This is well known among our principal
20 men now engaged in forming an imperialism of capitalism to govern the
21 world. "By dividing the people, we can get them to expend their energies
22 in fighting over questions of no importance to us, except as teachers of the
23 common herd," that's J.P. Morgan. This is the practice and principle not
24 only of landlords and developers but the politicians who have aided them
25 to arbitrarily and improperly inflate rents, not in keeping either with the

1 actual rules of the RGB or their actual expenses while crying poor and
2 routinely lying about profits. Every mayor since Mayor Koch has had the
3 goal of removing people, particularly from Manhattan, so that they can
4 turn it into a playland for the rich, the ultra rich. Giuliani and Bloomberg
5 were especially adept at this, as was Adams. Bloomberg actually used
6 September 11th recovery funds to build ultra luxury housing. Tenants,
7 including small, including small business commercial tenants whose rent
8 controls were undermined and removed years ago, need immediate relief
9 in the form of no rent increases for either one or two year leases.
10 Certainly a rollback is better. Approximately three and a half to four years
11 ago, my building was sold and five tenants, 5 apartments were forced out
12 by refusal to renew their leases. They, they requested permits for minor
13 repairs and then they get renovated those five apartments. One of my
14 neighbors is still fighting eviction after discovering that the last landlord
15 had illegally destabilized the apartment. I've been without a stove for
16 nearly four years because the landlord and I quote "does not want to spend
17 the money". To provide me with an electric, I need the wiring changed so
18 that I can have an electric stove and this is despite being notified that it's
19 required as a disability accommodation.

20 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Trina.

21 Ms. Semorile: Roll back the rents, please.

22 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

23 Ms. Bart: Hello, my name is Sandra Jean Bart. I'm a WSNA member at Westside
24 Alliance neighborhood. I'm here today because my son, Stiles Shepherd
25 [phonetic], who was here but he's disabled, so he had to leave. He was in

1 pain. I have one of his art. He's an artist. Also, he's a care-, caregiver.
2 And the reason why is because when he applied for SSI, he lives in a rent
3 stabilized building in Midtown, he was denied. So, I'm here because he
4 comes to me, I'm his mother and he comes to me and he's always saying
5 that he's hungry. He can't pay his bills because his income, he has to give
6 his entire income for his rent. He has like \$300 left, he has to pay his
7 phone. He's really struggling. I'm from a rent stabilized building. For
8 about 40 years I lived in Midtown, Manhattan. And I, I worked for the
9 Department of Buildings. I'm retired. And I always had to work overtime
10 to keep up with my bills. But my son is disabled. He can't do that. And I
11 have to help him as a retired city worker, as a government official. I don't
12 make a lot of money from NYCHA's pension. So, for me to help myself
13 and to help my son, it's, it's a struggle. And I am a housing advocate
14 because I'm trying to help people stop getting evicted. I do go to court.
15 You'd probably seen me on TV, rallies, the rip, rip-off, I'm trying my best
16 to help others and help my family. I have a cousin that lives in Brooklyn.
17 She's in a rent stabilized building. Mice is running all over her apartment.
18 I'm the one who told her, go to rent -- go to court for HP action. She's,
19 she's living paycheck to paycheck. I keep like, Zelle-ing her, she's Zelle-
20 ing me back. It's crazy how we're living. It's not right. I can't even live in
21 peace anymore as a retired person. Now my son, he's, he's struggling too.
22 Yesterday, for example, he bought a sandwich. He came over to my
23 house. I asked him for a bite of that sandwich. He said, mom, if I give
24 you that bite of a sandwich, I don't even know where my next meal is
25 coming. This broke my heart. We can't live like this. The four years rent

1 increase, I left my son in that rent stabilized apartment in Midtown
2 Manhattan thinking that he can continue doing his art. You know, he has
3 a heart monitor. He has neuropathy. He can't even walk. I don't know
4 what to do.

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

6 Ms. Bart: Please, if you can freeze the rent, I, I deeply appreciate it. Thank you.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Last call for Mary Anderson and Royal Rivas., if you're here,
8 please make your way up.

9 Ms. Anderson: Good evening, members of the, the Board. My name is Mary Anderson. I
10 am a rent stabilized tenant. My building is now owned by the sons of the
11 original landlord. Since they took over, there has been a continuous
12 deterioration of the building. They were toddlers when I moved into the
13 building and they only owned the one building at that time. Repairs are
14 not done in a timely manner, if at all, even those that pose a safety issue or
15 health issue. The building is filthy and basement garbage is always filled
16 high without being picked up on sanitation days and that's really, really
17 sad. So, piles even more by the next time, you know, it's time for pickup
18 again. Rats and roaches enjoy this and are encroaching in every part of
19 the building. Safety issues such as broken locks on the entrance doors,
20 broken windows in apartments and non-functioning elevators are
21 consistent issues. Increasing the rent does not seem to be the answer since
22 repairs are not getting done. Also I wanted to add that I and the other
23 tenants in the building have been calling 311 for not only these issues but
24 the entire winter that was so cold and even into the spring, we were calling
25 911 every day for no heat and no hot water. You know, this is really,

1 really unhealthy. You know, I, for instance, have severe osteoporosis --
2 osteoarthritis and asthma and both of those diseases are, you know, are
3 affected by cold, no matter, you know, whether it's cold weather outside or
4 freezing apartment inside.

5 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

6 Ms. Anderson: Thank you.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. When you're ready.

8 Mr. Rivas: Hi, my name is Royal and I'm nine years old. And I want to freeze the rent
9 because back when my great grandma was alive, she was ripped off from
10 her rent because the landlord was making her pay \$900 and some -- and
11 change. And really the rent was only was \$300 and change. And also I
12 hope everyone -- everybody in this auditorium that vote for the freeze of the
13 rent. I hope they have no problem with their bill or rent and also freeze the
14 rent at least two years.

15 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. I'll now welcome Tyler Rutledge
16 [phonetic], Michael Pfeiffer [phonetic], Fior Ferreri and Arlene Geiger
17 [phonetic]. I'll call those names once more. Please make your way to the
18 mics. Tyler Rutledge, Fior Ferreri, Michael Pfeiffer and Arlene Geiger.

19 Ms. Ferreri: Good evening, everyone. My name is Fior Ferreri and I'm here to talk to
20 you about my situation. I'm ill at the moment. I would like for my rent to
21 be frozen because the income that I receive at the moment is not enough
22 for me to make my rent payment. The landlord doesn't make any, any
23 repairs and doesn't do anything at all. Please freeze the rent.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you.

25 Ms. Ferreri: Thank you.

1 Ms. Mitchell: One more time for Arlene Geiger, Michael Pfeiffer or Tyler Rutledge.
2 Okay. I'll now welcome Natasha Soto [phonetic], Jeff Gold [phonetic],
3 Stiles Shepherd [phonetic] and Migel Acberto. That's Natasha Soto, Jeff
4 Gold, Stiles Shepherd and Migel Acberto.

5 Mr. Acberto: Good evening. My name is Migel Acberto. I live in a rent stabilized
6 apartment in Harlem East. In 2024, the, the landlord increased the rent
7 and the reason is that now we have a terrace in the building, the -- I've
8 seen the terrace and there is nothing there. And also from the satellite
9 images you get on Google Maps, you can see that nothing has changed on
10 the terrace. Talking with a, with a super, it turns out that what really
11 changed is just that a door was closed and now it is open during the
12 summer months. These -- I, I trust that the, the property owner, the
13 Greenwood management that manages many luxury buildings across
14 Manhattan, I think they've done everything by the book. I think they've
15 done everything that -- in a way that was allowed by to -- by regulations.
16 And therefore, this is, I think, the problem, that just by turning a key and
17 opening a door, they could increase my rent. For this reason, I am asking
18 you to, to freeze the rent until you can close -- these loopholes can be
19 closed and because it's clearly not -- they -- didn't change anything, you
20 know, to just open a door and, and that is not an improvement and to roll
21 back, what what the, the rent increases that were done in this regime that
22 just allowed property owners to, to rent increases.

23 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you. Last call for Stiles Shepherd, Jeff Gold and Natasha Soto.
24 Okay. I will move to Margarita Tuxy Navaro [phonetic], Sade
25 Amsterdam, Christopher Espinosa [phonetic] and Mitch Ellmauer.

1 Ms. Amsterdam: Hello, my name is Sade Amsterdam. I am a rent stabilized tenant in the
2 Bronx. I initially wasn't sure if I was going to testify tonight but I thought
3 it was still important that I showed up tonight. I was moved to testify after
4 sitting behind a landlord earlier tonight who had testified and as they were
5 listening to tenants share their testimonies about spending 50% of their
6 income on rent and not being able to afford diabetic supplies and
7 medication. I heard their, I heard their responses, not my problem, get
8 another job. Somebody has to care. I'm asking the RGB to care. My
9 landlord, Suss Realty Co. LLC does not care. I've paid over \$100,000 in
10 rent within the last five years. In fact, my lease has not finished, so it's
11 still foreign some change. I -- my landlord has received DOB violations,
12 HPD violations, DHCR violations and an order to correct from court,
13 order to correct from the housing court. And we're also in court for
14 harassment. And I continue to pay my rent on time. I continue to pay my
15 rent in full, regardless of the treatment that I've received from my
16 landlord. For what? My landlord continues to raise my rent and now he
17 has threatened me with eviction. This is not right. This is not fair. And
18 all of this because I have held him accountable for the repairs he has not
19 completed. I pay my rent every month but that is not to fund the
20 maintenance of the building. It is to fund my displacement. So, I ask the
21 Rent Guidelines Board if you cannot do a rent rollback, to do a rent freeze
22 because if you don't, I'm going to continue to fund my displacement.
23 Thank you.

24 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Sade. Margarita Tuxy Navarro, Christopher Espinosa and
25 Mitch Ellmauer.

1 Mr. Ellmauer: Hey, what's up? I'm Mitch, and I am a proud member of the Crown
2 Heights Tenant Union. I'm a member of the Crown Heights Tenant Union
3 because when I moved into my building, shortly after I moved into my
4 building, at 1291 Eastern Parkway, there was a fire. And -- there was a
5 fire shortly after I, after I moved into my building and they declared my
6 apartment and many of the other apartments unfit for human habitation.
7 They gave us a discount, is what it meant, really. And this was in 2018.
8 My rent then was \$1,680. My rent today is \$2,150. That is a 28%
9 increase. What did the landlord do with this extra money? Did he fix the
10 faulty wiring that caused the fire? No, he didn't. Did he fix the broken
11 pipes? Did, did he even paint over the walls that were damaged by the
12 fire? He didn't do any of that. He took out a high interest mortgage from
13 Santander Bank and bought dozens of buildings all over the City,
14 including buildings on my block. I live at 1291 Eastern Parkway. He
15 bought 1315 Eastern Parkway, 1325, 1330, 1353. And then in like 2024,
16 he went bankrupt because he, he couldn't make the payments on all of his
17 new mortgages. He was irresponsible and that irresponsible speculation
18 was enabled by the Rent Guidelines Board that, you know, promised him
19 that the rent would always go up no matter what happened. But me and
20 my neighbors in my building and on my block and in Crown Heights are
21 getting organized. We got organized to force the landlord to make repairs
22 that the court ordered. We got organized to stop the evictions after 2020
23 when he couldn't make his mortgages -- when he couldn't make his
24 mortgage payments even after he got a handout from the state. And we
25 are organizing now that his buildings are being foreclosed and auctioned

1 off. We are organizing now to make sure there are no landlords on our
2 block at -- of Eastern Parkway.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Mitch.

4 Mr. Ellmanuer: Tenant power elected this mayor. And if we can't get -- and if this Board
5 can't give us what we need, then we, organized tenants, will smash this
6 Board. Give us a rent roll back.

7 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. I'll now welcome Michael Cone or
8 Michael Lone, I can't tell if it's a C or an L. Melinda Montoroso
9 [phonetic], Ching Wong and Andrew Bodiford. Again, Michael Cone or
10 Lone, Melinda Montoroso, Ching Wong and Andrew Botiford. If you're
11 any of those names, please make your way to the mic.

12 Ms. Wong: Okay. My name is Ching. I've lived in Harlem my whole life in a rent
13 stabilized apartment. My first job is a boring scientist and my second job
14 is to organize tenants against a scummy landlord hid-- hiding behind
15 multiple LLCs. For years, they failed to mai-- maintain the building,
16 which was built in 1891, caused expensive problems for themselves while
17 trying to do damage control, doing cheap, shoddy repairs that fall apart
18 within days, committing fraud for more money to build a portfolio.
19 Taking Florida and LA vacations, paying lawyers to help them lower the
20 property taxes, paying lawyers to send threats and do basic, do basic
21 reading and writing for them because they never learned how to at about
22 \$500 an hour and setting things up for the next nepo baby. That is the
23 opposite of the hard work and certifications, certifications everyone tells
24 us to have to get ahead. I have also used Newton's law of cooling to prove
25 the building isn't using adequate heating to save a couple of bucks while

1 the rest of us suffer. Management can't practice lead safety because it's
2 too expensive to use certified workers for repairs. I can't have an air
3 conditioner because of pigeons in our air shaft. I can't open the window
4 because of bird mites. How much are landlords even putting towards
5 repairs? In fact, I have discovered the only way to get landlords who
6 claim financial hardship for accepting repairs to suddenly cough up
7 \$400,000 for repairs. Just to state, the elderly tenant living in a rent
8 stabilized apartment just died. Then they raised the rent and hope no one
9 catches them. You don't need me to tell you that 70% of angry people in
10 the City with nothing to lose won't take matters into their own hands
11 because you failed your end of the social contract. My peers who only
12 make up 0.02% of the entire population of the United States and the latest
13 group to real-- to realize will be thrown under the bus in the name of
14 profits also feels like you've failed the end of the social contract. And I'm
15 organizing them too. I'm here to call for a rent rollback to, to, to, to make
16 you realize, you know, you need to accept social responsibility on your
17 end and not to start an angry mob. Thank you. So, pick a side.

18 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony.

19 Mr. Cone: Good evening. Thank you very much for this marathon session. I know
20 it's difficult. My name is Michael Cone and I am the leader of the Plunger
21 Protection Team. I am a rent stabilized tenant in the neighborhood. We're
22 different from the Plunge Protection Team, which is actually bankers and
23 government people who, when the stock market crashes too quickly, they
24 intervene to make sure that rich people don't get hurt. And I don't want to
25 be here tonight and I don't want to do this. I'm a tariff lawyer. I came

1 here 30 years ago. I have a lot of stuff to do. But what I found in my
2 building was total abuse. When -- I live in a building that was previously
3 owned by Irene and Paul Bogoni, they, they are the biggest rent fraudsters
4 on the Upper West Side. Paul's no longer with us. When the new people
5 came in, in 2022, they, they, they weaponized construction and they were
6 going to shut the lights off. We heard earlier testimony about that. And
7 so we had to organize and fight. But this building is replete with rent
8 fraud and the agencies have done nothing. I am here to urge the RGB
9 tonight to freeze the rent on three bases. Affordability, legacy rent fraud
10 and sclerotic Tammany Hall agencies, including Tammany Hall Housing
11 Court, THC. So affordability. The tariffs are hurting us. It's going to get
12 worse. The Strait of Hormuz, it's going to get worse. People are going to
13 be suffering even more and in this City, they're not going to be able to
14 afford their rent. But what we know from people who wrote the musical
15 called Rent is that it's the poor people and the starving artists who make
16 this City interesting. There's nothing more boring than a room full of
17 super rich people and I've been in very many. Now, that's for
18 affordability. In terms of legacy rent fraud, it was a self-reporting system.
19 The Bogonis faked it. And the new owners are faking it. And you need to
20 audit. The whole City is infected with rent fraud. And finally, legacy.
21 And finally, the Tammany Hall agencies, HPD doesn't coordinate with
22 DEP, doesn't coordinate with DOP. And then you go to housing court and
23 they can call us in and they can sue us over and over and over again,
24 according to their schedules, right? And it is killing us. And, and this
25 City, the livelihood of this City, and the viability of the greatest City on

1 earth depends upon the ability of poor people to be able to afford rent.
2 Thank you.

3 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you, Michael. Okay. Final call for Andrew Bodiford, Melinda
4 Montoroso.

5 Mr. Bodiford: Yes. Hello, my name is Andrew Bodiford. I'm a tenant and I'm also a
6 candidate for the New York State Assembly. I'm here to urge you to beg
7 you, in fact, to freeze the rent. The rent is way too high. And as you've
8 heard from countless working class people from all around New York
9 City, the rent is simply the biggest burden which people have to face in the
10 city. It -- as you heard from so many people, can be up to 85% of their,
11 their total expenses even more. And the reality is that the rent is
12 something which people cannot keep up with given the circumstances of
13 rising costs in the world, given what you just heard, the fact that the, the
14 costs of everyday essentials in New York City are going up, the costs of
15 food, the costs of fuel, the costs of transportation. And on top of all these
16 costs which people have to deal with in their day-to-day life, they cannot
17 afford a rent increase. They simply can't. And as you also heard, the
18 lifeblood of this City relies on the people who live in it. The lifeblood of
19 New York City is in fact the working class people of the City. It is in fact,
20 the people who live in rent stabilized units. It is the artists, it's the
21 workers, it's the ordinary people of New York. And without the people
22 who actually live here being able to afford to live here, this is not going to
23 be the same City that it would be otherwise. And it's not going to be the
24 same city that it has been for, for so many years, for decades, for all of its
25 history. It's absolutely incumbent on the Board to, to freeze the rent and

1 eventually to have a rollback because the increases in costs for the last
2 years cannot be borne by the people of New York City any longer. And
3 so, I urge you to freeze the rent and then to roll back the rent. Thank you.

4 Ms. Mitchell: Thank you for your testimony. I'm going to read these names once more.
5 Please come up if you hear your name. Melinda Montoroso, Christopher
6 Espinosa, Margarita Tuxy Navarro, Natasha Soto, Jeff Gold, Stiles
7 Shepherd, Tyler Rutledge, Michael Pfeiffer, Arlene Geiger, Soledad
8 Heron, Chaplain Warren Riley, Kiana Ziad Campur, Adam Blazage,
9 Catherine Mero, Anne Schutzberger, Derek James Temprow, Olga
10 Trujillo, Melicio Mendoza, Kevin McAnnerney, Sue Seussman, Zena
11 Gonzalez, Maria Faranole Perez, Tasha Lincoln, Magdalena Lopez,
12 Ramona Wooden, Frederick Miller, Guillermo Perez, Hannah Mosenthal,
13 Amadou Jagidar, Susanne Pearlman and Bee Cuilin. Okay. Thank you to
14 everyone who has testified tonight. The next meeting of the Board will be
15 the final Board next week on the 25th. Do we have a motion to adjourn?

16 Ms. Melodia: Motion to adjourn.

17 Ms. Mitchell: Second?

18 Ms. Melodia: Second.

19 Ms. Mitchell: We are adjourned.

20

CERTIFICATE OF ACCURACY

I, Gabriela Rodriguez, certify that the foregoing transcript of 2026-057588 for the audio file *June 16, 2026 RGB Manhattan Public Hearing - Moston, R. (Job ID 756400)* was prepared using the required transcription equipment and is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

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