

Testimony from NYCHA's Chief Operating Officer Eva Trimble
Doors, Locks, and Lights: the Infrastructure of Resident Safety at NYCHA
Committee on Public Housing with the Committee on Aging
Thursday, November 30, 2023 – 1 p.m.
New York City Hall Council Chambers

Chairs Alexa Avilés and Crystal Hudson, members of the committees on Public Housing and Aging, other distinguished members of the City Council, NYCHA residents, community advocates, and members of the public: good afternoon. I am Eva Trimble, NYCHA's Chief Operating Officer. I am pleased to be joined by Shaan Mavani, Chief Asset and Capital Management Officer; Lauren Gray, Senior Vice President of Quality Assurance, Safety, and Technical Programs; and Chief James Secreto, Vice President for Public Safety and Security.

The safety of residents is a fundamental part of our mission, so thank you for this opportunity to discuss our efforts to enhance the safety and security of NYCHA developments.

Safety Infrastructure at NYCHA Developments

We recognize the important role of security cameras and other security enhancements like layered access controls and exterior lighting, so we are always seeking funding to increase the scale of these measures across our portfolio. Since 2014, NYCHA has expended about \$600 million on cameras and other security infrastructure – funding that's generously provided by City Council members and other elected officials, including the Manhattan District Attorney, as well as through initiatives like the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety.

More than 18,500 CCTV cameras are currently installed at NYCHA developments across the city – they are placed strategically at building entrances, roof landings, stairwells, and other exterior and interior areas where illegal activity could occur or unauthorized entrants could gain access. When installing sidewalk sheds for public protection or other structures, we always try to have them designed to minimize blocking security cameras or creating dark, unsafe spaces. If we learn about a camera or lighting that inadvertently becomes blocked due to sidewalk shedding or any other obstruction, we immediately work to re-position the camera, lighting, or obstruction to a new location.

In the past decade, NYCHA has installed nearly 10,000 exterior lights at 87 developments. We've also installed layered access controls – new entrance intercoms, key fobs, and doors – at more than 400 buildings across 80 developments.

Considering the massive capital needs across the Authority – currently totaling more than \$78 billion – we appreciate the funding from the Council and other partners which enables us to install these vital quality of life and security enhancements. To help maintain our investments in layered access controls and ensure their functionality, we issued protocols for staff on monitoring and repairing damaged doors promptly, work that is both costly and time consuming. Our protocol is to also alert the NYPD in the event of a nonfunctioning door.

Collaborating on Safety and Security

NYCHA's Office of Safety and Security is dedicated to the safety of residents, through its monitoring of security systems and policies as well as partnerships with experts like the NYPD. We work closely with the NYPD on many aspects of crime prevention and security enhancement, including the placement of CCTV cameras and exterior lighting.

The Office of Safety and Security is also working with property management and resident leadership to assess potential safety hazards at our properties through inspections – as well as the analysis of data, reports, and resident input – to develop solutions for any issues.

Addressing Intrinsic Challenges to Make Progress for Residents

As we strive to address the growing challenges of aging buildings that have not received the investment they've needed for decades, the safety and quality of life of residents remain at the heart of our mission.

We appreciate the support of our partners, including the NYPD and the City Council, as we work with residents to foster safe communities at NYCHA. We are especially thankful for funding from Council Members for security enhancements such as cameras, exterior lights, and layered access controls. We hope that you will continue to partner with us on these efforts, as we need funding to not only install this infrastructure but also to maintain it.

Although we commit all available resources and work with our partners to promote the safety of NYCHA communities, there is always more that can and must be done. Thank you for your support as we continue to make progress for residents. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
BRAD LANDER

**Testimony of New York City Comptroller Brad Lander
New York City Council Committee on Public Housing
Oversight – Doors, Locks and Lights: The Infrastructure of Resident Safety at NYCHA**

October 30, 2023

Thank you Chair Aviles and members of the New York City Council Committee on Public Housing for the opportunity to testify on NYCHA's safety infrastructure.

A year and a half ago, my office kicked off an engagement effort to hear directly from NYCHA residents about the most pressing issues in their developments by attending family days, hosting roundtables across the five boroughs, and collecting hundreds of surveys. Many residents flagged significant security concerns including chronic issues with broken doors and locks.

In response, over 100 auditors took to the field and visited every NYCHA development and checked the physical condition of doors and locks in August and September of 2022. Auditors visited 262 developments and were alarmed to find the following:

- 36.8% of residential building entrance doors were propped open or unlocked
- 40.1% of entrance door locks were broken
- 37.5% of rear side doors were propped open or unlocked
- 28.5% of rear or side door locks were broken

The results of this review in 2022 found conditions much worse than in 2018, when the Comptroller's auditors undertook a similar review. Between 2018 and 2022, the number of entrance doors propped open and/or had broken locks increased dramatically from 23.5% in 2018 to 57.9% in 2022.

Our 2018 report recommended that NYCHA implement the following recommendations: (1) repair or replace damaged exterior doors, (2) regularly inspect all exterior doors and maintain all doors and locks in good working order and (3) ensure that when exterior doors are obstructed or unsecured, maintenance staff are immediately made aware.

The 2022 review resulted in our auditors reissuing many of these recommendations to NYCHA. In March 2023 when NYCHA was asked by the Comptroller's Office for the status of recommendations, they reported that they implemented all of the recommendations. However, our office and other elected officials continue to hear from residents of ongoing and long-standing issues.

Our 2022 field review made clear that NYCHA did not fully implement the recommendations made in 2018, and continuing complaints since the 2022 review raise concerns that the problems remain. For example, as recently as this week, we heard from a resident that most of the doors at Jefferson Houses were opened, not secured, and the intercom did not work.

We stress that NYCHA must urgently and consistently follow through in implementing these recommendations. While we understand NYCHA's dire financial straits, our office voices our concerns that repairs are not adequately done even when funding is allocated. We also understand the issues extend

beyond the doors themselves. Residents inform us that doors are often propped open because replacement keys are too expensive, and we urge NYCHA to make replacements more accessible. However, these worsening results overall do not represent one-off challenges, but a deeper culture of improper maintenance without quality assurance mechanisms.

We urge NYCHA to listen to the voices of many residents who shared the impacts these security issues have on their daily lives, and what it means to live without a sense of security in their own homes. Thank you for your consideration, and our office welcomes any questions or elaboration on our recent field review.



**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING JOINTLY WITH NYC COUNCIL ON AGING
TESTIMONY RE: Oversight - Doors, Locks and Lights: the Infrastructure of Resident Safety at NYCHA.**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the New York City Council Committees on Public Housing and Aging.

My name is Iziah Thompson. I am a Senior Policy Analyst at the Community Service Society of New York (CSS). The Community Service Society of New York (CSS) works with and for New Yorkers to promote economic opportunity and champion an equitable city and state. Since 1843, CSS has powered change through a strategic combination of research, services, and advocacy to make New York more livable for people facing economic insecurity.

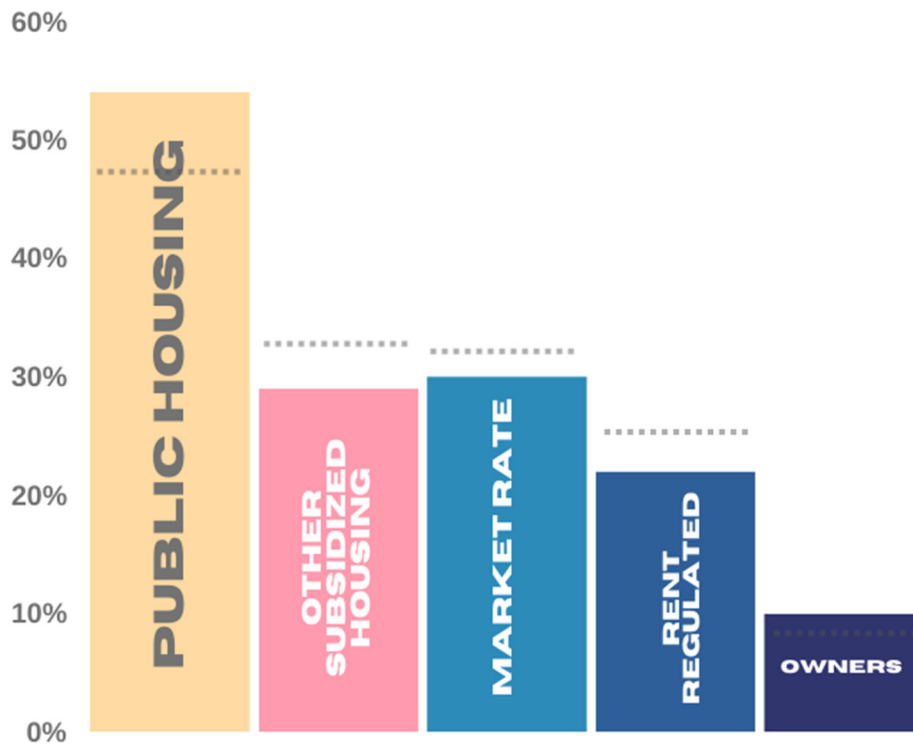
Last year, CSS carried out its annual survey of New Yorkers with a focus on capturing the experience and needs of low-income residents, including those in public housing. We found that in 2022, more than half of NYCHA residents said that properly working exterior door locks, intercoms, and buzzers were a concern.

We compared this across various housing types and found that access to a safe and secure dwelling is a strictly public housing issue in NYC. Public housing residents were:

- 2.5 times more likely than rent regulated households to have this issue with exterior doors
- More than 4 times more likely than market rate households
- And 12 times more likely than homeowners

This data matches with the on the ground reality we see. In the past year I have visited public housing developments in the Bronx, Queens, Manhattan, and Brooklyn, and have consistently found doors ajar, broken, and in disrepair. I've attended multiple resident association meetings where residents describe a situation where NYCHA spends money on new doors, only to have outsiders break them so that they no longer close. This occurs again and again across the city and in none of these cases were more modern resilient doors installed, despite the fact that residents have complained about the poor quality and deficiencies of contractors used in the past.

We asked New Yorkers if they had properly working exterior door locks, buzzers or intercoms...



**The dotted line represents the percentage of only low-income respondents.*

While it is disconcerting to see, we can understand that modernization of heating and replacing old pipes and roofs are capital intensive fixes that we continue to call for more funding on from local, state, and federal elected officials. However, it is beyond our understanding why the basic provision of a protected entry and exit way can't be maintained for public housing residents.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share what we've learned and for your attention to this pressing issue. We will continue to collect data on this issue.



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Testimony of University Settlement before the New York City Council

Joint Oversight Hearing: “Doors, Locks and Lights: the Infrastructure of Resident Safety at NYCHA”

Committee on Public Housing, Chair Alexa Avilés,
Committee on Aging, Chair Crystal Hudson

Submitted by Rohan Lalla,
Case Manager, University Settlement

November 30, 2023

Chair Avilés and Chair Hudson, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

My name is Rohan Lalla, and I am a case manager with University Settlement Project Home, a non-profit organization that offers anti-eviction, and homelessness prevention services, and housing counseling to low-income residents.

My organization works with countless NYCHA residents living in Manhattan and Brooklyn who are struggling with housing issues, such as rental disputes and arrears; lack of repairs; and safety and infrastructure problems. NYCHA needs to take urgent action to improve its physical conditions which threaten its residents’ safety daily.

We work primarily in the Lower East Side, Fort Greene, and East New York. NYCHA residents across these neighborhoods are concerned with the state and upkeep of their buildings: the lights in the hallways flicker, the elevators are often broken down, entrance doors don’t lock to keep trespassers out. These conditions gravely imperil tenants, especially those who are elderly and disabled. NYCHA, unfortunately, has proven to be unresponsive and understaffed with regard to repairs and tenant complaints, a situation that should be blamed on both underfunding and mismanagement.

Not only do the state of public and shared spaces in NYCHA developments make tenants unsafe, so do the conditions in NYCHA’s individual units. My colleagues and I have seen NYCHA drag its feet on repairs that threaten health and safety.

I have personally interacted with NYCHA residents who live with severe health hazards in their apartments daily. One of my clients, a disabled amputee residing with her two daughters who are both disabled as well, lives in Breukelen Houses in East New York. She has been living in a unit that tested positive for toxic levels of asbestos in September. NYCHA has continually delayed the scheduled repairs and apartment transfers for this family.

LEAD. ACT. IMPACT. 领导。行动。影响。 LIDERA. ACTÚA. IMPACTA. 领导。行动。影响。 अगुवाई कर रहा हूँ और DIRIGEZ. AGISSEZ. IMPACTEZ. 领导。行动。影响。 ЛІДІТЬ. ДІЙТЕ. ВПЛИВ. 领导。行动。影响。



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Another family in Vladeck Houses in Lower East Side, two elderly retirees, have had a severe mold issue in their apartment since September. Again, no action has been taken besides inspections. Photos show the entire ceiling covered in mold, garbage piles right outside of the couple’s window, and a severe leak with rancid water leaking through the door. NYCHA has failed to do root cause repairs, forcing the couple to move out of the unit and live with their daughter while still paying rent to the Housing Authority.

These are anecdotal cases that I have witnessed and advocated for. Aggregated data details a larger, systemic problem. The Ombudsperson Call Center (OCC), a court-appointed group formed to assist residents for leak and mold complaints that were not being adequately addressed or resolved by NYCHA, has participated in 67,000 calls with NYCHA residents since 2019. Between 2022 and 2023, the OCC averaged 234 new mold and leak complaints per month, 50% of which were classified as severe conditions. The average days to resolve resident-reported complaints to the OCC, again, 50% of which were severe conditions, ranged from 168 days to 224 days. This was caused by recurrence failures, or inability to meet scheduled appointments, and craftsmanship, where NYCHA contractors and vendors failed to conduct root cause repairs, making it so that tickets had to be re-opened.

NYCHA residents are among the most vulnerable populations in New York City. The majority of our clients are low-income, minority tenants who receive public benefits. They form the constituency of many of members sitting on these committees, and they deserve better than what they are being given right now.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions or connect you with the families I support. You can reach me at:
 rlalla@universitysettlement.org

To whom it may concern,

Since August 2023, at the:

Good Samaritan Men's Shelter
247 49th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11220

I've been seeking a housing voucher in order to move out of the mens shelter, into my own apartment.

I havent even spoken to or submitted documents for a voucher, with the representative: Davonne Rhymer.

Staff are constantly complacent or incognito- not at their post working- gone and negligent of residents.

Firstly, I am advocating for myself as I learn about the housing process in NYC. Secondly, I will obtain written signatures of individuals within the good Samaritan shelter, regarding negligence due to staff- not responding to taxpayers request regarding basic needs- food, housing, and health.

I am seeking at least an appointment- to obtain my housing voucher- in order to start searching for housing within the city.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shahar

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Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 11.30.23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maryanne Mullany

Address: 1 Centre Street NY NY 10007

I represent: Brad Lander, NYC Comptroller

Address: 1 Centre Street NY NY 10007

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Name: Brelyn Garden

Address: 2 Lafayette St.

I represent: NYC Aging - Associate Commissioner

Address: 2 Lafayette St.

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Name: Shaan Marvani

Address: Chief Asset & Capital Management Officer

I represent: (NYCHA)

Address: _____

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

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Date: _____

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Name: Lauren Gray

Address: _____

I represent: NYCHA, SVP of Quality Assurance,

Address: Safety, & Technical Programs

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Name: Eva Trimble

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I represent: NYCHA, Chief Operating Officer

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Date: Thursday Nov 30, 23

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Name: Iziah Thompson

Address: _____

I represent: The Community Service Society of NY

Address: _____

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Name: James Secreto

Address: VP for Public Safety and Security

I represent: (NYCHA)

Address: (NYCHA)

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