

Testimony of the
New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development
to the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings

Introductions 1264, 1265, and 1266

April 29th 2025

Good morning, Chair Sanchez, members of the committee, and all our partners that help make affordable housing possible in New York City. My name is Ahmed Tigani, and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak with you today as the Acting Commissioner of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

Thank you for inviting me here, and for allowing me to be joined by my team: the Deputy Commissioner of Housing Access and Stability, Meryl Block Weissman, and the Associate Commissioner of Housing Opportunity and Placement Services (HOPS), Emily Osgood. **We are grateful for the chance to discuss one of the most powerful tools in HPD's mission to expand access to affordable housing: the Housing Connect lottery.**

We talk to New Yorkers every day who are doing everything they can to stay in this city.

- Some have only ever known this place as home.
- People working one or two jobs to make ends meet
- —single parents, frontline workers, retired New Yorkers on fixed incomes who helped shape the neighborhoods we love—
- these residents are now seeking access to affordable housing opportunities that meet them where they are, at a cost they can afford, in a neighborhood they love.

We hear from children that grew up in this city, returning home after college in search of new opportunity and families who want nothing more than a stable, affordable home where they can raise their children in peace.

Today, we find ourselves at a moment of real urgency. With a frighteningly low vacancy rate of just: 1.4% for all apartments, 0.94% for apartments priced at \$2,400, and less than 0.39% for homes at \$1,100 – **virtually zero for extremely low-income families.**

The housing crisis is not looming—it's here. Rents continue to rise, while the demand for affordable homes far outpaces the supply.

For too many New Yorkers, the process of securing housing feels like a full-time job in itself—complicated, slow, and filled with uncertainty. **This is a moment that calls on all of us to move with urgency, clarity, and purpose.**

That's why our work at HPD, especially within the Office of Housing Access and Stability, is focused on one clear goal: **cutting through the red tape and getting people housed.**

We're not just managing this Housing Connect system—

- we're breaking it down,
- taking in and assessing feedback, and
- rebuilding it to be **faster, more responsive, and easier to navigate.**

This past fiscal year, we didn't just talk about removing barriers—we did it.

- **We eliminated credit checks for voucher holders** because families with rental assistance should not be blocked by barriers that were never even necessary.
- **We updated the Marketing Handbook**, reducing paperwork, removing notarization requirements, easing documentation for federal benefit recipients, and making the process more accessible for people with disabilities.

We're even marketing smarter. In addition to requiring most new lotteries to advertise in newspapers and conduct outreach to local community-based organizations and elected officials,

- **HPD and HDC send email blasts to hundreds of thousands of active Housing Connect users** whenever a new opportunity becomes available.
- **We also email applicants directly when there's an update to their profile**—whether it's a reminder to submit documents, a status on an appeal, or a final determination—so they never miss a step in the process.
- **Our website also offers housing connect trainings**, with short informative videos on how to apply to lotteries, set up an account, income eligibility, and more – along with a FAQ, answering New Yorkers' most asked questions.

We're already seeing results from those changes.

- In 2024, **HPD helped more New Yorkers move into more affordable housing than ever before—14,654 households.**
- That's over **14,000 second chances, new beginnings, and families finally able to exhale.**
- Of those, more than **10,000 secured homes** through Housing Connect lotteries, and another **4,600 families moved out of shelter** and into HPD homeless set-aside units.
- In total, more than **300 affordable housing lotteries** were advertised this year, opening up opportunities across the five boroughs.
- And currently there are **31 rental opportunities** available on housing connect, resulting in **2,675 units** across the city.

This work is also about keeping New Yorkers housed. That's why we've expanded the programs and support systems that promote long-term stability.

- We refreshed our Retention and Stabilization Services request for qualifications (RFQ) to support formerly homeless clients —if they choose— maintain a stable tenancy after moving into affordable housing
- For families transitioning out of shelter, we've provided \$2 million in essential furniture, helping them settle in with stability and dignity.
- And with the council's and NYC Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP)'s help, we've issued the Ready to Rent program, pairing free financial counseling with hands-on application support, so more New Yorkers can successfully navigate the process from the very beginning.
- We also coordinate educational campaigns, trainings, and in-person events with The Department for the Aging (DFTA), The Department of Veteran Services (DVS), and other city agencies, to work hand in hand and share the most up to date information with our communities.

Another key component of our outreach is the Housing Ambassador program—a network of about 50 trusted community-based organizations at over 60 locations across all five boroughs that work directly with New Yorkers to help them apply for affordable housing, maintain their Housing Connect profiles, and navigate the tenant selection process. Many of the Council Members here today represent districts with active Housing Ambassadors, and we're grateful for your partnership in connecting residents to these important services.

This on-the-ground work is further supported by HPD's Housing Connect outreach team, which leads public-facing lottery presentations and workshops in partnership with community organizations and in collaboration with elected officials. In calendar year 2024 alone, this team helped coordinate nearly 80 events citywide, reaching more than 3,000 New Yorkers.

For residents who need help at and outside of these events, our Housing Connect hotline offers another layer of support. Staffed by a dedicated team of 22 of

incredible public servants, the hotline responds to over 10,000 calls annually. We also maintain a dedicated customer service email that fields hundreds of questions and complaints each week. Beyond this, HPD's Division of Neighborhood Development & Stabilization, a part of HPD's Office of Neighborhood Strategy who regularly interacts with communities, has a team focused on broader community engagement. They regularly attend citywide events and speaking engagements to represent HPD programs and respond to housing questions.

But we also know there's more work to do. We're investing in the future of our systems, starting with a full-scale overhaul of Housing Connect. We're committed to making it faster, clearer, and easier to use. This work is already underway and will continue over the next year.

As part of that broader transformation, we're carefully reviewing the legislation being considered today.

Intro 1266 would require HPD to create an in-person Housing Connect assistance program in coordination with other agencies. We recognize the intent behind this bill and it's something we believe in as well --to ensure New Yorkers can get the help they need navigating the affordable housing process. As mentioned before, we have a number of existing relationships with community organizations for our Housing Ambassador program. Plus, we recently launched a new Neighborhood Tech Help initiative, in partnership with public libraries, providing the kind of in-person support we believe the Council is seeking. From one-on-one digital guidance to multilingual application assistance and help with completed paper application, these programs are connecting New Yorkers to housing opportunities every day. We'd welcome the opportunity to discuss ways we can work with the Council on these efforts.

Intro 1265, which proposes notifying applicants through Housing Connect and allowing them to designate a representative to receive updates, presents a really thoughtful opportunity. Whether it's a daughter helping her mother, a caseworker supporting a client, or a friend assisting someone without regular internet access—this flexibility could make a real difference. We'd love to explore how we can build this out together as part of our Housing Connect redesign. Our preference is to shape this as a flexible, user-informed feature—something we can adapt and improve over time. We're currently engaged in testing a set of new waivers and program processes and would like the opportunity to test and refine what works best for applicants. At this time, we would like to see this process continue before determining if legislation is needed.

Intro 1264, which addresses how affordable housing units that become vacant are re-rented through the Housing Connect portal, touches on a process we are actively rethinking. We recently rolled out a new temporary update, the third update announced over the last few years to improve the process. Re-rentals will continue to be required to be posted publicly and accessibly but it will not be necessary to send through HPD's housing connect system, though many may continue to do so voluntarily. This added flexibility is one example of ways we're testing strategies to help fill units faster and reduce unnecessary paperwork. Over the next year, we plan to rebuild re-rentals, bring, using insights from this pilot, housing advocates, New Yorkers, building owner and marketing agents, and recommendations from the Council to guide that work.

In closing, **there's still more to do.**

But we've seen what's possible when we act quickly, listen closely, and stay focused on what matters. Thank you for your partnership and for holding us accountable to the New Yorkers we serve. Thank you to the New Yorkers who use our program every single day and provide us with feedback on how to make it

better. I look forward to working with you to keep pushing this work forward.
Thank you.



JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS

**TESTIMONY OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND
BUILDINGS
APRIL 29, 2025**

Good morning,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams, Public Advocate for the City of New York. I want to thank Chair Sanchez and the members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings for holding this hearing.

With more than 50% of New Yorkers spending more than thirty percent of their income on rent and severely rent-burdened households (30%) paying more than fifty percent of their income on rent, New York City is the most rent-burdened city in the U.S.¹ Housing Connect, otherwise known as New York City's housing lottery, began as a pilot program in 2012 and was later officially implemented following the devastation of Hurricane Sandy. Since its 2013 launch, Housing Connect has simplified the city's housing lottery process, allowing families and individuals to create a profile that can be utilized to apply to multiple housing lotteries. The system receives an annual 3.5 million applications for housing lotteries and depending on processing times and other external factors, the time from when an application is submitted to when a tenant can move in can take anywhere from a few months to years – time that many New Yorkers simply don't have.

On the topic of re-rentals, I want to commend the Department of Housing Preservation and Development for the bold move they announced last week. The city's waiving of bureaucratic rules for re-rentals in the housing lottery, while temporary, will provide us with a better understanding of how cumbersome the current process is and how we can more easily facilitate getting families and individuals into vacant apartments. Currently, rules around re-rentals can leave apartments vacant for months on end, with landlords unable to market the apartments available to those interested.² I look forward to seeing the data that comes from this trial period and hearing in this hearing how we can further optimize the housing lottery for every day New Yorkers. Thank you.

¹ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/spotlight-new-york-citys-rental-housing-market/>

² www.thecity.nyc/2025/04/24/affordable-housing-lottery-vacant-apartments-empty-rentals/



NYSFAH Testimony
New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings Oversight Hearing
“Housing Connect—Reforming New York City’s Affordable Housing Lottery”
April 29, 2025

Thank you, Chair Sanchez and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on Housing Connect and reforming New York City’s Affordable Housing Lottery. My name is Jolie Milstein, and I am the President and CEO of the New York State Association for Affordable Housing (NYSFAH), which represents hundreds of for-profit and nonprofit developers working to create and preserve affordable housing across New York State.

First, I’d like to thank the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) for maintaining an open dialogue with NYSFAH over the past several years regarding Housing Connect. That communication has led to meaningful improvements, and we’re grateful for HPD’s commitment to transparency and progress.

That said, despite good faith efforts, the current Housing Connect system remains deeply flawed, so we appreciate the City Council’s efforts to be part of the solution. It now takes nearly four times longer to lease up affordable housing units in New York City compared to units financed by other housing agencies statewide. This is not just a bureaucratic issue, it has real, measurable costs.

According to Enterprise Community Partners, between 2019 and 2024, delays caused by Housing Connect and lease-up timing adjustments reduced equity in New York City affordable housing projects by \$4.6 million at a cost of \$386,000 per impacted project. Developers are forced to cover these unexpected gaps with additional financing or subsidies, straining public resources and slowing down future development.

We commend HPD for taking decisive action to temporarily suspend the current Housing Connect platform for re-rentals and re-sales. That decision was both necessary and commendable, and we hope it marks the beginning of a true transformation.

NYSFAH wants to continue to be an active partner in this reform process. We know that the goals of efficiency, fairness, and accessibility are shared. But achieving them will require coordination, not just within HPD, but across agencies like the Department of Social Services and Division of Human Rights. These organizations are key stakeholders in this process, and it is essential that we minimize handoffs and clarify lines of responsibility to prevent further delays and confusion.

INVESTING IN MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND SMARTER SYSTEMS

To truly improve the affordable housing process, we need better tools—plain and simple. The digital infrastructure that supports Housing Connect needs to be upgraded and designed to make life easier for both applicants and administrators. That means less red tape, more automation, and real-time updates that reduce back-and-forth and confusion. We also need systems that can handle documents more efficiently, ideally through integrated platforms that eliminate the constant need for uploading, emailing, and resubmitting the same materials.

CUTTING REDUNDANT ACTIVITIES AND PRE-LEASE UP DELAYS

Right now, the process is bogged down by duplicative reviews and unnecessary administrative steps. Many of these could be eliminated or streamlined without compromising compliance. Take lease-up audits, for example, full-scale reviews for every case aren't always necessary. HPD could adopt a spot-checking approach in certain situations, which would still ensure accountability while saving significant amounts of time and resources.

There are also specific pre-lease up issues that cause delays. For instance, when a rent increase is requested, HPD currently pauses all marketing efforts until the request is reviewed. This bottleneck could be avoided by allowing marketing to proceed while the rent adjustment is being considered through a standardized parallel process. Similarly, the process of approving qualified marketing agents is overly burdensome. Ironically, it is often easier to finance a multi-million-dollar development than to get approved to market units. HPD's limited staffing only compounds this problem, resulting in downstream delays.

IMPROVING LEASE-UP EFFICIENCY

Once lease-up begins, additional roadblocks emerge. One major inefficiency is the strict preference order for marketing units. Instead, units should be made available to all applicant types in parallel to prevent bottlenecks. Then there's the verification timeline, which currently includes a 10-day document submission period, a 5-day letter wait, and up to three verification attempts. These stack up to cause significant delays and should be streamlined.

Another issue is allowing applicants to hold onto multiple unit options in the same building. Applicants should be allowed to apply for only one unit size per building to speed up decision-making and occupancy. Similarly, tenant refusals, often based on neighborhood preferences, have become increasingly common and disruptive. Right now, there are no consequences for rejecting a unit, even after acceptance, and appeals are allowed after refusal. NYSAFAH recommends ending appeals in such cases and instituting a policy where applicants who refuse a unit are ineligible for the lottery for a period.

We also need to rethink how we handle smaller lease-up situations. Mini lotteries for fewer than ten units consume a disproportionate amount of time and staff resources. A more efficient approach would be to allow these leftover units to be leased on the open market.

SIMPLIFYING APPLICANT PAPERWORK AND ASSET REQUIREMENTS

Applicants often face an insurmountable burden with respect to documentation, especially when it comes to proving limited financial means. A more practical approach would be to allow applicants with few or no assets to submit a simple declaration, like what's already permitted for formerly homeless applicants. Moreover, the requirement to verify digital wallet accounts like Venmo and PayPal is cumbersome and of little value. These accounts rarely hold meaningful balances, yet auditors demand hard-to-obtain statements that don't materially impact eligibility.

The treatment of whole life insurance policies also needs to be reevaluated. Currently, these are counted as liquid assets, which is unfair. They should be classified similarly to retirement accounts like 401(k)s. Penalizing families for saving for the future directly contradicts the spirit of affordable housing. There have been several cases where qualified applicants were denied housing solely because of the cash value in a life insurance policy, even when their income met the eligibility criteria.

REDUCING BARRIERS FOR HOMELESS INDIVIDUALS AND VOUCHER HOLDERS

Voucher holders often face lengthy delays, with approvals sometimes taking more than 90 days. This exceedingly drawn-out process leads to financial losses for developers and missed housing opportunities for families in need.

Additionally, developers should be allowed to accept direct referrals from shelters. This would markedly expedite the placement process for homeless individuals and ensure better utilization of available units. It's a simple but impactful change that could make a real difference for vulnerable populations.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PARTNERSHIP

The need for affordable housing has never been greater and every delay means a family goes without a home. We urge the City Council, HPD, DSS, and DHR to work together in reducing handoffs, streamlining processes, and modernizing the Housing Connect system. The tools and structures in place must be more efficient, more coordinated, and more compassionate.

We at NYSAFAH are fully committed to being a partner in this process. We believe in the mission of Housing Connect, and we believe reform is not only possible, but essential.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Contact: Jolie Milstein, NYSAFAH President/CEO, at jmilstein@nysafah.org or (646) 473-1208.



**Testimony to the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings
Re: Reforming the NYC Housing Lottery – April 29, 2025**

Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on reforms to the NYC Housing Lottery, regarding re-rentals and vacancy. My name is Sonali Govind, and I serve as the Housing Development and Preservation Policy Associate at the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD).

ANHD is one of the City's lead policy, advocacy, technical assistance, and capacity-building organizations. We maintain a membership of 80+ neighborhood-based and city-wide nonprofit organizations that have affordable housing and/or equitable economic development as a central component of their mission. We are an essential citywide voice, bridging the power and impact of our member groups to build community power and ensure the right to affordable housing and thriving, equitable neighborhoods for all New Yorkers. We value justice, equity, and opportunity, and we believe in the importance of movement building that centers marginalized communities in our work.

ANHD's work directly supports the needs of our members who develop, manage, and organize to preserve affordable housing, and who fight to bring equity into low-wealth and historically disinvested communities in New York City. Our groups rely on us for technical assistance and capacity-building resources that allow them to maximize their resources, skills, and impact. The support services, research, analysis, public education, and coalition building we do helps to identify patterns of local neighborhood experiences and uplift citywide priorities and needs. Our work translates into the capacity to win new programs, policies, and systems that ensure the creation and preservation of deeply and permanently affordable housing, and economic justice.

Systemic Challenges in the Housing Connect Re-Rental Process

Through our direct work with members, we have consistently heard concerns about the Housing Connect lottery system—particularly its shortcomings in handling re-rentals. Units often sit vacant for months, sometimes over a year, due to opaque procedures and significant delays in listing available units on the portal. In a city with a rental vacancy rate of just 1.4% and tens of thousands of applicants waiting for affordable housing, these inefficiencies not only harm prospective tenants but also undercut the stability of affordable housing developments ([NYHC, 2025](#)).

Our Community Development Corporation (CDC) members, who are mission-driven nonprofit developers, are navigating an increasingly difficult fiscal environment. Rent collection rates, once reliably in the high 90s, now hover in the high 80s to low 90s due to pandemic-era arrears and rising operating costs ([NYHC, 2025](#)). In this context, prolonged re-rental vacancies are not



merely an administrative inconvenience—they deepen financial strain for mission-driven developers trying to keep housing accessible and affordable. Given the inflationary environment and historically lower collection rates, we appreciate the Council’s temporary pause on requiring re-rentals to be filled through the lottery.

Case Study: A Bronx-Based CDC’s Experience

One of our CDC’s in the Bronx has encountered significant obstacles with the Housing Connect re-rental process. This CDC manages a portfolio of 10 rehabilitated buildings, collectively known as the Reclaim HDFC project, which were revitalized in the 1990s and offer larger-than-average units with rents averaging around \$1,100. Despite the affordability and quality of these units, they have remained vacant for extended periods—some for up to 18 months—due to inefficiencies within the Housing Connect system.

The current re-rental process requires owners to contact batches of up to 250 applicants, many of whom may not be interested or eligible, leading to prolonged vacancies. Meanwhile, the CDC receives daily inquiries from community members eager to rent these units, highlighting a disconnect between the system and actual housing demand. These delays have resulted in substantial financial losses; in 2024 alone, the CDC reported losing over \$117,000 in revenue due to vacancies, with \$97,000 attributed to Housing Connect delays.

Support for Proposed Legislation

We support the Council’s proposed legislation aimed at addressing systemic issues within the Housing Connect process. The bills such as requiring the listing of all re-rental units on the Housing Connect portal, enhancing applicant notifications through text and email updates, and expanding in-person application assistance at community hubs are critical steps toward improving transparency, efficiency, and accessibility in the affordable housing allocation system.

A particularly important element of the proposed reforms is ensuring that only users who apply for a unit after it is posted on the portal are considered for that vacancy. This change is crucial for filling vacant units more quickly and efficiently, as it helps match units with applicants who are actively interested and available—reducing delays, limiting administrative burdens for nonprofit developers, and ensuring that homes are occupied as swiftly as possible.

Additionally, improving tenant communication is not simply about checking a box—it is fundamental to ensuring that tenants have clear, accessible, and timely information throughout the application and leasing process. Strong communication practices help tenants understand their options, move through the system with confidence, and maintain trust in the affordable housing process. They also support nonprofit developers by reducing confusion, minimizing delays, and ensuring that applicants are informed, engaged, and prepared to move forward when units become available.



Conclusion

We urge the Council to adopt these reforms with thoughtful, community-centered implementation strategies. Fixing re-rental inefficiencies is essential to stabilizing mission-driven nonprofit developers and ensuring tenants have equitable, timely access to affordable homes. While these bills are an important step, real progress will require permanent structural changes.

We look forward to working with HPD, the Council, and our members to ensure these overdue improvements deliver lasting benefits for tenants and the communities we serve. Thank you for your attention and for the opportunity to submit testimony. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Sonali Govind at Sonali.g@anhd.org.

Sincerely,

Sonali Govind

Housing Development and Preservation Policy Associate
Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD)



TESTIMONY TO CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS, OVERSIGHT HEARING, 4/29/25

HOWARD SLATKIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Good morning Chair Sanchez and Council Members. My name is Howard Slatkin, and I am Executive Director of Citizens Housing and Planning Council. My testimony today will focus on the housing lottery process generally, with relevance to Intros 1264, 1265, and 1266.

CHPC is in the midst of research about the range of approaches to matching residents with affordable housing units in other global cities. We look forward to publishing the results of our research in the weeks to come, but for today's hearing will share some key takeaways of relevance.

In defining what works as a fair and efficient system, every city strikes a different balance between speed and choice. It is vital to put people in homes quickly, as well as fairly. These goals relate in complex ways, and policy often strikes different balances in different circumstances, as cities adapt their processes to evolving needs and situations. In many cases, the cities we are studying have chosen to change their approach to allocations in order to address clearly articulated policy objectives.

The allocation process must work speedily and fairly, with consistency and clarity. However, rigidity and proceduralism pose risks – because of the range of individual circumstances the process needs to address, and the scale of New York City's lottery

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system, with such a large number of New Yorkers in need of affordable housing and such a limited number of units available. CHPC's Brutal Bureaucracy report, based on data from 2014 through 2021, found that average lease-up time for new construction affordable housing took more than a year, with wide variation among projects.

These and other results, including the long delays in re-rentals recently documented by the NY Housing Conference, highlight the need for **continuous monitoring and improvement of the allocation process**, as well as the need for **an agile and adaptable process** for marketing as well as the development of tech platforms and other supporting tools. HPD's recent revisions to its Marketing Handbook are a welcome step in making this process more timely and responsive; this active management approach must be continued.

A key lesson for today's hearing drawn from our research is that **the details of lottery procedures should not be fixed in law**. The agencies administering the process (HPD and others) need the ability to adapt the process to changing circumstances and an understanding of outcomes.

This is not to say "trust them, it will all work out fine." There are huge challenges to conducting lotteries on the scale that NYC does. Efforts to optimize individual outcomes can easily create enormous logjams that hurt everyone waiting for affordable units, as well as affordable housing providers. In NYC's multilayered process of allocating affordable units to qualifying residents, we must continue to grapple with the balance between speed and choice, based on sound data about how the process is working.

The Council is situated to improve the affordable housing allocation process not by legislating its details, but rather by using its oversight authority to ensure the clarity of goals for this process, the measurement of results, and that there is an ongoing practice of monitoring and improving upon this process.

Reforming NYC's Affordable Housing Lottery

04/29/2024

My name is Mbacke Thiam. I am the Housing & Health Community Organizer at Center for the Independence of the Disabled, New York (**CIDNY**). We are a nonprofit organization founded in 1978. We are part of the Independent Living Centers movement, a national network of grassroots and community-based organizations that enhance opportunities for people with disabilities to direct their own lives. CIDNY advocates for people with disabilities in the five boroughs of New York City. We hereby testify on "Reforming NYC's Affordable Housing Lottery."

Numerous CIDNY consumers use this Housing Lottery portal to find housing. We advocate for a fair and just proceeding of housing applications to combat the discrimination that people with disabilities may encounter when their disabilities are disclosed. This is discriminatory. This is why we strongly advocate for fairness in selecting applicants for apartments and homes without disqualifying people because they live with disabilities.

Individuals with disabilities are entitled to reasonable accommodations and modifications so that they can fully enjoy their homes. Denying disability-related services needed in their homes, refusing modifications, and/or not accepting service animals can be "ableist" and against the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008, and other New York City's fair-housing legislation. This is illegal, unacceptable, and unjust.

CIDNY supports:

- [Int. No. 1207](#), in relation to allowing for time spent in an apprenticeship to count towards the supervised practical experience time requirement for the granting of high-pressure boiler operating engineer licenses
- [Int. No. 1264](#), in relation to how affordable housing units which subsequently became vacant are rented through the housing portal
- [Int. No. 1265](#), in relation to notifications regarding applications in New York City's housing portal and designation of a representative to receive notifications
- [Int. No. 1266](#), in relation to requiring the department of housing preservation and development to create an in-person housing portal assistance program

We thank the City Council for providing CIDNY with the opportunity to testify. Trying to meet the needs of people with disabilities moves New York City closer to an equitable and fair housing system. This testimony is supported by Dr. Sharon McLennon Wier, Executive Director of CIDNY.

Thank you,



**Testimony of Enterprise Community Partners
Patrick Boyle, Senior Director of Policy & Communications**

**To the New York City Council
Committee on Housing & Buildings
Oversight Hearing on Housing Connect and Reforming NYC's Affordable Housing Lottery**

April 29, 2025

Enterprise is a national nonprofit that exists to make a good home possible for the millions of families without one. We support community development organizations on the ground, aggregate and invest capital for impact, advance housing policy at every level of government, and build and manage communities ourselves. Since our New York office opened in 1987, we have committed more than \$4.7 billion in equity, loans and grants to affordable housing and community to create or preserve over 68,300 affordable homes across New York City.

The lease-up process for affordable housing is a significant problem. It is a problem for the many thousands of New Yorkers seeking affordable housing, including those in homeless shelters, doubled up or otherwise living in subpar conditions. It is also a problem for mission-driven affordable housing operators, many of whom are in dire financial straits due to many factors, and who cannot afford to sacrifice rental income from vacant units and lose tax credit equity due to lease-up delays.

Thank you to Chair Sanchez and the Committee on Housing & Buildings for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important topic. Moving forward, we strongly urge a focus on solutions that streamline and expedite the process for New Yorkers and housing operators, rather than layering on additional rules and regulations.

Overview and Data

By any metric, the time it takes to fill affordable housing properties with eligible tenants is unacceptably long, which has significant financial consequences. Over the past several years, the average timeframe has gotten longer.

In Enterprise's asset management role over the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties that we partner on, we track lease-up timeframes. This is because the IRS rules governing the tax credit program require a property to be leased up with income qualifying tenants in order for tax credits to be delivered to investors.

Our data shows:

- Over the past two years, affordable housing projects in our portfolio experienced a lease-up **delay of 9.3 months on average**. (A delay is measured by the amount of time a project actually takes to lease-up compared to how much time is underwritten. Enterprise typically underwrites to 6 months as a lease up timeframe.
 - This is compared to an **average delay of 3.7 months elsewhere** in the country.
- **It takes on average 14.4 months** to fully lease up an affordable housing property in New York City. This is compared to around 7 months nationwide.

The Economic Impact to Affordable Housing

Certainly, there is a human cost to affordable housing units sitting vacant despite the overwhelming citywide need. Families should be able to exit shelter faster, or go from overcrowding and rent burden to a secure, permanently affordable apartment of their own.

These delays also have a negative impact on affordable housing operators. Affordable housing properties that are developed through the LIHTC program rely on certain agreed-upon timeframes for construction completion and subsequent lease up. These timeframes, which are signed off on by involved parties, dictate when the financial benefits from tax credits flow to project investors.

When lease up delays occur, resulting in not enough qualified tenants living within the property, the eligible tax credits for the project lose value, which reduce the amount of equity which ultimately goes into the project. Reduced equity opens up financing gaps, which are then often filled by the affordable housing owners.

Enterprise's numbers show that:

- From 2019-2024, there was **\$4.6 million in total reduced equity** to affordable housing projects based on lease-up delays.
 - This represents an average of **\$386K in reduced equity** per impacted project-financing gaps that are required to be addressed in some manner.

The Nature of the Challenges

According to feedback from developers, marketing agents, and policy organizations who have deeply studied New York City's lease up process, there are a number of areas that appear to contribute to lease-up delays. As Enterprise continues to convene stakeholders to recommend additional streamlining measures, we would like to highlight a number of those areas.

- **Agency Approvals:** Too many steps of the process require HPD or HDC staff at some level to review and approve steps. This begins from the development of a marketing plan with related materials all the way through the lottery process. Other major cities set rules and requirements, but rely on developers to lease up buildings and maintain wait lists. While HPD and HDC have moved towards an audit-based approach to applicant

eligibility, this approach should be taken far more comprehensively. As we have seen, agency approval is far more problematic when there are budgetary and staffing challenges which reduce headcount.

- **Efficiencies Being Subject to Review:** There are areas where efficiencies, such as parallel lease-up of different population types, are permitted on a basis that is subject to agency approval/a waiver. While this is an improvement, this approach still relies on seeking and waiting for approvals from agency staff. Instead of requiring review, rules should be established on when such efficiencies can be done as-of-right.
- **Technology:** Technology and usability of the Housing Connect platform remains an issue, with marketing agents still experiencing problems being locked out of the system and manually inputting information. Agents report that technology could be better utilized to minimize back and forth with applicants.
- **Appeals:** Partners have identified the applicant appeals timeline as a delay point, as well as the inability of marketing agents to move on to the next applicant in a lottery log while an applicant goes through the appeals process or deals with a documentation problem. We understand that many of these processes are in place to ensure fair housing protections, and that applicants who were wrongfully denied have recourse. However, many other major cities have found a way to balance fair housing concerns with a more expedited process; we look forward to working with the city on striking a similar balance in New York.
- **Re-Rentals:** The re-rental process which utilizes “mini lotteries” has been extremely challenging. Recent changes announced by HPD allow more paths to obtain waivers to this process; we are still in the process of examining those updates and learning from partners on how those impact the process.

Recommendations

We applaud HPD and HDC for the announcement of an updated April 2025 Marketing Handbook which announced streamlining measures and some reduced requirements for applicants. We hope it is the beginning of continued engagement on the part of the city to ensure timeframes are being significantly reduced.

The current challenges are the net result of many cumulative decisions, competing priorities and good intentions. We at Enterprise believe there is a real opportunity for improvement. As we work with stakeholders on specifics, we would like to uplift the following principles that should be the direction that the city undertakes given the size of our housing crisis and the urgent need for nonprofit sustainability.

- **Moving to an Audit-Based System:** To the great credit of HPD and HDC, the 2025 Marketing Handbook removes the step of HPD/HDC conducting a full review of applications, opting instead for audit-based reviews that allow development teams to process applications and fill units without having to wait. This is a major step forward,



and we encourage the city to more comprehensively consider an audit-based enforcement approach to the lease-up process.

- **Exempt Re-Rentals from a Lottery:** Local Law 64 of 2018 required that affordable housing projects put re-rentals of units through a so-called “mini-lottery” system that is beset with the same delays and inefficiencies of the regular lottery. We believe that re-rentals should be exempted from the lottery process, with owners being permitted to re-rent vacant units to income qualified tenants, with units posted on a website so New Yorkers are aware of vacancies.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony today. We look forward to working with you to ensure that New York City’s Housing Connect system can be an equitable and time-efficient tool to more quickly deliver affordable housing to New Yorkers.



**Testimony of Habitat for Humanity New York City
and Westchester County**

**To the New York City Council Committee on
Housing and Buildings**

**oversight hearing on Housing Connect - Reforming NYC's Affordable
Housing Lottery**

April 29, 2025

Testimony respectfully submitted by:
Matthew Dunbar
Chief Strategy Officer

Good morning. My name is Matthew Dunbar, Chief Strategy Officer of Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County. I want to begin by thanking Speaker Adams, Chair Sanchez and the full Committee on Housing and Buildings for the invitation to testify on affordable homeownership in New York City.

Habitat NYC and Westchester knows the power and importance of affordable homeownership as we've spent the past 40 years building and preserving more than 2,600 homes for low- to moderate-income families in all five boroughs. Affordable homeownership as a critical part of the housing continuum. In order to build an equitable city, it is imperative to invest in solutions that build family and community equity.

I appear before you today to discuss how we can make affordable homeownership more accessible for New Yorkers—especially for families who have been waiting a long time for a chance to own a home.

We're thankful for the city's significant efforts to create affordable homeownership opportunities through programs like Open Door and the Affordable Neighborhood Cooperative Program (ANCP). These capital programs are essential in providing the critical funds required to establish new opportunities to own a home at affordable prices in an expensive city like ours.

However, the way we're trying to get those homes to people—the Housing Connect 2.0 system— isn't working well when it comes to homeownership. The system was not designed with homeownership in mind, adds costs to an already expensive process, and creates delays in sales that have a detrimental effect on homebuyers, homeowners, and homebuilders.

Housing Connect 2.0 was mainly designed to help people rent affordable apartments. But when it comes to selling both new and resale affordable co-op and CLT homes, it has serious problems. Here's what we've seen:

- **It takes too long to sell homes.** Home buying and selling is a complicated and time-intensive process in normal, market rate circumstances. Adding additional requirements to the marketing, selection and sales process increases challenges and adds financial burden and time delays, which affect both buyers, owners, and developers. Some co-ops take several years to sell just a few units, sometimes exhausting the first pool of applicants and needing to remarket. Our own Seed Co-op in Brooklyn, which was initially marketed pre-Housing Connect, ended up having to go through the mini-marketing lottery to sell the final few units in our 25 units co-op at 80% AMI. This delays sales by months and thousands of dollars in marketing and carrying costs onto the project.
- **The system is costly and hard to use.** Homebuilders like Habitat are required to go through a tedious document upload process with their marketing agent, in which any errors or requested alterations could lead to weeks of delays and issues. We often start the process a year in advance of marketing in order to ensure everything is ready in time for the projected window. For our last marketed development, we had our Marketing "kick off" call in March but were not able to market until October. Staff time not included, it costs on

average \$4,000-\$7,000 per unit to market an affordable homeownership development and those costs are repeated when a development needs to re-market. On top of that, all mandatory expenses associated with the marketing process (advertisements, for-sale signs, P.O. Box rental, and printing) are to be funded separately by the developer.

- **Housing Connect is made for rental lease readiness, not mortgage finance readiness.** Home buying applicants must be ready to qualify and prove mortgage readiness within a tight timeframe, typically within 10 to 30 days, before Marketing Agents need to move to the next applicant. Applicants who are not qualified are able to take up to 30 days of the Marketing Agents time, meaning there can be delays in selecting qualified buyers. We see upwards of 15 thousand applicants on Housing Connect due to how little information is needed to apply.
- **Resales through Housing Connect are completely unworkable for low-income homeowners and cooperatives.** We appreciate receiving notice of the blanket waiver from using Housing Connect for resales and request this temporary waiver be made permanent. Due to the aforementioned complicated marketing processes, timelines, and upfront costs associated with reselling an affordable homeownership unit through Housing Connect, low-income homeowners or cooperatives would be required to front thousands of dollars when seeking to sell their home, utilize a marketing agent, adhere to challenging marketing guidelines, and endure drawn-out timelines in order to sell their home. Given that most of our developments have long term affordability restrictions (or permanent affordability through the Community Land Trust), a homeowner who wants to resell their unit would likely not be able to recoup costs of marketing due to the maximum sales price requirements, flip tax, attorneys fees, subsidy repayment and other closing costs. This process, outside of a bulk new development, is even more unfeasible and goes against all norms and best practices in home sales which seek efficient transactions with costs incurred at closing and puts a significant burden on homeowners or cooperatives that may be in financial distress already or have personal life incidents that require more expedient sales and relocations. In the unfortunate circumstance that a buyer is not identified in the mini-lottery, additional costs and time would be incurred by the owner to remarket.
- **Lenders and Banks don't like this system either.** There are few lenders willing to take the risk of lending due to the complexity of resale restricted homeownership, but the requirement to resell shares on Housing Connect upon a foreclosure is seen as additionally onerous. If a lender forecloses on a co-op, they are also forced to go through the mini-lottery process, which could create additional delays and hurt the whole building's finances.

We appreciate the City's increasing support and prioritization for the creation and preservation of affordable homeownership. We know the city cares about getting this right, and we believe there are better ways to accomplish our shared goals. Here are three changes we request the city strongly consider to improve our affordable homeownership marketplace:

1. Permanently exempt affordable homeownership from current Housing Connect 2.0 and establish a new system for selling affordable homes—one

that's made for homeownership, not rentals.

2. Use Housing Connect only to advertise, track and record sales, not as the main tool to sell homes.
3. Make it easier for homeowners, homebuilders, lenders, CLTs and co-op boards to resell homes in a fair, cost-efficient, and timely manner.

Owning a home is a big step toward building wealth, stability, and a secure future for working class New Yorkers. In order for families to successfully achieve this step, our systems must actually help people reach that goal. Thank you for your time, your work, and your care for the people of New York City.

TESTIMONY OF SHANE CANADA

STATIONARY ENGINEER APPRENTICE, IUOE LOCAL 30

BEFORE THE NYC COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

REGARDING INT. NO. 1207-2025

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

Good morning Chairperson Sanchez and Committee Members.

I was accepted into the Stationary Engineer apprenticeship program 17 years ago.

This program was a catalyst for understanding theory and principles of HVAC, electrical, plumbing, etc. The immersive method of learning while working in the field helped hone my trade skills in real time versus the traditional route of attending college but lacking the hands-on skills obtained by applying what I'd learned immediately.

The apprenticeship program has served as a bookend in my life.

I was constantly searching for a career that either provided a sense of purpose or a career that would allow me enough financial security to become a homeowner and raise a family in these inflationary times. I have been afforded both, a true blessing.

It's challenging to believe that any of the things I have accomplished to date would have been possible without the apprenticeship program. Prior to applying, I wasn't aware of what a Stationary Engineer was nor the importance of the position in the day-to-day workings of facilities.

I have not yet obtained my high-pressure license. With the passing of this legislation, I will be eligible to sit for the exam this coming September '25. This change would recognize that my apprenticeship work experience counts toward my licensing requirements. Removing two years off my eligibility requirement at the age of 43 is immensely beneficial. It's giving me a leg up in achieving my own financial and career goals.

I strongly urge you to support Int 1207-2025 as it will make a meaningful difference for apprentices like me.

Regards,

Shane Canada
Stationary Engineer Apprentice
IUOE Local 30



**MET
COUNCIL**

Feeding the hungry. Serving the poor.
Changing lives.

**New York City Council Hearing of the Committee on Housing and Building
Oversight Hearing on Housing Connect: Reforming NYC's Affordable Housing Lottery.**

Chair Sanchez, and fellow members of the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings,

Thank you for holding this oversight hearing on reforming NYC's affordable housing lottery. For over 50 years, Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council) has been America's largest Jewish charity dedicated to fighting poverty. We operate ten departments, ranging from 100% affordable housing to our award-winning family violence program, comprehensive Holocaust survivor assistance, senior programming, crisis intervention, and the country's largest kosher and halal emergency food network. Met Council provides a wide array of support to over 320,000 New Yorkers annually, including those with religious dietary restrictions.

Met Council is a leader in producing affordable housing for special needs populations in New York City. By leveraging private and public money, our housing portfolio has grown to 1,100 units of affordable senior housing, serving approximately 1,300 seniors. Met Council provides a range of services, delivered by an outstanding network of social services agencies and Jewish Community Councils as well as on-site staff. Residents not only get a comfortable and affordable place to live, they also receive comprehensive social services to meet their needs.

The need for affordable senior housing in New York City is ever growing. According to a 2025 NYS Comptroller Report, in the past twenty years, New York City's 65+ population has grown by nearly 500,000, a 53% increase. In addition to this rise, 61% of older tenants were rent burdened in 2023, spending at least 30% of their gross income on rent. Meanwhile, about 21% of the older adult population lived in poverty, which is significantly higher than the citywide rate of 18%.

In order to serve older New Yorkers effectively, Met Council must be able to fill vacant units efficiently; current HPD Housing Connect marketing requirements prevent that. For many of the units managed by Met Council, re-rentals are required to be filled through Housing Connect. When a unit becomes vacant, we are required to do a "mini-lottery" from a pool of applicants who indicated in Housing Connect that they are interested in future re-rental opportunities. This requirement introduces delays in the re-rental process because applicants in the pool never indicated that they may be interested in a particular apartment or location. Applicants may also not be able to move in at the time the apartment becomes available. In addition, Met Council's units are designated for senior New Yorkers. Since Housing Connect does not allow agents to filter applicants by age, each application must be reviewed manually to confirm that at least one household member is age 62 or older. This time-consuming process not only slows down re-rentals but also increases operational costs for nonprofits with already limited staff and capacity.

We commend HPD's recently released temporary waiver to NYC Housing Connect requirements related to re-rentals. The waiver, which will go into effect in May, will provide much needed relief at a time of high operating costs for nonprofits with affordable housing. We look forward to working with

HPD as they work to make enhancements to the NYC Housing Connect portal and urge HPD to make changes to the process that will allow for efficient re-rentals. Permanent changes to the portal are essential for Met Council to continue to serve older New Yorkers as efficiently and effectively as possible.

It is vital that the City Council works to address the concerns of organizations providing essential affordable housing for some of New York City's most vulnerable residents. We thank you for taking the time to review our testimony, and we hope to continue to work with this committee and the City Council to provide affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elena Sytcheva".

Elena Sytcheva
Co-Managing Director of Housing, Regulatory Compliance & Affordable Housing Development
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

Testimony of Brendan Cheney, New York Housing Conference

New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings

April 29, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Operations at the New York Housing Conference (NYHC). I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify about Housing Connect and the City's affordable housing lottery process.

New York Housing Conference is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. As a broad-based coalition, our mission is to advance City, State and Federal policies and funding to support the development and preservation of decent and affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

We greatly appreciate Chair Sanchez for leading this hearing and bringing attention to this issue. Your advocacy for affordable housing generally, and today on improving Housing Connect, is helping countless New Yorkers.

We support a single portal for all affordable housing rental and homeownership opportunities with functionality that allows for automatic notifications. We believe this should be complemented by a robust Housing Ambassador program, especially targeted to aid populations that may not easily navigate a web application system. However, while we support the intent behind the bills being discussed today (Intros 1264, 1265, and 1266) to improve fair access to housing, we do not support their adoption. We do not recommend codifying new requirements until changes to Housing Connect, underway by HPD, would support these improvements and we are concerned about federal policy and budget changes that may impact HPD staffing or budget for core functions for the agency.

At its best, Housing Connect provides transparency and access to the City's publicly subsidized affordable housing. Allowing New Yorkers to view affordable housing apartment listings and apply to rent units in a simple process is vital. However, the functionality offered in Housing Connect is inadequate to meet the needs of renters and building owner and the system's limitations contribute to delays of rental and re-rental of affordable housing. There are also many significant bureaucratic challenges that should be improved in the City's marketing rules for the lottery -- from scheduling a marketing kick-off meeting with HPD, all the way through to tenant selection. We understand HPD is tackling both processing reforms and upgrading the housing portal's technological specifications within a year and they have been meeting with stakeholders for input.

Last week, HPD announced a temporary waiver for re-rentals, while they improve their system. We are supportive of this waiver to move renters into housing more quickly and end lengthy vacancies the "mini lottery" process was creating for owners.

In addition to our February policy brief focused on Housing Connect Re-Rental Vacancy Problems, we also convened stakeholders to make recommendations on a broader set of improvements to the marketing process. These recommendations included system notifications, which we understand is not possible at present given the limitations of the Housing Connect platform. In addition to notifications for applicants, notifications for marketing managers are also

required to eliminate manual lookups for some processing stages. We also identified several processing rules that should be changed such as special postal service requirements, zoom monitoring requirement for mail applications and amending the lottery ad template.

Related to Intro. 1264, which would require re-rental of affordable units to be posted on Housing Connect, neither HPD staffing, process requirements nor the Housing Connect platform are currently able to support centralized re-rental lease ups. Until Housing Connect is improved enough to create a re-rental process that is efficient, we do not support codifying new requirements.

Starting May 1, HPD will grant exceptions for re-rentals through a waiver application. Until additional functionality is provided in Housing Connect, we strongly support re-rentals being managed by owners through their own lists. To address concerns about access and transparency, owners will need to publicly post re-rental opportunities and share the listings with HPD.

Over the next year, HPD is planning to look for a long-term solution for re-rentals. We request that any solution prioritize speedy and efficient re-rentals, both so that affordable housing owners are not unnecessarily losing rental income and tenants are not unnecessarily delayed in moving into affordable housing.

With respect to Intros 1265 and 1266, we generally support the purpose of these bills, but we do not think they should be done through legislation. We are concerned about the impact of unfunded mandates, especially when there is the threat of significant federal funding cuts.

We are grateful for the advocacy and support for these needed changes and call on HPD to work to make these changes without legislation.

Thank you again to Chair Sanchez for your leadership. We are happy to answer any questions.

REBNY Testimony | April 29, 2025

The Real Estate Board of New York to The Committee on Housing and Buildings Regarding Housing Connect

The Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) is the City's leading real estate trade association representing commercial, residential, and institutional property owners, builders, managers, investors, brokers, salespeople, and other organizations and individuals active in New York City real estate. REBNY thanks the Committee on Housing and Buildings for the opportunity to provide testimony on Housing Connect and reforming the affordable housing lottery.

New York City is facing a housing crisis of historic proportions, and Housing Connect plays a critical role in ensuring that New Yorkers can access affordable housing. However, at a time when the need for affordable housing is more urgent than ever, the current structure and administration of Housing Connect create unnecessary barriers that delay lease-ups, waste valuable affordable housing resources, and contribute to prolonged vacancies.

REBNY appreciates the intent of Intros 1264, 1265, and 1266. Intro 1264 would require the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to list previously occupied affordable housing units on the housing portal and limit consideration to applicants who apply through the portal. Intro 1265 would mandate that the housing portal provide enhanced updates to users – and their designated representatives – about their applications and matching units. Intro 1266 would establish in-person assistance for Housing Connect Applicants. While these measures are important, these bills fail to address the lottery system's fundamental issues, and without more comprehensive reform, Housing Connect will continue to fall short of its goals.

The housing lottery process, which begins about six months before the expected occupancy of a building, is riddled with inefficiencies. According to the [Mayor's Management Report](#), approving an applicant takes an average of 202 days, and only 24% of lottery applicants are approved within three months. With a citywide vacancy rate of just 1.4%, and tens of thousands of New Yorkers applying for each affordable unit, extensive timelines in the lease-up process are unacceptable.

Similarly, the process of moving shelter residents into designated units is painfully slow. The Mayor's Management Report found that in FY24, it took an average of 196 days to lease a homeless placement set-aside unit. When leasing a homeless placement unit, identified tenants often fail to attend scheduled unit tours, and owners receive no updates or alternative tenants from the City. As a result, units that owners could quickly lease to other qualified applicants instead remain empty, awaiting referrals that may never arrive. We urge the City to create clear and enforceable timelines for homeless referral units. When referrals fall through, owners should be permitted to promptly release units for general occupancy so they don't remain empty.

Once a building is occupied, the process of re-renting vacant affordable units is even more inefficient. Therefore, we commend HPD for its recent changes to the [Marketing Handbook](#), which governs the Housing Connect re-rental process. Now, a temporary waiver will permit owners and marketing agents

to find and qualify applicants for affordable units outside of the Housing Connect system. REBNY hopes this waiver will mitigate extensive delays in what typically is a slow process.

Equally important to address are the administrative challenges that arise during the lottery's basic pre-marketing steps. Unit registration is a particular pain point for owners. REBNY members frequently submit completed property registrations to HPD, only to receive no acknowledgment of receipt despite repeated follow-ups. Absent HPD confirmation, projects are left in limbo and unable to proceed with marketing or lease-up. We urge HPD to improve responsiveness and tracking for critical pre-marketing steps like property registrations to ensure the timely delivery of much-needed affordable housing.

We look forward to working with the City and other stakeholders to implement these reforms and ensure affordable housing reaches New Yorkers who need it.

Thank you for considering these points.

CONTACT:

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settlementhousingfund.org

April 29, 2025

New York City Council
Committee on Housing and Buildings
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Thank you, Chair Pierina Ana Sanchez and the members of the committee, for convening the hearing on Reforming NYC's Affordable Housing Lottery.

I am Mildred Flores-Thevenin, Director of Marketing & Compliance at Settlement Housing Fund, Inc. Settlement Housing Fund, Inc. (SHF) has been a non-profit developer for over 55 years. We've owned, developed, and preserved thousands of 100% affordable units, across the 5 boroughs: primarily in The Bronx, Brooklyn, and lower Manhattan. Through our Marketing & Compliance department, we are an approved HPD Marketing Agent. As a Marketing Agent we work with third-party developers to market and lease their affordable units to low-middle-income families. Annually we market and lease around 500 units per year, and help families move into these homes.

As Marketing Agent, we rely heavily on Housing Connect to do our work. We see the huge benefits of the system and similarly the significant challenges. We would like to see HPD continue to make critical technological upgrades needed to make the site more functional and make it easier for marketing agents to lease units. We are working with the agency directly and providing them with our recommendations.

We appreciate the Council prioritizing these issues and its work to help increase access to affordable housing to in-need New Yorkers.

Thank you,

Mildred Flores-Thevenin
Director of Marketing and Compliance
Settlement Housing Fund, Inc.
mflores@shfinc.org



Testimony Before the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings: Regarding the Housing Connect System

April 29th, 2025

Good afternoon. My name is Christie Peale and I am the CEO and Executive Director at the Center for NYC Neighborhoods. I would like to thank Chair Sanchez and the members and staff of the Committee on Housing and Buildings and Oversight and Investigations for holding today's hearing regarding the Housing Connect System. We look forward to continuing to partner with Chair Sanchez and the NYC Council Committee on Housing and Buildings to achieve our mission of promoting and protecting affordable homeownership in New York so that middle- and working-class families can live in strong, thriving communities.

About the Center for NYC Neighborhoods

Established by public and private partners, the Center meets the diverse needs of homeowners throughout New York State by offering free, high-quality housing services. Since our founding in 2008, our network has assisted over 200,000 homeowners. We have provided more than \$60 million in funding to community-based partners. Major funding sources for this work include the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the Office of the State Attorney General, other public and private funders. Additionally, from 2021 through earlier this year, the Center's subsidiary, Sustainable Neighborhoods, administered the New York State Homeowner Assistance Fund in partnership with New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR), which distributed over \$450 million in federal relief to more than 16,000 homeowners affected by the pandemic who are struggling with housing payments.

Housing Connect and Affordable Homeownership

Our organization is committed to identifying and securing affordable housing opportunities for New Yorkers—especially households identified as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). We are currently focused on creating pathways to homeownership, with the goal of helping at least 5,000 BIPOC households maintain or become homeowners through our **WORTH Initiative, in partnership with LISC and NHS NYC.**

One of the primary tools the City of New York uses to deliver affordable homeownership opportunities is the development of homeownership units under the **Open Door** and **Affordable Neighborhood Cooperative Programs (ANCP)**. These programs rely on the **Housing Connect 2.0** lottery system to distribute opportunities. While the portal was designed to streamline affordable housing delivery and create a more equitable application process, serious concerns have emerged—especially regarding its use for homeownership rather than rental units.

Most discussions around Housing Connect 2.0 have focused on its use for rental housing. Today, we want to highlight its significant limitations in the areas of both initial cooperative sales and the resale of shares in HPD-supported co-ops.

After extensive conversations with multiple HPD-approved marketing agents responsible for selling affordable homeownership units, we have observed the following:

- Many cooperatives under the **Affordable Neighborhood Cooperative Program** must go through **multiple lotteries** and **supplemental marketing** efforts to sell even a modest number of units.
- When the initial lottery fails to yield sufficient eligible buyers, the process drags on for months—sometimes more than a year—to sell just 10 to 20 units.
- This timeline severely delays full cooperative conversion and occupancy, restricting access for New York City families who urgently need affordable homes.
- Marketing agents point to several barriers: strict eligibility windows, inconsistency with advertising definitions (e.g. including Carrying Costs or “total monthly housing costs”) versus monthly maintenance costs), high maintenance fees, and pricing structures that are misaligned with the financial profiles of BIPOC and working-class applicants.

The following ANCP cooperative developments failed to sell all units through the Housing Connect lottery process within 2 years, and ultimately required a 2nd lottery and/or open market sales:

1. 508 W 138th Street (4 units marketed) – 2 lotteries- 3 years sellout
2. 748 Beck Street (4 units marketed)- 2 lotteries - 3 years sellout
3. 152 E 116th Street (6 units marketed) – 1 unit still avail
4. 107 W 105th Street (6 units marketed) – 2 Lotteries- sold out
5. 46-48 W 129th Street (4 units marketed)- 3 years-1 unit still available
6. 21 Arden Street (4 units marketed) – 1 unit still available
7. 518 W 161st Street (6 units marketed) – 3 units still available
8. 544 w 163rd street (6 units marketed) – at least 1 unit still available

Housing Connect 2.0 was designed to support rental lease-ups with a corresponding marketing budget for HPD development programs. Interestingly, homeownership was not included in Housing Connect 1.0. HC2 was not designed with homeownership sales—or resales—in mind. It was rolled out in July 2020 to quickly meet the requirements of the Local Law without input from marketing agents. This led to a critical misalignment between the platform’s functionality and the needs of both developers and individual shareholders.

More concerning is the **mini-lottery system**, which is the only method individual shareholders can use to resell their units. Although Regulatory Agreements require these resales to take place on Housing Connect, individual shareholders do not have marketing budgets like their developer counterparts. Unlike developers, these owners must rely on a slow, bureaucratic process that rarely results in successful resale. There is an option to waive shareholders from reselling on housing connect, but that is only possible after at least one attempt on Housing Connect.

Special Note: Only pre-qualified marketing agents designated by HPD are allowed access to Housing Connect, so shareholders need to query this group of agents, who traditionally market hundreds of rental units for developers with marketing budgets.

Few marketing agents have an interest in marketing resales and those who do must charge shareholders a fee in advance of a sale and with no expectation of finding a resale purchaser.

We have found no evidence that any mini-lottery conducted by individual shareholders has resulted in a successful resale. Most shareholders are forced to request waivers just to market their homes outside of the system.

This flawed resale process also discourages mortgage lenders. Regulatory agreements stipulate that if a lender forecloses on a co-op unit, they must also resell the shares through the mini-lottery system, rather than through a traditional auction. This delays occupancy, maintenance collection, and overall financial stability of the co-op.

In summary, Housing Connect 2.0's design is **not in sync** with HPD's regulatory structure for affordable homeownership. We believe this platform is a valuable tool—but it is **not the right tool** for homeownership sales and resales.

We recognize that HPD is temporarily waiving certain NYC Housing Connect requirements for re-rentals and resales to help vulnerable New Yorkers access affordable housing more efficiently. This waiver is in effect from May 1, 2025, to April 30, 2026, during which time HPD and HDC will develop new features for the Housing Connect portal to improve the leasing and sales process. Marketing agents must first complete tenant selections already in progress before using the waiver. A new FormAssembly tool for submitting applicant files outside of Housing Connect is expected to launch in May 2025, and agents will be notified when it's available.

Therefore, we respectfully recommend the following:

1. The Council should work with HPD to assess and develop an alternative system for marketing and selling affordable homeownership units—both initial sales and resales.
2. Housing Connect 2.0 should no longer be used as the primary sales mechanism for homeownership, but rather be used **solely to document, record, and track** the sales of these valuable public resources.
3. The City should create a separate, equity-focused infrastructure tailored to support BIPOC households in purchasing homes, including in-person support, financial counseling, and income-based appropriate outreach.
4. Mortgage lender requirements tied to Housing Connect 2.0 should be revisited to ensure that foreclosures do not disrupt cooperative stability or prevent future occupancy.
5. Integration of Housing Connect 2.0 with HPD's Homefirst Down Payment Assistance.
6. Fund for HUD housing counseling agencies to guide Homeowner Ready applicants through housing connect.
7. Codify the City for All commitment in local law.

Affordable homeownership remains one of the most powerful tools to address racial wealth inequality in New York City. Let's ensure the systems we use to deliver this opportunity are effective, fair, and just.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Resources:

- Housing Connect and Homeownership:
- [2022 - Lottery opens for 72 affordable co-ops in Soundview available to buy from \\$183k](#)
- [2023 - Affordable Housing Lottery Opens for Co-op Apartments starting at \\$183k in Brooklyn](#)
- [2025 - Affordable Housing Lottery Opens for BedStuy Co-ops](#)
 - Intended for first time homeowners the lottery includes one and two bedroom co-op apartments in 4 new Bed-Stuy buildings
 - 46 one- and two-bedroom co-op apartments/units in four new Bed Stuy buildings, giving households of one to five people with incomes between \$83,126 and \$218,010 a year the chance to become first time homeowners
 - Eligibility: 90-130% AMI, must live in the apartment as their primary residence and no one in the household can own or have previously purchased any interest in a residential property
 - Buyers must have 10 percent of the purchase price available for the down payment and must also meet an asset limit cap
 - The four buildings have been developed by BJF Development LLC, which won a Request for Proposals through the city's Open Door Program to build affordable housing on city-owned vacant lots, city records show. The city transferred the long-vacant sites to the developer in 2021 for \$8, with the proviso it builds affordable housing that offers homeownership opportunities.
 - The city's Open Door Program issues Capital funds to Housing Development Fund Corporations for the construction of new co-ops and condos for moderate to middle income earners. The HDfCs can include for-profit developers, corporations, limited partnerships, limited liability companies, trusts, and joint ventures. According to the Housing Connect listing, the buildings will also get the city's Article XI Tax Exemption.
- Do we want to connect this testimony with INT 958 - HPD which would require HPD to significantly increase their amount of affordable homeownership opportunity units, stating that it would divert their resources from rentals and other priorities?



**UHAB Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on Housing and Buildings**

April 29, 2025

Honorable Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee,

Thank you for holding today's hearing and for the opportunity to testify. My name is Arielle Hersh and I am the Director of Policy and New Projects at UHAB. For 50 years, UHAB has empowered low- and moderate-income residents to take control of their housing and become homeowners in the buildings where they already live. We turn distressed rental housing into lasting affordable co-ops, and provide comprehensive training and technical assistance to keep these homes healthy and stable for the long term. UHAB has created over 25,000 cooperative homes across the five boroughs, predominantly in formerly redlined neighborhoods where rates of homeownership continue to lag behind the rest of the city. UHAB is also a founding member of Interboro CLT, the city's only citywide community land trust.

We appreciate the Council's timely attention to the HPD marketing process, especially given HPD's recent announcement that both re-rentals and resales will be granted waivers for the upcoming year and larger changes to Housing Connect are on the horizon. With the prospect of a new HPD marketing process for resales, we want to add our voice to illuminate some of the **specific challenges HDFC co-ops face in the marketing process via Housing Connect. We hope this testimony can serve as an opening for a larger dialogue on the needs of HDFC co-ops.**

While most HDFC co-ops are not required to market vacant units via Housing Connect and the marketing system generally works well for newly-created HDFC co-ops with outside purchasers, there have been serious issues concerning resales via Housing Connect. **The "mini lottery" process for existing HDFCs with a regulatory agreement has been impossible to implement in the cases we've observed** both as marketing agent and monitor. The process itself is cumbersome, costly, and lengthy, presenting financial hardship for sellers and the HDFC co-op. Furthermore, design issues with Housing Connect reinforce that the current platform is not set up for homeownership, creating additional burden for HDFC co-ops and technical assistance providers.

Overall, HDFC co-ops form a key bloc of stable, affordable homeownership for 25,000 households across 1,200 buildings in New York City. The majority of shareholders are Black and Hispanic New Yorkers systematically excluded from traditional homeownership opportunities. Many HDFC co-ops were created from the abandonment and disinvestment of New York City's fiscal crisis, and received limited building repairs and training when they converted. For the last 30 years, shareholders have stewarded their buildings through deferred maintenance, fiscal uncertainty, and maintained their buildings despite too little investment from the City.

The vast majority of HDFC co-ops (more than 80%) are not required to market vacant apartments via Housing Connect. Most HDFC co-ops have their own unique resale policies that include instructions on

how to advertise vacant units for sale, and often sellers work with a broker knowledgeable about HDFC co-ops to help sell the unit to an income-qualified purchaser. Dozens of HDFC co-ops have worked with UHAB's Market and Match program over the past 7 years to publicize available units through UHAB's website and pair HDFC co-ops with income-qualified purchasers for reasonable sales prices.

However, HDFCs that have been newly formed through an HPD program, or existing HDFCs which have received an HPD loan have been required to use Housing Connect to market available units for sale since 2020. This process has been difficult for HDFC co-op shareholders and the professionals who support them to navigate, especially given **program design issues with the Housing Connect system and an ever-changing system of requirements.**

For newly-created HDFC co-ops converting through ANCP, TPT, or Open Door, the marketing process is lengthy but generally works well. In UHAB's experience as marketing agent on 5 of these projects, the biggest source of delays have to do with timing the close out of the construction and development process, not the HPD marketing process itself. This mismatch in timing can lead to a situation where new purchasers have been selected and are ready to move into their new apartments, but have to wait months or sometimes years for co-op conversion. Some purchasers in this situation describe losing faith in the process without regular updates or a clear timeline, jeopardizing their financing and approval for additional grants and downpayment assistance. We also see genuine difficulties in the marketing process if sales prices are set too high for the neighborhood. On one project where UHAB was the marketing agent, prices had to be reduced at least 3 times and each new round of marketing added months and thousands of dollars to the project. These issues could have been prevented with clear guidance on sales prices that doesn't push for outside sales at top dollar to make projects pencil.

For existing HDFC co-ops that apply for an HPD loan or tax abatement, marketing for vacant units via Housing Connect is included in the HPD regulatory agreement that buildings receive in exchange for loan or abatement. Here, the process of marketing single units in dispersed buildings has proven nearly impossible.

First and foremost, Housing Connect is not designed for homeownership or resales. When a New Yorker sets up their Housing Connect profile for the first time, they are asked in a simple check box to indicate interest in re-rentals *and* resales in a geographic area. Later, when a resale for an HDFC co-op becomes available in their borough, they are invited to apply, even if they have not expressed specific interest in HDFC co-ops or homeownership. This creates a disinterested applicant pool to draw from, meaning marketing agents do more work for each application to find qualified *and* interested purchasers. Moreover, there is no way to select interest in HDFC co-ops, meaning applicants may not have familiarity with the limited equity co-op model or the responsibilities of being a shareholder and participating in building governance. Housing Connect is not equipped to collect necessary information for homeownership such as assets, which demonstrate whether an applicant has sufficient savings for closing costs and a downpayment. In the five years homeownership projects have been available through Housing Connect, none of these issues have been addressed. This creates an imbalance between rental and resale opportunities marketed together on the site, in effect disadvantaging homeownership opportunities for prospective purchasers.

Further, the mini lottery process prescribed for HDFC co-op resales has yet to work in practice. While in theory it makes sense that an HDFC co-op selling only one unit should go through a shorter, simpler process for resale, a mini lottery requires the use of an HPD-approved marketing agent and many of the same administrative approvals as a full marketing process. As described above, mini lotteries draw from a pool of Housing Connect users who've expressed interest in re-rentals and resales via checkmark on their initial profile setup, yet few if any are interested when contacted months or years down the line because they have not applied for the unit in question. **In all three mini lottery processes where UHAB has assisted as marketing agent, it has been impossible to complete the process and required a waiver to sell the unit. In each of those cases, buildings had to wait an average of 6 months to attempt the mini lottery process before they were granted a waiver by HPD. This adds time, money, and confusion to the process for HDFC shareholders.**

That said, we are pleased to see HPD initiate a pause on mini-lotteries for homeownership resale and welcome this time to discuss alternatives. **It's clear that mini lotteries can't work in their current form, and create a time and cost burden on HDFC co-ops, further exacerbated by navigating a complex and changing set of rules to comply.** In particular, requiring a process that necessitates an HPD-approved marketing agent—whose fees can run upwards for \$3,000 per resale—creates unnecessary pressure to increase sales prices to cover costs, making HDFC co-ops less affordable in the long term. Delays in sales present challenges for HDFCs running an operating deficit while attempting to sell units, or presenting financial hardship to sellers who cannot wait over a year to complete the sale process and must still pay their carrying costs in the interim.

HPD has recently announced a new process for a “waiting list lottery” that exists somewhere between a mini lottery and the full marketing process for resales where there are more than one unit for sale. This process creates a new interest pool through a proactive application on Housing Connect without the requirement to market in print media. While it does not significantly reduce the cost or time of marketing units, creating a pool of interested purchasers who have proactively applied for a homeownership project has proven to be significantly more successful than the mini lottery process.

We know that it is possible to develop and sustain deeply affordable homeownership projects, including selling units in a fair and equitable manner that complies with fair housing law. **However, many developers of new HDFC co-ops face adverse pressures to increase sales prices to offset City capital subsidy and debt financing.** Sometimes these changes are framed as building wealth for the homebuyer, but they actually serve to make the entire co-op less affordable for all residents in the long term. Setting new homeownership units at higher AMIs with the goal of building wealth harms the purchaser, who will not see increased equity due to affordability restrictions despite purchasing for a high price. It also harms the future co-op by setting high sales prices in perpetuity to ensure residents who purchase at high prices receive a fair appreciation on their homes.

HDFC co-ops shouldn't only be affordable to the first residents to purchase—they should be stable, well-maintained affordable housing that serves generations of working class New Yorkers to come. Setting deeper affordability targets for sales allows low-income New Yorkers to become homeowners, accrue modest equity and have the opportunity to pass down a stable home to their family. Lower sales

prices also ensure that HDFC co-op apartments remain a true discount to market and are consistent with fair housing principles to ensure equal access, especially in gentrified and high-cost neighborhoods.

These recommendations are not without their own programmatic challenges. HPD has limited subsidy to disperse across a wide range of projects at any given time, meaning that the agency relies on high sales prices to reduce City dollars in homeownership projects. Sponsors and developers also look to sales prices to offset costly private debt on these projects. **Yet this comes at a great cost to our City by trading affordability for future generations of New Yorkers away to make projects pencil.**

We hope this testimony can serve as an opening for a larger dialogue on the specific needs of homeownership projects and HDFC co-ops as Housing Connect is amended to better serve all New Yorkers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Brendan Mitchell and I am the Director of Real Estate at University Neighborhood Housing Program in the Bronx. Among other things, UNHP is a non-profit community developer and operator of affordable housing. I wanted to use this time to share about our struggles with the Housing Lottery from the perspective of a Non-Profit developer. For the last four years we have had large units with extremely low rents sitting vacant through a pandemic and a housing crisis. This was not because these units were in troubled buildings, because they are too small, or overpriced, or for lack of trying on the part of our various marketing agents, but because the Housing Lottery in its current form could not connect interested parties with the housing we have available. As a result, quality units sat empty for as long as 18 months while we tried to fill the unit through the lottery.

Our largest project is Reclaim HDPC, which is 10 buildings in total spanning from Southern Boulevard to University Avenue and was named appropriately as all of them were once vacant in the 80's until they were Reclaimed by the people of the Bronx through Community Development. All 10 of the buildings were gut rehabbed in the 1990's and have received various upgrades as needed over the years. These buildings have larger than average units compared to what we see being built today, and lower rents as they have been rent stabilized with relatively low turnover. These are not the buildings you might expect to see when you log into your Housing Connect account to apply for the new construction projects developed in your neighborhood. They do not have elevators or bike rooms, they do not have free wifi or in many cases even laundry rooms. They do have an average tenancy across 265 Units of over 25 years and an average rent of roughly \$1,100. Our regulatory agreement requires these units be rented to families making anywhere from 40% to 60% AMI with 27 Units reserved for Homeless Families. We like to believe that most people remain in these units for so long because although the buildings may not have the amenities or architectural frills of new construction, they provide decent and quality housing at an affordable price to low and moderate income families in the community.

The applicants that we have consistently been connected with through the lottery for re-rentals have been uninterested in moving to the Bronx, disappointed that they are being selected for a building that was built over 100 years ago, unhappy or physically unable to move into a building that does not have an elevator. By contrast, every single day we have low income people in the community walking into the management office asking to rent these units, calling the super looking for information to rent them and we have people we work with in the Northwest Bronx Resource center, our direct services arm looking to rent these units because they work and live in the community. We also get calls from other non-profit housing providers looking to place existing tenants in larger units, checkerboarding while renovating for existing tenants, or relocating existing tenants due to fire or flood. Working together with these other organizations is important in creating, preserving and maintaining our affordable housing. That is why we believe that non-profit organizations should be permanently exempt from the re-rental lottery requirement moving forward.

The delays involved with filling our vacant Units have hurt projects financially at a time when buildings like these are up against rapidly rising costs and historically low collection rates. We are grateful that NYC HPD has heard our concerns and recently announced a 1 year pause on requiring re-rentals to be filled through the lottery. This will provide us much needed financial relief as we can quickly fill our empty units with income qualified tenants, as we have for 30 years prior to the re-rental requirement. We look forward to participating in discussions with our agency partners around re-rentals and the lottery over the next year and will welcome any changes that allow us to fill our empty units quickly and efficiently.

Hello Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jumelia Abrahamson, and I am the director of programs at UNHP and part of a Bronx advocacy group called - AHORA, Affordable Housing Opportunities Right Away made up of apartment seekers, concerned local affordable property managers and non-profit service providers, including current HPD Housing ambassadors. You will hear from a couple of them today, that are in this room or back in the Bronx virtually. And others who couldn't take time off from work, but will submit a written testimony.

This group came together in 2022 out of frustration around the NYC Housing Connect website. University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP), is a 42-year-old community based non-profit and in the last couple of years we've helped Bronx residents submit over 13,000 lotteries. Since many of the clients we serve need permanent affordable housing, we've offered 1-on-1 sessions, workshops, and monthly seminars to help apartment seekers navigate the HC portal. Even with this hyper awareness, only 36 applicants moved into an apartment via HC, or as we like to say won the golden ticket. Around 80% of Housing Connect units require incomes that are higher than what the majority of Bronxites earn. For these reasons, after serving as a HC ambassador and pouring a lot of resources we ended this formal partnership with HPD. Today, we commend the Council's attention to this issue and urge bold, community-centered reforms to ensure the system truly serves low-income New Yorkers—especially those in boroughs like the Bronx, where incomes remain significantly below citywide averages. In the Bronx, where the median income of the applicants we serve is below \$25,000, many so-called "affordable" units remain far out of reach.

We now call on the Council to act in the following four key areas:

deeper affordability requirements in new developments that reflects Bronx Wages,

1. Mandate deeper affordability requirements in new developments that reflects Bronx Wages, (2) Better Communication and Transparency between agent and applicants (3) Additional Funding for Housing Ambassadors and Ready to Rent providers and (4) Dashboard for Community Organizations

How do we do this you ask?

1. The current income bands used in Housing Connect lotteries often price out the very people these programs are intended to serve or provide false hope since only 1 unit is on the low income band. We urge the City to:
 - Align Area Median Income (AMI) levels with local neighborhood income data. Prioritize 0-30% and 30-50% AMI bands. Create more units for senior and disabled tenants with project based subsidies
 - **And a system that receives over 100k lotteries per development but may only house a few, is not connecting or meeting a need. Especially if then these units sit vacant for a long time because the asking income is too high for those applying.**

2. We demand, Better Communication and Transparency between property agents and applicants

Too often, applicants are left in the dark about their application status, eligibility requirements, or next steps. We ask for:

- Clearer communication throughout the application and selection process.
 - The process is complex, discouraging, and often confusing. Outreach emails don't help. Applicants should only be notified of units they qualify for. Bronx applicants that said they only

want to live in select Bronx neighborhoods, should not receive weekly/at times daily communication from Housing Connect. Instead provide Real-time updates for applicants with low log numbers so they can start gathering paperwork and be ready if they are invited for a selection interview.

- Applicants are encouraged to apply to as many units they are eligible for but then a very small percentage moves to the selection process and the documentation is so much that it is too overwhelming
- After providing tax returns, bank statements, birth certificates, etc applicants at least deserve a text or a phone call if they are denied and the right reason for denial.
- Text message should NOT be overused and reserved for important/personalize communication, eligible lotteries, selection process
 - We trust that the legislation, Int T2024-2522 being introduced will take this into consideration.
- Applicants deserve to know the square footage of units (estimate starting space) to be added to selection posting, this can help them determine if to continue with this process. **Pronto seeks to alleviate this process but documents are still being asked on HC. Don't ask for the same documentations multiple times or rush applicants when you are aware that vacant units have been linked to the eligible applicant.**
- Of course, all communications should be multilingual and culturally competent.

3. Additional Funding for Housing Ambassadors and Ready to Rent providers

These programs are lifelines for many families navigating this difficult process. We urge:

- Increased funding and expanded support for Housing Ambassador organizations.
- Sustained investment in the Ready to Rent program, with outreach focused on the lowest-income communities. **Elevate the Neighborhood Tech Help initiative a pilot program recently proposed by HPD to provide in-person support with internet, mobile devices, and computer at affordable housing developments, community centers and NY Public libraries**
 - **Select locations in the Bronx.** We also trust that the legislation, Int T2024-2312 being introduced will take in-person needs and match it with the right capacity and resources.
- During the years we served as Housing Ambassadors, we received zero funding.

Lastly, the 4th recommendation. A dashboard for Community Organizations

Nonprofits, housing advocates, and community groups play a crucial role in connecting residents to housing. We propose:

- A centralized dashboard for organizations to track application trends, outreach impact, and unit availability for those they assist. Similarly to the DOF TAP portal.

UNHP relies on our texting platform to monthly inform AHORA members of lotteries in their zip before these close. This will make it easier to support the 220 selection we support for interviews in a timely matter



**Testimony on behalf of Volunteers of America-Greater New York
The New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings
Oversight Hearing on Housing Connect- Reforming NYC's Affordable Housing Lottery
April 29th, 2025**

Introduction and Thanks

My name is Eric Lee, Director of Public Policy for Volunteers of America-Greater New York (VOA-GNY). We are the local affiliate of the national organization, Volunteers of America, Inc. (VOA). I would like to thank Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

About Us

VOA-GNY is a 129-year-old anti-poverty organization that aims to end homelessness in the Greater New York area through housing, health and wealth building services. We are one of the region's largest human service providers, impacting more than 12,000 adults and children annually through 70+ programs in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Westchester. We are also an active nonprofit developer of supportive and affordable housing, with a robust portfolio of permanent supportive housing, affordable and senior housing properties. Within the next 5 years, VOA-GNY's pipeline of projects will leverage an anticipated \$550 Million in public and private investment to create another 1,000 units of affordable housing.

We're extremely excited by two of our most recent affordable housing projects for older adults. Our newly renovated East Clarke Place Senior Residence contains 122 rental units in Council District 16 in the Jerome Avenue Highbridge-Concourse neighborhood of the Bronx. It provides permanent affordable housing to low and very-low-income older adults, with 37 fully furnished units set aside for chronically homeless seniors, and it includes comprehensive supportive services including case management and wellness staff to help our residents access benefits and strengthen ties within the community. Our newest affordable housing project, YP Senior Residence, located within Council District 14 within the Morris Heights neighborhood of the Bronx, recently opened and just started moving in tenants. When fully occupied, it will house 117 low-income seniors including 37 formerly homeless households.

Thank you, Chair Sanchez and Members of the Housing and Buildings Committee, for your dedication and leadership towards expanding access to affordable housing within New York City. A recent report found that **half of all NYC households are considered housing-cost burdened** (paying more than 30% of their income towards rent), and **more than half of NYC households struggling to meet basic living expenses are considered severely housing-cost burdened** (paying more than 50% of their income towards housing).ⁱ

Affordable housing is an extremely limited and precious resource for our city, and we must do everything we can to maximize the use of every unit given the overwhelming need. **We understand the Council's and Administration's shared goal to make the affordable housing**



process more equitable, but until the city can ensure that Housing Connect is positioned to effectively achieve that goal, it must continue to utilize more flexible options to quickly match qualified candidates to housing. HPD's recently announced a temporary waiver to exempt re-rentals from Housing Connect to allow the city more time to make the online re-rental process more efficient.

To access NYC Housing Connect, HPD requires housing providers to undergo a training process to become "Qualified Marketing Agents". The training and approval process can take well over a year and a half to complete. We are in the process of completing that training now and are excited to gain the ability to list and lease our own units. Given the extremely low turnover rate for affordable housing developments, we anticipate that many more affordable housing providers will want their staff to complete the training to become Qualified Marketing Agents as well because it is simply not cost-effective to hire a third-party agent to process them.

We welcome this Committee's support in prioritizing additional resources for HPD to increase the frequency of scheduled training and shorten the turnaround time to approve prospective marketing agents. More frequently held training courses and faster approvals of marketing agent applications would allow more timely listings and leasing of affordable housing units.

Legislative Solutions:

Int 1265-2025:

VOA-GNY supports this legislation to require HPD's Housing Connect to send e-mail and text message notifications to affordable housing applicants or designated representatives. This new functionality could be especially helpful for households in shelter, if applicants choose their shelter case manager/housing specialist as a designated representative. Shelter residents may work full-time as well as need to balance any number of other time-intensive responsibilities and electing to have their case workers keep track of any pending documentation requests or next steps can help ensure their affordable housing application does not stall out.

Int 1266-2025:

VOA-GNY supports this legislation to require HPD to offer in-person assistance for Housing Connect applicants. While the city seeks to modernize access to its systems and services like affordable housing, it must continue to ensure they are accessible to households with limited access or familiarity with web-based platforms. Elderly as well as low-income households may have limited access to computers and Wi-Fi and bringing in-person help into local community hubs will ensure that technology is not a barrier to accessing affordable housing.

In Closing:

Further improvements to the Housing Connect portal are needed to streamline the affordable housing process, but flexible solutions are essential in the interim to ensure that as many eligible households as possible are quickly matched to vacant units. Through prioritizing utilization of this critical resource while implementing plans to improve the process, the city can



ensure a more transparent and equitable way to provide affordable housing to those who need it. VOA-GNY continues to stand ready as a thought partner with the Council and Administration to strengthen and improve access to affordable housing for our fellow New Yorkers.

Testimony respectfully submitted by Eric Lee.

If you have any questions, please email me at elee@voa-gny.org

ⁱ Kucklick, Annie & Manzer, Lisa. (2023, April). *Overlooked & Undercounted- Struggling to Make Ends Meet in New York City 2023*, page 35. <https://unitedwaynyc.docsend.com/view/dh9h3h7q9478bzf9>

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Joshua Stephenson
Executive Director

April 28, 2025

Good morning/afternoon to the members of the New York City Council's committee on Housing and Buildings. My name is Joshua Stephenson, and I'm the Executive Director of West Bronx Housing and Neighborhood Resource Center, Inc. We're a small organization that provides one on one in-person bilingual English-Spanish housing related services to at least 1,200 Bronxites per year.

I'm here to talk about how prohibitively difficult the Housing Connect process is itself, and why my organization no longer regularly provides Housing Connect assistance, despite doing so 155 times in FY 23, 251 times in FY 24, and only 80 times in FY25.

Most of our clients don't really know how to use computers, and barely know how to use their phones. Believe me, we've tried to show them and teach them, but I can't tell you how often I log into someone's account and see that they missed five lotteries asking them to upload documents, despite having two weeks to do so. That's two weeks that could have gone to someone who would have been able to get their documents uploaded. Which means, if we created 500 housing connect accounts in three years, we'd have to log into 450 separate accounts every two weeks, just to make sure that they're not missing opportunities.

What I believe would make our job far easier is a provider portal to which we could link a new housing connect account that we just created. Instead of having to log into dozens or hundreds of separate accounts, we could log into one, which would show us a list of clients that have pending requests. **Attachment 1** of my testimony gives an example of a landing page for a current client. In the specific example, all seven of the completed applications were rejections. Three because my client missed the document submission window, four because there were no more units. **Attachment 2** of my testimony is an admittedly hideous cut and paste using old school Windows "paint.exe" of how the landing page for a provider portal could look.

Another glaring issue is the "refine search" function. Here's an example - If I filter using the following parameters "Two person household, two bedrooms, max rent \$3,500" the first selection is 111 Willoughby Street Apartments. The two bedroom for this lottery is \$4,347.00. Why is this filtering to apartments for which I don't actually qualify and/or can't afford? **Attachment 3** is a screenshot from housing connect of the first two lotteries that pass that same filter. Notice how neither of them actually fall under that category.

Absent major changes in the on-line process, my organization simply doesn't have the capacity to help with Housing Connect, which is truly a shame, because the number one question we get from phone calls and walk-ins is "Can you help me get an apartment?"

With that being said, thank you for your time. I also want to thank Council Members Dinowitz, Feliz, and Sanchez for their continued support of West Bronx Housing's work. We've worked with each of your offices to save dozens of people from outright eviction. It's an honor to work with each of you and your offices.

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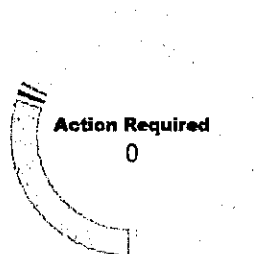
Fax: (718) 654-5105
Joshua Stephenson
Executive Director

ATTACHMENT 1:
LANDING PAGE FOR
HOUSING CONNECT CLIENT

[^ My Applications Summary](#)

[View All](#)

[^ Scheduled Appoi](#)



16 Pending ③

0 In Process ③

0 Action Required ③

7 Completed ③

You have no active sched

[^ New Unread Mes](#)

No unread messages



280 West 24th Street Senior Apartments
Chelsea and Clinton | Manhattan **Applied**



HELP ONE BUILDING A
East New York and New Lots | Brooklyn **Pending**
Updated: 08/21/21



The Willow
Hunts Point and Mott Haven | Bronx **Applied**



Linden Terrace III
East New York and New Lots | Brooklyn **Applied**



H1H2 APARTMENTS
Greenpoint | Brooklyn **Pending**
Updated: 07/24/21



**ROCKAWAY VILLAGE APARTMENTS
PHASE 3**
Rockaways | Queens **Applied**



ATLANTIC CHESTNUT PHASE I
East New York and New Lots | Brooklyn **Applied**

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ATTACHMENT 2:
SAMPLE LANDING PAGE GRID FOR
PROVIDER PORTAL

Jose A	Pending	20	In Process	0	Action Required	1	Completed	0
Elisa B.	Pending	20	In Process	3	Action Required	2	Completed	0
Flor F.	Pending	20	In Process	5	Action Required	0	Completed	0
Luz R.	Pending	20	In Process	0	Action Required	0	Completed	0

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ATTACHMENT 3:
EXAMPLE FILTER ERRORS FOR
2 people, 2 bedroom,
\$120k household income, \$3,500 max rent

111 Willoughby Street Apts. lottery

Unit Size	130% AREA MEDIAN INCOME	MonthlyRent ¹	Units Available	Asset Limit		Household Size ²	Annual Household Income ³ Minimum – Maximum
Studio		\$2,950.00	29	\$201,890.00	→	1 people	\$101,143.00-\$141,310.00
						2 people	\$101,143.00-\$161,590.00
1 Bedroom		\$3,300.00	30		→	1 people	\$113,143.00-\$141,310.00
						2 people	\$113,143.00-\$161,590.00
						3 people	\$113,143.00-\$181,740.00
2 Bedroom		\$4,347.00	10		→	2 people	\$149,040.00-\$161,590.00
						3 people	\$149,040.00-\$181,740.00
						4 people	\$149,040.00-\$201,890.00
	5 people					\$149,040.00-\$218,010.00	

Kay's Place lottery

2 Bedroom	80% AREA MEDIAN INCOME	\$2,668.00	1	\$124,240.00	→	2 people	\$97,303.00-\$99,440.00
						3 people	\$97,303.00-\$111,840.00
						4 people	\$97,303.00-\$124,240.00
						5 people	\$97,303.00-\$134,160.00
3 Bedroom		\$3,071.00	1		→	3 people	\$112,560.00-\$111,840.00
						4 people	\$112,560.00-\$124,240.00
						5 people	\$112,560.00-\$134,160.00
						6 people	\$112,560.00-\$144,080.00
						7 people	\$112,560.00-\$154,080.00

Housing Connect Testimony

For April 29, 2025, hearing

Dear Councilmember Sanchez and Council members:

My name is Dawn Bracy and I am sorry I could not be there in person or virtually as I am working today. I am a longtime – 50 years or more- resident of the Bronx and am currently employed as a home health aide. I rent an apartment in a two-family home and the owners will sell the house one day. I am looking to get settled into an apartment as I approach full retirement. Even though I am now 65 years old, I continue to work part-time.

I have been applying for an apartment through Housing Connect for about 10 years. I worked with UNHP to get help because the online application is confusing and I don't want to make a mistake. I do not have a computer and use my phone to check emails and do online applications. When I was working full-time my income was in the mid \$40,000 range. I was shocked at the range of income covered under Housing Connect. I was also shocked that my full-time income was often too low to qualify for the units. Who are these units for – I make a good living in terms of Bronx standards and the affordable housing was still too high. I have been working with other people through UNHP who are also seeking an apartment through Housing Connect. Our complaints are similar – the income ranges are too high, the system too complicated and the process too confusing.

I did get a call for one unit but when I went to look at it – the apartment was a studio – and way too small to accommodate my furniture. I am seeking a one-bedroom. I feel as if I am being forced to downsize by the level of rents and higher income brackets.

Thank you for your work to improve the housing lottery. I appreciate being heard. In terms of changes I believe that new apartments constructed with public funds should be more affordable, targeting people and families earning less than \$60,000 with consideration for those on limited incomes, earning low wages and on social security. Apartments built in the Bronx should be for Bronx incomes. More help with Housing Connect is needed. So many people are older, or don't have access to computers or don't know how to work on a computer. New construction apartments need to be big enough to accommodate people and their living needs – we can't all live in shoeboxes.

Thank you again for the hearing and this opportunity,

Dawn

[REDACTED]

Hola comité:

Gracias por la oportunidad de testificar.

Soy Dora Rivera yo estoy buscando un apartamneto digno y seguro. Mi ingreso es bajo, solo recibo el Seguro social. Por esta razon, he aplicado para sección 8 desde el año 1997 hasta el presente y todavía no he conseguido que housing me de un apartamento y yo realmente lo necesito siempre he vivido en cuarto y tengo mucho problema por no poder usar el baño, ni dejan usar la cocina personas que viven más años que yo. Tengo hasta la ves seguir usando baños de afuera mi número de teléfono es 646.2442809 eso es toda mi inquietud bueno gracias

He aplicado a 16 loterias y quiero permanecer aquí en NY. Necesitamos un sistema Housing Connect que cumpla con su nombre—uno que realmente conecte a los neoyorquinos, especialmente a los más vulnerables, con opciones de vivienda reales, duraderas y asequibles.

Gracias por esta oportunidad.

Heather Hall


New York NY 10034

April 30, 2025

Dear City Council members,

I have worked part-time with University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP) in the Bronx since January of 2020. In that time, I have witnessed the frustrating experiences of hundreds of apartment seekers who need a safe and affordable place to live.

The topic that I want to focus my testimony on is the technology required to apply. While I am technologically savvy, the majority of the apartment-seeking contacts we serve are not. Many only have one device – their phone – and the HC2.0 system is most definitely not supportive of people who are less tech savvy. No one can get notified of updates to their application through their mobile number, and many people who do not rely on email for their work lives do not check it every day.

With the millions of applications that HC2.0 receives each year, there really needs to be updates to the technology and notification systems to make it accessible for all.

Thank you,
Heather Hall

Thank you Chair and members of the committee. My name is John Abramo, and I serve as Senior Vice President of the New York City Housing Partnership, a nonprofit and public-private intermediary created by Mayor Ed Koch and David Rockefeller in 1983. Since our establishment, the Housing Partnership has created or preserved more than 88,000 units of affordable rental and homeownership units in the five boroughs. I appreciate the opportunity to provide our recommendations on enhancing access for New Yorkers to safe and comfortable affordable housing through improvements to HPD's affordable housing lottery system. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration of ways to ensure that Housing Connect remains fair and equitable in the face of the City's growing housing crisis.

We share a common goal here: to enable New Yorkers to access more affordable housing faster.

The overwhelming demand for affordable housing is evident in the huge number of families and individuals applying for each residential unit that becomes available through Housing Connect.

The City's housing crisis demands that New Yorkers have rapid access to new and preserved affordable units when they come online.

The urgency here is underscored by recent data from the New York City Housing and Vacancy Study released by HPD that revealed an alarming decline in the city's vacancy rate, plummeting to a historic low of 1.4 percent, with only approximately 33,000 units available for rent citywide, the lowest since 1968.

We face a crisis of monumental proportions. These statistics illustrate the need to speed up access to affordable housing.

The ambitious housing goals established by our state and city leaders include the Governor's aim for 800,000 new units statewide, the Mayor's vision for 500,000 new units in the city, and the framework established by the Speaker for shared responsibility in housing creation.

But we must also improve efficiency and reduce the time required to confirm applicants' eligibility for affordable housing through Housing Connect.

Our first recommendation is to strengthen the human resources at HPD dedicated to marketing. This would help overcome delays in getting information and clarifying questions regarding qualification compliance of applicants, as well as reducing the exaggerated time projects often have to wait in the pre-marketing phase. HPD's Marketing Department is understaffed, which is impacting how quickly households in need are able to access already built, available apartments.

The premarketing process, the period between our notice to HPD advising them we have a project ready to go onto Housing Connect, and when the advertisements actually "go live", is too long. There are a number of documents requiring submission for review, which further slows the process. This often adds a frustrating four to six month delay to approve only about a dozen one and two page documents.

There is also a need to improve the functionality of the Housing Connect platform itself, specifically related to the dashboard and filtering. The Housing Connect platform should be able to show the number of units available, so that applicants can see how fast a building is filling up in relation to their log numbers.

At this time in our role as Marketing Agents, the Housing Partnership must interact and contact every applicant that comes up in logbook order, regardless of the types of units or AMIs available. We should receive eligible applications that match the criteria for available units. For

example, if we have a one-bedroom unit for a household at 60% AMI, and we request applications from Housing Connect, we now receive a number of initially ineligible applicants that have incomes that are too high, or households that are too large.

On a more granular level we also recommend:

- Revise Housing Connect to reflect actual vacancies that remain after affordable apartments are assigned. This real time information would reduce confusion about apartment availability.**
- Eliminate leased-up buildings from the dashboard.**

As a final point, we believe attention should also be paid to streamlining and improving the voucher system to make it more efficient and flexible. We are available to share our recommendations on this at an appropriate time.

We believe these improvements can be implemented quickly and at minimal cost.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Josef Aguilar, and I live and work in the Bronx.

Today, we applaud the Council's attention to the issues with Housing Connect and urge bold, community-centered reforms to ensure the system truly serves low-income New Yorkers—especially those in the Bronx, where incomes remain significantly below citywide averages. In the Bronx, where the median income of the applicants served at UNHP is below \$46,000, many so-called "affordable" units remain far out of reach.

I've lived in the Bronx for 8 years and want to remain here. As an associate director at a non-profit, I lead a team that works directly with community members seeking affordable housing. Daily, I witness firsthand how the current system falls short of meeting the needs of Bronx residents who struggle to find housing within their means despite working full-time jobs.

In the last 5 years, I've helped many friends submit over 18 lotteries, experiencing the same frustrations that our clients face.

I call on the Council to take action in the following key areas:

Deeper Affordable Units - reflective of Bronx wages We recommend HPD establish affordability bands that better reflect actual Bronx income levels, with a focus on creating more units accessible to households earning below 40% AMI. The current AMI calculations do not adequately represent the economic reality for most Bronx residents, making supposedly "affordable" housing unattainable.

Simplification of the Selection Process We recommend HPD streamline the application process, create more transparency in selection procedures, and develop a centralized document system so applicants don't need to repeatedly submit the same paperwork for different lotteries. Clear, timely communications on application status would significantly improve the experience for housing seekers.

We need a Housing Connect system that lives up to its name—one that truly connects New Yorkers, especially our most vulnerable, to real, lasting, and affordable housing options.

Thank you for this opportunity. Reforming this system isn't a luxury. It's about equity, justice, and dignity. This is an urgent matter that can't be delayed any further otherwise the low-income families like mine in the Bronx will be pushed out of our borough. We are ready to work alongside the Council, HPD, and fellow community members to make this vision a reality.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and commitment to building a more just New York City.

Hello, Housing and Buildings Committee members.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today. I am Melissa, and I am part of a Bronx advocacy group known as the AHORA (Immediately Affordable Housing Opportunities), which consists of individuals seeking housing, local affordable property managers, and nonprofit service providers.

In 2022, this group was formed due to dissatisfaction with the NYC Housing Connect website. The hearing today is a significant improvement over previous years. Today, we commend the Council's attention to this issue and urge bold, community-focused reforms to ensure the system truly serves low-income New Yorkers, especially those in boroughs like the Bronx, where incomes remain significantly below the citywide average.

After five years of living in the Bronx, I want to continue living here. Rent in what is considered a low-income area in NYC is becoming increasingly unaffordable. I must first express my gratitude for this Housing Connect program, which has provided my family and I with an apartment. Despite this, I must acknowledge that the entire process is quite tedious. Without the help of housing ambassadors who work for various nonprofit organizations, such as UNHP and KHCC, it would be challenging for a person to succeed in doing so.

I have participated in more than 30 lotteries over the past four years, and I know that there are people in the community who have been participating for many more years and are still waiting.

I urge the Council to take actions in the following key areas:

- Affordable units that are in line with Bronx wages
- Simplifying the selection process

Our Housing Connect system must meet its name and provide New Yorkers, particularly the most vulnerable, with truly affordable housing options through practical and functional application and selection processes.

I appreciate the opportunity to submit my story. It's not a luxury to reform this system. Equity, justice, and dignity are all about. It is imperative that this matter is not put off any longer; otherwise, low-income families in the Bronx will be compelled to leave our borough.

I am grateful for the efforts, leadership, and dedication you have made towards creating a more just New York City

Hola, Estimada Concejal Sánchez y miembros del Comité de Vivienda:

Gracias por la oportunidad de testificar hoy. Mi nombre es Milagros Salazar, soy parte del grupo AHORA, y el día de hoy he venido para compartir mi testimonio con Housing Connect, sobre mi experiencia al aplicar, el proceso de elegibilidad y la asequibilidad para obtener un apartamento para personas de bajos ingresos, como yo.

Vivo y trabajo en el Bronx por más de 10 años. Estoy en Housing Connect desde el 2017 y aplique a más de 63 loterías dentro de mi ingreso y después de muchas aplicaciones sin respuestas, obtuve un apto. Soy una de las pocas personas con suerte, se que la preferencia comunitaria me ayudo mucho.

Soy trabajadora de salud en el hogar, como Home Health Aid mi ingreso es bajo, y regularmente no soy elegible a los rangos que están apareciendo en Housing Connect. Para una persona como yo, con dos pacientes tendría que trabajar más de 50 horas a la semana para poder llegar al estándar que se exige. Entonces no son verdaderamente asequibles para las personas de bajos ingresos que trabajamos duro y merecemos tener un hogar digno para nuestras familias. Gracias a Dios y a UNHP que siempre nos ayuda en los procesos complejos y exigentes. Mi renta actual es \$1,245, y días que no trabajo como hoy no son pagados.

En Diciembre del 2023, después de 6 años conseguí por fin mi apartamento, y estoy aquí para ser la voz de todos los que están pasando por este proceso, que también necesitan su hogar; el día de hoy quiero solicitar la ayuda de las entidades aquí presentes para que mejore el proceso y sean realmente asequibles para las personas de bajos ingresos que también merecen tener un hogar digno.

Antes de obtener mi apartamento, tenía ansiedad de no perderme un correo electrónico de housing connect y obtuve dos oportunidades de entrevistas de selección que me desanimaron. Fui a dos entrevistas, la primera era un edificio parte de un proyecto de tres, uno al lado del otro, el primer edificio luego de recopilar todos los requisitos y documentación me fui negada por mis ingresos. En el momento en que se realizaba la entrevista faltaban \$100 para llegar al rango que ellos tenían, aun demostrando que podía pagar la mensualidad ya que el apartamento era con una renta de \$550 (30%) del ingreso requerido, y yo pagaba \$700 en una habitación mensualmente por varios años y con todas las pruebas de lugar.

Luego al terminar el tercer edificio de este mismo proyecto, se comunicaron conmigo para saber si aun estaba interesada en un apartamento porque tenían apartamentos disponibles en el cual calificaba con mis ingresos. Rápidamente recopilé todos los documentos, pedí el día libre de trabajo para ir al banco y llamar al empleador, buscar los impuestos y talonarios, etc. Pero nuevamente cuando revisaron todo, su respuesta fue que no calificaba porque donde vivía no tenía prioridad comunitaria, me sorprendió esa situación porque en el edificio de al lado no pasaba eso, me sentí frustrada, deprimida, y confundida, se supone que las personas que verifican el perfil de cada aplicante, ya sabes donde vive, sus ingresos y de mas. Luego de verificar

tu solicitud para rechazarte al comprobar lo mismo que tienes en tus datos, me hizo cuestionar la claridad del proceso.

un porcentaje muy bajo de las loterías son menores de \$40,000. Estos procesos son largos, no tan claros, llenos de burocracia y por lo regular son 10 días para recopilar los documentos, cuando en la mayoría de las oficinas tardan más para entregar estos formularios; además hay que saber manejar la tecnología porque todo es mediante la página web. Hay que subir documentación al portal de Housing Connect y enviar correos electrónicos, y muchas veces no todos tienen la facilidad de manejar la tecnología.

Por ultimo, donde vivo actualmente no es perfecto, es mixto, muchas unidades fueron rentadas a personas con subsidios (voucher) por problemas mentales. Esto hace el edificio difícil de manejar por la seguridad y el desorden.

Necesitamos un sistema de vivienda que haga honor a su nombre: uno que realmente conecte a los neoyorquinos, especialmente a los más vulnerables, con opciones de vivienda reales, permanentes y asequibles. Porque de lo contrario las familias de bajos ingresos como las tantas en el Bronx no tendremos donde vivir y sin esperanza de un futuro digno.

Gracias por la oportunidad de compartir mi historia y hablar sobre la necesidad de simplificar este proceso.

My name is Richard Bess and I graduated from the Stationary Engineer apprenticeship program in June 2023. The apprenticeship program taught me all the necessary skills and hands on experience to excel in this trade. With this practical experience provided by Local 30 I am now able to handle various types of machinery safely and properly.

During my time I was able to earn two years of steam time from the program which pushed me ahead to qualify for my high pressure boiler license. If this was not done I wouldn't qualify to sit for my license therefore extending the waiting period an extra two years and 6month rather than 6months after my graduation.

The apprenticeship program give us the opportunity to get our high pressure boiler license at accelerated pace. I am grateful for the apprenticeship program as it helps and pushes me forward to achieve my goal of becoming a High Pressure stationary Engineer.

I urge the committee to support int 1207-2025 to recognize experience gained from the apprenticeship program.

Dear Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee:

My name is Sonia Simpson, and I have been applying through Housing Connect since my children were young, I received one selection interview for a unit, but the time allowed was not enough. I was unable to put the documents on timely fashion due to the crunch time and poor communication. I have a fixed and limited income and there are very few apartments on Housing Connect for which I am eligible. I need an affordable, clean, and healthy apartment. I find the Housing Connect Portal difficult to use. I tried to use my phone to update my application, and I worked with UNHP to get help. I received constant emails from Housing Connect for apartments that I can not afford, and I'm not eligible for, and this is frustrating. These emails fill up my inbox. I can only imagine how frustrating this must be for the elderly or non-English speakers. Going forward, I would love to be able to talk to a person when I am selected for a unit, emails should be sent only to those who are eligible for the unit, based on income/voucher and location where the family wants to move. We need more units for low-income families, and individuals. There needs to be more help on Housing Connect in communities.

Thank you,

Jumelia

Dear Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Yadhira Marte, and I am the housing advocate at UNHP and part of - AHORA, the Affordable Housing Opportunities Right Away advocacy group.

This group came together in 2022 out of frustration around the NYC Housing Connect website. University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP) is a 42-year-old community-based non-profit, and we've helped over 3,000 apartment seekers understand and navigate the HC portal. This is a collective of community members, housing advocates, and residents directly impacted by the current challenges of New York City's Affordable Housing Lottery system and Housing Connect platform. Working at UNHP during the last 6 years, I have been able to see how difficult it is for people to find affordable housing, and I have seen people's frustration firsthand, as the process is very difficult and slow.

We call on the Council to take actions in the following key areas:

I hope something can be done and the selection and document submission process can be improved.

- Improve better communications method.
- If the applicant has a high log number, and the building is completely full, please don't ask to upload the same documentation more than once.

The clients we help in our community are not comfortable with technology, especially since many of them are seniors and don't know how to check their emails, and they are not aware when they receive a Housing Connect email notification. It is also very time-consuming as sometimes our clients must submit documents more than once, and sometimes they must take the day off to be able to get all the documentation they ask for, and most of the time they don't even receive a response from the leasing agent. The applications remain pending. I have cases where applicants only realize they were chosen for a selection interview when they meet with me to review the account, and at that time it's too late, even to appeal or we check their portal, and in the Housing Connect Portal, it indicates that there are no more units available, but they were hopeful that their low log number met they were going to be selected. and in some cases I have to send emails asking for updates because the Housing Connect Portal shows that the application is still under review and their response is that they have no more units remaining,

Another point is the size of the apartments and how sometimes the desperation of having a home leads a family of up to three to have to accept a small studio or one-bedroom apartment because they have no other option. As I mentioned, this whole process is frustrating for both the client and us as an organization, and it is not fair that there is no immediate solution.

We need immediate action to be taken to see some solution to these problems that affect our communities. We commend the Council's attention to this issue and urge bold, community-centered reforms to ensure the system truly serves low-income New Yorkers, especially those in boroughs like the Bronx, where median incomes remain significantly below citywide averages.

Hola comité:

Gracias por la oportunidad de testificar.

Yo Nelly soy solicitante de apartamento, mi carta es para poner mi opinión sobre el programa NYC HOUSING Connect. En UNHP están trabajando excelentemente. Pero el programa de HC es confuso, una nota curiosa que es que en el portal te acepta la aplicación piden todos los requisitos de papeles se lo entregamos a la dirección que fui seleccionada para el departamento y resulta que igual tenemos que esperar porque después de haber sido aprobada, estamos igual en espera de departamentos que estén desocupados. mi inquietud es ¿Porque solicitan los requisitos si no hay apartamentos disponibles y luego ponernos en espera? Es probable que esto pueda mejorar

Vivo en el Bronx con mi esposo, hemos aplicado a 20 loterías y quiero permanecer aquí en este condado. Necesitamos un sistema Housing Connect que cumpla con su nombre—uno que realmente conecte a los neoyorquinos, especialmente a los más vulnerables, con opciones de vivienda reales, duraderas y asequibles.

Gracias por esta oportunidad.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eric Urquiza

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joshua Stephens

Address: _____

I represent: West Bronx Housing

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eric Urquiza

Address: _____

I represent: West Bronx Housing

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 4/29/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brendan Mitchell

Address: [REDACTED] Bronx NY

I represent: University Neighborhood Housing Program

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Melano Salazar

Address: [REDACTED] BRONX NY 10455

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Janelle Abrahamson

Address: [REDACTED] Bronx, NY

I represent: UNHCR

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1265-1266 Res. No. _____

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 4/29/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eric Lee

Address: _____

I represent: Volunteers of America Greater New York

Address: 135 W 50th St 10020

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brendan Cheney

Address: _____

I represent: New York Housing Conference

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Victoriano Mejia

Address: BRONX, N.Y. 10468

I represent: Myself

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Valentina Mena

Address: [REDACTED]

Bronx NY
10468

I represent: Me

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 4/28/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Arielle Hersh

Address: _____

I represent: VHAB

Address: 120 Wall St, 20th Fl, NY NY 10005

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emily Osgood

Address: _____

I represent: 71PD

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ahmed Tigani

Address: _____

I represent: HPD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Abdullah Black Weissman

Address: _____

I represent: HPD

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Shane Canada

Address: [Redacted] Roselle, NJ 07068

I represent: _____

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Richard Bess

Address: [REDACTED] Valley Stream NY 11580

I represent: _____

Address: _____

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1207 Res. No. _____
☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brandon Bess

Address: [REDACTED] Garden City NY 11530

I represent: IUOE Local 30

Address: 16-16 White Stone exp

▶ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◀

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1264, 1265, 1266 Res. No. _____
☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 4/29/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HOWARD SLATKIN

Address: _____

I represent: CITIZENS HOUSING & PLANNING COUNCIL

Address: 42 BROADWAY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
☒ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SHARON SAMMY

Address: STREET VALLEY NY 11757

I represent: LOCAL 30

Address: 16-76 WHISTLESONA FREEWAY

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms