

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING

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HELD AT: 250 Broadway - 8th Fl. Hearing Rm. 2

B E F O R E: Chris Banks
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés
Erik D. Bottcher
Justin L. Brannan
Darlene Mealy
Chi A. Ossé
Rafael Salamanca, Jr.
Pierina Ana Sanchez
Julie Won

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Wanda Salas
Manhattan Together

Maria Roman
Manhattan Together/ Metro IAF

Tabitha Ward

Neil Barofksy
Federal Monitor

Cesar De Castro
Ombudsperson

Kiersten Acevedo
OCC/Independent Mold Analysis

Neil Steinkamp
OCC/Ombudsperson

Daniel Greene
Executive Vice President of Property Management
Operations at NYCHA

Elena Tenchikova
Vice President of the Office of Mold and
Remediation at NYCHA

Heather Beck
Deputy Chief Real Estate Officer of Real Estate
Department at NYCHA

A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Reverend Getulio Cruz, Jr.
Metro IAF

Reverend Francis Skelly
Metro IAF

Yolanda Moore
NYCHA Resident

Stephanie Pitts

Christopher Leon Johnson

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good morning. Welcome today's New York City Council hearing for the Committee on Public Housing. Please silence all cell phones and electronic devices and do not approach the dais. If you wish to participate in today's hearing, you need to fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant at Arms. Chair, we're ready to begin.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [gavel] I'm calling this meeting to order this morning. Good morning, everyone, and welcome to this hearing of the Committee of Public Housing for the City Council. I'm Council Member Chris Banks, Chair of this committee. I'm pleased to be joined by my colleagues who come a little later. But today, we are holding an oversight hearing on the updates related to NYCHA's remediation of mold in its developments. It should not surprise anyone when I state that. Give us a minute. We have technical difficulty.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Mic test. Sound check for Zoom. Sound check for Zoom, hearing room two. Sound check for Zoom.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Copy. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you very much. We're going to resume.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Good morning again.

This meeting is called to order. [gavel] Good morning everyone and welcome to this hearing on Committee of Public Housing of this New York City Council. I'm Council Member Chris Banks, Chair of this committee, and I'm pleased to be joined by my colleagues who will be joining me a little later. Today, we are holding an oversight hearing on updates related to NYCHA's remediation of mold in its developments. It should not surprise anyone when I state that mold is a serious issue. It does not only damage the structures of apartments by eating away at the building materials, but it also causes and exacerbates respiratory conditions for those who encounter the mold. The persistent presence of mold and leak issues in NYCHA apartments led to a lawsuit by tenants against NYCHA known as the Baez case. The court-ordered Consent Decree that came out of the Baez along with federal HUD agreement issued in 2019 spoke to the severity of the situation that NYCHA allowed to fester. In those agreements, NYCHA is held to a set of mandates and matrix to remediate the mold in its developments and track its performance in meeting those goals. However, despite the fact that

these agreements legally-- are legal mandates, NYCHA has continually failed to meet its obligations. I do acknowledge that NYCHA has made some progress. For instance, the latest monitor's report shows that NYCHA removed mold within five business days of a resident complaint at a 24 percent rate in the first two quarters of 2025, compared to a seven percent rate over the same time period last year. However, the HUD agreement's obligations were for NYCHA to have a minimum of 95 percent compliance rate by 2021. However, in the year since the HUD agreement was finalized, NYCHA's compliance rate for this obligation ranged from four percent to 10 percent and it remains to be seen what the final yearly compliance rate will be this year. Crucially, this drastically low compliance rate is seen across NYCHA's mold obligations and NYCHA's tenants are suffering the consequences. Residents continue facing issues with long wait times on mold and leak repairs, ad hoc band aid fixes that don't treat the root cause, and inconsistent communication from NYCHA. This cannot be allowed to continue. Residents who live with reoccurring mold and leaks in their apartments are constantly under duress. It is

not hard to imagine how coming home to mold and leaks would cause stress, or let alone the breathing problems, the health complications that one would experience. We need to make sure that we are doing our best to remediate these mold and leak conditions in a timely and comprehensive manner so that our residents can live with health and dignity. I look forward to hearing from the administration about their efforts to improve their compliance with their mold and leak obligations. I'm also eager to hear from the Federal Monitor and the mold ombudsman and their teams about the issue and possible solutions presently and moving forward. Finally, I would like to hear from the expert advocates, the residents gathered here today about their experiences with mold and leaks in NYCHA and what needs to be done so that living at NYCHA does not have to be a risk for one's mental or physical wellbeing. I want to also thank my amazing staff, Michael Lambert [sp?], Kyle Graham [sp?], along with the Public Housing Committee staff, Jose, Charles, Carla, Dan, Reiss [sp?], James, and Sierra [sp?] for all the work they put into this hearing. Now we will move as we've done traditionally for pre-panel, and we will now have

Wanda Salas come on up. We'll have Maria Roman, and Tabitha Ward. You may approach the dais. Thank you. And Tabitha? Thank you. You have three minutes for your testimony. We thank you for coming out this morning and being a part of this hearing. We'll start with Maria Roman. You may want to press the button and make sure the light is red, and then you may begin your testimony.

MARIA ROMAN: My name is Maria Roman. I'm a member of Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, a leader in Manhattan Together Metro IAF, and I've been a resident of Baruch Houses since 1975. In July of 2019 a major leak developed in my kitchen wall, and I called NYCHA many times, but the problem wasn't solved. Through Manhattan Together I learned about the OCC which was created through our lawsuit to help get real mold and leak repairs. I contacted them in March of 2020, and through persistent follow-up, they helped me to get the wall fixed in July of 2020, and this July a smaller leak returned. I reported it to NYCHA, but things didn't start moving until after I called the OCC. NYCHA scheduled plastering and painting after the work was done for July of 2026, but thanks to the OCC's help, the painting, the work

1 was completed on September 23rd of this year. We
2 also know that many NYCHA employees, especially
3 Executive Vice President Daniel Green are working
4 very hard to improve NYCHA's response.
5 Unfortunately, too many tenants still suffer
6 unnecessarily. The OCC has made a real difference
7 for tenants, but they can't do everything. They need
8 more resources and more authority to hold NYCHA
9 accountable. For example, in my case, NYCHA staff
10 often fails to show up when scheduled. There's still
11 a hole in the staircase in my building from earlier
12 repair work. I have a recurring mold problem around
13 the tub. A NYCHA employee told me that's because the
14 roof fan on my line isn't working. That was months
15 ago. It hasn't been fixed. No matter how hard I
16 scrub, that mold keeps coming back, and until they
17 fix the fan, it will keep coming back. The OCC has
18 proven that tenants don't have to accept these
19 terrible conditions, but to keep making progress,
20 they need more resources, more authority to hold
21 NYCHA accountable. Thank you.

22
23 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. Wanda
24 Salas, you may go. You want to press-- thank you.

WANDA SALAS: Chairman Banks and members of the Committee on Public Housing, good morning. My name is Wanda Salas. I am a resident of Amsterdam Houses and a leader of Manhattan Together. I'm here to share how the OCC and Manhattan Together helped me make my home for my first child safe. After the NYCHA annual inspection in 2020, I was told that our floors were to be replaced, and I simply waited and waited like a good tenant. Twice our apartment was tested for lead, yet I was never informed it required remediation. When my daughter was born in 2023, I had no idea how dangerous our home was. Later, a contractor who came to look at our ceiling because I reported a crack, pointed to the floor at the possible asbestos there. NYCHA staff had come to do some fixing, never told me that was an issue. Yet, when the floor tester came, he simply said, "You will get relocated." I was alarmed and I started packing. Yet, when nothing happened, I visited the office only to be told that another test had to be scheduled. What? My daughter was nearing crawling age. I repeatedly contacted property management with no result. I was freaking out. I was stressed, desperate, with nothing. It's not good for me. I

1 remember so clearly the stress. Then by grace, I met
2 a volunteer from Manhattan Together who guided me
3 through the process and helped me get NYCHA to
4 finally do the work. I'm so grateful for everybody
5 that said yes and helped me out. Unfortunately, after
6 the asbestos and lead remediation-- I was very happy.
7 NYCHA left a gap under the bathroom window and the
8 shower panel and mold began to grow. Six months
9 later the carpenter removed the bathtub panels and
10 left the walls bare, covered with plastic. The mold
11 became uncontrollable. I had filters. I was freaking
12 out. I had to keep the door closed. I was so nervous
13 for my daughter, especially my daughter. Luckily, I
14 learned about the OCC through Manhattan Together, and
15 I took my baby across town at night to attend the
16 meeting, because I really needed the help that the
17 NYCHA staff was not giving to me. The OCC was
18 wonderful.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: You may continue.

21 WANDA SALAS: I followed-- they followed
22 up with calls and texts and emails, unlike NYCHA, and
23 they finished the job, and they even contacted me to
24 tell me like-- to make sure that the job was done
25 after the job was done with pictures. They wanted

1 everything, and I felt so grateful that my daughter
2 could bathe in the bathroom and I didn't have to keep
3 the door closed. And I was-- I'm just so happy. So,
4 thank you, Manhattan Together. Thank you, OCC. My
5 daughter is safe at home, and now I have two little
6 girls, and they use every space in my apartment.
7 Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. Tabitha?

9 TABITHA WARD: Good morning, my name is
10 Tabitha Ward, and today-- even though I do not live
11 in NYCHA housing, I do live in low-income housing,
12 and I want to just discuss a solution for the mold
13 and leaks and other repairs that needs to be done in
14 not only NYCHA housing, but in other low-income
15 housing where they're receiving federal, state, or
16 city funding. I record-- today, you will hear
17 different types of solutions and progress reports
18 from the committees and the different panels that
19 will come before you and speak today. But I also ask
20 that the congress, that the-- sorry-- that the
21 Committee considers also an alternative while they
22 are discussing their solutions and the things-- their
23 progress and what they are doing. I'm asking that
24 you consider to allow housing voucher recipients to
25

1 directly receive housing vouchers, their full award
2 amount, deposited onto their benefit cards or
3 deposited into their checking accounts. By allowing
4 the housing voucher recipients to receive the full
5 award amount regardless as to the rent, it will give
6 them an opportunity to have a say in where they live,
7 how they live, and it'll also allow them to have a
8 vested interest in their communities and their
9 environments. Also, it will not matter if landlords-
10 - to include low-income housing-- it will not matter
11 if they accept CityPHEPS, Section 8, Section 9, or
12 anything else, because it will be housing vouchers
13 recipient's responsibility for applying for an
14 submitting the paperwork for housing vouchers, and it
15 will be included as their income, proof of income.
16 This will eliminate by allowing the housing voucher
17 recipient to directly receive the full award amount
18 onto their benefit card or into their-- directly
19 deposited into their account. It will eliminate
20 slumlords, unscrupulous landlord practices, computer
21 glitches, and the failure of landlords to make
22 repairs to include mold, mildew, leaks, and as it
23 stands, they will-- right now, the housing vouchers,
24 because they're directly receiving the housing
25

1 vouchers, they're going to receive that regardless if
2 they make these repairs, regardless to if they do
3 anything about, you know, mold, mildew and leaks. It
4 doesn't matter, they will receive it anyway. It will
5 not cost the city, state, or the federal government
6 any undue burdens or additional financial costs for
7 allowing them to directly receive it, because it'll
8 just require just a couple of changes to the computer
9 systems which will direct that funding onto their
10 benefit cards or into their accounts, and they can
11 pay their rent and pull the money from it. You can
12 include language that states that the landlords have
13 a certain amount of time to respond to mold, mildew,
14 and leaks, and if they don't do this in a certain
15 amount of time, the housing voucher recipient can
16 hire outside people to come in and make these
17 repairs, and they can deduct it from the rent by
18 paying the rent, the balance, and giving the landlord
19 the receipt, the original receipt for whatever
20 repairs that were made.

21
22 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you for your
23 testimony. I just have a couple of questions before
24 the pre-panel leaves. And I guess I'll direct this
25 one-- well, I guess I'll direct this to Ms. Roman and

Ms. Salas. What has been the most challenging part of getting your mold and leak issues addressed by NYCHA?

WANDA SALAS: In my experience, when I reported mold in NYCHA, the staff comes in. They take a picture. Then they come back, and then I have to wait for a schedule, and then I call, and I'm like, okay, and then the person from my bathroom recently they came and after they agreed that there's mold, nothing happened, but OCC was like on it. And by the time NYCHA finally responded, OCC had taken care of it. So, it's the delay, the taking the extra steps and not communicating. So, I cannot plan.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And if you had the opportunity, which you do now, to make a recommendation to NYCHA to improve it's handling of mold and leak complaints, what would it be?

WANDA SALAS: Well, I noticed in the app-- I noticed in the app that when I make a complaint I take pictures, and I do that. So, when I take a picture, if it's not clear, then send a staff member, but if it's clear, then give me a call, confirm, and then make my appointment and communicate. I-- it just it seems like it takes so long, so just, you know,

slow down the steps and communicate with the tenant.

Hey, we're coming and we're going to help you. I just want to be helped.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right. Ms. Roman?

MARIA ROMAN: I'd like accountability.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Press the--

MARIA ROMAN: Sorry. Thank you. Because we do put in the complaint through the app.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

MARIA ROMAN: And someone will come in. I put one in last Friday because of the recurring mold around the tub, and I got a call this morning, "Are you home now?" No, I'm not home right now. I will be home after one. Yet, as this happened so many times in the past, hopefully not today, but no one will come at one. Maybe they'll come at three or four or five. Then they'll come the next day, and they'll look at it, and 10 days will come by. People will come, look, say-- but nothing will get done. Nothing will get done until I call the OCC, and once I do, then everybody starts. Then we have three or four people knocking in--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] So, what would be your recommendation to NYCHA?

MARIA ROMAN: Accountability.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

MARIA ROMAN: I think they need to follow up, know what everyone is doing. Just more accountability, I think.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: More accountability, okay, and communication. Yes?

WANDA SALAS: I have a request that the OCC also takes over the heat radiation, because I reported that our radiator is damaged, and the person came in to check its real, and then nothing. I-- nothing.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Alright, well, thank you for compassionate and passionate testimony, and thank you. Alright, appreciate it. Now, we will-- next, we welcome the testimony from our Federal Monitor and ombudsman. Okay. Alright, good morning.

NEIL BAROFSKY: Morning.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Good morning. Alright you may begin, Mr. Monitor.

NEIL BAROFKSY: Thank you, Chairman Banks, and thank you for having us here today. My name is Neil Barofsky. I'm one of the Co-monitors

1 with my partner Matt Cipolla who could not be here
2 today and sends his apologies. We were appointed to
3 be the Federal Monitor under the HUD agreement in
4 February of 2024 about 20 months ago. Of course,
5 we're not the original monitor, we're the successor.
6 Guide Post had that role for about five years
7 previous going back to February of 2019 when the
8 monitorship was first-- the HUD agreement was first
9 executed. When we got to NYCHA, of course, the first
10 thing we did was to do a comprehensive overview of
11 the different requirements under the HUD agreement,
12 and first and foremost was mold. We knew that the--
13 as we just heard from the first resident panel, is
14 just top of mind for residents. The scourge of mold,
15 its impact, as well as the very, very long delays
16 that residents experience in getting their mold
17 remediated. And you know, we took a look at the
18 statistics and it was dire. As you mentioned in your
19 introductory comments, Chairman Banks, you know,
20 eight percent response rate as far as timely response
21 to mold when it's supposed to be 95 percent is about
22 as dire as it could be, and we saw struggles across
23 the board. As we look, though, one of the things
24 that was somewhat-- a little bit encouraging was the
25

fact in the previous five years, it's not as if nothing was being done. The first monitor, my co-pal [sic] at NYCHA had been putting in work and laying a foundation for necessary reform, but it wasn't yet being translated in the data, and then as we saw on the resident experience. And so we focused on how could we bring some of these-- this effort to the surface and start seeing it, results. And as, again, as Chairman Banks as you mentioned in your introductory comments, we are starting to see some of that success. An increase from eight percent to 28 percent which is the most recent statistics of how often NYCHA responds timely to mold under the terms of the HUD agreement is an extraordinary increase in a relatively short period of time. Is it enough? Of course not. It's still unacceptably low, and one of the things you heard from the residents, for the 72 percent who are not getting that timely response, it is cold comfort to hear the 28 percent, you know, are-- there is that compliance. But it is a sign of progress. And you don't turn a supertanker around instantly, and the key thing is to build on that success, take a look at what has led to this, because the fact is for the first time we really do see a

path towards compliance that had not existed before.

And our focus-- and I think one of the things that

has helped bring this progress and what we need to

maintain our focus on is right in line with what the

residents were talking about, efficiency and

accountability. Because the reality is is that the

portfolio of NYCHA structures is well past its

expiration date, and the plumbing of NYCHA, those

pipes, they're not getting younger, and they're going

to continue to fail at increasing rates until they're

replaced. But that is a problem that is not a

billion-dollar problem. It is a tens of billion

dollar problem, and that money doesn't currently

exist. So, a lot of what we do, and I think a lot of

what my co-panelists do, is that bridge between today

and the eventual need to replace those pipings, to

find that money and do the necessary infrastructure

and structural improvements. And so a couple of

areas that we detailed in our testimony and in our

most recent report of how do you address that in-

between, that repair and maintenance that is so

necessary is again focusing on the idea of efficiency

and accountability. So, for example, things like

dashboards so that NYCHA could have a better sense of

how it's deploying its assets, and then accountability to make sure that the people are doing the necessary work so they get it right the first time and don't have to keep coming back. The idea of pilots and certain projects to attack this extraordinarily long backlog, as the resident mentioned, getting a date mid to late 2026. And so things like the Restore and Renew program which I know all of the people on this panel really push NYCHA, and NYCHA to its credit has accepted, which is just being launched in the Sotomayor Houses. The idea of having a squad team of dozens of temporary skilled trades to deal with some of the worst performing assets to get those out from under the backlog to free NYCHA resources to do all the other work it needs to get done. The rolling out of the leak standard procedure, this is a really important development, and it's something that's been a long time coming, and we've all pushed very hard, but this will mean that now maintenance workers and skilled trade workers, they're going to have the necessary training and tools to do the job and to do it well. It's also going to give us additional data so we can measure and make sure there's a level of

1 accountability, including measuring performance in
2 one of the HUD agreement requirements that hasn't
3 been measured in the first seven years, which is
4 NYCHA's obligation to remove standing water. And
5 overlying all of this-- and again, what you heard so
6 much on that resident panel, resident communication.
7 There is nothing worse from an efficiency perspective
8 as well as an emotional perspective than when an
9 appointment is made and it's not kept, either because
10 NYCHA worker doesn't show up, or because the resident
11 is not home because they didn't get adequate
12 communication to know to be there to get repair done.
13 And we detail in our testimony as well as in our most
14 recent report, the numerous efforts that we're doing
15 and are starting to have success in those areas.
16 Chairman Banks, there has been some level of success,
17 but it is fragile. Only with continued focus,
18 attention from this committee, from those here at
19 this panel doing oversight, and NYCHA itself is there
20 going to be a path forward? It has to be maintained,
21 and above all, the budget has to be protected. All
22 of this news out of Washington about potentially
23 draconian budget cuts to public housing, it's hard ot
24 overstate just how devastating that will be, not just
25

for NYCHA, but for its residents who always seem to be the political football, the ones who suffer the most. And so, you know, but with that sustained effort and with sustained budget, we do believe that we can get NYCHA and keep NYCHA on the right path forward. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you [inaudible] opening statement. We'll now move to the ombudsman.

CESAR DE CASTRO: This works. The OCC and ombudsperson model has worked and continues to work. What the Baez plaintiffs, NYCHA, and Special Master McGovern proposed, U.S. District Judge William H. Pauly, then Loretta Presca [sp?] and Special Master James Francis have implemented works. For the first time ever, as far as we know, a comprehensive independent resident-centered resource to have mold and leak conditions backed by a Federal Consent Decree is available to all NYCHA residents. With NYCHA's complete buy-in, this collaboration and collaborative approach with mechanisms to ensure NYCHA's accountability has made a difference in the lives of thousands. We're helping individuals and systemically making a difference. Change is incremental. In a world of instant gratification, it

takes hard work, individuals, and institutions like this one, the City Council, to identify and support positive strategies that make a difference in the lives of thousands of NYCHA residents. We at the OCC are not just a call center. We cultivate trust by listening, empathetic listening, processing information, tapping into NYCHA's databases, and providing support to residents tailored to their individual needs. We deliver data-driven expertise to not only help residents, but to help NYCHA make data-informed decision-making systemically. The OCC is a call center unlike many. We do not analyze and make decisions on the fly. When we hear from a resident, we don't just make a quick decision. We listen, we think about it, we review the data, and then call the resident back appropriately informed and ready to help. As a result of the Baez consent decree reforms, NYCHA has, with respect to the overwhelming majority of cases being handled by the OCC, dedicated itself to serving the residents that have sought our help. There's not been a single instance of which I am aware that NYCHA has not appropriately responded to our inquiries, requests and orders. Afterall, it is required to do so by the

very terms of the consent decree, and for the most part, my orders are unappealable. It's been clear since 2019 when we became operational that NYCHA has not just responded with the bare minimum of effort, it's dedicated substantial resources to the matters brought to the OCC and to myself. It created OMAR [sic] and the MRU whose staff have been responsive and dedicated to resolving our cases as they arise. Yes, the Ombudsperson Call Center and this model is working, but we're unknown to the majority of NYCHA residents. My esteemed colleagues at Jenner and Block [sic] diligently performing their oversight functions are pretty well-known, but our office in many respects, the boots on the ground as it relates to mold and leaks, remains foreign to NYCHA residents. Even this body, the City Council, recognized that in 2020 when it passed the Provision of Information to tenants of NYCHA regarding the mold ombudsperson. That would have required the Mayor to designate an office or an agency to distribute information regarding our role. My understanding is that it was returned unsigned by Mayor de Blasio in 2021. So, outreach has been left to the Baez plaintiffs, NYCHA, and us. While conditions remain

difficult for NYCHA residents in a variety of aspects, many if not all of which the monitor is tasked with overseeing, conditions remain difficult for residents facing leaks and mold. Need for capital repairs remains dire. Many buildings need full rehab and massive capital repairs such as the replacement of piping, replacement of roofs, repairs of façade damage, all which lead to leaks and mold. That we cannot order. The ombudsperson has no authority to order those capital repairs, but we work on a case by case basis to help residents and ensure that NYCHA employs its best efforts to address tenants leaks and mold while helping NYCHA uncover opportunities for systemic reform in pursuit of transformational, organizational, and cultural change. We are, like Mr. Barofsky said, a bridge. Thank you, Chairman Banks. Thank you to the Public Housing Committee. Thank you for the invite. This is the first time we have been asked to appear before you. Thank you to the rest of the Council, others in attendance here or via live feed and NYCHA residents and tenant advocate groups in attendance as well. My name is Cesar de Castro. In 2019 I was appointed at the recommendation of the parties to the Baez

litigation to serve as the ombudsperson. As part of my appointment, in partnership with the global advisory firm, Stout, that also serves as the independent data analysis, we created the Ombudsperson Call Center, or the OCC. Here with me today is Shannon McMannus [sp?] who's sitting behind me, an Associate Counsel in my office, Neil Steinkamp from Stout and the Independent Data Analyst, and Kiersten Acevedo, also from Stout and responsible for many things, not the least of which is running the OCC on a daily basis. I should also say that the Independent Mold Analyst Micro Ecologies not here today is a critical part of the team of experts assisting NYCHA through the revised consent decrees. Now, in preparing for this, I understand that a little background may be helpful for the Council. So, by way of background and for this sort of unaware of how Baez fits in this framework-- among other requirements NYCHA, you know, is required to resolve simple cases of mold or leaks within seven days and complex cases within 15 days. My powers come from part VI of the Consent Decree at paragraphs 25 to 27. These paragraphs create the ombudsperson. In turn, we created the OCC to handle resident complaints and the

stream of calls to the OCC. We've received over 100,000 calls. The basics for us is to first determine whether NYCHA is compliance with the seven or 15-day requirement depending on the circumstances. If so, we'll monitor that case. If not, which is almost all of our calls, we see if NYCHA's engaged in its best efforts to resolve the issues appropriately. As part of that review, I can require NYCHA to complete the repair within specified number of days. I can require NYCHA to approve and assign the highest priority to the transfer of a tenant to another apartment. I can't order a transfer, but I can ask NYCHA to prioritize that transfer. I can order an independent contractor, hired through our Special Master, to complete the repairs. And I can request our independent mold analyst to inspect and prepare a plan for remediation of that tenant's apartment. If my orders are ignored or I otherwise find that NYCHA has acted in some sort of bad faith or failed to exercise its best efforts, I can order other what the consent decree determines appropriate relief which includes a fine to NYCHA if I find it has systemically failed to comply. We do not have a team of workers and contractors. Our job is to

ensure that NYCHA fulfills its obligations. We seek to develop trust with the residents. We emphasize our independence. We take an empathetic approach. We listen. We digest. We pull information from NYCHA's systems. All of our calls are recorded for review. Residents can email us, text us, and we can conduct virtual inspections. Our system is transparent to NYCHA. They have full access to our system. We then call the resident back within hours or a day. We do all of this with give or take staff of 15 or 16. We have two to three lawyers, me included, four paralegals, seven call centers employees, and Ms. Acevedo who oversees the operations, technology, and reporting of the OCC and has regular dialogue and collaboration with NYCHA, plaintiffs and other stakeholders. Since our launch at the end of 2019 we have assisted more than 30,000 NYCHA residents. As of July 31st we've processed over 20,000 complaints across 16,000 apartments, serving more than 31,000 households. We've averaged about 300 resident reported complaints per month. The annual volume of complaints has steadily declined from-- well, it steadily declined from 2019 to 2023. There was an uptick in 2024, and we believe that 2025 will be

similar to the 2024 numbers. We've seen the average amount of time to resolve mold and leak complaint be reduced from 1090 days on average to 70 days. That's still not in compliance with the Baez and HUD monitor benchmarks, but quite an improvement by NYCHA. Our biggest challenge is not getting NYCHA to respond to our directives. Our biggest challenge is not getting residents to trust us. Our biggest challenge is not getting residents to allow access to their apartments when NYCHA is scheduled to do work. One of our biggest challenges is helping residents deal with scheduling delays, as you heard in the prior panel, and helping them navigate mold and leak issues when their building is in desperate need for undergoing-- desperate need or actually undergoing capital repairs. But our biggest-- our biggest challenge by far is awareness. Making sure that we are serving all of the residents that we can. The reality is we are not. People do not know about us, or they forget about us. So, people do not call. In 2022, we conducted a survey, 96 percent of those residents surveyed were not aware of the OCC. Every time I meet with a resident association that point is underscored. I focused a great deal of effort this

past year on outreach. I've met with resident associations, public officials, including members of this body. I've appeared in the media. We've been trying to create multiple pipeline channels to help as many residents as we can. When we increase outreach, our cases grow. We intend to continue outreach channels including mailers to residents which we found is very effective, and NYCHA has agreed to do that. we need this Council. I've presented to some members of the Council as I've mentioned individually, and I'm happy to meet with any member of the Council or your staff. But what we see as NYCHA's biggest problems are first, as we've discussed, NYCHA has chronic infrastructure issues. Second, many or most of its buildings are in need of substantial capital improvements, and NYCHA will need to relocate those residents if the money comes through for that to actually happen. Third, its aging backlog of mold and leak work orders. It has to attack them, and it has, and I'm sure they will be addressing how they are attacking that. Fourth, dealing with and solving scheduling delays, that is a big issue. Fifth, handling leaks. The majority of Baez is leak related, but it has learned that as

NYCHA as learned from its approach to mold-- what did they do for mold-- which they've gotten their numbers down. Develop and launch a standard procedure. Train everyone appropriately, then launch and implement that procedure. We saw results with the mold standard procedure, results I'm sure NYCHA will talk to you about in the next panel. Hopefully, the same is going to happen with the leak standard procedure. And sixth, root cause investigations. NYCHA must get to the root causes of tenant mold. That will certainly lead to more cases, more calls to the OCC undoubtedly, but it will also lead to the identification of additional capital needs, and they need to get better at that. So, I'm back where I started. The ombudsperson and the OCC, this process works. Working collaboratively with NYCHA and holding them accountable has worked. It's allowed us to serve thousands of New Yorkers, but we know there are so many more that could use our help if they only knew about us. We're optimistic from the progress that's been made that with continued oversight, collaboration with NYCHA and the accountability that's baked into the Baez revised consent decree

that sustained and lasting change will be made case by case. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you for your opening statement. I'm actually going to begin by first acknowledging we've been joined by Council Member Bottcher. And now I'll go into my line of questions, and I'll be going back and forth between the ombudsman and the Federal Monitor. The HUD agreement required a 95 percent compliance with mold remediation timeframes by January 31st of 2021. What is NYCHA's current compliance percentage for this benchmark?

NEIL BAROFSKY: It's a-- it's what we called a blended rate, because there's different components. So, NYCHA has different times for which to respond to different things. So, clean-up, for example, has to be within five days. Simple repairs, stuff that can be done by a maintenance worker has to be done within seven days, and complex repairs usually something a skilled trades worker-- skilled tradesman, that takes-- that's 15 days. So, it's-- there are three different components, and then that all goes into a blended rate which shows that number. And yes, as we discussed earlier, it was just an area

of just stagnation. I mean, the numbers dropped during year two of the monitorship and stayed in the single digits up until last year, but what-- but this-- a lot of what the progress that we're seeing comes from that initial response time. So, up until last year, it would take NYCHA on average about nine days after someone could call in a complaint, not to the OCC, but directly to NYCHA. They've been able to manage to get that down to manage to get that down to three days. And so, if you're getting someone a new apartment within three days instead of nine days, not surprisingly, everything contracts, right? You're able-- if the person is in there, they can clean it up when they go in and inspect or shortly thereafter. If it's something that can be done simple, a stuck window right, the maintenance worker can do that and get that in within that seven day window, and you can get the skilled trade scheduled. So that's part of the reason why you're seeing the improvement in numbers. And the second is, you know, as you have more resources available from some of these projects-- we talk about Restore and Renew, it's not the only one. Now you're freeing up resources as some dedicated resources attack the backlog, the 60,000+.

That frees up the regular daily maintenance workers, caretakers, those who are in the apartments every day, to more quickly address the concerns as they arise.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Well, to your knowledge, has NYCHA achieved 95 percent compliance, and what are some of the most significant barriers to compliance you've identified?

NEIL BAROFSKY: So, I think we're nearing or at peak right now at 28 percent. So, they have not come close to 95 percent. I mean, part of the barriers are-- I mean, number one, as my co-panelist just said, it's sticking the little finger in the dike. I mean, and here that sort of metaphor works, because of the water aspect of it. NYCHA needs an enormous amount of capital improvements. A pipe that is way too old and is leaking eventually needs to be replaced. An entire building line of old pipe needs to be replaced, but until NYCHA can get the money in capital resources to go in, open up that building, replace that pipe, relocate the resident because you can't live in that apartment while that's happening, they're band aids, right? They're necessarily band aids, and I don't mean that in any way, shape or form

1 as a criticism. These are necessary important band
2 aids, but that band aid is going to come off, and so
3 it just creates this resource suck of constantly
4 repairing and band aiding something that needs to be
5 completely replaced. And that's not NYCHA's fault,
6 right? It's not NYCHA's fault that it's been the
7 disinvestment in public housing, not just in NYCHA,
8 but across the country. And so that is one of the
9 big challenges. And with any type of backlog, it's
10 just-- it's really hard to get into some of those
11 older areas. But again, what I really have to
12 commend NYCHA for is it's-- it is an almost-- it is a
13 seemingly impossible task, but is one that they are
14 taking on, and they're putting the resources, they're
15 putting the commitment. They're working with us.
16 They're working with the ombudsperson, and that's why
17 you're seeing this type of success. And there really
18 is-- I understand all of the resident frustration and
19 share it, but there is a can do attitude at NYCHA
20 that my understanding has not always been there, and
21 the current management-- and I know Dan Greene is
22 going to be speaking to you next, and it is a can do
23 attitude. And it's not just, by the way, in mold.
24 It's really across the board. There's been a notion
25

1 at NYCHA that certain aspects of the HUD agreement
2 are unattainable, cannot be met, and then there's
3 people who come in and say yes, we can. And again,
4 I'm going off a little bit, but one of the things I
5 would point to is response rate to rats, right?

6 There is a response rate, a two-day response rate to
7 rats that was in the HUD agreement, and what-- the
8 general sense at NYCHA for years was that was an
9 unattainable standard. In the last year and a half
10 or so since we've been there, they've shattered it.

11 They beat it consistently. They find a way. And so,
12 again, I hear the resident frustration. I share the
13 residents frustration, but the folks at NYCHA,
14 they're really working hard on this and being
15 creative and open to the solutions and things like
16 Restore and Renew, this new project, is open where
17 again, they were open to it. We've discussed it.

18 We're launching it, and now we're going to see if it
19 works, and my hope is if it works, we can then work
20 with NYCHA to find additional funding to expand it,
21 because once you get that backlog-- once you release--
22 - get that backlog and get out from under these tens
23 of thousands of old work orders, that 95 percent is
24 going to be attainable. I truly believe that.
25

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Do you plan to require any updates to the mold and leak action plan, or are you aware of any such plan by NYCHA to update this action plan?

NEIL BAROFSKY: You know, we're continue-- I think that's a-- as far as requiring an update versus continually working with them in details--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Right.

NEIL BAROFSKY: I mean, these action plans are important, and I don't mean to take away from them, but they have a tendency sometimes to become an academic exercise. Like-- and just to, you know, build on my co-panelists, you take a look at something like leak standard protocol, I want their resources there. I want NYCHA focused on rolling that out, on training that, on coming up with the necessary components, because that is what is going to translate into meaningful impact for residents. When NYCHA-- you know, when NYCHA workers pull out their smart phone and see, okay, this is exactly what I do for this type of leak, and is able to have that-- the training to do that, and then can enter into the data so that NYCHA could see, okay, this is the trend here. This is what's going on in this

1 building. This is what's going on on this building
2 line, this plumbing line. We can see, okay, here is
3 how NYCHA is responding within 48 hours. Are they
4 meeting the standard or not? These are the types of
5 things that are going to unlock future reform. These
6 are the type of data that's going to give new paths,
7 new ideas to be creative, and to me, that is really
8 the key. And it worked with the mold standard
9 protocol. I think it's going to work with the leak
10 standard protocol. We've all put a lot of effort
11 into it. NYCHA's put a lot of effort into it. It's
12 way behind schedule. It's too late, but it is being
13 rolled out in projects like that, and then being
14 super smart about it and really learning from the
15 data, seeing what can be improved, and I will say, we
16 have really good partners in this, and that's what
17 really gives me the most hope in NYCHA with the
18 ombudsperson, you know, for the residents.

19
20 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. Can you
21 share more about the collaboration between the
22 monitorship team and NYCHA's mold remediation unit,
23 and what does data look like day-to-day in a big
24 picture? Who is driving the policy shifts and the
25

broader initiatives to improve mold remediation like the standard procedures or the IT updates?

NEIL BAROFSKY: We are-- we work hand-in-hand, and so our team is structured. We have a mold team that's on our team. It comprises of different members of the monitorship team. We have attorneys at Jenner and Block [sp?] who are day-to-day working with their NYCHA counterparts. We have Turner and Townsend who's one of our vendors and construction experts, and we try to bring the different skills of this different set together. So, for example, Turner and Townsend is working on a data project right now to try to deal with the-- not just the-- you know, with the backlog and how to-- is there a smarter way of dealing with the backlog? And we'll deal very closely with NYCHA. We actually get the data from NYCHA. We'll analyze the data. We will share it with them. We will give them recommendations going forward, and then they will, you know, hopefully execute. When you're talking about resident communication, right, which is such an important part, we have an organizational change group of the monitorship. And Turner and Townsend is part of it. We also have Quadell [sp?] which is a public housing

expert that works on our side. What do we know of best practices of other housing agencies? What can we do within the existing IT framework? You know, moving away from what hasn't worked, which we know hasn't worked as far resident communication, brainstorming new ideas, using-- something as simple as getting and using and updating email, changing the content. These are all these little tiny things that don't sound like a big deal. You know, one of the things that we help work with NYCHA to bring about, just as an example, when someone calls to get a repair, the wait time can be brutal.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Yes.

NEIL BAROFSKY: It's one of the things we talked about. How about a call back, right? I call somebody when I'm doing, you know, whatever it is, Verizon or, you know, Con-Ed. You know, they'll say, you know, push one to get a call back, and now NYCHA does that. And so those are small things, because we'd hear residents, hey, after 25 minutes, I got to go and hang up, and then have to call back some other time, and the meanwhile NYCHA doesn't even know to deal with the problem. Now, they can schedule a call back and you lose that frustration. These are like a

1 lot of the little things that we focus on day-to-day,
2 and the hope is that over time they will, you know,
3 have this cumulative impact, because again there is
4 nothing worse than a NYCHA resident waiting for that
5 appointment, you know, months and months, and either
6 nobody shows or they don't even know that appointment
7 was there because of a breakdown in communication and
8 the NYCHA worker shows up and can't get into the
9 apartment. It's a simple thing, but it's
10 devastating.

11
12 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right. No,
13 definitely.

14 NEIL BAROFSKY: But we are really--
15 again, NYCHA has been a wonderful partner, and OCC
16 has just been also a tremendous partner. And you
17 know, I hear you and whatever we can do to help,
18 because the impact of the call center is so
19 extraordinary, and I have to think that we also could
20 do more to get the word out. I know it is top of mind
21 of our team,--

22 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Right.

23 NEIL BAROFSKY: but man, we also have to
24 do better, because it's such an important resource,
25 and I frankly hadn't realized those numbers which is,

you know, two or three percent of NYCHA residents know about this important resource.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. Has NYCHA ever disputed or pushed back on any of your findings regarding mold and leak compliance?

NEIL BAROFSKY: No. I will-- well, let me say that. Yes, because it is a partnership and a dialogue.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

NEIL BAROFSKY: And we have a lot of ideas. We have a lot of good ideas and sometimes our ideas are not so good, to be honest with you. But that's what a partnership is. It's a back and forth collaboration. And we want NYCHA to push back on us. We don't want NYCHA to just reflexively say, well, thank you-- thank you, Monitors, that's a great idea, we're going to do it, and then we end up wasting resources or wasting time. And so there is pushback. I consider it to be a healthy level of pushback, of the type of pushback that we want in a partner. Sometimes there's disputes, of course, but we haven't had a single dispute that we haven't worked out. And look, and sometimes I would say the areas where there is a little bit of frustration is there's just not

enough resources to do something that we want to do.

And that's just a reality of disinvestment. But I

will say Restore and Renew, going back to that, which

is launching in Sotomayor, they found a way, right?

This was one where there wasn't enough resources and

we work with them collaboratively to find the

resources, and we got there. So, I would say,

healthy amount of pushback. I haven't had single

instance where NYCHA has refused to do something or

refused to engage, or found a different way to solve

a problem.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. What

specific recommendations have you made to NYCHA to

improve their performance to remove mold in a timely

manner?

NEIL BAROFSKY: So, a lot of the ones

that we're talking about, you know, in my testimony

and now, because again I think the key thing here is

that where NYCHA fails, it's not because of a

conscious or deliberate indifference, right?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

NEIL BAROFSKY: It's because of how do

you find a way to squeeze more juice out of the

lemon? And so a lot of our recommendations are about

1 increasing efficiency, working within existing
2 programs. So, again, something like streamlining
3 resident communication. That's a whole set of
4 recommendations that we have. You're constantly
5 working them with dashboards. We don't do as much
6 formal recommendations as perhaps the prior monitor
7 did, because-- and it sort of goes back to your
8 question about action plans. We don't want to get
9 caught-- and this is not in any way a criticism of
10 the former monitor. They did a tremendous job. But
11 we-- our approach is trying to be more collaborative.
12 So, we identify problems and then try to work
13 together to get to the solution. So that's usually
14 iterative. We really almost always prefer to build
15 on and improve an existing thing than creating a new
16 thing, just because it's more timely and more
17 efficient. And so we don't necessarily have-- okay,
18 here's these 10 recommendations that you need to do.
19 It's much more, again, to go back to an example--
20 there's a problem with resident communication. We
21 could all agree there's a problem with resident
22 communication. Let's brainstorm ways to make it
23 better. So, we might say, hey, how about this, and
24 NYCHA's response would be like, well, that's a good

idea, but we think if we use this path forward, that might be more efficient. And it's just my experience as a monitor when you can get to that level of trust that I think that we've achieved now. It's taking a little while.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

NEIL BAROFSKY: You get that type of efficient back and forth, and that's really what we're trying to execute now.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Well, I'm glad you put an emphasis on communication. As you heard through the pre-panel, that's number one, and that can go a long way to helping to ease the stress that a lot of NYCHA residents have to deal with when they have to deal with these issues.

NEIL BAROFSKY: It's heartbreaking. I mean, it's just-- listening to the first panel, it's just-- if your heart doesn't break when you hear--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Most definitely.

NEIL BAROFSKY: the idea of two babies at home, it's just-- you know, it's just heartbreaking. And we all-- that's why we're all here.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: That's why you're here.

NEIL BAROFSKY: Just to make, sure that doesn't happen.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: To the ombudsman, how many total mold and leak complaints has the OCC received since November 2019? And what percent of these complaints involve reoccurring mold in the same unit, and how many of these units have you encountered with mold complaints three or more times per year?

CESAR DE CASTRO: So, in terms of-- in terms of numbers, you know, we've handled 100,000 calls. That's not 100 complaints.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: We've handled, you know, roughly 30,000 cases if you-- I mean, that's sort of the number, 31,000 cases. But in terms of the recurrence, let me address your last question first which is why do people-- I mean, we can give you those stats. We report them to the court. We're required to report them to the court. We-- everything we do is transparent in public. We issue reports to the court. It's on the docket. It's on

our website. People can see the numbers. You can see the numbers. You can pull them all. people having recurrence, that's going to happen. That's going to happen with the need for capital repairs. It's just going to happen.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: And we have gotten calls back certainly, but people call us back because they trust us. They call us back. We call them back. It's an open dialogue. It works-- you know, we think it works incredibly well. In terms of how many, what that number is, either my co-panelist can-- if they have the numbers. You know, we have so many numbers.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: You know.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. What are the most common root causes that you've identified for the reoccurring mold, and have you identified specific developments with chronic mold problems?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Oh, absolutely. I mean, first of all, you know, that's why we say most of Baez is leaks.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: Leaks, leaks, leaks, leaks. So, the leak standard procedure coming out and being rolled out and people being trained on, it's going to make a huge difference, a huge difference.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And the most chronic?

CESAR DE CASTRO: The most chronic places?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Places.

CESAR DE CASTRO: Yes. Let me give you an example of how we do that. one, we know where everyone is calling from. So, if you called me today, we would pull up your apartment. We would be calling you back later. We'd pull everything we knew about your apartment so that we could help you. We'll know what development you're in, but we have our statistics from our calls, but we also have access to NYCHA's sort of databases and statistics.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: We also have an incredibly collaborative approach with NYCHA. It's the only way we can do this work, and so I don't remember exactly when it was, but it was around the pandemic and after. We were developing certain-- we

were seeing trends in certain developments. And we with NYCHA got together and I had meetings with each development's maintenance staff and their property management team to say, you have to understand what we are, who we are, what we're doing here in our oversight efforts, and also we are the boots on the ground with respect to calls to us. We saw an increase in responsive time in those developments. So, we do track it, and we know where the most mold cases are.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: The most chronic, okay. The independent mold analysis semi-annual report from early this month noted that your team is focusing on identifying and tracing the source of plumbing leaks from above. Can you share more about that and how specifically you're working with NYCHA to address that issue?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Well, so, that goes to my point about root cause.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: You have to trace. You have to find the root cause of whatever mold or leak is happening. Now, the Independent Mold Analyst job is-- they're out in the field. They're doing the

work. They're in the apartments. They are training NYCHA workers. Sometimes they're doing also oversight and quality assurance to make sure people know to trace that leak, to trace a building line and identify maybe if there's something larger going on in a particular development. And so we do that, because we are talking to residents in a very simple way. If you think about it, if someone were to call us today and say there is a leak from above, obviously we know what the apartment above would be and we try to be proactive and engage, at least have NYCHA engage with that resident above. Certainly, there's sometimes issues, communication issues which I know you're going to probably ask questions about communication. But-- which is a huge focus. It is about communicating with the resident's neighbors, right? We as-- if I'm a NYCHA resident, I should not have to go and trace the line and knock on all the doors of all of my neighbors to say, hey, what are you doing? Why is water flowing down here? That is not appropriate and residents shouldn't have to do that. And so that's part of how, you know, every single case-- and we act on a case by case basis--

involves that. We end up trying to see what's going on in the apartments around it.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Before I ask my next question, we've been joined via Zoom by Council Member Chi Ossé. When it comes--

CESAR DE CASTRO: [interposing] I'm sorry. I'm sorry. If Ms. Acevedo can jump in.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Yes, you may.

CESAR DE CASTRO: She had something she wanted to add.

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: I was just going to add to that. We also do-- we cluster. So that's where we use our data and technology to identify different apartment lines all throughout NYCHA where we see a higher rate of works being created and high rates of work orders being created with no work being done. So, we have the ability to use data to find situations where a resident might have had their work order inappropriately closed. And we do outbound outreach to those residents and just check in, and what we have found is that there are situations where the resident might have had their work order closed because they can't have the work done in their apartment, right? They have the symptom of a leak,

1 meaning there's water coming down, but NYCHA can't
2 fix a leak in their apartment. It's coming from
3 floors above. So, their work order gets closed, but
4 then they're left with water damage which can lead to
5 mold and a series of other issues, and sometimes
6 there's a hole in their wall because NYCHA was trying
7 to trace it. And so that's an area where we've been
8 very effective in helping residents because we're
9 able to open up a case and ensure NYCHA's able to
10 create additional work orders, and we're able to
11 ensure that they work on the communication to improve
12 on.
13

14 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] And let
15 me-- since we're talking about orders. How many
16 orders have you issued against NYCHA's since the
17 November 2019, and how many of these orders has NYCHA
18 fully complied with, and has NYCHA ever refused to
19 comply with an order?

20 CESAR DE CASTRO: No refusals. So, the
21 way we-- the way our ordering system works is-- the
22 consent decree says I can order the following things,
23 and as the ombudsperson I can issue these orders.
24 Now, we create the OCC out of the powers of the
25 ombudsperson. So, the way that we approach it is

1 that-- and we discussed this with NYCHA is that in
2 our system-- which as I said is completely
3 transparent to NYCHA. So, if I am looking at a
4 particular case today, NYCHA can see that we're
5 looking at that particular case. But we have
6 communication within those, for lack of a better
7 term, tickets or orders, work orders.
8

9 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

10 CESAR DE CASTRO: And so in their
11 communications to NYCHA, NYCHA provide me with an
12 update on this ticket in two days, five days or
13 today, or what happened today. Now, we consider
14 those orders. They have to be complied with. NYCHA
15 has been totally fine with us not having to issue a
16 formal order. Super cost-effective in the sense
17 that, you know, as a lawyer acting as an oversight, I
18 could approach this like a judge and say okay-- and I
19 did this early on-- issued sort of decisions. Here
20 are cases that we want you to do, these 200 case,
21 500, 100. We did that. It's cumbersome. It doesn't
22 make much sense, and it doesn't help the resident.
23 It does help the resident, but it's quicker to do it
24 within. So, I can't give you a number, because it's
25 so many, because we are in cases daily, and any time

a call center employee says in a ticket, "NYCHA give me an update," or I say in a ticket or my employees say in a ticket, "We want X," that's an order, and NYCHA's complied. I mean, I can't think of a time when they have not.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And just for argument's sake, what recourse do you have if NYCHA fails to comply with a compliance?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Well, I think--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] I mean, fails to comply with an order.

CESAR DE CASTRO: If they thumb their nose at me and say we're not doing it, I have a mechanism in the consent decree where I can find that they're acting in bad faith which is what I think your question is. If they're in bad faith, well, I can fine NYCHA or any other-- what the consent decree determines appropriate remedy. It doesn't define appropriate remedy, so it's whatever I choose. Now, that is an exception to the general-- an appealability of my orders.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

CESAR DE CASTRO: That they can go to the court. So, let's say tomorrow I were to find that

they are ignoring so and so's apartment and I issue a fine, they could then appeal to the Special Master and to the district court judge and say that was unfair or whatever their point. We've never had to go there. We've never even been close.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. and what is the average time NYCHA takes to comply with your order, and what percentage of the time does NYCHA meet deadlines set in your orders?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Average time, I don't think we have an actual metric on that, unless you tell me--

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: So, we handle it from an incremental approach. So, at the time in which we complete intake with the resident, NYCHA has one business day to respond and react to that, and we have a report that tracks their compliance with that, and they've always been in compliance with it.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: What--

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: [interposing] From there it goes on to they have seven days to ensure that we get plan in place, a certain number of days to ensure that any inspections are in place, and then scheduling and so on.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. And--

CESAR DE CASTRO: [interposing] There have also have been certainly times where we have issued a directive or an order, especially early on when we said we want this apartment finished in two weeks, and they have come back and said-- I mean, and again, it's collaborative. We're going to do it. We don't think two weeks is-- this is the reason.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: So, then that moves. Sometimes they can do it faster, but other times-- and then it's okay, you need to move this person. Can you find a way to move this resident and their family, and they're often very, very responsive. So, I don't think they've ever not responded to our order.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: How many times have you ordered like-- well, an emergency transfer due to mold conditions and what type of outreach is done so that these tenants are aware and that the ombudsperson exists.

CESAR DE CASTRO: Well, usually, if we're ordering it, the tenant knows, because they're in communication with us.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: With you, okay.

CESAR DE CASTRO: So, yeah. Looks, it's no-- it's no mystery that NYCHA's had a trust issue with its tenants. I mean, it's working super hard to rebuild that trust. And so when tenants trust us to provide the information that we are getting from NYCHA, they know what's happening. In terms of, you know, moving people is not unusual. My power is to recommend that someone be prioritized for a move. I can't say move them. However, they often do move people. We work-- and look, most of our cases are complex cases where there's a lot happening. A lot of things-- sometimes you have-- as you heard from a panel, not only lead. So, sometimes they need to come in-- and asbestos as well. There's remediation of asbestos that has to happen. We have to move someone out, and then there's going to be mold. And so, you know, in terms of our numbers, helping move-- do we have a number?

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: We have some information in our report regarding relocation, some of which is not there.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: The one thing to note that I think is one of our most important levers is that NYCHA sometimes we will seek feedback from the Compliance Department or the Environmental Health and Safety Department as to whether a resident needs to be moved, or whether it's the resident's preference because of any health-related issues that they are faced with. And sometimes, when either of those answers are yes, NYCHA is able to relocate a resident very quickly, within 24 hours in a hotel accommodation. Typically, a hotel accommodation will allow for up to two weeks. That isn't always ideal for some residents, and others it is, depending on the size of the family and whether they have pets. But we have found that that is often a way in which we are able to have a resident relocated so that the necessary emergency-related work can be performed, and then they can be brought back into their apartment for the remaining repairs.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Does NYCHA consistently provide residents with written statements, including your contact information?

CESAR DE CASTRO: They're required to.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

CESAR DE CASTRO: And you know, we're not on the ground when that happens.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: I think early on that was an issue that we raised that makes sure everybody is getting our information. Our information is out there in many, many, many places.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

CESAR DE CASTRO: And prior to the most recent past, NYCHA was doing our outreach. They were pushing out information regarding us. We are generally doing it ourselves now with NYCHA's assistance, and again, they're going to do a rent mailer. So, it's out there.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Well, when it comes to RAD/PACT which is also part of NYCHA's-- NYCHA provides oversight over, does the ombudsman oversee PACT developments, and if so, do the PACT residents receive the same written notices about the OCC as Section 9 residents?

CESAR DE CASTRO: We are available to RAD and PACT. That has-- that was handled with the district courts. So, we are available. It's a slightly different process, but largely the same as

well. We are available to RAD and PACT. Now, it's going to be development by development. It's going to be by private partner and by private partner how they communicate an existence.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: But NYCHA requires them to communicate our existence.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: What specific outreach has been conducted to the PACT residents that you know of?

CESAR DE CASTRO: That I'm aware of? What do you--

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: So, they are required to send a mailer I think within the first 60 days of conversion, and then they're required to send a mailer once a year. In addition to that, NYCHA has to inform the local TA and there needs to be, I think, participation at a resident meeting.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Do you have any data or numbers showing how many RAD/PACT tenants have contacted OCC?

CESAR DE CASTRO: We do, yes, yes. But in terms of the outreach that is done, that's a question for NYCHA.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Alright. Well, you do have data showing--

CESAR DE CASTRO: [interposing] All in our reports.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: All in our reports.

CESAR DE CASTRO: And are there specific developments that are more chronic, problematic? Are you--

CESAR DE CASTRO: [interposing] Same answer. We can pull it. It's not hard. We can look at our data in real time anytime.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Yeah, we will love to if you can provide the specific developments in RAD/PACT where you're getting chronic calls.

CESAR DE CASTRO: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Do you find that the repairs being made at the PACT developments are solving the mold condition, or is it a reoccurring condition?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Sorry, just making a note.

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: For the most-- I'm sorry, can you repeat the question?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Do you find that the repairs being made at the PACT developments are being solved or are they reoccurring conditions?

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: So, you have to-- it's hard to answer because when a development converts to PACT, there's a section of PACT developments that have had all their construction completed, meaning that all the capital repairs have been completed. And then there's others that more recently converted where that hasn't happened yet. So, it depends on the development and the nature of the complaints. So, do we still have some complaints where there's a recurring issue? Yes. Most of the time those are locations in which they have not yet had their capital repairs completed, so they're awaiting for--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Well, after they're through the construction phase, have you received calls or complaints from residents about recurring mold issues?

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

CESAR DE CASTRO: Should also-- if this turns on. Should also mention that, you know, those private developers, it's a smaller universe. So you

would expect, that they will be much more responsive and faster, because they're dealing with a much smaller universe of residents. But each development is different.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Well, and I guess we'll get a clear picture based on the amount of calls that are coming in and what particular development.

CESAR DE CASTRO: Yeah, with time certainly, and you know,-- and again, that's why we say people need to know about us, right? If we get calls and people know about us, and we can help residents, and we can have-- and we can have difficulties helping residents, complex cases, that's all great, because guess what we get? Data.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right. Well, is it NYCHA's responsibility to notify the developer, you know, to-- or to make sure that-- holding the developer accountable to make sure that they are making the tenant aware or the tenants aware that the OCC exists?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Yes, I think-- I mean, I think that's a better question for NYCHA, but yes, and it's part of their requirements as a developer.

But again, if we can do outreach in ways that every tenant is going to receive information differently. We all do. Some people use social media. Some people do not use social media. Some people read newspapers, some people don't. There has to be a multi-channel approach.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Well, what type of outreach have you done directly to the RAD/PACT development?

CESAR DE CASTRO: To RAD/PACT development it's too new right now, so--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Okay.

CESAR DE CASTRO: you know, we're--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Well, I mean, there's enough developments that have gone through the construction phase. What outreach have you done to those particular developments?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Our outreach has been the required outreach that-- and we have found--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] And what's the required outreach?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Mailers.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Mailers.

CESAR DE CASTRO: Right. And that's what we found has actually been--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Are you speaking to the tenant associations directly? Are you going to the TA meetings?

CESAR DE CASTRO: At RAD/PACT, I have-- I don't--

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: [interposing] Yes, we have.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: You've attended?

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: Yeah, we've attended that and we've also done some targeted email. So specific developments where we've seen uptick in cases. We've done some outbound email outreach, and also we've done some email outreach to developments where the IMA, the court appointed independent mold expert, has been on site and has said that there's been a low rate of awareness of the OCC.

CESAR DE CASTRO: So, and-- so we were provided, for example, we were provided with a list of all tenant association presidents. Now, you know, whether they're all-- I know some bounce back, so not all of them. And so we try to do a blast to say--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Okay.

CESAR DE CASTRO: And then individually in groups to try to say will-- can I come to talk to your groups? It was-- I didn't get a lot of responses. A lot of-- and those that I did, I went to all the different, you know, NYCHA tenant association meetings that anybody wanted me to go to, I would go. A lot of people just either were non-responsive or maybe was old contact information. So, that's another thing that we intend to try to redo this year. We only did it a year ago.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Before I allow my colleague, Council Member Bottcher, to ask his questions, this is to the Monitor. Do the ombudsperson and the Federal Monitor work together to help NYCHA to address mold conditions, and if so, what does that collaboration and division of responsibility look like specifically when it comes to RAD/PACT developments?

NEIL BAROFSKY: RAD/PACT it doesn't really exist for us when it comes to mold, because once-- once a development goes into RAD/PACT, under the terms of the HUD agreement our oversight ends. Generally speaking, almost everything that we've

spoken about today, we try to do in collaboration with them.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

NEIL BAROFKSY: So, just as an example, and I keep coming back to this, but when we did our push for Restore and Renew, this is something that we, you know, we involve them in, you know, because again, they have such an expertise on-- as boots on the ground with the residents, and just-- and data, and there's such an important and necessary partner for us. And so when we see issues in the mold phase, it's just a routine thing for us to consult with them. They're a gut check to make sure that we're right. They've been doing this longer than we have, and so it is-- it is formal and informal. If we have, you know, individual residents who reach out to us, you know, we steer them towards the OCC, and so I just think it's-- it's sort of a constant ongoing collaboration. And if we're going to be pushing for something in the mold and leak space, we're going to check it, right, because it would be crazy for us not to, but also because they're-- you know, again the level of expertise-- the level of resident perspective is so invaluable to our work. You know,

our work with residents is more intentional but outside the daily course. You know, we do site visits. We'll do townhalls. We have them coming up in Sotomayor, but their level of resident interaction really surpasses ours, and so it just-- it's a really valuable and important perspective for what we do, invaluable really.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. Now, I would allow my colleague, Council Member Bottcher to ask his questions.

COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Good morning. Thank you, Chair. You had testified earlier about the-- historically, a lack of a can do attitude at NYCHA. When we talk about the substandard conditions that NYCHA tenants live in across the city, how much of that is due to the funding shortfalls that they've been experiencing and how much of it is due to this lack of a can do attitude that you said that NYCHA has had historically?

NEIL BAROFSKY: So, the can do historically really predated our involvement in February of 24. It's something that I had heard of. Maybe we see it in pockets, certainly in areas, but from the senior management perspective, I don't think

1 that's driving a lot of what the problems are at
2 NYCHA. A huge part of it is disinvestment and
3 everything that flows from that. in particular, in
4 the mold space where you have-- you know, if the
5 level of investment in public housing had stayed
6 steady over the past few decades, NYCHA likely would
7 have been in a position to be replacing these
8 plumbing lines and to be doing what was necessary to
9 avoid these leaks. I would-- so, I think-- but
10 that's not all of it, right? The other part is
11 legacy, inefficiency, lack of communication. There
12 are real issues here that can be solved, and thank
13 goodness, right, because otherwise the current state
14 would be the current state until there was a
15 miraculous invention of capital. There are areas to
16 improve with increased communication, increased
17 training. You know, the key here is-- and I use this--
18 - this is a terrible phrase-- but squeezing as much
19 juice out of the lemon that we have, in particular,
20 on efficiency. And so this is everything from making
21 sure that communication is better with residents so
22 that when a worker goes out they can get into the
23 apartment and do the work. It's the training that's
24 necessary so that when you're doing the work, they do
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1 it correctly. They don't hve to come back two or thre
2 times. There's the accountability. Not every NYCHA
3 worker is an ideal worker either because they're not
4 adequately trained and don't do the work, or because
5 they're a bad apple and they're not particularly good
6 at their jobs. And so a lot of the work, the
7 efficiency work, what we call efficiency is about
8 bringing accountability so there's better ways to
9 measure who the workers are that are not pulling
10 their weight, and then seeing, okay, is this a
11 training issue where we can get this person trained
12 and they can be more efficient, or is this someone
13 who needs to move on to another job. These are all
14 the types of things that can be done within the
15 existing budgetary framework that can have
16 significant and material improvement, but at the end
17 of the day, if you don't fix the pipes, you're not
18 going to be able to stop the leaks, and if you can't
19 stop the leaks, you're not going to stop the mold.
20 And it's just a-- you know, it is just a really big
21 challenge and it has to happen. And so we used--
22 you've heard us use the word bridge a couple of
23 times, because ultimately that's a lot of what we do
24 is that bridge towards the eventual capital

1 replacements that just have to happen sooner or
2 later. You know, if there's ever going-- if these
3 problems are every going to be fully and adequately
4 addressed. So, it's a little bit of both, but I want
5 to be clear, we do not encourage can't do on a daily
6 basis at all, in fact, the exact opposite. And it's
7 hard. I mean, like I-- it is really-- you know, I've
8 spent most of career in or around government, and I
9 can't think of another agency that has to deal with
10 something as difficult as the underfunding that NYCHA
11 has to deal with, and having to go to work every day
12 knowing that there are solutions but not being able
13 to execute them because the money is not there,
14 particularly when it comes to something as
15 fundamental as hundreds of thousands of New York City
16 residents having safe, sanitary, you know, dignified
17 way of life and being able to constantly beat back
18 that pessimism that has to come when you know you
19 just don't have the funding to do what you do. I
20 really do commend the NYCHA people that we deal with
21 on a daily basis. Are they perfect? No. Is there
22 room for improvement? Absolutely. But fundamentally
23 it is in most instances working together towards a
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path of-- and sometimes really trying to achieve what seems unachievable.

COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you, Council Member Bottcher. Right on time. This is to the Monitor. You mentioned NYCHA's remediation of standing water hazard been measured. Can you say more about that?

NEIL BAROFSKY: One of the requirements in the HUD agreement is that any standing water must be removed within 48 hours. That has never been measured, and the reason why it hasn't been measured is there has to be-- it's sort of an IT solution, the collection of data. And so one of the first things we did when we came in was taking a look at the agreement and looking at where NYCHA was on all the requirements, and we found there was a number of requirements that had never been addressed for whatever reason, and this was one of them. And so-- and one of the real priorities for us as monitors is that we wanted to fix that. We wanted to make sure that every single thing in that agreement is being measured and reported on, because frankly, the reality is-- and again this is not a criticism, it's

1 just a realty-- when things are not measured, when
2 there's no publication about them in the reporting,
3 there's less of a tendency to direct resources to
4 solve the problem. And you know, and this is a
5 number of different areas. This included the lack of
6 measurement of metrics with respect to individual
7 heating failures in apartments. So, NYCHA had been
8 measuring what happens when a boiler goes out and 30
9 apartments go out, but hadn't been measuring what
10 happens when a radi-- as we heard earlier in our
11 first panel-- when a radiator breaks. And so that's
12 something that we're now doing. Pest populations and
13 by development was something that was not being
14 measured that is now being measured. This is kind of
15 the last one. And so what has to happen is with the
16 leak SP, which we've been talking about a bunch, and
17 with the IT rollout of that, now we're going to know
18 exactly how long from when a complaint is made about
19 standing water to when its remedied, and we'll have
20 that data and then we'll be able to measure NYCHA's
21 performance. We know that they're doing-- they're
22 meeting their metrics on addressing certain leaks,
23 and so that's good news. And now we're going to see
24 once this is launched-- and again, it's a slow
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rollout. Right now it's starting I believe in Staten Island and Queens, and it's going to take a while for it to get-- because again, the problem with these standard protocols-- it's not a problem, but one of the features of them is you can't just drop an IT solution and now tell every worker you've got to do this, because without the adequate necessary training, it's going to create bad data and it's not going to work. And so, this rollout which had been delayed and delayed, but is now being executed, we'll be able to come here and tell you exactly how NYCHA is doing hopefully within a year's time.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. For the ombudsperson, would you support an expansion of the OCC model to other areas?

CESAR DE CASTRO: So, you know, as I said in my remarks, I think it works. It works, but part of the reason it works is because it has been created and structurally designed for mold and leaks. Now, I think it could certainly work for many thing.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: Just have to put in the person power to learn about that issue. For example, just in when we created the system and how calls are

going to come in. This team was determining sort of swim lanes. What kinds of calls would we get. That has to happen for heat, for pests, for all those other kinds of things. I don't see why it wouldn't work, but one thing that-- the reason-- one big reason that this work is accountability. And so NYCHA has to take that accountability on their own. We have additional accountability in this process. That is a pretty strong federal consent decree, and people in place that ensure that accountability.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: But you know, I'll echo-- you know, I'll echo what my colleague said which is, you know, at upper levels of management, and this is part of the can do question issue is we've never experienced that we can't do this. We've heard we don't have the money to do this.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: But let's try to work on a solution. Now, that attitude has to translate down to the individual developments and to the workers, and that's a challenge.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Well, obviously, one of the recommendations from the pre-

panel was to have an expansion, because they see the necessity. They see the need.

CESAR DE CASTRO: I mean, if the question was could we expand,--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: you know, it would be pretty easy to do it. Yes, we could easily expand if it was hey, you're now going to handle heat, for example. Yeah, we would have to do some work to sort of learn.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And heating has been a problematic area at NYCHA. Even this morning when I was driving in I was dealing with heating issues and some RAD/PACT developments, particularly. How many virtual inspections has the OCC conducted and that has been-- and has that been a useful tool?

CESAR DE CASTRO: I'll let Ms. Acevedo answer that one, but what I do want to say before she does is that when we were asked to sort of pitch whether we'd be interested in becoming the ombudsperson, and we as a team made our presentation, part of our presentation. Part of our presentation was, look, we have to do things more efficiently. they don't need-- we don't need a team of 100 people

to go around to all the units when there's generally no disagreement as to what is happening in a particular unit.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

CESAR DE CASTRO: We're are technolgiaal society. So, residents will say can I go on facetime with you right now? Can I show you? Can I send you a video? And so that-- I mean, that's all we would need and then get people in that apartment. So, in terms of our numbers on that-- go ahead.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And before-- are there ways for residents to upload--

CESAR DE CASTRO: Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

CESAR DE CASTRO: They just send them to us.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: They just send them to you, okay.

KIERSTEN ACEVEDO: So, we developed the process of doing inspection during ROID because during COVID it as critically important for us to understand what were the conditions in our residents in apartment so that we could field urgent issues, because we all know that's what cause this large

backlog in part that NYCHA is faced with, and so we've done over 500 at this point. I don't have the specific number in front of me. But we found them to be tremendously successful and helpful. We use them for a variety of different reasons, some of which residents don't always communicate the whole picture to us. One example that is a resident will tell us that they have a recurring issue in their bathroom, but what they won't say is that that issue is affecting a wall, and on the adjacent side of the wall, maybe the hallway or the kitchen from the bathroom is also impacted. And so sometimes the specific work order task, the repair task, won't always be created to account for those additional rooms that are impacted. So, that's a way that we're able to ensure that the resident's apartment is restored. And another way is for prioritization or possible relocations. If we're able to a virtual inspection and we run through that resident's entire apartment, in minutes we're able to send a link, and that can go to the maintenance worker or the superintendent, and in many times has gone, you know, to the executives in Omar [sp?] or Dangary [sp?].

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. If we were able to successfully increase awareness and more residents made use of OCC, would it have the resources to help the influx of residents?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. And I will-- also, before I ask my last question, this will be to the monitor-- I want to recognize my colleague Council Member Sanchez, and I'll also allow her to ask her question as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you, Chair Banks, and good morning. Apologies. I apologize for myself and I know that a lot of Council Members come in and out, but I look forward to catching up on the back and forth I did miss. My first question is just a clarifying question. So are you saying that there is a mechanism that residents can employ to reach you directly when they have persistent complaints or concerns in their apartments?

CESAR DE CASTRO: Yeah, they can call, email. It's on our website. They can call directly to us.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay, excellent. Thank you. I probably should have known that. Did not

1 know that. Well, I represent the northwest Bronx,
2 but selfishly, you know, I also have a lot of family
3 that lives in NYCHA. And so my question today is
4 relating to a lot of the constituent complaints that
5 I hear, but also from family members who live in
6 public housing, I hear a lot from them about this
7 issue of scheduling appointments, you know, getting
8 their units inspected and having, you know,
9 professionals or tradespeople come in and do the
10 actual work. They don't schedule. They said that
11 they're going to show up this day and they're going
12 to break my-- that's how they interpret it. They're
13 going to break my locks whether I'm there or not.
14 This isn't fair. I was working. I was at childcare.
15 There's all the many reasons. And so my question for
16 you with respect to mold, but also with respect to
17 lead remediation and the other issues that you have
18 oversight on, how's satisfactory do you find NYCHA's
19 process for responding to work requests from tenants
20 and sending these trades? Do you see their process
21 for engaging with residents and scheduling that work
22 as sufficient to meet the requirements of the
23 monitorship on the one hand? And second, as
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respectful to the tenants in terms of how they work out.

NEIL BAROFSKY: So, this is an enormously significant issue, and we have-- you know, a part of our team and our organizational change team, a work stream that is exclusively dedicated to resident communication around these issues, because for so many reasons. There's the obvious reason of just how frustrating and debilitating it is when some-- you know, when you finally get to your appointment day and somebody doesn't show. But there's also extraordinary efficiency harm on both sides, right? If a NYCHA worker doesn't show, that's again, incredibly disruptive for a resident who has taken a day off from work, given up a day of pay to sit in an apartment and not have their problem fixed. But it's also a huge problem for NYCHA when they show up to an apartment and the resident isn't home because the communication had broken down to a point where the resident doesn't know to be home, right? Didn't get a reminder. Didn't get notice. It's just-- it's such an obvious area of loss of resources. So, this has been a real focus of work, and we are seeing improvement since we've worked with NYCHA to have a

scorecard and measure the percentage of time that NYCHA misses an appointment, again, on their end. Since we've launched this effort with NYCHA, and Mr. Greene can give you sort of details about it. It's decreased somewhat significantly the occurrence of NYCHA missing appointments. And so bringing attention and data and training and ideas does help. So it is not-- it was not okay. it's getting better. There's still more work to be done. On the notification aspect, again, not okay. A lot of more work to be done, but we're trying different things, and a lot of this is workshopping different ideas, putting them out in practice, see what works, see where we can get things improved. So, among the types of reforms that have happened recently since we've taken over this monitorship, things like when there's a communication more detail. So, before, a resident might receive a robocall that says you have an appointment scheduled for Monday at 2:00 p.m. Now, hopefully, we'll be getting a robocall. They'll be getting a mailer. They'll be getting an email. It'll give the time. It'll say this is the type of thing that's going to be addressed. We're going to be repainting your mold situation. We're going to be

1 doing a lead inspection, whatever it is, with the
2 work order number. And so now, the resident A, has a
3 better idea of what's coming; B, it gives them an
4 opportunity and information we've provided in the
5 communication. If you can't make it, here's what you
6 do. I got buzzed. You know, here's how you respond.
7 Here is now-- and even there, before the-- if it was
8 a skilled trade, a resident would get maybe two
9 different numbers to call, or different areas. Now,
10 it's a single point of contact for them to call. And
11 when they call that number-- we talked about this a
12 little bit before. If you're on hold and it's a 45-
13 minute wait which was before where residents would
14 just give up. Now, at least there's a callback
15 option, and I will say also, the amount of time that
16 you're on hold has shrunk significantly. So, this is
17 an area of concern. It's-- we're all well aware of
18 it. We're all working towards fixing it. We're not
19 there yet, but this is also an area where we don't
20 have, you know, a monopoly on good ideas, and there's
21 been a lot of experimentation and trying to get
22 there, but it is an area of enormous focus for our
23 team and I know for NYCHA as well.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Well, I just want to say--

CESAR DE CASTRO: [interposing] If I can add to that?

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Oh, sure.

CESAR DE CASTRO: Because we take a-- you know, it's the same perspective, right? Is that okay?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: That's okay. Go ahead.

CESAR DE CASTRO: You know, we're getting the calls so, you know, we're the-- we're the ombudsperson call center. So, the reason people are calling us is that-- are those reasons. So, we're getting the calls already where they missed an appointment or we've been waiting two weeks or a month or whatever that is. And so our job is to communicate with NYCHA and to make sure and ensure that doesn't happen again. So we don't really have that as much of a problem when people call us. So, I think if you-- if people have an issue with how we're handling cases, it's usually because they're unhappy with the work that was done, or sometimes the scheduling is way out, and that's a big problem, and

1 we're trying to assist them by getting NYCHA to do
2 the work a little bit earlier. So, you know, an
3 example of sort of collaboration and communication--
4 so, since we were appointed in 2019, so it's been a
5 number of years, and we've been pushing
6 communication, communication, can't be missing
7 appointments. People stay home from work. They're
8 losing money, literally losing money that they're
9 going to use to pay rent. So, pushing that, and so
10 the reason this has to be collaborative-- we're
11 sitting at the Jefferson Houses and we're talking
12 about rolling out our OCC, and that's where we were
13 going to start. It's going to be a sort of roll out
14 incrementally. And we were talking about all these
15 issues of communicating with the resident. You can't
16 just show up and say hey, I have to be in here. Oh,
17 hey, nobody called you yesterday? Like these kinds
18 of issues. That birthed what we call-- had different
19 names-- these resident communication associates which
20 we deal with a lot, or ambassadors. So, this is a
21 new position that NYCHA created so that their only
22 job is to communicate with the residents regarding--
23 you know, they can talk to you more about it
24 regarding repairs and other things. For us, it was

all about getting-- that we are helping you get out there, and we have someone else to communicate. So, what that then means is an RCA is going to call you. We're going to call you to remind you that they're coming, and NYCHA knows we're doing that as well, and we're making sure that something's going to happen. We've also talked to over 30,000 residents. We've had 100,000 calls. All these kinds of recommendations come because of experience. So, we're having the experience and it helps inform our strategies and it helps NYCHA inform their strategies and how they communicate better, because they have embraced at least with us that that is a problem and they're trying to fix it.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Are there also texts sent out?

CESAR DE CASTRO: There are texts. I mean, there's-- it depends. You know, how does the resident want-- from our perspective it's how do we communicate with the resident? What do they want? So, you know, I like people sending me texts. I don't want people leaving me voicemails, for example. I would tell that to the OCC and people would not leave me a voicemail.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Well, Chair, I just want to say thank you for holding--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: this important hearing. It's so important for us to be able to have these connections, and thank you for showing up. Chair, I think for me-- I'm his counterpart. I Chair the Committee on Housing and Buildings, and I think there's-- this issue also comes up with HPD inspections. And so if there's conversations that are not yet happening, happy to make that connection so that, you know, the scheduling challenge can be compared by the agencies. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you, Council Member Sanchez. The final question for me, and this is to the Monitor, how do you work with NYCHA to secure additional funding for example for like the pilot programs?

NEIL BAROFKSY: You know, we basically sit down and say what can we do here, and it's like an additional source of funding might come in from a different perspective, from the city, from the federal government, and we'll sit there and we'll

1 discuss-- you know, ultimately, you know, it's their
2 decision. We don't control their budget, but what
3 we'll do is we'll say hey, maybe we can reallocate
4 some of these resources over here as opposed to over
5 there. NYCHA does, you know-- it can find resources.
6 You know, a lot of the times it-- they apply-- you
7 know, NYCHA's applying for a lot of grants and a lot
8 of funding, and so, you know, we try to suggest push,
9 prod, beg, plead for certain areas. You know, here's
10 some resources that are coming in that maybe weren't
11 expected. You know, could we please think about
12 funding a program to deal with this issue. So,
13 again, it's very collaborative process.

14 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Well, thank you for
15 your testimony, guys, today, and my final comment
16 overall of the testimony, I would-- glad to see an
17 expansion definitely be taken into consideration
18 seriously. Knowing the-- some of the problematic
19 issues that continue to occur at NYCHA, especially
20 around heating. So, look forward to further
21 conversations and dialogue on possibly having that
22 happen. Thank you. Thank you for your testimony
23 today, guys. Now we will hear testimony from NYCHA,
24 and I will turn it over to our Committee Counsel to
25

give the affirmation. And I guess we have here today Daniel Greene. We have Jaclyn Sullivan and Elana Tenchikova. I apologize. Thank you, Elana. Counsel?

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes, good afternoon, everyone. Thank you. You're prepared. If you could raise your right hand, please, we can do it all at the same time. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

UNIDENTIFIED: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great, thank you. You can begin when you're ready, and just before you start, if you could state your name and title for the record, that would be great. Thanks.

DANIEL GREENE: Good afternoon, Chair Banks. My name is Daniel Greene. I am the Executive Vice President of Property Management Operations. I'm here today with Jaclyn Sullivan, Senior Vice President for Healthy Homes, Elana Tenchikova, Vice President of the Office of Mold and Remediation, or OMAR. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Authority's efforts to prevent and remediate mold

across our portfolio. We recognize that mold is an issue of very great concern to our residents, and it's top priority for the Authority. It's top priority for me. The majority of NYCHA's buildings are more than half a century old, and they have been underfunded by the federal government for decades. The Authority's approximately 149,000 apartments collectively suffer from an \$80 billion in major capital needs, and the reality is that this lack of investment has led to many of the chronic leak and moisture issues which are the root causes of mold. Recognizing the capital needs deficit, in 2019 we rolled out a state-of-the-art program to address mold, in partnership with the court-appointed, independent entities and the Federal Monitor. This has enabled us to establish strong procedures and operational responses to mold. We prioritize a rapid response to mold and do our best to complete mold-related repairs efficiently, to benefit residents and to improve their quality of life. In fact, there's been an entire systemic shift within our organization to ensure that mold is prioritized and addressed. And our partners both within and beyond the organization, the Ombudsperson Call Center, NYCHA's Compliance

Department, and Federal Monitor are helping us make sure that the resident experience matches the larger organizational transformation that is taking place. Our success in tackling mold is measured by fewer occurrences, fewer reoccurrences, and reduced response times. NYCHA is seeing about a 20 percent less new mold complaints since 2022, and the reoccurrence rate dropped from 30 percent to 10 percent from 2019 to today. And we're now responding, on average, within two days to mold complaints. These are very encouraging signs of progress, and evidence that we're on the right path, although we acknowledge that there's still so much work to do, and this will continue to be challenging without significant capital investment. Leading the work to address mold is our Office of Mold Assessment and Remediation. Or I'll refer to them as OMAR, which spearheads comprehensive infrastructure and repair projects and updates operational procedures. OMAR works closely with our external partners who are helping us make progress in this vital area, including the Federal Monitor, the mold and data analysts who are independent, and the mold ombudsperson. I would like to walk you through a few of the specific initiatives

that are making a difference for the residents we serve, and this is one we didn't hear much about today, but it's so very important which is cleaning vents and our roof fan replacement or ventilation. So, enhancing and modernizing mechanical ventilation systems at our developments, and thus reducing moisture in buildings, it is a critical way that we are reducing the occurrence of mold. To that end, we are replacing 6,188 old roof fans across the Authority, installing new, state-of-the-art versions in their place. At the same time, we cleaned bathroom and kitchen vents in more than 74,000 apartments, and are replacing fire dampers which are the vents that cover where the air is flowing, as part of our Clean Vents Initiative. As a result of these efforts, we have decreased mold associated with poor ventilation by 54 percent and bathroom mold by 32 percent. Our Mold Busters initiative ensures that our staff are properly inspecting and remediating mold in apartments. It involves enhanced tools and strategies as well as staff training and greater accountability via photo documentation and follow-up quality assurance inspections. As part of the holistic Mold Busters regimen, staff work though a

set of tasks to address mold, from cleaning vents and repairing windows to remediating leaks and applying mold-resistant paint. So, now I'm going to offer you some other operational initiatives and improvements. We are taking a data-driven approach to mold. Our Operation Mold Clean-up program delivers additional resources to address backlogged mold work orders and has enabled us to resolve nearly 35,000 work orders. Through Operation Dry Out, we have resolved nearly 9,000 backlogged plumbing work orders and nearly 6,000 backlogged tub enclosure work orders, or tub surrounds. With the Enhanced Oversight Program, we have improved mold performance at 29 high-risk sites, and we are currently working to do the same at an additional three sites. We also created a specialized blitz remediation team, and then through our Work Order Verification project, a very important project with OCC, we have closed over 2,500 work orders that were no longer needed, because the issues were already addressed. By cleaning up the data, we are freeing up resources for faster response times where they're needed. We have also determined that approximately 30 percent of older tickets are similarly no longer needed, and we are working with

the OCC to close them out. Our Mold and Leaks Scorecard is a key tool for fighting mold. It's a visual and assessment tool that we developed with the OCC that rates the performance of every NYCHA development on a refresh basis and helps us direct our resources effectively. Additionally, we have improved the way we work by updating standard procedures related to how we inspect roof fans and how we address mold, leaks, and moistures. I'm going to talk about capital investments. We are already executing an extensive capital portfolio that leverages funding from the City, State, and federal government, but we are always seeking opportunities to expand this work. For instance, with our Building Line Initiative, we are replacing entire plumbing systems in select building lines that are failing and leading to pervasive leaks. The program is not only reducing mold but also upgrading residents' kitchens and bathrooms. And our Comprehensive Modernization, PACT, and Trust housing preservation programs include new plumbing systems in their scope of work. We are also addressing roofs and facades at some locations through these and other capital funding sources. These major investments, which benefit from City

funding, will have a long-term impact on our mold efforts and residents' quality of life. It must be stated that replacing our plumbing systems and addressing leaks in the roofs and facades of our thousands of aging buildings across the NYCHA portfolio requires tens of billions of dollars of investment that NYCHA does not have. Combatting mold at PACT developments is the next topic. NYCHA requires the partners who are renovating and managing our PACT developments to remediate mold and excessive moisture complaints within 30 days, abate flooding issues within 24 hours, and remove standing water within 48 hours, unless a longer repair schedule is warranted. Additionally, residents at PACT developments can get assistance with mold and leak issues from the Ombudsperson Call Center. NYCHA's Real Estate Development team, in coordination with NYCHA's Compliance Department, coordinates the review of mold and leak orders through an Independent Data Analyst and an independent mold analyst. Over the last quarter, mold work orders occurred in less than one percent of the PACT portfolio. And our PACT partners have resolved work orders in an average of six days. Now I'll speak to NYCHA's larger

transformation efforts. As part of NYCHAs transformation efforts, the Authority is improving the ways we work to become a better landlord for residents. For example, we are scheduling and completing repairs, including mold-related work, more efficiently through our Work Order Reform initiative. We expanded the types of automatic notifications and reminders residents receive about upcoming skilled trades repairs, and we made it easier for residents to reschedule them, and this has meant fewer missed appointments for mold-related work, and thus faster completion of the work. We are along with that, we were fostering enhanced communication. We also partner with residents in other ways to combat mold, and that includes providing education that includes providing educational materials on how to prevent and report mold. Resident have several channels for reporting mold, including not just customer contact center in the My NYCHA App and website. Additionally, the independent court appointed Ombudsperson Call Center can assist residents with problematic mold and leak repairs. To date, OCC has served nearly 32,000 residents. The result of our partnership and our multi-prong approach to address mold are tangible for

residents. Here are some additional statistics which illustrate the progress we're making. Our work orders scheduling rate has increased from an eight percent rate up to 21 percent. OCC cases resolved within 30 days have increased from just 16 percent to now 46 percent. The median amount of time it takes to inspect mold has gone from 24 days down to days, a 92 percent reduction. And importantly, resident's satisfaction concerning mold work has risen from 71 percent to 83 percent. Additionally, we have reduced the number of open mold-related work orders by thousands, and are decreasing the time it takes to complete mold-related work and address leaks. Ensuring safe and healthy homes for residents is our top priority at NYCHA. While we are making progress to prevent and remediate mold, we know there is still more work to do, and more investment in NYCHA's aging buildings is required so that residents can live in the high quality, modern housing they deserve. Specifically, our Building Line Initiative to fix our aging, failing pipes will go a long way in our efforts to combat mold. Our partnerships with NYCHA's stakeholders including the City Council, the Baez court appointed entities, the ombudsperson,

Independent Data Analyst, and the Independent Mold Analyst, the Baez Special Master, the Federal Monitor, and NYCHA's internal oversight entities are highly productive as we carry out the important work to improve residents' quality of life. Thank you for your continued support and attention on this important matter. I think we have a brief PowerPoint-- some brief PowerPoint slides that-- which I'll go through very briefly because they reiterate the point. So, we can pull up the first slide. Oh, you have the copies. Oh, I thought it was going to be on the screen. Okay.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Was it supposed to be on the screen? Well, if not, we--

DANIEL GREENE: [interposing] Okay, I can just walk you through it.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Yeah, I wanted the public to--

DANIEL GREENE: So, the first slide just shows the results on our ventilation program. You see a photograph of a NYCHA roof and installing the direct dry fans. So, again, 6,188 roof fans have been replaced; 74,000 vents are clean and 32,000 dampers have been replaced, and that's still ongoing.

1 The goal is 95,000. Well, that's not the goal,
2 that's what our obligation is. That's really going
3 to improve ventilation and ventilation reduces mold.
4 That was one of the major findings of the independent
5 mold analyst in the early days of Baez. So, you see
6 the next slide here shows the-- slide three. After
7 completing roof fan installation, you can see the
8 conditions, and I've seen worse than that of those
9 vents. They get clogged. The air cannot flow out of
10 the bathroom. The moisture remains in the bathroom,
11 and that causes a mold condition. So, what we do is
12 we clean the vents, and now we're replacing the vents
13 with better more modern technology so there's better
14 flow of air through those vents into those bathrooms.
15 Note, because those bathrooms don't have windows. So
16 those bathrooms really need those vents to air out.
17 The next is Operation Mold Clean-up. You did see
18 some staff-- so, Operation Mold Clean-up we really
19 want to make sure that mold is remediated quickly.
20 That's my number one focus right now is getting to
21 that five days, and Operation Mold Clean-up addresses
22 the backlog of mold removal and molders [sic] and
23 paint work orders. So, for mold removal, we've
24 addressed 98 percent of them. We've closed 17,805
25

1 out of 18,116. We track this every single day, and
2 we're pushing hard to get it down as low as we can.
3 94,000-- 94 percent, excuse me, of mold-resistant
4 paint work orders have also been closed, and that's
5 critical for addressing recurrence. That actually
6 acts as a sealant and helps prevent mold from
7 regrowing. Operation Dry Out is an initiative that
8 addresses backlog plumbing and tub enclosure work
9 orders that are more than 200 days old. 89 percent
10 of these older work orders have been addressed for
11 the plumbing work orders, and another 79 percent of
12 the tub enclosure work orders-- we heard one of the
13 residents earlier who told the story about a tub
14 enclosure. I don't want residents going to take a
15 shower in areas protected by plastic. We should get
16 those tub enclosures done as quickly as possible.
17 The next slide, slide six, is our enhanced oversight
18 program. We created this program to work with
19 developments that are struggling with the mold
20 requirements. We bring a specialized team, including
21 OCC and IMA, the Independent Mold Analyst, to the
22 properties to improve their performance. We work
23 with them over an intense 30 to 60-day period, and
24 that enables us to get them caught up on their
25

1 inspections, assist them with mold cleaning, retrain
2 their staff, and do some outreach to residents as
3 well, and that program is ongoing. The next is the
4 Building Line Initiative. Building Line Initiative
5 is a pilot, but it's growing. This is slide seven.
6 We have completed one. We're almost complete with
7 our second-largest one at Thompkins [sp?], and then
8 we're going to be doing more and more in 2026, Red
9 Hook East, another in Red Hook East, Carlton Manner,
10 and then new BLI projects to be determined in early
11 2026. Slide eight-- we're almost done here-- is our
12 Building Line initiative which is just-- we just
13 talked about it, but this is just going to show some
14 of the metrics on that for the one that we completed.
15 And then finally, maintenance care. So, maintenance
16 care, I think-- I save it at the end there. So, now,
17 NYCHA has to do-- we have to inspect our apartments,
18 100 percent of our apartments every single year. So,
19 we have to get into every single NYCHA apartment
20 every single year now, and what we're noticing is we
21 don't was escalations only coming from outside
22 entities. We want our maintenance workers to be
23 escalating these things before they even reach places
24 like the OCC so that we are taking this upon
25

1 ourselves. So, these are some of our worst
2 apartments. These are also some of the most
3 voiceless residents, those who are struggling to
4 connect with NYCHA. We escalate them internally
5 through our maintenance workers, and we then
6 aggressively address them as a priority with our
7 planners. So, we've-- since we started this in
8 March, we've had 597 cases that are in progress.
9 We've already resolved 387 cases, and these are
10 internal NYCHA escalations. This is the kind of
11 cultural change that NYCHA needs to bring that can do
12 attitude out to the developments so that everybody is
13 escalating working together to address those repairs
14 that are most in need. And now, happy to have any
15 questions.
16

17 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Before I start my
18 round of questions, I'm going to allow my Council
19 Member, my good Council Member, my good friend
20 Council Member Sanchez to ask her questions.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.
22 Thank you so much, Chair Banks. I actually just wantd
23 to follow up on the question that-- hi, Dan, good to
24 see you.
25

DANIEL GREENE: Hey, it's good to see you again, yeah.

COUNCIL MEMBER SACNHEZ: I'm not sure if you were in the room a few minutes ago when I asked the federal monitorship and the-- I cannot say that word-- the O word that is very long, about the ways that you coordinate with residents to contact. So my specific question was whether you send text message notifications or whether you communicate with residents via text message as well as email and phone.

DANIEL GREENE: So, text messaging is something that we're doing for our pest program right now. We're looking at for rolling it out for other aspects of operations, particularly skilled trades. This year, the past year, we focused a lot on our phone systems and upgrading our phone systems for our planners so that we can better monitor them and they can have call cues and other sort of advancements. We think that text is the next, you know, iteration, but wanted to first upgrade the phone systems to see what impact that has in terms of our skilled trade repairs, and then from there hopefully, you know, we can move to text more broadly. We have a large-- you

1 know, we get across the board for our maintenance
2 workers. We get 100,000 maintenance work orders a
3 month. We get 35,000 skilled trade work orders a
4 month, so the volume is enormous. However, we do
5 think that that's a good way to communicate. We also
6 have improved email communication which a lot of our
7 residents use email, and they maintain the same
8 email, and that's been very effective for
9 communicating with residents.
10

11 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you. And
12 specifically, how do you confirm appointments with
13 residents?

14 DANIEL GREENE: So, confirmation is
15 typically done via phone, via phone with residents
16 through our planners. You know, we have a pretty
17 good rapport. Right now, the Monitor mentioned the
18 new dashboard that we built out, so missed
19 appointments has been a major focus for us in the
20 past year. So, we confirm appointments with
21 residents via phone. In the month of September, we
22 missed less than 600 appointments for the first time
23 for our skilled trades, and those are our much-in-
24 need skilled trade plumbers, plasterers, painters,
25 and some trades missed zero apartments in their

neighborhood. So, we feel like as our planners mature in their roles, as we approve the phone systems. We are having better luck with confirming it. We've also been working with Metro IAF on two pilots around maintenance worker scheduling. There's definitely some work to do on that. Maintenance workers were at properties, and so they typically have a more grassroots rapport with residents. They're there. They can knock on doors. They can call the resident. They can work with the housing assistance to call a resident, but we do want to improve that communication so we're not missing it, especially when there's an A.M./P.M. time, and we noticed some discrepancies that we want to correct in our system thanks to the pilot. But we're really trying to work on missed appointments and confirmation of appointments so that we're not-- you know, we're not wasting residents' times which I totally agree is not good.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Yeah. And so you've mentioned planners, but there's-- it's the Resident Communication Associates, these RCAs who are the specific folks that are communicating with residents to confirm appointments, and--

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: [interposing] Sure, I could speak to that. Good afternoon, Council Member. Thank you for asking that question. So, there's kind of like larger communication that happens that NYCHA does in response to mold and leak coordination, and then there's kind of like a very different model that is used when it comes down to our mold response unit team, just because it's a case management system. So, our mold response unit deals with escalated issues, and once they establish contact with the resident, they figure out what is the best means of contacting them, who is the best person to contact, and then we'll work with them through those means. So, we'll use email, phone. We'll use text messaging. So, a variety of platforms and it's lot more of a more frequent touch with our communication until we resolve the issue.

COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Okay. I-- I'll share with you. I am very annoyed by my baby's dentist, because they call and text and text and call, but you know, it's very effective and it gets us, you know, to the appointment. But very specifically that they, you know, say is you are confirming your appointment, please reply C. you

1 know, that simple kind of change on some of your
2 communications-- you know, I just ask for you to
3 consider that. It won't fix all of the issues, but
4 as you continue to improve your communications with
5 the residents.
6

7 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Yeah, our Strategy
8 Innovation Team kind of has been looking at this
9 holistically on how to improve communications as part
10 of like the transformation and establishing the
11 neighborhood model, creating the neighborhood
12 planners, making sure that we're set up with
13 automated mailers that go out for reminders, and
14 robocalls.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER SANCHEZ: Thank you.
16 Thank you so much, Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. Okay,
18 we're going to begin with work orders and
19 remediation. According to the HUD agreement, NYCHA
20 must remediate mold within five business days or fix
21 mold and root causes within seven days for simple
22 repairs or 15 days for complex repairs, is that
23 correct?

24 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Correct.
25

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: What percentage of mold complaints does NYCHA currently remediate within these required timeframes, and does NYCHA have any documented plan with a specific date on when they think they can achieve a 95 percent compliance?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Sure. I'll respond to that. I'll start with the seven-day which is to respond to simple repairs. These are repairs that are usually able to be completed within one visit, and we are now at 54 percent. Based on last Monitor's report, most recent were-- through our dashboard receiving as high as 73, so hopefully next quarterly report will show continued progress. And just to give a baseline we're starting at 22 in comparison. I do want to kind of frame this from-- this is a hit or miss metric. So one of the ways that I would encourage to look at it is not only progress on how often are we hitting this metric, but how are we doing overall over time, so, average days to complete. And when we're comparing this back to 2020, we were at 170 days, and now we're at 16. So, a lot of progress has happened over time to really prioritize this, and this goes to using data. This is using visibility, and really concentrating and

1 prioritizing mold in NYCHA. The next one that I'll
2 talk about is the five-day removal. This has
3 improved as the Federal Monitor noted from seven to
4 now 24, and in comparison of like average days that
5 we're seeing progress, we were at like 130 in 2020,
6 and now we're now averaging around 25 days. For 15-
7 day complex which is by far our most difficult metric
8 to hit, because we need to go through the inspection
9 full repair and restoration and pass the QA, we're at
10 now 11 percent going from two. Average days to go
11 through this workflow is 388-- was 388 and now down
12 to 252. So, progress is being made, but certainly we
13 have a long way to go which I'm sure we'll talk
14 about.

16 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Well, let me ask this
17 question again. Does NYCHA have a documented plan
18 with a specific date on when they think they can
19 achieve 95 percent?

20 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: We do not have a
21 specific date where we're going to be able to achieve
22 it.

23 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: You said yes or no?

24 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: No.
25

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: How can residents have confidence that compliance will ever be achieved then?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: I will defer this to our EVP of Property Management Dan Greene.

DANIEL GREENE: So, we're pushing as hard as we can with the resources that we have, but as noted in the Monitor's testimony and the Ombudsperson testimony, and as stated by our former Chair, we're not going to repair our way out of this problem. We need capital investment in our buildings in order to hit those types of numbers in more of our buildings. We will push and we will improve those numbers even further. We're going to push the inspections so that they're done within-- as quickly as we can, and then we'll get the-- we're going to get the mold cleaning and mold remediation done as quickly as we can. More complex plumbing repairs, though, they take time, and the stocks that we're dealing with at places like Queensbridge are nearly 100 years old. So, until-- and that's just one example. You can find at Baruch. You mentioned some of our worst impacted sites, Baruch, Jefferson, Red Hook, all of-- the Queensbridge. All of those need full pipe

replacements which we don't have the money for. So, hitting that top level is really dependent upon more capital repairs. We will do to our Building Line Initiative more and more high-risk lines which will probably lead to some improvement, but that across-the-board improvement, especially on the leak side is really going to be dependent upon capital investment in NYCHA.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Well, what percentage of mold complaints does NYCHA currently remediate within these required timeframes?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Yeah, sure. So, seven days, 54 percent; 15 days, 11 percent; and five days is 24 percent.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And how many open mold orders does NYCHA currently have?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Sure. We have 23,453 work orders that are open, 379 of those are related to inspections. That would be either the initial inspection, the QA inspection, or reinspection. And 23,164 is related to child [sic] repairs, so actual repair work.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay, but--

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2 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: [interposing] And I'm

3 happy to break down those if you'd like.

4 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And how many--

5 DANIEL GREENE: [interposing] Just want to

6 add one--

7 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] How many

8 have been pending more than 15 days?

9 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Sure. 22,255 more than

10 15 days.

11 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And how many been

12 pending more than 30 days?

13 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: 20,680.

14 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And how many been

15 pending more than 90 days?

16 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: 17,058.

17 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: You said 17,000?

18 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: 58.

19 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: So, what percentage

20 of the units have a second mold complaint been within

21 the last 12 months?

22 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: I'm happy that you

23 asked that question. That is one of the metrics that

24 we're actually doing well in. The HUD agreement

25 requires to not have more than 15 percent or we

should be at 85 percent, and we're now at 88 percent. So, which demonstrates positive state of reoccurrence.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. And then how many of these units have experienced mold more than three times this year?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: We've improved on this metric going from 60 apartments to now 39 units, and we do monitor those. Our Mold Response Unit and our data analyst team reviews it, and then we investigate and we'll case manage those periodically.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And what was the primary cause of the reoccurring mold?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: I would actually say that this is a really good metric for gatekeeping some of those that fall through the cracks, and from like our investigations, I'm seeing that certainly there is an aging component, but also it's-- was it properly addressed in the initial inspection? And we're able through this tool actually be able to catch those which we're happy about.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Well, you spoke earlier about NYCHA's roof fan replacement program.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: But we also heard earlier from a tenant who's experiencing reoccurring mold in her bathroom, because of the roof fan on her line. Is it-- is it working, and NYCHA hasn't fixed it yet? What is the average timeframe for replacing broken roof frames-- fans, sorry. And are units with active mold cases prioritized?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Sure, I'm happy to talk about that. So, a little-- if I could take a step back to talk a little bit about the ventilation program so it makes--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Okay, yes.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: kind of pieces it all together. Our ventilation program consists of three phases. The first initial phase was replacing the roof fans. So we did a major push to send out engineers, do asbestos testing, and if it needed to be upgraded to be a direct modern fan, we've updated that, and that resulted in 1,056 buildings across our portfolio. The second part was to like kind of going hand-in-hand to offer as much relief as we can, and also I'd like to add we were doing this all during

COVID. We actually performed vent cleaning. So, where we HEPA vacuumed the interior of the lateral duct, and that's where we saw the pictures of like really being able to declutter the dust debris that has accumulated there, and now we're currently in the damper component. As part of the damper program, this is a longer term. Rollout is about three years, and we're cleaning the vents during that time, and we are checking the roof fans again to see if they're working or not and working with the property to update it. Separate and apart, part of our mold inspection will check for CFR [sic] measurements to make sure that the vent is operating. If it's not, then it'll create a child [sic] work order for to check the roof fan and to clean the vent. In this case, we-- as this was being brought up, we checked on our site, and there were two open tickets for the roof fan being out of order. How does that happen after major improvements? Because every so often it used to be maintained. There could be an electrical problem. These roof fans, although we shouldn't be seeing it yet, some of the ones that we may have retained, meaning we verified it, that they weren't just, you know, put in two years ago, may be starting

to act up or their motor being out of-- or not working. And that would happen because we're running our motors 24/7 which means, you know, the use of life will be a little bit faster. But with this there, there is a proactive measure of whenever we're responding to proactively check if the vent is operating, and we do prioritize the replacement of those.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And so then how many of NYCHA's public housing apartments are currently with an active mold complaint?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: 23,1-- I'm sorry, pardon. My apologies. How many units, right? 11,723 units or 8.9--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Can you repeat that number?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: percent of NYCHA's overall universe.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay, and how many children under 18 live in units with verified mold complaints?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: This one, one second.

DANIEL GREENE: It's about 7,400.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: 74? And how many open leak work orders does NYCHA currently have?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: 43,387 of which 8,372 or 19 percent are parent, and 35 percent-- 35,015 that are child, or 81 percent.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. And what is the average time to abate a leak after it's been reported?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: So, we have requirements that to abate a leak within 24 hours, and as the Federal Monitor noted, there's been challenges with the way that we do our reporting. However, through our best efforts of trying to use a proxy measure, we've seen--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] What's the challenge?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: It's the way that we record the work orders. We don't actually ask the question of did you abate the flood condition, which now we'll be able to do as part of the leak standard procedures. So, what we currently use is a proxy measure, meaning that if we're responding to it, that we are addressing it. And right now we've seen an improvement from 54 hours to 33 hours.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. And what percentage of leaks are abated within 24 hours as required?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: So, keep in mind that challenge that I talked about, but the way that we use in the proxy measure we're now at 72 percent in comparison to 69 of last year.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And what percentage of standing water is removed within 48 hours?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: 76 percent.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Does the mold and leak work order backlog also consist of the child work orders that need to be completed before the mold work order can be fully closed out?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Correct. Those are the repairs, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And if so, do you have any breakdown of how much of the work order backlogs consist of those smaller associated with work orders?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Yeah, absolutely. So, the child work orders are the ones that need repair associated with the mold consists of 23,164. The way that I like to move of it is evaluating into

1 buckets of mold removal, which is one of our top
2 priority is to remove the hazard. That currently
3 consists of about 34 percent or 4,654. We have 3,480
4 or 15 percent in encapsulation. This is what should
5 happen as a part two to remediation to help to
6 prevent it. And then we have the remainder which
7 would be the root cause and the restoration. And that
8 consists of 15,030 work orders, or 65 percent.

9
10 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

11 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: And to give a little
12 bit of context within that universe of that 15,000,
13 about 50 percent of them are for cosmetic paint.
14 Part of our challenge during COVID and kind of the
15 way that our work orders work, we cannot close the
16 work until we're able to complete the work. So, we
17 cannot close it as tenant not home or refused which
18 means that our work orders stay open. During COVID
19 we suspended our paint, cosmetic paint. So, we
20 continued to respond to making sure to remove mold
21 and encapsulate mold, but all cosmetic paint got
22 suspended during that time which then caused a
23 backlog to grow that now is taking us years to
24 handle.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Just for clarity, I just want to know what is responsible for the delays in closing mold and leak work orders?

DANIEL GREENE: I could speak-- I mean, there's-- a lot of it is on NYCHA's end. You know, a lot of it has come down to staffing and the amount of work orders that we have to handle. Some of the older work orders, it becomes about getting access. So, we did last year is we started a new program with OCC, because they see the same data that we do. We share all of our data openly. It's incredibly transparent. And what we want to do is reach out to these residents through OCC to determine if work is still needed.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

DANIEL GREENE: Some of those older tickets. And approximately 32 percent of them-- they've reached out to a population of about 8,000 so far, they've made positive connections with, and about 32 percent of that 8,000 are stating they no longer need the water--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

DANIEL GREENE: So, either NYCHA might have done it and didn't document it, or maybe it was

1 painting and they might have done it themselves or
2 they just don't-- some residents just don't want--
3 just don't want painting. So, that would indicate,
4 if you extrapolate that out, there is probably a high
5 percentage. I can't say it's 32 percent. I don't
6 know if that's statistically accurate, but a high
7 percentage of those older tickets that are probably
8 no longer needed. However, mold work orders out of
9 all the work orders at NYCHA have the strictest
10 closure rules of any work order unless you physically
11 get access to the apartment. The verification
12 project has been a way to work with the Baez
13 plaintiffs in a way that might be a slight change to
14 that to be-- I've been at the door of many apartments
15 where if you look on our work order logs, 19
16 attempts, 20 attempts, and the residents get
17 frustrated. They're like, why are you coming back
18 again. These are the stories that you hear about
19 NYCHA going into apartments and taking pictures, and
20 how are they here. This is really annoying. It's a
21 friction. It's annoying for the residents, for us to
22 be in their apartment when we don't need to. So what
23 we need to do is find a way to improve that to make
24 sure that we're meeting the intention of making sure
25

1 that the work is getting done, but also not doing--
2 keeping things open indefinitely which causes a lot
3 of confusion, resource. We direct our resources in
4 the less sufficient ways, because we have to send a
5 staff person up there to verify it, and that person
6 could be in another apartment doing repairs. So,
7 that's something that I think, you know, that we want
8 to continue to work on with OCC, and as part of the
9 Restore and Renew Initiative, verification will be a
10 big part of that as well, because there we're trying
11 to tackle the entire backlog at particular
12 developments. So, at Sotomayor when we leave, they
13 should have zero mold and leak work orders left over,
14 and part of that is making sure that we verify with
15 the resident they still want and need the work, and
16 if they don't want it, then we want to redirect those
17 resources, the residents who so badly need the work,
18 those with temp sinks, missing walls, all those
19 terrible things that we see every single day in our
20 apartments. So, we're really trying to work with OCC
21 to use data to prioritize-- and communication to
22 prioritize our resources.

23
24 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: How many of these
25 units are currently offline due to mold?

DANIEL GREENE: That's an interesting question. So, I don't-- let me just pull up to the right page here. So, I don't think we actually have like a tally for mold. I can say, like at certain developments, like Ingersoll Houses, where we have significant roof issues--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] So, you don't have a tally of how many units are offline?

DANIEL GREENE: Of how many have been-- well, we have-- we have a total number that are offline, but not due to mold-- not due to mold.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Not due to mold, okay.

DANIEL GREENE: We have 48 cases where we've removed residents from apartments due to mold and 10 have been returned to the original unit, 20 made a permanent unit transfer and 18 are ongoing. So, that number seems a little bit low to me. We do relocation on a daily basis. One of the things we didn't talk about here is how really relocation has been transformative in NYCHA through lead, through asbestos.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

DANIEL GREENE: And for mold. So we relocate residents pretty much on a daily basis. For lead alone, we're relocating around 200-300 residents a month for lead abatement, and on top of that, we're relocating probably 60 to 80 per month for asbestos abatement, and then as part of that as well, we also have a number of cases per month for mold. We want to get residents out of uninhabitable conditions. We work with hotels. We have a great relocation program, and then we want to move folks out. We also move folks to other hospitality units or we try to facilitate permanent transfers pursuant-- under our TSAP rules if we can do that to get the uninhabitable unit offline, treat it as a vacant apartment, restore it, and then allow that resident to have some relief and live in a better apartment. So, relocation has been transformative. We could also provide you after this hearing the number that are offline due to like repair issues.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Yeah, if we could get that number, I appreciate it. Thank you.

DANIEL GREENE: That's no problem.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Before I go forward with my questions, let me just recognize Council

Member Salaam-- sorry, Council Member Salamanca who's joined us via Zoom. Going back to my questions. How many buildings were identified as needing ventilation upgrades in 2020?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: 1,056.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And how many have been completed?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: 100 percent for roofing upgrades, 100 percent on vent cleaning where we've attempted that resulted in 85 percent access rate.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: And we're about-- we have 100 percent in 334 buildings for volume dampers which resulted in 28,289 dampers being installed, and we're currently working at 392 buildings. I'm sorry, 395 buildings. So, in total right now, we're about 34 percent in on the roll out of that effort.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And what's the timeframe for the remaining upgrades?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: That will be going through 2028.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. And what impact have completed upgrades had on mold reoccurrences?

1 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: We actually see a
2 pretty significant impact. We see a 54 percent
3 reduction in poor ventilation complaints, and 32
4 percent reduction in the bathroom-related for poor
5 ventilation, and one of the key indicators of why we
6 see-- we attribute seeing a reduction in the new
7 volume of cases coming in for mold is certainly the
8 strong-- standard procedure which identifies root
9 causes and does the remediation, but of course, the
10 ventilation upgrades, that was massive.

12 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right, okay. Well,
13 NYCHA's phase one mold and leak action plan from 2020
14 indicated that there would be a phase two mold and
15 leak action plan forthcoming. Has such a phase two
16 plan ever been developed or published, and if so,
17 when can we find it, or if not, why not?

18 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Yeah, we've been
19 working with the Federal Monitor on drafting it, so
20 it's in initial stages.

21 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Alright.

22 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: I don't think we have
23 a date that we could commit to yet, though.

24 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. When it comes
25 to the ombudsperson in OCC, how many ombudsperson

orders has NYCHA received, and how many have been fully complied with?

DANIEL GREENE: So, we treat all of them as orders. So, in OCC's--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] So, how many orders have been--

DANIEL GREENE: [interposing] So, 32-- they've had 32,000.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: We reached about 31,500 residents.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And how many have been fully complied with?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: We're in process of complying. I think right now we have about 500 that are open that we're continuously working. So, they go through a cycle of like coming in and we work with them, and then they get closed out. So, there's always about like 5-600 that we're working at a time.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Well, we've heard today from several residents who learned about the OCC through community groups and other external partners. What type of outreach is being done-- does NYCHA does itself to ensure that residents know about the OCC?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Yeah.

DANIEL GREENE: I'm going to answer the [inaudible] and then refer to you. But correct me if I'm wrong. Every mold receipt that the resident receives, because after they receive their inspection you get a mold receipt-- has the OCC's phone number on it. There's also multiple, like-- it's basically built into the NYCHA structure. So, Elena can talk about it more detailed, but we try to get-- I talk about it all the time. You know, we want people to know about it. Go ahead.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Yeah, yeah. I would-- thank you, Dan. I'm going to just echo that and say that we build in OCC contact information just about any avenue that we have where we're interfaced with residents. So, we do this through CCC. We do this through issuing through the mold receipt whenever we finish an inspection. We issue a mold receipt that indicates the ombudsperson call center contact information. We also had a whole mold campaign that we've done as part of our Mold Action Plan.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: And we've developed content, printed material, web page, as well as

testimonials. We include OCC through it all. My team, the Mold Response Unit team is present in communities and we certainly have a stronger presence during family days where we issue those handbooks--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Okay.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: and promote, again, OCC, and we'll take in cases and--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Thank you.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: [inaudible] work with them.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Does the outreach apply to Section 9 residents as well as PACT residents?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: It does.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: So, what has--

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: [interposing] The--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: been the specific?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: I'm sorry. OCC applies to PACT locations as well.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. And what specific outreach has been done.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: If I may call in--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing]

[inaudible] PACT, the residents of the PACT.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Heather Beck, Deputy Chief for our Real Estate Department to speak more on that side of the operation. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Just before you begin, if you could raise your right hand, please? Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before this committee and to respond honestly to Council Member questions?

HEATHER BECK: I do.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: And then, just before you begin, if you could state your name and title for the record, please.

HEATHER BECK: Of course. My name is Heather Beck. I'm the Deputy Chief Real Estate Officer in the Real Estate Department at NYCHA. Thank you for the question. So, as Elena stated, we do require our partners to share outreach about the OCC to all the residents in the PACT portfolio. This is something we track during predevelopment and after closing. We've created standard fliers for all of our partners to use so there's consistent messaging.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And they're posted up throughout the entire development?

HEATHER BECK: Yeah, they should issue it in the mail to each household, and then-- yeah, I was just at a site last week--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] So you do--

HEATHER BECK: they post it in the--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] mailing or do they post it in the lobby areas of the development?

HEATHER BECK: They do both.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: How do you verify compliance?

HEATHER BECK: We monitor that through our planning meetings with them. We have check-ins with them ahead of conversions to make sure they have mailings prepped, and then we meet with them consistently after conversion to make sure they're following through with that along with a number of other requirements for the program.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Does that outreach-- well, I'm sorry about that. Let me-- has NYCHA heard about a possible resident confusion

between the CCC and the OCC, and does NYCHA do any outreach specifically to correct such confusion and ensure that residents know that the OCC is completely independent of NYCHA?

DANIEL GREENE: Every communication about the OCC that we do says that-- states that they're independent. The OCC also when they receive a call, they require that the resident have a complaint open with the CCC first, because they don't want to be the first impression. They want to make sure the resident have given NYCHA an opportunity to address it before it becomes an OCC case. So, but everything that we do with the OCC always states that they're independent. All of our mailings do, yeah, all of our communication.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Well, has NYCHA considered employing the OCC model in any other areas of its property management?

DANIEL GREENE: We have-- no. We have not, because-- but we have taken ideas from the OCC model to apply them to NYCHA.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

DANIEL GREENE: For example, the team, the MRU team, they're so effective working with the

OCC that we expanded them out to work our court cases which apply like also HPD violations. So, we actually have them now working on court cases throughout the city to ensure--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Okay.

DANIEL GREENE: that we were responding in that measure. The maintenance cares program that I mentioned is also an OCC-style program and that we're escalating internally and tracking internally cases within operations that we believe are in desperate need of repair, relocation, or do that internally. We've seen OCC data models which I work directly with independent analysts on several of the tools that they've built. They're extremely impressive. We've now worked with internal teams at NYCHA to build out similar dashboards to cover other areas of repair. For example, on skilled trades data, maintenance work orders where we've used similar screens and breakdowns of data to help with performance. The scheduling tool that was built by the Federal Monitor is very similar to what we-- OCC tools. So, though we don't have the OCC call center, the OCC model we've used throughout the agency to

1
2 improve our data-driven approach to resident
3 [inaudible]

4 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: When it comes to
5 staff and training, how many skilled trade workers
6 are assigned to mold remediation, and how many
7 maintenance workers are assigned to mold remediation?

8 DANIEL GREENE: So, the answer for
9 skilled trades is all of them.

10 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

11 DANIEL GREENE: So, I'm going to give you
12 the-- I actually asked this question. I knew you were
13 going to ask this question about skilled trades, so I
14 had it sent to me on my phone.

15 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: There you go.

16 DANIEL GREENE: So, yeah. So, I'm going
17 to tell you the skilled trades breakdown. And look,
18 we always need more skilled trades. We have a new
19 special team that the Restore and Renew--

20 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: [interposing] Restore
21 and Renew.

22 DANIEL GREENE: initiative where we hired
23 special skilled trades just focused on mold. So
24 that's one development at a time. Our worker-- our
25 workers are skilled trades who I oversee. They work

on mold every single day. Every maintenance worker works on mold. Caretaker X's works on mold. That's another craft at NYCHA. So, in terms of our skilled trades, our current rundown, and this is our-- this does not include vacancies. These are budgeted headcounts. Some trades get impacted by civil service vacancies. So, brick layers, they're going to do a lot of the concrete work on the ceilings and the bathrooms around mold. There's in Brooklyn-- well, I just got it by borough which is easier. So, brick layers in Manhattan, we got 13. We got 16 in the Bronx, got seven in Queens, Staten Island, and 18 in Brooklyn. For carpenters who are doing the tub enclosure work which is critical to leaks in the bathrooms, they actually are responsible for installing the tub enclosures. Cabinets also get molded, the wooden cabinets, and those also are a big scope for carpenters, and windows. So, we have 76 carpenters in Manhattan. We have 64 in the Bronx. We have 33 in Queens, Staten Island and 72 in Brooklyn. Plasterers-- so, I'm going to-- plasterers is another major trade. This is a trade that-- we have big plaster needs in our developments, but this is a trade that is unique to NYCHA. There really is

not plaster anywhere like-- anywhere else in the city. So it's a very hard trade for us to hire, but in terms of plasters, 78 Manhattan, 63 in the Bronx, seven in-- sorry, that's 29 in Queens, Staten Island and 72 in Brooklyn. And lastly, I'll just do the plumbers unless you want me to get into any others. But the plumbers, obviously critical to leaks. So, in Manhattan we're budgeted for 35 plumbers. Bronx we're budgeted for 36, 13 in Queens and Staten Island, and 43 in Brooklyn. It's not-- this also does not include the supervisors who are not mechanics but oversee the plumbing work. So, that staff-- we added staff under work order reform, but-- and we're always trying to get a few more people here and there, but honestly, it's not enough to meet some of the requirements that we talked about in here.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Well, how many-- how many additional workers does NYCHA need to meet the benchmarks.

DANIEL GREENE: As many as NYCHA can afford. That's how many that we need. You know, we need a lot more, especially plumbers, and painters are a big one, too, because painters do a lot of the mold cleaning under the NYCHA rules.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: So, what are you doing to address the staffing shortage?

DANIEL GREENE: What we're doing-- well, NYCHA's had a budgetary-- a little bit of, you know, budgetary challenge right now. We still are struggling with rent arears that accrued post-COVID. We also have the threats of the funding cuts at the federal level which are certainly very concerning as we follow the news, and so this here, we're not going to be adding any more. It's not in our plans to add any more, other than the Restore and Renew initiative which is adding 32 trades to address those high work order sites, and that will be very helpful. We are on overtime. You know, we are budgeted for overtime, and this year I'm proud to say we're on budget for overtime. But we use overtime extensively every single day for our plumbers. This year, we're focusing our overtime on leak repairs, on mold, on lead, and in addition to that we do a lot of work on turnovers which is also essential for getting residents to live in decent, safe, and sanitary apartments, given the number of transfers that we have.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Alright, okay. Thank you.

DANIEL GREENE: Sorry.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: What training do workers receive on mold remediation, and how often is the training updated and who provides the actual training?

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Sure. Our training is provided by Environmental Education Associates called EEA. When it comes down to our inspectors, they receive a five-day training that evaluates building science, like how-- what is mold, why is it important? It provides an overview on root causes and restoration methods. Our standard procedure has 30 root causes as well as 14 remediation plans. So, it's not simple. It's not just, you know, a few. And they also learn the hand-held, how to be able to work and document the work. They will learn how to use the tools, how to identify mold conditions, and come up with remediation. So, that's-- that's one. Our most popular titles that get trained in that are our superintendents, property maintenance supervisors, our assistant property maintenance supervisors. We've-- in 2022 expanded it to

1 maintenance workers in order to improve our response
2 to perform immediate initial inspection. And then
3 there's, of course, you know, spin-offs like
4 obviously my team at OMAR is all trained in that.
5 that performs inspections and they have various
6 titles. And for skilled trades, anybody that is
7 performing remediations get remediation training. We
8 are about 4,100 trained under remediation, and so
9 that would be your maintenance workers. That would
10 be your caretaker X's [sic] that would perform mold
11 removal. That would be your skilled trades that are
12 doing this work. And there they will also learn
13 about the importance of mold, proper remediation
14 practices, proper containment, proper PPE to make
15 sure to respond to it accordingly.

17 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Now, just to
18 move onto some budget questions. What was NYCHA's
19 budget for mold and leak remediation for FY24 and
20 what is the budget also for 2025?

21 ELENA TENCHIKOVA: I could tell you on
22 2025 right now. We could go back on 2024, if that's
23 okay. don't have it in front of me. But we have
24 about \$20 million in operating right now. We have
25 116 staff members on my team, and we have a \$55

million federal capital budget over the next five years if all goes well.

DANIEL GREENE: And I want make one point. That does not include the money that we spend on our skilled trades. Our staffing for skilled trades--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] And how much is that?

DANIEL GREENE: So, overall operations, I don't want to say a number off the top. I'll provide it to you as a follow up, but all of our trades are funded throughout the City. So, every-- we have in-house trades. We also have our vendor budget that we use in operations. It's a very high number. I just don't want to misquote it. So, I'll get you the number for 2024 and--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Is the budget sufficient to achieve compliance?

DANIEL GREENE: I mean, again, the answer-- I would say the answer is no. We want-- we want more funding. We need more funding to address these apartments.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Now, when it comes to the PACT, what happens to pending mold complaints when a development converts over to PACT?

HEATHER BECK: Thank you for that question. The open leak and mold work orders are transitioned to the PACT partners, and they are required to create a plan to abate those.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: How is that done? Can you walk me through? How do you transfer it over?

HEATHER BECK: How the work orders are transferred?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Yes.

HEATHER BECK: The Compliance Department works with the Real Estate Department to prepare the work order report, and those are just automatically provided to the partner team ahead of--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] So, is the RAD/PACT developer, are they required to have a system in place, a ticket system in place? And is that verified first before anything's transferred over?

HEATHER BECK: Yes, all of our partner teams work to create their own work order system

1 ahead of the conversion to make sure they're ready to
2 address work orders, new ones that arise that after
3 conversion, and they are required to put together a
4 plan for the work orders that are transferring from
5 NYCHA to the new property management team. And then
6 the NYCHA Compliance and Real Estate Department will
7 work with the partner to ensure that they're
8 following their plan and close out the work orders
9 that are transitioned to them.
10

11 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Okay. And the
12 work orders that are transitioned over, do they
13 maintain the same work order number that was given
14 initially under NYCHA or does that change in the new
15 system?

16 HEATHER BECK: I don't think I have that
17 level of detail. I would assume they put them in
18 their own system.

19 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Because we've known
20 situations where some of the RAD/PACT developers
21 haven't had a ticket system for close to two to three
22 years, and so-- and residents have kind of been left
23 in the dark over, you know, those existing work
24 orders that were put in prior to the conversion
25 taking place. So, what is being done to keep the

resident informed about the work orders that are being transitioned over to these new developers?

HEATHER BECK: Thank you for that question and that comment. I think our role after the conversion through our asset management team is really to make sure that the team is conducting the repairs as they planned and outlined, and that they're closing the work orders appropriately. They need to work with the households, each household, to gain access to those units to conduct the work and complete the work order. So, that communication will happen directly through the property management team to that household in a number of ways, and that can look similar to the way that NYCHA does it, but it is direct outreach and engagement with that household. If they're to get in the unit to conduct the work, they need to you know, have access to the unit.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. So, how does oversight look over the PACT when it comes to mold remediation?

HEATHER BECK: Yeah, thank you for that question, and I do think it's important for us to just take--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] And then also, how do you maintain it, because that's been--

HEATHER BECK: [interposing] Yep.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: a concern too, as well.

HEATHER BECK: Yeah, thank you. Just to take a step back, I do want to note that the PACT developments and the PACT properties are under a different agreement through the Baez settlement, and so that settlement agreement was effective late December 2021. We call that the Baez PACT settlement. And really, that agreement ensures that NYCHA residents in converted properties are afforded protections that align with the intent of the original Baez decree or agreement. But they are different requirements, and NYCHA's role at the PACT sites after conversion is significantly different than when we are the active property manager. As you know, we require our partners to submit monthly reports to the Real Estate Department related to a number of things. So, that's related to maintenance and repairs, to tenancy and to construction updates while the developments are under construction. As part of their tenancy-- or sorry. As part of their

1 maintenance and repairs reporting, they report to us
2 on their leak and mold work orders. Under the PACT
3 agreement, we require that partners are responding to
4 and abating leak and mold work orders within 30 days,
5 and we're able to monitor that through those monthly
6 reports. That information is shared--

7
8 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Did the
9 developer or the new management company reports--
10 does a monthly report?

11 HEATHER BECK: To us, yeah, and that
12 information's also shared online through our public
13 dashboard. You can see that information kind of
14 rolled up in a quarterly basis, but the reports--

15 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] So,
16 those-- those are existing orders. I mean, existing
17 orders.

18 HEATHER BECK: Requirements.

19 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Work orders, yeah.

20 HEATHER BECK: Some of-- the existing
21 work orders that are transitioned are just related to
22 leak and mold. The other work orders are work orders
23 that are created for the project or the development
24 by residents on a monthly basis.
25

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And then, okay. So those will be sort of the ones that are created, okay.

HEATHER BECK: If I can just add, I do want to share that the monthly reports are shared with our Compliance Department.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

HEATHER BECK: And the Independent Mold Analyst and the Independent Data Analyst, and so those are all reviewed not just by the Real Estate Department, but the mold and leak ones are shared with the IMA and the IDA to ensure that the partners are closing those appropriately within the required timelines, and they include information on the work orders in their quarterly reports.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Alright. Well, that concludes my questions. Thank you again, guys.

HEATHER BECK: Thanks.

ELENA TENCHIKOVA: Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: I'm going to open the hearing up for public testimony. Now, I want to remind members of the public that this is a government proceeding and decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall

1 remain silent at all times. The witness table is
2 reserved for people who wish to testify. No video
3 recording or photography is allowed from the witness
4 table. Members of the public may not present audio
5 or video recordings as testimony, but may submit
6 transcripts of such recordings to the Sergeant of
7 Arms for inclusion in the hearing record. If you
8 wish to speak at today's hearing, please fill out an
9 appearance card with the Sergeant of Arms and wait to
10 be recognized. When recognized, you will have two
11 minutes to speak on today's hearing topic. And if
12 you wish to submit written statement or additional
13 written testimony for the record, please give a copy
14 to the Sergeant of Arms. You may also email written
15 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72
16 hours of this hearing. Audio and video recordings
17 will not be accepted. So, now we will begin with the
18 Reverend Getulio, Jr., Getulio. We got you, sir.
19 Good, Rev. Good to see you. And we also have
20 Reverend Francis Skelly. Thank you. Two good
21 Reverends. If you want to-- you want to flip a coin?
22 Which-- you go first. Thank you. You may begin your
23 testimony.
24
25

REVEREND GETULIO CRUZ: I'm Reverend

Getulio Cruz, Jr., Senior Pastor Monte Sion Christian Church and Co-Chair of Ban Together, Metro IAF. Half my congregation live in NYCHA housing along the East River, and we've been organizing for justice in public housing since 1996. And here's the good news, progress is possible. For years, tenants fought just to get basic repairs. NYCHA's response kept getting worse, but we didn't give up. We organized, eventually we filed the Baez versus NYCHA lawsuit, and when the Consent Decree was revised in 2018/2019, things finally began to shift. That decree brought real oversight, Independent Mold Analysts, IMA, Microecologies identified what needed fixing, Independent Data analysts-- Stout showed how to better use NYCHA's resources, and the Ombudsperson Call Center started getting-- which is the OCC-- started getting mold and leak repairs done. The result, over 31,500 families have received real repairs from the OCC alone, and tens of thousands more have benefited from other Baez-related work. We worked hand-in-hand with OCC, IDA, IMA and committed NYCHA staff like Dan Greene and Elena Tenchikova to make this happen. But too many tenants are still

1 waiting months even years for help, and that's why
2 we're pushing for more. Just last week, Metro IAF
3 brought together over 1,750 people, tenant leaders,
4 clergy, elected officials, Assembly Member Mamdani
5 and former Governor Cuomo committed \$100 million to
6 expand the OCC model and appoint a Deputy Mayor to
7 ensure accountability. This investment will clear
8 the repair backlog, modernize NYCHA's scheduling
9 systems, expand successful pilots like the Building
10 Line Initiative, and ensure all repairs, not just
11 mold and leaks, are done right. We know what works.
12 We seen it. Now, we need the City Council to help
13 scale it. Father Skelly is next.

14
15 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: You can con-- are you
16 finished?

17 REVEREND GETULIO CRUZ: Well, Father
18 Skelly will now share how tenants are connecting with
19 the OCC and how it can help even more tenants improve
20 their quality of life.

21 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you for your
22 testimony. Father Skelly?

23 REVEREND SKELLY: Good morning. My name
24 is Father Frank Skelly. I'm a Redemptorist Priest
25 assigned to the Archdioceses of New York. I have

1 ministered in East Harlem for 15 years and in the
2 South Bronx for 20 years. Both parishes have many
3 NYCHA residents. I became a member of Metro IAF in
4 1994, and in the year 2000 began heavy involvement in
5 issues with NYCHA. I served a parish in Brooklyn for
6 four years where there was no public housing, Sunset
7 Park. When I came back to the Bronx in 2023, a
8 faithful parishioner who always came to church
9 approached me and asked, "Are you still the NYCHA
10 priest?" And then told me about a recurring leak and
11 mold. When I asked did you call the OCC, she
12 responded, "What?" She said she had several tickets
13 and then called the CCC. I gave her the OCC number
14 and received a fruit basket the following Sunday,
15 because the OCC resolved her problem with the leak
16 from above. Another parishioner described the OCC as
17 an answer to prayer when a similar leak from above
18 was taken care of. Reverend Cruz mentioned the Baez
19 case and Consent Decree. Marilel [sp?] Baez was a
20 parishioner of Immaculate Conception in the South
21 Bronx. The legal proceedings were a difficult
22 journey and finally resulted in a Consent Decree and
23 the creation of the OCC. In retrospect, it might not
24 have been the best acronym since it sounds so much
25

1 like the CCC, which is the call center for NYCHA.
2 People do get confused. The City Council, as we've
3 heard, introduced legislation requiring the City to
4 inform NYCHA residents of the new call center for the
5 mold ombudsman. At times, it seems that this
6 legislation has been effective as some of my sermons.
7 Pastors like to think that the congregation hangs on
8 your every word, but that is not the case most times.
9 Fliers in the church bulletin gave the new number for
10 the OCC. It talked about the OCC, and still people
11 asked are they ever going to fix the mold. We all
12 need to do a better job in making the OCC known. I
13 was recently at a RAD/PACT meeting and there was
14 about 100 people there in Melrose Houses. I asked how
15 many of you know about the OCC? This was in June.
16 Two raised their hand. The two were my church, in my
17 church. And it came up about expanding the OCC. I
18 have suggested that the OCC should be expanded to
19 pests and waste. Pest and waste are also a part of
20 the asthma situation. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you for your
23 testimony and your great advocacy. I know you were
24 both involved with the Baez Consent Decree, and I
25 want to know what kind of outreach would you like to

see NYCHA do to make sure that residents know about the OCC? And based off of your experience, do you feel like you've seen the goals and the ideas of the Baez settlement implemented on the ground in the decade since the settlement was approved?

REVEREND GETULIO CRUZ: Actually, we're seeing a big improvement.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

REVEREND GETULIO CRUZ: But communication is paramount. You know, improving the communication is very important. We would like to see the IT Department in NYCHA, because they have their own IT, to be as creative and as responsive as the OCC is.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. Reverend Skelly?

REVEREND FRANCIS SKELLY: Yeah, I would agree with Reverend Cruz. There has been-- I've been with this for 25 years now. Originally, there was great pushback from NYCHA. The present group that we're working with there's some pushback, but it's vastly improved. It's vastly improved. And again, Ritchie Torres has done-- made videos about the OCC. We've tried all kinds of things, but it doesn't seem to hit the people.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

REVEREND FRANCIS SKELLY: You know, you can say it, and then they come-- and again, I was just recently in an apartment and they were showing me mold, and I said, did you call the OCC? And I gave the person the number, because I have it on my phone. So, there's really a lack of, you know, communication. As I mentioned, you'd like to think that people are listening. They're not.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

REVEREND FRANCIS SKELLY: Until they have a leak, and then they come looking what's the solution.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: What are your thoughts on the current implementation of the ombudsperson and the OCC, and do you think there are ways to improve that model?

REVEREND FRANCIS SKELLY: As I've said, I think it could be expanded to pests and waste. It's a working model.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

REVEREND FRANCIS SKELLY: And anybody I've referred to the OCC comes back and thanks me.

REVEREND GETULIO CRUZ: And I'm glad that NYCHA, you know, through Daniel Greene and everybody else that's really-- cares about the tenants, they're learning a lot and, you know, using a lot of what they're learning from the OCC. But we want to see the OCC expand, but of course, you got to provide-- not you, but people have to provide the resources, and they do need money to do those capital repairs and that's very important.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And what additional changes would you like to see NYCHA make with regard to mold and leak remediation?

REVEREND GETULIO CRUZ: To get the leaks, they already got the leak standard.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Right.

REVEREND GETULIO CRUZ: Finalized. It's implementing it, doing the training, everything they did with the mold, if they do with the leak, that's going to be significant.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay.

REVEREND FRANCIS SKELLY: Yeah, and again, I know a lot of capital improvement is needed. These buildings are old. The piping is old, and this is one of the things with RAD/PACT, when they're

taking on the building they have to put in new piping. Sometimes that's not happening.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: So true. I guess that's a good question for NYCHA.

REVEREND GETULIO CRUZ: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you.

REVEREND FRANCIS SKELLY: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay, we will now turn to the remote testimony. Once your name is called, a member of our staff will unmute you, and the Sergeant of Arms will give you the go-ahead to begin. Please wait for the Sergeant to announce that you may begin before delivering your testimony. We will now begin with Yolanda Moore.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Ms. Moore?

YOLANDA MOORE: Can you hear me?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: We can hear you.

YOLANDA MOORE: Alright. Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Chair and Committee Members. My name is Yolanda Moore, and I am the EBC leader as well as a long-time resident of New York City Housing Authority. I lived in New York City housing since 1972 and currently reside at East New York Boulevard

Houses. In 2020, Boulevard Houses underwent a significant transformation when it converted from Section 9 to RAD/PACT. After the completion of the RAD/PACT conversion, major renovations were undertaken. However, once these renovations were finished, tenants at the Boulevard Houses, including myself, began experiencing persistent and severe issues with mold, water leaks throughout the building, as well as serious other problems. The presence of mold and ongoing water leaks has significantly impacted the quality of life for many residents here. The issues posed health risks and create challenging living conditions, especially for families and the elderly tenants. To address these problems, the residents of Boulevard Houses with the support of EBC and Metro IAF organized and engaged with the OCC. We have relied heavily on the OCC for assistance. The OCC has proven to be an invaluable resource, helping tenants navigate the process of reporting and resolving mold and water leak issues, advocating for necessary repairs and ensuring our voices are heard by housing management and city officials. Boulevard Houses has a long way to go before life returns to normal. We continue to push

management to resolve challenges such as plumbing issues, heating problems, security, and are ongoing to push them on the threat of mass evictions, as well as difficulties in communicating between management and residents. However, we are grateful to the OCC for improving our living conditions.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: You may continue.

YOLANDA MOORE: We appreciate-- we appreciate the committee's attention to these ongoing concerns and urge continued oversight and support to ensure that all residents of Boulevard Houses and all public housing tenants can live in safe, healthy, and well-maintained homes. Thank you for your time and consideration. Thank you, my favorite Councilman.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: I have a question for you, Ms. Moore.

YOLANDA MOORE: Sure.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Based on your experience, do you feel like you have seen the-- hold on. I'm sorry about that. Let me go back to my-- Sorry about that. I do apologize. If there is one recommendation you would like to make to NYCHA to improve its handling of mold and leak complaints, what would it be?

YOLANDA MOORE: To enforce oversight accountability on developers and to implement the OCC system as a permanent system in getting rid of mold and water leaks. They need to really enforce oversight accountability on developers when it comes mold and leaks or any kind of maintenance issue.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And thus far, I know you speak to a lot of residents in Boulevard and you advocate for a lot of the residents in Boulevard Houses. What would you say would be the overall experience? Would you say it would be positive with NYCHA's mold remediation, remediating units?

YOLANDA MOORE: You mean the renovations?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Well, in this situation, the renovations?

YOLANDA MOORE: What's the positive?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Yes, what's the positive?

YOLANDA MOORE: It's-- I don't have an answer for that right now, because we're dealing with so many issues, and we attained more issues after the renovations. The mold and water leaks became doubled and tripled after the renovations. So, I don't have an answer about anything positive as of yet, but I do

have positive that OCC's system is working to resolve those issues.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And from your knowledge, has there-- was there ever a overhaul of the plumbing at Boulevard Houses?

YOLANDA MOORE: Not--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: [interposing] Was that part of the work scope?

YOLANDA MOORE: We had no plumbing--

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Are you familiar with the overall overhaul of the plumbing system or the piping.

YOLANDA MOORE: No overhaul of the plumbing system was done at Boulevard Houses during the renovation. We had no plumbing upgrades done, none.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: And would you say that has led to the persistent mold and leaking?

YOLANDA MOORE: Absolutely. We believe so. The tenants believe so, absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Alright, well thank you so much, Ms. Moore, and thank you for your advocacy.

YOLANDA MOORE: Thank you, Councilman.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: We will now proceed to Stephanie Pitts.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: You may begin.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Ms. Pitts? Stephanie Pitts, you may begin your testimony.

STEPHANIE PITTS: I'm sorry. Hello?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Hey, how you doing, Ms. Pitts?

STEPHANIE PITTS: I'm good. How are you? I thought I had unmuted myself.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: It's alright.

STEPHANIE PITTS: I'm sorry. I've been living in New York City housing for over 50 years, and I was having problems with leaks. For the last three years I was begin housing to come into my apartment. It wasn't until I took them to court, and I was contacted by a Ms. Loconia [sp?] Jones from the Mold Response Unit. When I tell you I was blessed when I was contacted by Ms. Jones, she informed me that she was working on my case and that would be an understatement. Ms. Jones took her job seriously. She went above and beyond to make sure my problem was solved. She was caring, concerned about my wellbeing and the condition of my apartment. Ms. Jones and her

1 team were very-- kept in contact with me throughout
2 the procedure of my apartment being renovated-- being
3 done, not renovated, being fixed for the mold. I am
4 a senior with breathing problems, and it wasn't until
5 Ms. Connie [sic] and the mold system reached out that
6 my apartment was fully done, and if I can complain
7 about those that don't work, I can complain about
8 those that do work. And the Mold and Response Unit
9 went beyond their job in helping me get my apartment
10 together.
11

12 CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. If there
13 was one recommendation you could make to NYCHA to
14 improve its handling of mold and leak complaints,
15 what would it be?

16 STEPHANIE PITTS: I would to say to come
17 out and check the apartments thoroughly. I would say
18 to keep in contact with the tenants, because we put
19 in tickets and what they do, they send people out and
20 they put band aids on it, and that's what was
21 happening with me. They kept sending someone out and
22 they wasn't doing the right thing, and then once Ms.-
23 - the Mold and Response Unit got in touch, it was
24 like everything went into effect. Because I even
25 went to the courts and told the judge how pleased I

was with the work that the Mold and Response Unit had done, because if they don't look out for the seniors, and not only the seniors, those that live in housing, and we have a breathing problem, who else is going to look out for us?

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you for your testimony.

STEPHANIE PITTS: You're welcome. And I would say that the Mold and Response Unit, one thing I can truly say, they take their job seriously, they really do, and they're concerned about the tenants.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Alright, so now we're going to-- I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize Council Member Avilés who has joined us. Now, we'll move on to Donna Elden [sp?]. Okay, we have actually an in-person testimony from Christopher Leon Johnson. Before you begin, Christopher. Just want to read this clause again. I'm opening up the hearing to public testimony again. I remind members that-- members of the public that this is a governmental proceeding and decorum shall be observed at all times. As such, members of the public shall remain silent at all times. The witness table is reserved

1 for people who wish to testify. No video recording
2 or photography is allowed for the witness table.
3 Members of the public may not present audio or video
4 recordings as testimony, but may submit transcripts
5 of such recordings to the Sergeant of Arms for
6 inclusion into the hearing record, and if you wish to
7 speak at today's hearing, please feel free to fill
8 out the appearance card with the Sergeant of Arms.
9 Christopher Leon Johnson, you are recognized. We
10 can-- press--

12 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Oh, yeah,
13 hello, Chair Banks, Chair Avilés. My name is
14 Christopher Leon Johnson. Just want to say here today
15 that I know that NYCHA does their best to mitigate
16 the mold in their developments. People that try to
17 work with NYCHA tell me that they do their best to
18 mitigate the mold in the developments. My feeling is
19 that there's certain developments that are really
20 left behind and like Chelsea and Fulton, because
21 what's going on is that what they want to do is find
22 a way to demolish those two developments. I'm
23 calling on the City Council to make a public
24 statement to make it where that NYCHA makes-- keeps
25 Chelsea and Fulton public and because there's a lot

of things that are going on that-- in those developments. Not only with just mold, and that's only part of it. It's the quality of life. It's the smells of the hallways, and our Council Member over there, Erik Bottcher, refuses to address it, because he's down with closing down NYCHA to give to the developers. I'm just saying here today that we need to keep NYCHA public. We cannot prioritize NYCHA and they-- that's what I got to say. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Thank you for your testimony.

CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BANKS: Okay. If we have inadvertently missed anyone that has registered to testify today and has yet to-- have been called, please use the Zoom raise hand function if you're testifying remotely, and you will be called in order that your hand has been raised. If you are testifying in-person, please come to the dais. Seeing none, I will now close the hearing. Thank you to all the members of the administration and the members of the public who have joined us today to discuss this very important topic. This hearing is now adjourned.

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COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date November 12, 2025