

**TESTIMONY FROM NYCHA'S EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF CAPITAL PROJECTS  
STEVEN LOVCI  
NYCHA'S CAPITAL SPENDING OF CITY FUNDS  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CAPITAL BUDGET  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2021 – 2 PM  
REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 3)**

Chairs Alicka Ampry-Samuel and Helen Rosenthal, members of the Committee on Public Housing and Subcommittee on Capital Budget, other distinguished members of the City Council, residents, and members of the public: good afternoon. My name is Steven Lovci, NYCHA's Executive Vice President of Capital Projects. I am pleased to be joined by Annika Lescott, Executive Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer; Eva Trimble, Executive Vice President for Strategy and Innovation; Oliver Osterwind, Vice President for Project Management in the Capital Projects Division; Brian Honan, Vice President of Intergovernmental Relations; and other members of NYCHA's team. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss NYCHA's capital program, which is committed to preserving and modernizing public housing for NYCHA's residents and the City of New York.

Considering the Authority's significant capital needs – \$40 billion and climbing – we are incredibly grateful for the Council's partnership and funding. Without your support, many important projects that contribute to residents' quality of life would not be feasible, such as playground and basketball court renovations, new entrances, security cameras, and exterior lighting installations.

**NYCHA's Capital Program Scope & Strategy**

As the largest public housing authority in the nation, NYCHA manages a vast capital program that preserves and modernizes more than 2,200 buildings housing nearly 400,000 residents residing in over 2,400 acres across every borough of the city. However, decades of federal disinvestment has left our buildings needing \$40 billion worth of major repairs – an astronomical figure that grows at the rate of about \$1 billion a year. To best address the significant

needs of our developments and to protect our investments, NYCHA established a “logical building sequence” when planning work. This begins with sealing the building envelope – roofs and facades – and then turning to building systems like heating plants; we can then move to interior renovations and grounds.

NYCHA’s Capital Projects Division (CPD) is responsible for implementing capital construction projects from planning and design through construction and closeout. Over the past two years, CPD has focused on the building sequence and comprehensive design strategies, executing projects with the highest degree of safety and quality. The portfolio includes roof replacement, masonry repairs, heating plant replacement, elevator modernization, infrastructure upgrades, grounds improvements, exterior lighting, lobby entrances, and CCTV, to name a few.

### **NYCHA's City Capital Plan – Sources & Uses**

NYCHA’s 10-year (2022-2031) City Capital Plan totals \$4.6 billion. The majority of these funds, or \$4.4 billion, are Mayoral. More than half of those funds (\$2.8 billion) are allocated toward projects that address the HUD Agreement pillar areas, such as heat, elevators, lead, and mold.

NYCHA’s City Council funding totals \$125 million in the 10-year plan. The discretionary allocations from Council Members are an essential source of funds for vital quality of life projects that benefit residents greatly, such as playground and basketball court renovations, exterior lighting installation, security enhancements, and other community amenities.

### **Progress through Partnership**

NYCHA takes responsibility for the frustrations around City Council discretionary projects. And we are committed to improving our performance through new management and partnerships. For instance, CPD hired a new

government liaison in 2020 to streamline communication between all parties. We also established a project management team whose assignments involve City discretionary-funded projects; a significant benefit of this enhancement is that staff are more knowledgeable about the complexities of City procurement.

To enhance transparency, NYCHA recently joined Checkbook NYC. And by moving from paper to electronic submission of registration packages for the Comptroller's Office this year, we are speeding up the contract registration process while also providing ready insight into the status of these packages.

As I mentioned, Council Members are a vital partner to the Authority, especially when it comes to identifying projects that will go a long way in improving residents' quality of life. Our partnership with residents and other stakeholders is also furthering our work. For instance, CPD's Connected Communities initiative leverages public-private partnerships to enhance residents' quality of life through improvements to outdoor spaces at our developments; the initiative also serves as a roadmap for dialogue and engagement with our partners.

We know how important it is to engage residents, development staff, elected officials, and other members of the community in the planning, design, and implementation of projects. Our goals of accountability, transparency, and increased participation with partners are supported by our new Standard Procedure of Stakeholder Engagement, which rolled out with training this year.

## **Conclusion**

NYCHA strives every day to be a good steward of the funding we receive to preserve public housing and provide a better quality of life for residents. However, we know we need to continue improving the timeliness of City discretionary-funded capital projects.

I would like to emphasize again that NYCHA's partnership with the Council is crucial, and we value it highly. From our many meetings and conversations, we've taken your suggestions to heart and incorporated them into the way we do business. Your support and generosity are critical; we wouldn't be able to complete many of the capital projects that matter most to residents with federal funding alone.

Thank you. We are grateful for your support and are happy to answer any questions you may have. And we look forward to keeping you updated on the status of our efforts to improve our developments as well as residents' quality of life.



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## **Testimony on NYCHA's Capital Spending of City Funds**

*Submitted to the City Council Committee on Public Housing and  
Subcommittee on Capital Budget*

*November 18, 2021*

*Sean Campion, Senior Research Associate, Citizens Budget Commission*

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the New York City Housing Authority's (NYCHA) spending of City capital dollars. I am Sean Campion, Senior Research Associate at the Citizens Budget Commission (CBC), a nonpartisan nonprofit think tank and watchdog devoted to constructive change in the finances, services, and policies of New York City and New York State.

I will focus on two topics: first, how additional City capital funding and new policy approaches are helping to address NYCHA's capital needs, and second, the process and procurement reforms needed to ensure that NYCHA spends all—not just City—capital dollars effectively and efficiently.

### **Capital Funding and Policy Approaches**

It is well known that NYCHA faces immense funding and operational challenges. Its capital needs exceed \$40 billion due to years of underinvestment, mismanagement, and cost inflation. In recent years, NYCHA and the City have launched several initiatives to address this capital crisis, most notably by committing additional City capital funding for NYCHA and by supporting NYCHA's efforts to leverage funding for repairs through its Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program.

#### **City Capital Funding**

City capital funding for NYCHA has increased dramatically. The Fiscal Year 2022 Adopted Capital Commitment Plan contains \$4.6 billion in planned commitments for NYCHA through

fiscal year 2031, of which \$2.9 billion is planned through fiscal year 2025. This comes on top of \$1 billion already committed since fiscal year 2016, when the City began to increase its capital support of the Housing Authority. This level of City capital support is unprecedented. In the decade prior to this increase (fiscal years 2006 through 2015), the City committed a total of just \$257 million to NYCHA's capital needs, mostly through allocations from City Council Members and Borough Presidents.

An increase in capital support was required by a settlement agreement between the City, NYCHA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Southern District of New York (SDNY). It is important to note, however, that the level of City funding in the Adopted Commitment Plan is more than double the \$2.2 billion that the City was required by the agreement to invest through fiscal year 2027.

The Capital Commitment Plan includes \$2.8 billion for building improvements; a portion of this will support comprehensive modernization projects, in which NYCHA will fully renovate some of its highest-need developments, rather than do the work piecemeal by type. (NYCHA has said that it will use any federal funding secured as part of the proposed Build Back Better bill in a similar manner.) Other planned funding will help renovate roofs and combat mold (\$818 million), address general construction needs (\$212 million), upgrade boilers (\$77 million), and install green infrastructure (\$70 million). The remaining funding would be allocated to specific upgrades and replacements at individual developments.

This funding level represents NYCHA being more fully integrated into the City's affordable housing program. CBC's Stabilizing the Foundation report of 2017 called for the City to commit one-third of its capital spending for housing to NYCHA. That goal has been met; NYCHA now represents 33 percent of all planned commitments for housing through 2025.

### **Permanent Affordability Commitment Together**

In addition to City capital funding, NYCHA's primary capital financing effort involves converting public housing properties from the traditional federal Section 9 capital and operating subsidy programs to more flexible alternatives under the federal Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, which is part of NYCHA's Permanent Affordability Commitment Together initiative (PACT). NYCHA remains on track to reach its goal of renovating 62,000 units under PACT by 2028 in large part due to the City's housing agencies starting to provide financial and administrative support.

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development's (HPD's) capital plan includes \$300 million in City capital funding for PACT projects to help close capital financing gaps, which it

historically has not provided to NYCHA. (This funding is in addition to the \$4.6 billion discussed above.) Additionally, since 2019, the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC) has made tax-exempt bond financing available for PACT projects under its Housing Impact Bonds Resolution. Access to tax-exempt bonds offers two benefits: it helps NYCHA's partners secure funding and reduce financing costs, and it allows NYCHA to take advantage of HDC's asset management expertise.

## **Needed Process and Procurement Reforms**

Even if NYCHA were to secure significant capital funding through the City's capital budget or through the federal Build Back Better legislation, NYCHA, City, and State officials would still need to take additional actions to ensure the funding is well-spent. These actions fall into three categories: procurement reform, operating reform, and conversions to Section 8 and related federal voucher programs that promote NYCHA's long-term viability.

### **Capital Procurement Reform**

Several recent developments should help NYCHA improve its capital management processes. NYCHA has begun to procure City- and State-funded capital projects under its recently authorized design-build powers. NYCHA's board also approved a proposal to hire outside construction management firms to augment the Authority's capital planning staff and help it manage upcoming comprehensive modernization projects. If used wisely, these new approaches will help NYCHA speed up project delivery, attract higher quality construction firms to bid on its projects, and keep costs down.

However, NYCHA does not yet have authorization to use construction manager-build or construction manager-at risk procurement methods, which require State legislative approval. NYCHA requested this authorization as part of the bill to create a Preservation Trust, which is discussed in more detail below, that was introduced in last year's State legislative session. State lawmakers should act swiftly to grant NYCHA authorization to use these methods, even if the Trust is not speedily authorized.

In addition, NYCHA's federal monitor, along with NYCHA and the City, should strongly advocate for HUD to grant waivers from restrictive federal public housing procurement rules for both its annual Section 9 subsidies and any additional federal funding NYCHA receives under the Build Back Better bill. In its settlement agreement with the City and NYCHA, HUD pledged to work with NYCHA to grant waivers from the Section 9 program's onerous and outdated procurement rules, which prohibit the use of alternative methods like design-build and require NYCHA to accept the lowest responsible bidder instead of the bidder that offers the best value. HUD's

pledge, which so far has gone unfulfilled, is even more pressing as NYCHA stands to gain a significant share of the \$65 billion in federal capital funding for public housing under the Build Back Better legislation.

### **Operating Reform**

The discussion of capital funding cannot be separated from the need to improve NYCHA's operations. Even if all its buildings are renovated in a timely and cost-efficient manner, NYCHA must manage the renovated properties well. This requires real changes, such as those outlined in NYCHA's Blueprint for Change, which proposed new organizational structures, quality controls, staffing plans, and accountability measures in order to operate like a modern and effective property management organization and reduce per-unit operating costs, which in 2015 were 39 percent higher than private sector costs.

### **Long-Term Viability**

Finally, the receipt of additional capital funding does not negate the benefits of converting units to alternative voucher funding models under RAD/PACT or the Preservation Trust. There are multiple benefits to converting units from Section 9 to Section 8 or other voucher programs. Section 8 is a more stable and predictable funding stream than Section 9 and historically has enjoyed more political support. Section 8 also offers significant financing and procurement advantages: it would allow NYCHA to establish operating and capital reserves, issue debt to finance future repairs, and use alternative procurement methods like design build or construction manager-build, if authorized by the State legislature. All these powers are needed for NYCHA to avoid repeating the current crisis as developments need repairs in the future. The success of NYCHA's PACT program to date also has demonstrated that it can achieve these goals while maintaining affordability, residents' rights, and public control.

NYCHA also has proposed creating a Preservation Trust that, like RAD conversions under PACT, would allow NYCHA to raise revenue for repairs, partner with private construction management firms as beneficial, and allow for reinvestment to avoid future funding crises. CBC urges City and State lawmakers to create the Trust, since it will provide NYCHA with additional options to finance needed capital investment.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and we look forward to answering any questions you may have.



## **FURTHER READING**

Stabilizing the Foundation: Transforming NYCHA to Address its Capital Needs (2018)

<https://cbcny.org/research/stabilizing-foundation>

NYCHA's Operating Outlook: More Uncertainty Amid Pandemic and Repair Needs (2021)

<https://cbcny.org/research/nychas-operating-outlook>

November 18, 2021

Good afternoon Chair Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel and each of the Committee members present. My name is Karen Leader and I am a resident of Cooper Park Houses and I serve as the secretary on the Resident Council Executive Board. I am also a member of The Residents To Preserve Public Housing (RPPH).

I am reaching out to you today requesting that adequate funding be included in your budget for public housing. Under Section VII, Paragraph 63(d) – (e) of the HUD Agreement, over the ten years following entry into the HUD Agreement, the City is to provide a total of \$2.2 billion in incremental funding for capital expenses to support NYCHA's compliance with the HUD Agreement. These funds include \$250 million per year for each of the four fiscal years beginning in FY 2019 and an additional \$200 million per year for each of the subsequent six fiscal years.

Although the Monitor recently approved a City Capital Action Plan, which laid out how NYCHA is spending these funds residents are asking that there be a legislation in place that requires an annual comprehensive and independent audit of the funds which are allocated to NYCHA developments. We are also asking that these audits be made public which will allow us to: stay informed as to exactly how funding has been dispersed, we will know the actual deficit amounts of each of the developments, and we can ensure that all funding to NYCHA does not become disposable income.

I'll conclude with this; we need this committee do its share in adequately fund public housing. Your funding will be a guarantee to residents that our homes will not become the property of private developers and that our homes will remain safe and up to code. With your adequate funding in your budget - we will be able to see the light that awaits us at the end of our tunnel. Thank you!

## **Joshua Barnett, RA, NYCHA RAD/PACT City Council Hearing 1/13/21**

[President.ch25@local375.org](mailto:President.ch25@local375.org), 374 564 2783

My name is Joshua Barnett. I am a member of Local 375, DC 37, AFSCME, member of the NYCHA Union Coalition, and president of Chapter 25, Local 375, NYCHA. I've worked for the NYC Housing Authority as an architect in the Capital Projects Division Design Department since 1999. I also worked for the Boston Housing Authority in the late 1990s.

In response to NYCHA's current capital plan, what comes through, yet again, a total reliance on privatization and a total silence on the outsourcing that is a constant drain on scarce funds. What should come out of this hearing is an immediate moratorium on the RAD/PACT program, cessation of the proposals for the public housing trust, an audit NYCHA's funding for capital projects, a serious attempt to get stakeholder input and national results on RAD conversions to date, and a much stronger advocacy from NYCHA for public funding for public housing, especially now that there are large funding streams from Washington for public housing in bills that have been passed.

We know repairs to NYCHA's public housing developments are desperately needed. We're dealing with 40 years of chronic underfunding and deferred maintenance on buildings that were often poorly designed and constructed to begin with. But it can't come at the expense of privatization. Public housing needs to be maintained, and in an era of a national affordable housing crisis and a horribly gentrified city public housing needs to be expanded, but public housing needs to remain public. There are alternative funding streams that NYCHA, and HUD, are not advocating for. That needs to change.

The influx of private sector funding into previously publicly funded services almost always amounts to a dissipation of services for the public. The privatization of such vital services as transportation and sanitation has led to disorganization, lack of accountability, and diminution of services, especially for people of color, immigrants, women, and low-income. The privatization of prisons and law enforcement has led to outright systemic violations of human rights.

Housing is no different. RAD/PACT means bringing in private entities whose bottom line is the bottom line. NYCHA retains ownership of the land, but the safeguards for residents, threadbare already, are rendered even thinner. In almost every city where RAD has been enacted—Baltimore, San Francisco, Raleigh, Minneapolis—there have been reports of increased evictions and as is typical with private landlord's lack of accountability.

The basic justification for the RAD/PACT program is that there is a lack of funding, so this kind of public/private partnership is necessary, but NYCHA's stated commitment to RAD/PACT and the Blueprint even when funding under the Build Back Better and other bills comes through shows there's an alternative agenda. NYCHA lobbies heavily for private management and is virtually silent on advocating for alternative funding streams. While income inequality is at the highest point since the late 1800s tax rates on the top 1% are at historic lows. The tax on Wall Street transactions has yet to be re-introduced. New York City continues to provide tax abatements and subsidies for market-rate and luxury developments. And since NYCHA receives federal funding through HUD, the military budget consumes almost 60 cents of every dollar of federal discretionary spending.

NYCHA, however, is silent on all of this, as they are silent about the tens of millions of dollars management wastes every fiscal year on hiring outside consultants for work previously performed by experienced in-house staff. NYCHA initiated privatization of construction management in 2004 with the CM/Build program, but has yet to produce an independent cost/benefit analysis. In the central offices it is literally impossible to tell if someone sitting a cubicle is a consultant or a civil service worker. And NYCHA remains an incredibly top-heavy organization. None of that was addressed in the current plan.

We have no reason to trust NYCHA's transparency on the RAD/PACT program. Previous initiatives such as NextGen NYCHA have had no independent, public or stakeholder evaluations. Consultant designed boiler replacement projects currently underway at Carver, East River, Dyckman, St. Nicholas, Bronx River, and Sumner are using retrograde gas fossil fuel technology at great expense with little documentation of energy or cost savings and haven't been shown to the stakeholders even though the project designs are almost 90% complete.

From the point of view of the staff, RAD/PACT represents union-busting. There are no provisions in RAD/PACT to guarantee that hires will be hired under civil service or paid prevailing wage, and no guarantee under RAD or the Trust that Section 3 resident hires will be maintained (it's under-enforced by management as it is). Staffing levels have gone from almost 16,000 in 1999 to under 12,000 now. We have no assurances that RAD/PACT will address proper staffing levels or adequate service. As it is there have been complaints from Wavecrest Houses about the private management company's performance.

RAD/PACT has already started to generate waste. In-house design staff had worked on a \$44 million renovation at Harlem River Houses, a designated landmark, for over a year. But it was all shelved when Harlem River Houses was converting to RAD as the project was given to a private design firm, who was starting from scratch.

Which leads to the question of how developments are chosen for RAD/PACT conversions in the first place. Has NYCHA shown that the developments slated for conversion to private management are in fact the most distressed properties listed in the latest physical needs assessment? And if not, what criteria are being used for selection?

It cannot be overstated how direly needed the capital repairs are. NYCHA is the last stock of truly affordable housing in a city and country in the midst of an affordable housing crisis, and the residents, staff and the city need public housing to be safe, sustainable, and livable. We cannot see NYCHA go the way of Chicago or other public housing where chronic underfunding and neglect made the developments unlivable and were demolished.

But the short-term fix of bringing in private funding, while neglecting the available funding from stopping privatization and increased public revenues, is taking the public out of public housing. NYCHA's current Transformation Plan, which includes the proposed "public housing trust", accepts the conversion of 62,000 units under the RAD/PACT program. As public housing workers, residents, as people living in a horribly gentrified city, we cannot—absolutely cannot—accept this as a given. As union representatives for public housing workers we are calling for an immediate moratorium on RAD/PACT, till we see the effects of the few renovated developments, till NYCHA makes a serious commitment to input from residents and staff—lacking so far—as to the possible effects, and till we see what funding can come from the new administration in Washington. RAD/PACT is privatization of public housing. It seems like a bargain, but we can't afford it.

Hearing: Mon, Nov 15 @ 10:30 AM - Committee on Public Housing (Jointly with the Subcommittee on Capital Budget) Subject of testimony: Saving Public Housing

During the summer of 2021, I went to New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments throughout the city. I educated tenants about what was happening in Public Housing. I've knocked on a person's door in one of the developments in Brooklyn, a tenant opened the door, and the tenant asked a young person to translate what I was saying. I told them why I was knocking. It seemed that my message got lost in translation. So they closed the door, and the parents started yelling at the young person. I knew they were Asian but didn't know from where because I couldn't recognize the language. Knocking on other doors in other developments, I met tenants from a diversity of cultures and who spoke different languages other than English and Spanish. I noticed that NYCHA, the housing authority of New York City, has a diverse population with low to mid-income tenants.

I will not write about all the repair problems that are occurring in many NYCHA development. I believe other people will state this at the hearing. My goal is to note why we need to save Public Housing. I live in the South Bronx, so most of my experience is living in Mill Brook Houses, being a member of the Community Board, my education, and life experience. I have lived in Mill Brook Houses for over 25-years. I am an immigrant who came from Guatemala in 1989. Fiver of those years that I wasn't in housing, I was in a school in Syracuse, New York. I attended the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF), where I've received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies. I graduated from Hunter College with a Master's in Urban Planning. Currently, I am a member of the Community Board and the Land-use Committee. I went to the school because of my experiences living in an asthma alley. The South Bronx has faced Environmental Injustices for over 40-years, introduced to economic ideas like the Free Market and Neo-liberalism. Read and learn how Ronald Reagan's and Bush's policies have created more division and have devastated the middle class. Over the last few years, I've learned how trickle-down economics has not worked and increased wealth inequalities. I attended Hunter College in 2007. In the program, I saw how planning and urban policy apply neoliberalism ideas. Neoliberalism promotes more of these public and private partnerships, which provide more benefits to the private sector.

Most people in the Bronx community know that the US banks were bailout during the 2008 mortgage housing crisis. The federal government gave them hundreds of billions of dollars. Just recently, companies got over \$1.3 trillion from stimulus packages. For example, Elon Musk was worth around \$4 billion at the pandemic's beginning, and now he is worth over \$400 billion. Jeff Bezos also increased his worth during the pandemic. Elon musk uses the money to develop technology to send people to space, knowing full well that many of us in our neighborhood cannot afford space travel—seeing that as more for wealthy people. That tells you that money and resources are available for the few, and we battle over the crumbs available to us.

The New York City Housing Authority has a \$40 billion capital improvement deficit. I understand the state doesn't have the funds to cover those large amounts. The Federal Government can only cover that in a shorter time. \$65 billion was allocated to Public Housing by a recent Build Back Better or the reconciliation bill. That amount is for all Public Housing in the United States-chump change. People have stated that bringing private entities will provide the funds to fix Public Housing. Based on what I heard from a RAD and Blueprint meeting,

the state will have to bail out NYCHA if they default on the loans. So, they will have to get TPV or Tenant Protection Vouchers to pay off the loans and bonds. The TPV requires the buildings to be in obsolescence under section 16. Meaning the apartments will have to be in terrible conditions.

Sitting in the Land-use Committee in Community Board 1, I have seen how so-called "Affordable Housing" proposals are not affordable for people in the South Bronx. People who face economic neglect are living paycheck to paycheck. People who get paid higher wages tell us that we must work hard and get an education, which is easy for them to say when they are in a system of success to the successful. People in the South Bronx don't only face Environmental Injustice; they also face the Student to Prison Pipeline, Climate Injustice, job discrimination, and an educational system that cares more about a test than providing students the tools to be the next leaders or entrepreneurs. The Covid19 pandemic has increased the unemployment rate; in the Mott Haven district, it is about 26-percent. If jobs are available, many of them don't pay a livable wage. So, all we have left to have an affordable home is Public Housing. If Public Housing crumbles, more people will be displaced, and it will destabilize New York City.

Public Housing also has the keyword "Public." The taxes mainly paid by the Middle class and hardly paid by the rich provide a safeguard to the economically oppressed. Public also means everyone is allowed to have a home without discrimination on income. Many tenants contribute to our cities with few resources that are available to them. Now removing this word that includes everyone further oppresses people and increases inequality. People may say that this private-public method will help decrease disparities. I've seen at the Community Board that private entities care about profits and see low-income people as people to be managed and not provide solutions to inequality.

As elected officials, most of you know what I've written already. There are people that I know that are disabled, one using a trachea to provide oxygen to her body. I know grandmothers who live in Public Housing, and I have seen and met autistic kids who rely on families' support to live. The RAD and Blueprint programs won't solve the housing problem. These are the mechanism to give prime relate estate to the private market. That comes out of our expense. With wealth inequality, more people are in this position; saving Public Housing will keep tenants afloat.

Also, as a sustainability advocate and believer in Climate Change, the NYCHA physical housing stock needs retrofitting to meet the Climate Change challenge. The buildings use outdated technology that waste energy and consume more power than a new building that uses green standards.

As a member of savesection9, I am doing my part to protect the lives of those who I know. Public Housing should move away from privatization schemes. It is up to the elected to listen and hear what we don't like about these public and private partnerships. Many of the RAD changes have been cosmetic, and just recently, the Betances Development that underwent RAD faced pipe problems. The building infrastructure has not changed. Only cosmetic changes have occurred, so the issues we face in NYCHA will keep happening. However, those developments are not section 9 anymore, so they are not considered Public Housing. So the

private entities make more money, and the problem will still be intact. Private entities will keep making billions out of our oppression.

Thank you.

Cesar Yoc

NYCHA Tenant

Testimony November 18 2021

Testimony of Ramona Ferreyra, NYCHA Tenant, Social Entrepreneur, Founder Ojala Threads,  
Founder Save Section 9.  
Before the Council of the City of New York, Committee on Public Housing.

Good afternoon. My name is Ramona Ferreyra, Founder of Save Section 9. In this role educate and empower public housing tenants to demand more from their housing authority. For the last 18 months we have held approximately 40 teach ins at developments around the city. During these teach ins tenants learn the way racism has shaped housing policy in the United States. We aim to give tenants the tools to ask more questions.

After these teach ins tenants stop focusing on the repairs they need, instead they begin asking for what they deserve. I am here today to demand that you do better, because we now know what that is

- Safe housing
- Clean housing
- Access to programming and resources
- Upward mobility

To get this we need you, our elected officials to become our advocates, and defenders. For too long you have treated NYCHA like a hot potato passing us back and forth. NYCHA isn't public housing, NYCHA is simply a housing authority that has failed at its job. To get NYCHA back on track we need oversight, transparency and consequences. Congress, Senate, our state representatives and city council members have skirted your responsibilities for 40 years. That ends today and we demand the following:

- The City Council must take a more active role in the administration of NYCHA. This starts with the City Council supporting tenants in calling for the removal of NYCHA's current Chair. Greg Russ is not committed to the principles that make public housing great. Additionally, his contract and perks are unethical and insulting to the many families living in slum-like conditions.
- The Council must institute regular reporting deadlines to ensure that NYCHA monies are being executed in the best interest of tenants.
- The Council should expand the scope of responsibility of the NYC Comptroller to make them the fiscal overseer of NYCHA. The Comptroller's office has already done audits but seems unable to issue more than reprimands. We need to ensure the Office of the Comptroller can hold NYCHA accountable.
- The Public Advocate role must also be expanded to ensure that this office works to address, and solve the human rights violations we deal with daily.
- The Council must ensure that NYCHA reverses any organizational changes aligned with the Blueprint Plan. Despite the fact that tenants have rejected the Blueprint over and over,



NYCHA has executed contracts directly linked to the Blueprint. This demonstrates that NYCHA can't be trusted to act in the best interest of tenants.

- The Council must support tenants, and ensure that doesn't go against the expressed wishes of tenants. Any funding issued by Congress in the future must be used to save public housing, and reverse the deterioration of Section 9.

In closing, I thank you for the opportunity to speak for the tenants we've been engaging for the last 16 months. Many of my neighbors' fear speaking up for themselves. But I have nothing to lose. Living in NYCHA has made me physically and mentally sick; it has made my dog sick; it has killed my neighbors and my grandmother. The heartache this causes is what keeps me going. So I will continue the fight, and I hope you will join us. You can follow our fight via our Facebook group, or [www.savesection9.org](http://www.savesection9.org). We can be reached via email at [savesection9@gmail.com](mailto:savesection9@gmail.com)