

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TWIN PARKS  
CITYWIDE TASKFORCE ON FIRE PREVENTION

Jointly with

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT

And the

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

----- X

April 6, 2022  
Start: 10:32 a.m.  
Recess: 3:24 p.m.

HELD AT: Hybrid Hearing  
Council Chambers- City Hall

B E F O R E: Oswald Feliz  
Chairperson  
  
Pierina Anna Sanchez  
Chairperson  
  
Joann Ariola  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Alexa Avilés  
Amanda Farías  
David M. Carr

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

Carmen N. De La Rosa  
James F. Gennaro  
Robert F. Holden  
Kevin C. Riley  
Lynn C. Schulman  
Kalman Yeger  
Charles Barron  
Tiffany Cabán  
Eric Dinowitz  
Crystal Hudson  
Ari Kagan

Laura Kavanagh  
FDNY Acting Commissioner

John Hodgens  
FDNY Chief

AnnMarie Santiago  
HPD Deputy Commissioner for Enforcement and  
Neighborhood Services

Anne-Marie Hendrickson  
HPD Deputy Commissioner for Asset and Property  
Management

Oren Barzilay  
FDNY EMS President Local 2507

Darryl Chalmers  
Executive Board Local 2507

Michael Reardon  
Deputy Chief Inspector at Bureau of Fire  
Prevention

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

George Farinacci  
UFOA Local 854

Ryan Monell  
REBNY

Frank Ricci  
Executive President of Rent Stabilization  
Association

Andrew Sokolof Diaz  
Co-President 89<sup>th</sup> Street Tenants Unidos

Yadhira Rodriguez  
Resident

Jessica Bellinder  
Legal Aid Society Bronx

Steven Zirinsky  
AIA New York Chapter

Andrew Sokolof Diaz  
Co-President 89<sup>th</sup> Street Tenants Unidos

Yadhira Rodriguez  
Resident

Jessica Bellinder  
Legal Aid Society Bronx

Steven Zirinsky  
AIA New York Chapter

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

Vanessa Gibson  
Bronx Borough President

James Lloyd  
NYSFAFH

Monica Bartley  
CIDNY

Salim Drammeh  
Gambian Youth Organization

Ajifanta Marenah  
Gambian Youth Organization

Pilar DeJesus  
TakeRoot Justice

Noelle Francois  
Heat Seek

Lyric Thompson

Robert Eustace  
Vice President of Uniformed Fire Fighters  
Association



1 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Thank you and good  
2 morning, and welcome to today's remote New York City  
3 Council hearing of Twin Parks Citywide Taskforce on  
4 Fire Prevention jointly with the Committee on Fire  
5 and Emergency Management and the Committee on Housing  
6 and Buildings. At this time, would all Council  
7 Members and staff please turn on their video? To  
8 minimize disruption, please place electronic devices  
9 on vibrate or silent mode. If you wish to submit  
10 testimony, you may do so at  
11 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Once again, that is  
12 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Thank you for your  
13 cooperation. We are ready to begin.

14 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: I am Council Member  
15 Oswald Feliz, Council Member to the 15<sup>th</sup> District in  
16 the Bronx, and I'm Chair to the Special Committee,  
17 the Twin Parks Citywide Taskforce on Fire Prevention.  
18 I am joined today by the Chair of the Committee on  
19 Fire and Emergency Management, Council Member Joann  
20 Ariola, and Chair of the Housing and Buildings  
21 Committee, Council Member Pierina Sanchez. I would  
22 also like to acknowledge Council Members that are  
23 here today, both in person and virtually: Council  
24 Members Kagan, Holden, De La Rosa, Carr, Cabán,  
25

1 Hudson, Barron, and Avilés, and also Council Member  
2 Eric Dinowitz, and Hanif. Before getting into  
3 specifics of today's joint hearing, I want to begin  
4 by acknowledging the tragic fire that occurred in my  
5 district on Sunday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, resulting in the  
6 deaths of 17 individuals, including eight children,  
7 and the hospitalization of dozens with life-  
8 threatening injuries due to smoke inhalation. Let us  
9 take a moment of silence to acknowledge those who  
10 lost their lives in this tragic event.  
11

12 [moment of silence]

13 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. At  
14 today's hearing we have one overarching goal, figure  
15 out what can be done to limit the occurrence of  
16 residential fires and prevent the deadly results  
17 witnessed at the Twin Parks tragedy. To this end, we  
18 hope to examine the enforcement of existing laws to  
19 ensure city agencies have robust inspection  
20 protocols, and we also hope to discuss legislative  
21 proposals aimed to strengthen local fire safety  
22 standards to ensure all New Yorkers are protected  
23 within their homes. We're also hoping to hear from  
24 the Administration about the City's response to the  
25 Twin Parks fire from the initial bravery of our first

1 responders to efforts to help displaced tenants and  
2 ongoing post-incident measures taken by the  
3 Administration, including the Executive Order  
4 recently issued by Mayor Adams last month.  
5 Additionally, the committees will hear testimony on  
6 several bills related to fire safety. I am the  
7 sponsor of two of those bills. First, Introduction  
8 104 which will provide clarity to existing  
9 requirements pertaining to self-closing doors by  
10 adding a definition of self-closing doors to the  
11 administrative code as it is used within the Housing  
12 Maintenance Code. Next, Introduction 105, which  
13 would reduce the amount of item provided to landlords  
14 when correcting self-closing door violations from 21  
15 days to 10 days, and it will also require subsequent  
16 re-inspections by HPD and will also provide higher  
17 fines for bad actors. We have a lot to get to today,  
18 so I will now turn the microphone over to Council  
19 Member and the Chair of the Housing and Buildings  
20 Committee, Council Member Pierina Sanchez.

22 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much,  
23 Chair Feliz. Good morning. I am Council Member  
24 Pierina Sanchez, Chair of the New York City Council's  
25 Committee on Housing and Buildings. I want to echo



1 the remarks of my Co-chair, Council Member Feliz, and  
2 thank all of you for attending this important  
3 hearing. I would like to thank Council Member Feliz  
4 for all that you have done to support your community,  
5 and I'd like to also thank the Bronx Borough  
6 President for being present for the community as  
7 well. And I'd also like to thank our Co-chair Council  
8 Member Ariola for holding this joint hearing today.  
9 Seventeen lives were lost unnecessarily on January  
10 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Some of our community leaders powerfully  
11 repeated the refrain in those days that those  
12 families, those children would still be with us today  
13 if they were not from the Bronx. In fact, in New  
14 York City structural fires like the devastating five-  
15 alarm fire that took place at Twin Parks Northwest  
16 overwhelmingly take place in community district where  
17 the majority of residents are black and Hispanic per  
18 an analysis of the New York City Fire Incident  
19 Dispatch Data I documented. In this hearing today  
20 and in our work as leaders for the City of New York,  
21 we must interrogate why. We cannot leave any stone  
22 unturned in scrutinizing what went wrong, from  
23 heating adequacy and code compliance to space heater  
24 malfunction, building electrical capacity, resident  
25

1 education and more. The Bronx is scared by a history  
2 of fires and disinvestment, and we must ensure that  
3 our homes are safe into the future, and these  
4 tragedies can never occur. All gratitude for the  
5 first responders who, like they do time and again,  
6 jumped in harm's way to prevent greater loss of life,  
7 and thanks also to the outpouring of support for the  
8 affected families, especially from organizations like  
9 the Gambian Youth Organization, Unite Mi Umah [sp?],  
10 the Islamic Cultural Centers, Bronx Mutual Aid  
11 Networks, Smiling [sic] Coast Women Empowerment  
12 Network, and so many of our Bronx Muslim and faith  
13 leaders like Imam Kabah [sp?], who have been there  
14 for the community. So, as Council Member Feliz has  
15 noted, the oversight topic today is of great  
16 importance to the City. The United States has one of  
17 the highest rates of fire-related deaths in the  
18 industrialized world with thousands of lives lost  
19 each year. Fires kill more Americans than any other  
20 natural disasters combined, and they're the third-  
21 leading cause of accidental death in the home.  
22 Heating is the second-leading cost of residential  
23 fires, and residential fire safety is especially  
24 critical in a city as densely populated as ours.  
25

1 Thank you to the agencies for testifying here today  
2 and participating with us as we interrogate how we  
3 move forward as a city. And in the several months  
4 since the tragic fire in Twin Parks Northwest, the  
5 City has assessed the approximate cause of the fire  
6 and factors that contributed to the deaths and  
7 injuries. We've also given consideration to what  
8 solutions can make sense. And to that end, we are  
9 hearing several pieces of legislation from our  
10 colleagues today, each of which aims to bring  
11 sensible solutions to the problems that were at play  
12 in the horrific building fires earlier this year.  
13 These bills represent the beginning of a discussion  
14 as my colleagues and I continue to work on additional  
15 legislation as well to improve fire safety and  
16 landlord accountability in our buildings. In the  
17 Housing Code, Intro 106 sponsored by Council Member  
18 Hanif, would prohibit the sale of electric space  
19 heaters, unless they have an automatic shutoff  
20 mechanism and thermostat functionality, and have been  
21 tested and certified by the U.S. Consumer Product  
22 Safety Commission. Intro 115 by Council Member  
23 Hudson seeks to increase the minimum indoor  
24 temperatures required during heat season. Intro 131,

1 sponsored by me, would require the FDNY to conduct  
2 residential education and outreach regarding the safe  
3 operation of space heaters in addition to other  
4 information they provide. We will also hear two Pre-  
5 considered Introductions by Council Member Carr. The  
6 first would require DOB to waive filing fees for  
7 permits to alter family dwellings to conform to the  
8 New York City Fire Code. The second bill would  
9 require carbon monoxide detecting devices in the  
10 basements of certain dwellings. And lastly, the  
11 Committee will hear a Pre-considered Introduction  
12 sponsored by Council Member Williams ensuring self-  
13 closing doors in residential buildings are inspected  
14 every two years. You will hear from each of the  
15 sponsors regarding their respective pieces of  
16 legislation. Thank you, and I would now like to pass  
17 it over to my colleague, Council Member Ariola.

18  
19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you so much.

20 Before I begin, I would just like to acknowledge that  
21 Council Members Brewer, Riley, Yeger, and Williams  
22 have joined our hearing. Good morning everyone.  
23 Thank you all for being here today. As Chair Feliz  
24 stated earlier, I am Council Member Joann Ariola and  
25 I'm the Chair of the Fire and Emergency Management

1 Committee. Chair Feliz touched upon the reason we  
2 are here today, and I would like to express my  
3 sincere condolences to all those who lost a loved one  
4 in the tragedy that happened at the Twin Parks  
5 Housing Complex. My heart goes out to all of you. I  
6 know we have a lot to get done today, and in the  
7 interest of time I will keep my opening brief. There  
8 are eight bills being considered today for the  
9 committees, two of which are in Fire and Emergency  
10 Management. Council Member Sanchez already spoke  
11 about Introduction number 106. In addition to that,  
12 there's a second Introduction, Number 131, introduced  
13 by Council Member Sanchez which would amend the  
14 current requirements relating to the Fire  
15 Department's efforts to conduct fire safety education  
16 and outreach for residential buildings by requiring  
17 that such activities include dissemination of  
18 relevant information pertaining to the safe operation  
19 of electric space heaters in residential settings.  
20 As Chair of this committee, I expect to hear from--  
21 testimony from the Fire Department on their plan to  
22 better enforce fire safety in multiple dwellings and  
23 what obstacles the Department has faced enforcing our  
24 Local Laws. Additionally, I look forward to hearing  
25

1 testimony from the Administration on the package of  
2 fire safety bills that are before the committee  
3 today, several of which I am co-sponsoring. It is  
4 our responsibility as a city to protect and education  
5 the public on how to prevent fires as well as  
6 properly respond to a fire when one occurs. It is my  
7 hope that we are taking the steps today in  
8 strengthening our fire safety protocols and  
9 procedures. Again, I look forward to the  
10 Administration's testimony, as well as the members of  
11 the public. I would now like to turn the microphone  
12 to Josh Kingsley, the Committee's Counsel.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council  
15 Member. Before we begin, we're going to turn to  
16 Council Member sponsors for their opening statements  
17 on the bills. We'll start with Council Member Hanif  
18 followed by Council Member Williams and Hudson who  
19 are going to be joining us through Zoom. Council  
20 Member Hanif, you may go.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you so much.  
22 Good morning. I'm Council Member Shahana Hanif and I  
23 represent 39<sup>th</sup> District in Brooklyn. Thank you to  
24 the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management, the  
25 Committee on Housing and Buildings, the Twin Parks

1 Citywide Taskforce on Fire Prevention, and Chairs  
2 Ariola, Sanchez, and Feliz for hosting this critical  
3 hearing. I deeply appreciate you including Intro 106  
4 on today's agenda. I'm proud to have introduced this  
5 bill alongside Public Advocate Jumaane Williams,  
6 Chair Sanchez, Council Member Powers, and Chair  
7 Feliz. If passed, this bill would require all  
8 electric space heaters for sale in New York City to  
9 be equipped with a thermostat, equipped with an  
10 automatic shut-off feature that disables the device  
11 if it overheats or tips over, and certified by the  
12 United States Consumer Product Safety Commission.  
13 This devastating Touray Kunda or Twin Parks fire in  
14 Council Member Feliz's district was caused by a space  
15 heater that was on for a prolonged period of time and  
16 then overheated. If the heater had a working  
17 thermostat and automatic shut-off feature, it would  
18 have turned off and the fire would most likely not  
19 have started. Electric space heaters are one of the  
20 leading causes of fire. According to the Consumer  
21 Product Safety Commission, portable heaters are  
22 involved in about 1,700 fires per year nationwide,  
23 resulting in about 80 deaths and 160 injuries.  
24 Unfortunately, we know we cannot eliminate space  
25

1 heater usage in New York City. While landlords have  
2 an obligation to their tenants to provide adequate  
3 heating, this obligation is often not met and  
4 residents are forced to resort to using heaters to  
5 stay warm. It is our duty as a legislative body to  
6 ensure that these heaters are as safe as possible in  
7 order to prevent future tragedies. This legislation  
8 is a common-sense approach that will reduce risk and  
9 save lives. I strongly encourage my colleagues to  
10 support Intro 106 and for the Council to pass it  
11 expeditiously. Thank you so much for your time and  
12 consideration.  
13

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council  
15 Member. Next, we're going to turn to Council Member  
16 Williams for an opening statement, and she is on the  
17 Zoom calls.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: [inaudible] No,  
19 I say you speaking to somebody about me the other day  
20 about old stuff.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member  
22 Williams?

23 UNIDENTIFIED: I'm not mad at-- I'm not  
24 mad.  
25



1  
2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, we'll move on  
3 to--

4 UNIDENTIFIED: Council Member Williams?

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I don't even  
6 say anything. That's just--

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, let's-- sorry  
8 about that everyone. Let's turn to on to Council  
9 Member Hudson now.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Good morning and  
11 thank you to Chairs Ariola, Feliz, Sanchez-- and  
12 Sanchez for the opportunity to provide a brief  
13 statement on my bill, Introduction 115 which would  
14 raise the minimum indoor temperatures required of  
15 property owners during heat season. Currently, all  
16 residential building owners are required to maintain  
17 indoor temperatures of at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit  
18 between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. when the outside  
19 temperature drops below 55 degrees between October 1  
20 and May 31<sup>st</sup>, a.k.a. heat season. They're also  
21 required to maintain indoor temperatures of at least  
22 62 degrees between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.  
23 regardless of the outside temperature. This bill  
24 will raise the minimum required temperature overnight  
25 from 62 degrees to 66 degrees. As amended, it will

1 not raise the maximum from 68 degrees, as the City is  
2 pre-empted by State Law from doing so. This effort  
3 comes on the heels of the January 2022 Twin Parks  
4 fire which due to a malfunctioning electric space  
5 heater resulted in 17 fatalities. Tenants at a  
6 building owned by the same owners as Twin Parks have  
7 complained about inadequate heat and said they use  
8 space heaters or electric fire places to keep warm in  
9 the winter. Since the start of the year, the Fire  
10 Department of New York has identified at least nine  
11 fires linked to space heaters, on track to outpace  
12 the 11 fires from space heaters in 2021.

13 Additionally, I've heard complaints from many  
14 constituents including older adults and people living  
15 with young children who are more temperature  
16 sensitive about insufficient heat, forcing them to  
17 use space heaters and ovens to keep warm at home.

18 Advocates have long voiced concerns that this type of  
19 negligence will only continue to drive tenants to use  
20 these unsafe devices to stay warm. Currently,  
21 minimum temperature requirements in New York City are  
22 lower than in most major cities, including East Coast  
23 cities with similar average winter temperatures like  
24 Philadelphia, Washington D.C., and Boston, as well as  
25

1 West Coast cities with higher average winter  
2 temperatures like Los Angeles. This bill moves us  
3 closer to creating an age-friendly city by providing  
4 sufficient overnight temperatures for older adults  
5 and younger children who are more temperature  
6 sensitive. I'm aware of concerns regarding emissions  
7 and I'm committed to ensuring this bill is  
8 implemented in a way that does not burden renters and  
9 undermine our city's climate goals. It's important  
10 to know that tenants are currently using auxiliary  
11 sources of heat like space heaters and ovens that are  
12 likely not energy efficient, let alone safe. This  
13 bill is just the first step. I'm committed to  
14 working closely with the Mayor's Office of  
15 Sustainability and Council Staff in identifying  
16 solutions to these concerns, including support for  
17 those who need to update heating systems with newer  
18 ones that have modern temperature monitors and  
19 regulators. [inaudible] bill intended to address the  
20 deadly economic, racial, and housing inequality in  
21 our city with our broader fight for environmental  
22 action and justice is an unproductive distraction and  
23 undermines the issue at hand. I'd like to thank  
24 Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and Council Member  
25

1 Gale Brewer for their work raising the minimum  
2  
3 temperature back in 2017 when the Council passed the  
4 measure unanimously. I'm proud to build on their work  
5 and continue the fight to make New York safe for all  
6 and hope this council will also unanimously support  
7 this bill that addresses systemic injustices facing  
8 black and brown New Yorkers. And also, thanks to my  
9 co-sponsors Council Members Powers, Feliz, Sanchez,  
10 Brewer, Hanif, Krishnan, and Stevens. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much. I  
12 would also like to acknowledge Council Member Fariás  
13 who has joined, and I also want to acknowledge  
14 members of the FDNY and HPD, Acting Commissioner  
15 Laura Kavanagh, Chief John Hodgens, AnnMarie Santiago  
16 from HPD, and also Anne-Marie Hendrickson from HPD. I  
17 want to start by stating how thankful I am for the  
18 New York City Fire Department. On the Sunday morning  
19 of January 9<sup>th</sup>, we saw a devastating fire in the  
20 Bronx, a tragedy that took the lives of 17  
21 individuals, including eight babies. That morning,  
22 we saw fire fighters bravely, heroically entering a  
23 burning building. We saw them risk their own lives  
24 to save the lives of others. We saw fire fighters  
25 risking their own lives to save the lives of people

1 they had never met. We're very thankful for those  
2 fire fighters. We're thankful and grateful. The fire  
3 started due to the use of space heater. Space  
4 heaters started the fire in this fire-proof building,  
5 and the fire turned into a tragedy because the self-  
6 closing doors in the building were not self-closing.  
7 The doors were not self-closing, and it allowed the  
8 smoke to inundate the entire building, turning this  
9 fire in a fire-proof building, turning that fire into  
10 a tragedy that we saw that ugly Sunday morning. The  
11 tragedy highlighted the need for stronger housing and  
12 fire safety laws. Stronger housing and fire safety  
13 laws, but also stronger enforcement of housing and  
14 fire safety laws. So we have many questions for the  
15 NY-- for the FDNY and also for HPD, but before that  
16 we want to provide the floor to the FDNY for opening  
17 remarks.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council  
20 Member. I'm going to give instructions for the  
21 members of-- who are on the Zoom call. So as we're  
22 doing remote hearing here-- thank you everyone. I'm  
23 Josh Kingsley, Counsel of the Fire and Emergency  
24 Management Committee. Before we begin testimony, I  
25 want to remind everyone that you'll be on mute before

1 you're called on to testify. Afterwards, you'll be  
2 unmuted by the host. I'll be calling panelists to  
3 testify. Please listen for your name to be called.  
4 We'll periodically be announcing who the next  
5 panelist is. Council Members, if you'd like to ask a  
6 question, please use the Zoom raise hand function.  
7 For those present, please just wave your hand towards  
8 me, and I will acknowledge you then. All hearing  
9 participants should submit testimony to  
10 [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov). Okay, before-- I'm going  
11 to swear in the panelists. Before we do, we're  
12 actually going to pass to Council Member Carr for an  
13 opening statement on his bills. We apologize for the  
14 oversight there before. But if Council Member Carr  
15 has a brief second for a statement, we'll then move  
16 onto the FDNY.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Thank you. I  
19 appreciate it. I'll be very brief. Good morning  
20 colleagues. Thank you Chairs Sanchez, Ariola, and  
21 Feliz for convening this important hearing. Fire  
22 safety and prevention are undoubtedly important, and  
23 that was never made more clear than after the Twin  
24 Parks fire at the start of the calendar year. Last  
25 year, the Council made great strides towards

1 improving fire safety, and the Fire Code Revision  
2 adopted in December, and we need to build on that  
3 momentum. My two Pre-considered Introductions can  
4 help. The first would allow the Buildings  
5 Commissioner to waive fees related to permits to  
6 bring one, two, and three-family dwellings into  
7 compliance with Fire Code changes. We should do  
8 everything we can to make it easier for the City's  
9 homeowners, property owners to make their families  
10 safer in their own homes. The second would require  
11 carbon-monoxide detectors be installed in basements  
12 of multi-family dwellings that are not designated  
13 residential units themselves. Often basements in  
14 multi-family dwellings are common areas such as  
15 laundry rooms, and some are actually illegally  
16 converted as residential units, but regardless of the  
17 use, carbon-monoxide detectors are a must in these  
18 areas so that all might be using them are safe. I  
19 appreciate our Chairs and their teams taking time to  
20 have a hearing on this issue today, and I want to  
21 thank their staff for the help including Jeff Baker  
22 [sp?], Audrey Sun [sp?], Josh Kingsley, Brad Reed  
23 [sp?], Nicole Bramstead [sp?], Peter Spencer, and of  
24 course, my Chief of Staff Giuseppe Desario [sp?], and  
25

1 I appreciate the opportunity to speak this morning.

2 Thank you.

3  
4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much,  
5 Council Member Carr. We'll now turn to the panelists  
6 from FDNY and HPD to testify. Before we begin, I  
7 will call on you to swear in for the oath. Do you  
8 affirm to tell the truth, nothing but the truth  
9 before this committee and to answer-- honest answer--  
10 answer honestly to Council Member questions?

11 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You do?

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Awesome. Thank you  
15 so much. You may go ahead.

16 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Thank you.  
17 Morning Chair Ariola, Chair Feliz, and all the  
18 Council Members present. My name is Laura Kavanagh  
19 and I am the Acting Commissioner of the New York City  
20 Fire Department. I am joined today by John Hodgens,  
21 the Acting Chief of Department for FDNY, as well as  
22 colleagues from the Department of Housing  
23 Preservation and Development. Thank you for the  
24 opportunity to speak with you about the fire at the  
25 Twin Parks Housing Development and about the



1 legislation introduced by the Council in the wake of  
2 that terrible tragedy. On the morning of Sunday,  
3 January 9<sup>th</sup>, Fire Department received a call about a  
4 fire in a duplex apartment in the Twin Parks  
5 Northwest building in the Bronx. The building has a  
6 120 residential units and the Fire Department arrived  
7 on scene just over three minutes later. The fire  
8 ultimately resulted in the death of 17 people, and 46  
9 others were hospitalized. Even for veteran first  
10 responders who encounter dire circumstances on a  
11 regular basis, the loss of life at the Twin Parks  
12 fire was staggering. Members of the FDNY respond to  
13 every emergency with the goal of saving lives and  
14 minimizing harm. In this case, the heavy smoke moved  
15 rapidly, reaching stairwells, hallways, and other  
16 areas used by residents who were trying to escape.  
17 Two hundred fire fighters and 57 ambulances responded  
18 to the emergency. No one who arrived on scene that  
19 day will forget the devastation that they  
20 encountered. However, through the diligent efforts,  
21 and at times, as you mentioned, policing themselves  
22 in peril, FDNY members were able to save the lives of  
23 15 residents who were discovered in cardiac arrest,  
24 rescuing and transporting them to local hospitals.  
25

1 Dozens of other patients were assisted in escaping  
2 the building and received immediate medical care from  
3 EMTs and paramedics. We are grateful to the Council  
4 for its interest in addressing issues that  
5 contributed to the loss of life t this fire and  
6 others. The foremost problem in this fire was that  
7 the smoke was able to travel throughout the building.  
8 Though the fire itself did not spread beyond the  
9 apartment where it originated and the connecting  
10 hallway, fire fighters found residents in need of aid  
11 on virtually every floor of the building. The  
12 apartment door remained open despite the fact that  
13 city code requires all apartment doors to close  
14 automatically. The Fire Department's investigation  
15 also found other doors throughout the building that  
16 were required to be self-closing, but did not in fact  
17 close. This included doors leading into the  
18 stairwells which filled with smoke as residents  
19 attempted to use them for egress, and fire fighters  
20 used them to access the upper floors. In the  
21 aftermath of the fire, we participated in discussions  
22 with Council Member Feliz, who represents the  
23 district where the fire occurred, and Council Member  
24 Sanchez who represents a nearby district, and we are  
25

1 grateful for those conversations. Both Council  
2 Members were interested in finding ways to make  
3 residents safer, and that intention is reflected in  
4 their bills before the committee today. Some of the  
5 bills being heard are relevant to the interest of the  
6 Fire Department and others are better addressed by  
7 our colleagues here at HPD or other agencies. I'll  
8 speak briefly to each piece of legislation. Intro  
9 104 and 105, these bills sponsored by Council Member  
10 Feliz would define the term "self-closing door" in  
11 the Housing Maintenance Code and amend the code in a  
12 manner that clarifies that all doors providing access  
13 to interior corridors or stairs in the R1 and R2  
14 occupancies must be self-closing. We think this  
15 focus on self-closing doors is important,  
16 particularly given the role that they played at the  
17 fire at Twin Parks. As to the specifics of the  
18 changes to the code, we defer to our colleagues at  
19 the Department of Buildings and the Department of  
20 Housing Preservation and Development. Intro 106,  
21 this bill sponsored by Council Member Hanif,  
22 prohibits the sale of electric space heaters that do  
23 not have automatic shut-off and thermostat  
24 functionality and do not have certain certifications.  
25

1 The goal of eliminating the unsafe space-- use of  
2 space heaters is a laudable one. As to the specific  
3 language, we defer to our colleagues at the  
4 Department of Consumer and Worker Protection. Intro  
5 115, this bill sponsored by Council Member Hudson  
6 would change the required temperature maintained by  
7 landlords during heating season, and the Fire  
8 Department does not have a position on this bill.  
9 Intro 131, this bill sponsored by Council Member  
10 Sanchez, would amend current requirements regarding  
11 Fire Department, fire safety education, and outreach  
12 to residential buildings to require that those  
13 activities include information pertaining to the safe  
14 operation of electric space heaters. The Fire  
15 Department supports this bill. We currently perform  
16 outreach that includes space heater safety and best  
17 practices. We've expanded those efforts in recent  
18 months. We think this change is a good one, and we  
19 look forward to partnering with the Council to  
20 amplify fire safety messaging. T20226552, this bill  
21 sponsored by Council Member Carr would require the  
22 Department of Buildings to waive DOB fees on permits  
23 to alter family dwellings to conform with the Fire  
24 Code, and we defer to the Department of Buildings on  
25

1 this issue. T2022084, this bill sponsored by Council  
2 Member Carr would amend the administrative code to  
3 require the installation of carbon-monoxide detecting  
4 devices in basements. The Fire Department is in  
5 favor of this technology that helps first responders  
6 reach carbon-monoxide patients as quickly as  
7 possible. We defer to the Department of Buildings as  
8 to the specifics of the changes to the code. Finally,  
9 T20220647, this bill sponsored by Council Member  
10 Williams would require HPD to inspect self-closing  
11 doors in buildings' common areas, and we defer to HPD  
12 on these changes. At this time, my colleagues from  
13 the Department of Housing, Preservation and  
14 Development will also offer testimony.

15  
16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Good  
17 morning, Chair Sanchez, Feliz, Ariola, and members of  
18 the Committees on Housing and Buildings, Fire and  
19 Emergency Management, and the Twin Parks Citywide  
20 Taskforce. I am AnnMarie Santiago, and I am the  
21 Deputy Commissioner of Enforcement and Neighborhood  
22 Services at the New York City Department of Housing  
23 Preservation and Development. I am joined by our  
24 Deputy Commissioner for Asset and Property Management  
25 Anne-Marie Hendrickson. Thank you for the

1  
2 opportunity to testify on agency enforcement and the  
3 Twin Parks tragic fire. The fire that took place at  
4 the Twin Parks Northwest affordable housing  
5 development in the Bronx on Sunday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022  
6 was a devastating tragedy, and our hearts go out to  
7 all of the families affected. The City's heroic fire  
8 fighters, EMS workers, and first responders responded  
9 within minutes saving many lives. We mourn the 17  
10 New Yorkers, including eight children, whose lives  
11 were lost that day. Since then, teams from across  
12 New York City, including HPD, have been working  
13 tirelessly to respond to this tragedy. Our first  
14 priority has been to attend to the needs of these  
15 families. Teams from HPD staff the Emergency  
16 Management Service Center and have been coordinating  
17 with the building owner, the American Red Cross, the  
18 New York State Homes and Community Renewal, HCR, and  
19 our fellow city agencies to ensure displaced  
20 residents have temporary and long-term housing. As  
21 Twin Parks is a state-financed property with Section  
22 8 from HCR, our colleagues at HCR have taken the lead  
23 in working with the residents to identify permanent  
24 housing options for any household who did not wish to  
25 return to the building. In close coordination with

1 HCR, HPD has been actively working with our partners  
2 in the affordable housing community to identify  
3 permanent housing options. Before talking about the  
4 bills before us today, I would like to take a minute  
5 to talk about HPD's very pivotal role in housing code  
6 enforcement. Under the Housing Maintenance Code, or  
7 HMC, HPD has very broad enforcement over housing  
8 condition. The HMC intersects with multiple other  
9 codes in the City, including the Health Code, the  
10 Building Code, and the Fire Code. We require our  
11 inspectors to always look for nine issues on every  
12 inspection. Five are health-related and four are  
13 related to fire safety: self-closing doors, smoke  
14 detectors, gates on windows, and illegal double  
15 cylinder locks. We look at fire escapes and may  
16 issue violations for painted sprinkler heads and  
17 blocked egress when observed. I am not aware of any  
18 inspection agency whose staff is inside more homes  
19 than our inspectors and field staff every day. We  
20 were out there throughout COVID, never standing down,  
21 even at the height of the pandemic. Our agency is  
22 also tasked with addressing the most serious  
23 conditions when property owners do not, and we do  
24 this for HPD violations as well as other agency  
25

1 violations. We address lead-based paint, for  
2 example, when referred by the Health Department and  
3 we oversee the demolition of buildings ordered by the  
4 Buildings Department. And with all of this  
5 responsibility, we take our role for ensuring the  
6 safety of New York City renters extremely seriously.  
7 In addition to responding to complaints about a lack  
8 of heat and hot water, no electricity and no water  
9 among almost 200 additional conditions. We respond  
10 to fires every day, working to ensure owners make the  
11 repairs tenants need to return to their homes. HPD  
12 inspectors perform over 500,000 inspections annually,  
13 either proactively or in response to 311 complaints.  
14 Because we have so many important responsibilities,  
15 we recognize the need to be surgical in our approach  
16 to enforcement beyond the response to complaints. We  
17 have programs targeted to buildings that are  
18 consistently not up to code. We respond to the  
19 concerns of community groups and your offices about  
20 apartment and building-wide issues where tenants are  
21 afraid to file complaints for fear of reprisal. We  
22 need tenants and owners to be partners with us in  
23 keeping tenants safe, and we look forward to  
24 continuing to educate them about their rights and  
25



responsibilities. Now to turn to the fire safety  
issue specifically that are the focus of this  
hearing. In New York City, self-closing doors are  
required in all residential buildings with three or  
more apartments under the HMC. Although tenants can  
file complaints about self-closing doors through New  
York City 311, and HPD will inspect, HPD receives  
relatively few complaints about this condition.  
Recognizing how important this issue is, even when  
tenants were not complaining, and in response to a  
previous large fire in the Bronx in 2017 in which  
there were also fatalities, HPD modified its  
inspection procedure to proactively identify this  
condition and issue violations. The procedural time  
mandated that during every inspection in which we  
access an apartment, housing inspectors check to see  
if the door of the apartment being inspected and any  
public door they pass through on the way to that  
apartment is a self-closing door, and if not, they  
write the appropriate violation. Local Law 111, in I  
believe was 2018, changed the classification of the  
self-closing door violation from a Class B violation  
to a Class C immediately hazardous violation, and set  
a correction period of 21 days, effective in 2019.

1 These changes led to a significant increase in the  
2 issuance of these violations with over 22,000  
3 violations being issued for self-closing doors in  
4 Fiscal Year 21. Most owners respond to the issuance  
5 of violations with corrective action. Half of the  
6 issued self-closing door violations were certified as  
7 corrected by property owners within 21 days. For  
8 those violations not certified as corrected timely,  
9 HPD initiates emergency repairs. This process  
10 results in additional doors being found to have been  
11 repaired already by the owners, just not certified.  
12 Some repairs being completed by HPD vendors, and in  
13 some cases, there being no access for HPD vendors to  
14 complete the work. When there is no access, we sent  
15 notices to the tenant asking them to reach out to our  
16 staff to arrange the repair. If HPD's vendor  
17 completes the emergency repair work, the property  
18 owner will be billed for the cost of the repairs and  
19 a 50 percent administrative fee. If the owner fails  
20 to pay, the charge becomes a tax lien against the  
21 property. The tax lien bears interest and may be  
22 enforced to collect the amount owed. Through  
23 emergency repair, ERP, HPD spent almost two million  
24 dollars to repair to self-closing doors in Fiscal  
25

1 Year 21. HPD also periodically raises the issue of  
2 compliance with self-closing door requirements with  
3 building owners as part of its general outreach  
4 strategy, urging them to be proactive in checking the  
5 doors in their building to ensure that they are self-  
6 closing. We also made this issue more prominent in  
7 our general communications with tenant and owners,  
8 including updates to our ABCs of Housing Information  
9 Guide, and our webpage on fire safety. Given the  
10 tragic events at Twin Parks, we know more and must be  
11 done to protect our fellow New Yorkers. We  
12 appreciate your attention to this issue and want to  
13 continue to work with you to ensure that the next  
14 steps are productive and effective. In regards to  
15 Introductions 104 and 106, 131, T20206522 and  
16 T202284, HPD has no concerns and defers to our  
17 colleagues at FDNY and Department of Buildings. HPD  
18 does not have direct concerns about Intro. 115, but  
19 we defer to our colleagues who have expertise in  
20 environmental efficiency and sustainability since  
21 increasing indoor temperatures will have an effect on  
22 the City's ability to reach its goal toward reducing  
23 our carbon footprint. In response to Intro 105, we  
24 support the concept of increasing civil and false  
25

1 certification penalties and look forward to  
2 discussing the details with Council Member Feliz and  
3 Council Staff about the most effective way to frame  
4 those amendments. While we share your goals of  
5 ensuring that owners quickly meet their obligations  
6 to make repairs and confirming that those repairs are  
7 done properly, we have concerns about shortening the  
8 compliance period for owners and creating a mandatory  
9 requirement for HPD re-inspections. Lowering the  
10 compliance period to 10 days creates a very short  
11 timeline in which to arrange for the availability of  
12 tenants and address situations where the required  
13 repair is more complex than changing the self-closing  
14 mechanism such as where a door replacement is  
15 required. Creating a mandatory re-inspection period  
16 for all self-closing doors when there is a process in  
17 place that I just discussed for owner certification  
18 and a process in place for the emergency repair  
19 program to dispatch vendors, to conduct repairs when  
20 there is no certification or a false certification  
21 limits HPD's flexibility to respond to other types of  
22 serious and potentially more imminently dangerous  
23 conditions. We would be happy to have more  
24 conversations about the best way to accomplish the  
25

1 goals we're discussing here today to make our city  
2 safer. While we are still evaluating the scope of  
3 T2022647, and we will get back to council once we  
4 have a full assessment, an initial review of the bill  
5 anticipates it to include more than 140,000 buildings  
6 and does not focus-- and concerns are that it does  
7 not focus on buildings more likely to be of concern  
8 as having a risk of fire safety issues. We look  
9 forward to having conversations on the targeted  
10 approach that more directly address the goals of this  
11 legislation. Finally, I want to reiterate the  
12 important changes we are making at HPD in compliance  
13 with Mayor Adams Executive Order 12. We are excited  
14 to be partnering with the Fire Department around  
15 outreach and education, data collection and sharing,  
16 and strategic thinking about future ideas for  
17 enhanced enforcement around fire safety issues. We  
18 have similar and strong partnerships with the  
19 Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and  
20 Department of Buildings around issues where both  
21 agencies have jurisdiction and these partnerships  
22 have strengthened our enforcement and education  
23 initiatives. We believe as Mayor Adams has  
24 repeatedly stressed in his discussions of the issue  
25

1 that education for both property owners and tenants  
2 about how to stay safe and what to do in the event of  
3 a fire will go a long way towards preventing  
4 tragedies like the one at Twin Parks. Thank you for  
5 your time, and we look forward to your questions.  
6

7 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank you  
8 so much. So we have many questions for FDNY and also  
9 HPD. The first line of questions will be for the Fire  
10 Department and they will be related to FDNY  
11 inspections for residential buildings. Can you  
12 describe what a fire safety inspection-- the process  
13 for fire safety inspections? When are they  
14 conducted? What is the FDNY inspecting? And  
15 anything else related to the inspections.

16 CHIEF HODGENS: Sure. Good morning. Fire  
17 inspections are done, you know, by our local fire  
18 units in the areas where they, you know, respond to  
19 fires. We gather information through an algorithm.  
20 It's called the Risk-Based Inspection System. It's  
21 RBIS. The algorithm takes all the data from the area  
22 and compares it to all the other buildings. The  
23 building is, you know,-- there's two main areas of  
24 focus for the algorithm. One is the building itself.  
25 How old is the building? What is the construction of

1 the building? How many floors? Is the building  
2 served by an automatic sprinkler system? And that's,  
3 you know, that's one of the factors. The other  
4 factor is the-- what goes on at the building. How  
5 many fires has the building experienced? What-- is  
6 there-- how many emergencies, whether they're medical  
7 emergencies or fire-- fire-related emergencies such  
8 as gas, electric, or even water conditions. All of  
9 this is put into a computer algorithm, and how it  
10 works is it compares all the other buildings in the  
11 area and it assigns a score, and if a building is--  
12 scores a number that would give it a higher chance of  
13 actually having a fire, that building is inspected  
14 more often. So, it's a definite-- it's directly  
15 related to the risk-based component of the building  
16 as to how often the building is inspected.

18 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much for  
19 describing that criteria. So we have thousands of  
20 buildings, millions of buildings in the City of New  
21 York. What percentage of buildings in our city would  
22 you say are inspected by the Fire Department, more or  
23 less?

24 CHIEF HODGENS: So, in fiscal-- in 2021,  
25 the Fire Department inspected 64,000 buildings;

1 40,000 of those were residential. I don't know the  
2 exact percentages that would be.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, and does the  
5 FDNY inspect for self-closing doors? And what-- if  
6 yes, what standard is followed?

7 CHIEF HODGENS: The FDNY inspects for  
8 self-closing doors in the common areas of the  
9 building such as stairways, hallways, in the-- you  
10 know, if there's any meeting rooms within the  
11 building. All of the doors except the apartment  
12 doors. That's what the FDNY inspects. The standard  
13 is an NFPA standard, and when you open the door fully  
14 and let it go, it's just checked that it fully closes  
15 upon release.

16 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. If there's a  
17 self-closing door violation, what happens next?

18 CHIEF HODGENS: If there's a self-closing  
19 door, it is-- it's a violation of the Fire Code, and  
20 we have mechanisms to enforce that. A self-closing  
21 door would most likely be what's considered an FDNY  
22 summons which is given to the landlord, and the  
23 landlord is responsible to have that fix in a  
24 determined-- pre-determined amount of time, and it  
25 is, you know, followed up on by the Fire Department.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And what happens if a  
3 landlord says that they fixed the violation? Does  
4 the FDNY follow up with a re-inspection or phone call  
5 to tenants? Any type of follow-up?

6 CHIEF HODGENS: Yeah, so, if a violation  
7 order is issued by the local fire units, they will  
8 give a timeframe usually somewhere between six--  
9 about 16 days for a violation of that nature, and we  
10 return to the building to make sure that the door was  
11 fixed.

12 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And what's the  
13 timeline for the follow-up? More or less, when does  
14 the FDNY return to the building for the re-  
15 inspection?

16 CHIEF HODGENS: Most re-inspection of  
17 that nature is-- it's a 16-day follow up.

18 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. Does the FDNY  
19 provide any notice to any other agency, including  
20 HPD, DOB, or any other city agency?

21 CHIEF HODGENS: In the case of that, no.  
22 we handle that particular violation ourselves.

23 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Oh, okay. Thank you  
24 so much for that information. So a few more  
25 questions related to smoke inhalation. How many New

1 York City residents have died from smoke inhalation  
2 caused by residential fires? If you could give us a  
3 breakdown by year starting 2019, approximate numbers  
4 if you don't have the hard numbers in front of you.  
5

6 CHIEF HODGENS: Yeah, that would be very  
7 detailed information, because you know, there are  
8 many causes of that than a fire. I really do not  
9 have that on hand.

10 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. Can you talk  
11 to us about the educational initiatives taken by the  
12 FDNY to spread awareness about the importance of  
13 self-closing doors, use of space heaters and anything  
14 else to educate the public about fire safety?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, we  
16 have a very robust Fire Safety Education Unit that  
17 reaches communities all over the city, reaches  
18 schools, senior centers. We often work with Council  
19 Members, as some of you know, to target particularly  
20 vulnerable communities. And that is not only in  
21 multiple languages, but we identify certain risks,  
22 especially in certain neighborhoods or certain  
23 seasonal risks, and we actually target those. So,  
24 space heaters, you know, candles, cooking, some of  
25 the top causes of fire is something that we

1 specifically target, and we do have multi-lingual  
2 materials and fire safety education. In 20221, we  
3 had approximately 2,100 fire safety presentations.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. But  
6 approximately how many people are reached with the  
7 fire safety educational initiatives per year.

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: So, it's  
9 an estimate. From our in-person education sessions  
10 in 2021 we had 151,000 people reached. I would say  
11 it's significantly more in our total reach, and we do  
12 have fire companies that go out especially following  
13 fatal fires or even on their own if they're  
14 requested. We also have a lot of online materials.  
15 We have a pretty robust website with videos. You  
16 know, one of the effects of COVID is that we made a  
17 lot more of our presentations digital, and so those  
18 also reach a larger audience, and I'm not sure the  
19 size of, but quite a few New Yorkers received that  
20 education.

21 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank you  
22 so much. Also, we've seen an alarming and also very  
23 concerning increase in fires in the City of New York.  
24 So I wanted to ask about a few general questions.  
25

1  
2 Approximately how many fires have we had this year so  
3 far, January to April?

4 CHIEF HODGENS: January to April we've  
5 had a little over 6,000 structural fires, which  
6 compared to other years, unbelievably, is that it is  
7 a little lower than the past three years. We've been  
8 in the 6,000's, as high as 6,700 in I believe it's  
9 '19, but with-- it was 6,013 year to date structural  
10 fires.

11 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And in those 6,000-  
12 ish fires in our city from January through April,  
13 what has been the biggest cause of the fires?

14 CHIEF HODGENS: We have a range of causes,  
15 being electrical fires are common. We have, you  
16 know, misuse of extension cords, overloading outlets,  
17 these are primary causes of fire. Careless smoking,  
18 you know, use of candles, those are mainly the  
19 primary causes of fire.

20 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And out of all of  
21 those causes, which ones would you say are the top  
22 two?

23 CHIEF HODGENS: I would say electrical  
24 and overloading-- use of-- improper use of extension  
25 cords and overloading electric outlets.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. Thank you.  
3 Thank you so much for that information. I have no  
4 more questions for now for the FDNY. So I'll move on  
5 to questions for HPD. So, Twin Parks fire was  
6 avoidable. Had those self-closing doors actually  
7 closed, functioned, that fire in that fire proof  
8 building would not have turned into the tragedy that  
9 we saw. Only if those self-closing doors had  
10 actually closed. So I have a few questions on the--  
11 related to self-closing door enforcement, including  
12 the detection of self-closing door violations, and  
13 also the correction of self-closing door violations.  
14 So I'll start the detection of violations. Under what  
15 circumstances does HPD go into a building to inspect  
16 for self-closing doors?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
18 Council Member. As I laid out in my testimony, when  
19 we go into a building for any reason to conduct a  
20 complaint inspections-- totally unrelated to self-  
21 closing doors or re-inspection, for any apartments  
22 that we are in, we're checking those self-closing  
23 doors.

24 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And under what  
25 conditions does HPD enter buildings to inspect?

1 Which would trigger the automatic self-closing door  
2 inspection?  
3

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: So, we  
5 respond to complaints primarily from 311. We receive  
6 complaints from community groups, elected officials,  
7 other interested parties. We do re-inspections for a  
8 number of reasons, in some cases, with our enhanced  
9 enforcement activities. So our Alterative  
10 Enforcement Program, our underlying conditions  
11 program, those are the primary reasons that we are in  
12 a building-- in response to a Housing Court request  
13 for an inspection. We are primarily complaint-  
14 driven, and our enhanced enforcement activity is  
15 basically based on the results of a lot of our  
16 complaint activity.

17 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Does HPD ever conduct  
18 any self-initiated inspections for self-closing doors  
19 or any other matters?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Yes,  
21 Council Member. Let me clarify. So, for the  
22 alternative enforcement program for our anti-  
23 harassment, those are self-generated inspections.  
24 So, HPD chooses to go into those buildings because  
25 there is some flag about the general conditions in

1 the building or an allegation of harassment. And so  
2 those aren't generated based on 311 complaints.  
3 Those are generated based on HPD enforcement  
4 activities.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And when a tenant  
7 reports a self-closing door violation and inspectors  
8 inspecting a building, what exactly is HPD  
9 inspecting? What standard is followed? What is  
10 considered a self-closing door violation?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you.  
12 So, and again, we're pretty much in line with what  
13 the Chief said in terms of making sure that once open  
14 all the way, the door closes completely, sealing the  
15 entrance.

16 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. Moving on to  
17 the correction of self-closing door violations. How  
18 much time is the landlord provided to correct the  
19 self-closing door violation? You had mentioned 21  
20 days, right?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: That's  
22 correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And after the 21  
24 days, the-- if the violation is not corrected, it  
25 became part of the emergency repair program.

1  
2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: That's  
3 correct. The owner has a period of time to certify  
4 after correction. So there is a period of an  
5 additional five days for the owner to notify the  
6 agency that the correction has been done.

7 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yeah, can you  
8 describe that emergency repair program for us, the  
9 timeline, notice, timeline for correction?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Certainly.  
11 So, once a violation is issued, that means that HPD  
12 has produced a notice of violation and mailed it to  
13 the property owner. In some cases, if we have an  
14 email address for the property owner, we may email  
15 the property owner in advance of that mailing to let  
16 them know that the violation has been issued. Once  
17 the period to certify a correction is finished, our  
18 emergency repair program will attempt to concoct the  
19 tenant to make sure that the condition hasn't been  
20 corrected. During the period while the owner has time  
21 to correct, we do actually attempt to call the owner.  
22 So, to step back for a second, property owners are  
23 required to annually register with HPD every year,  
24 and through that registration process, they are to  
25 provide us with contact information about themselves



1 and the managing agent for the property so we have  
2 someone to reach out to. So we reach out to that  
3 party, if we connect with that party, they let us  
4 know whether or not they will correct the condition.  
5 It does not close based on what the owner says, so  
6 we're just letting them know and we're setting  
7 expectations that it will be corrected. Once that  
8 period is over again for the owner to certify  
9 correction, the emergency repair program will prepare  
10 a work order. We have to hire a contractor to  
11 complete that work, and we ask contractor to go out  
12 and make the repair. The contractor is provided with  
13 the contact information for the tenant and expected  
14 to attempt to make arrangements with the tenants to  
15 make that repair. And once the repair is done, we may  
16 audit that contractor's work. We may accept an  
17 affidavit for that work being completed. We may  
18 contact the tenant to confirm that the work was done,  
19 and at that point we pay our contractor. We bill the  
20 property owner as I outlines and that charge is  
21 transferred over to the Department of Finance for  
22 collection.  
23  
24  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And could you talk to  
3 us about the timeline for obtaining a contractor,  
4 getting them to go to the building and do the work--

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO:  
6 [interposing] Generally--

7 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: [interposing] correct  
8 the violation?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Generally  
10 within two to four weeks the contractor has been  
11 procured and has made attempts to arrange access with  
12 the tenant.

13 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And in the last 12  
14 months, approximately how many HPD violations have  
15 been placed for the fact they have self-closing  
16 doors?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: So, I have  
18 the number for this Fiscal Year to-date for 2021,  
19 which--

20 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: [interposing] 2021 and  
21 on is fine.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: For 2021  
23 we issued 22,000, almost 23,000 violations for self-  
24 closing doors. This Fiscal Year as of-- I believe  
25 this is as of the end of December, or maybe this is

1 up-to-date. I'm sorry, I don't have the date here.

2 17,000 self-closing doors violations have been  
3 issued.

4  
5 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: 17,000 this year that  
6 you mentioned?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: This  
8 Fiscal Year.

9 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Oh, okay.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Not  
11 calendar.

12 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And how many of those  
13 violations have been cured by the landlord as opposed  
14 through-- as opposed through the Emergency Repair  
15 Program?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: The  
17 majority of violations that are corrected are  
18 corrected by the landlord. So, about 11,000 of the  
19 violations for-- I'll talk about Fiscal Year 21.  
20 About half of the violations were corrected and  
21 certified by the landlord, and then we found  
22 additional violations corrected when we sent our  
23 contractors out to do the work. So it's more than  
24 half are corrected by the landlord. For Fiscal Year

21, HPD corrected about 5,500 self-closing door violations.

CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: So, approximately 20 percent are corrected by HPD, and the rest generally by landlords.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Correct.

CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. And what happens after landlords certified the correction of a self-closing door violation?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: So, the Housing Maintenance Code provides a certification period for all types of violations for HPD, except for heat and hot water violations. So, once an owner certifies correction of violation, HPD has an audit process to go out and attempt to verify correction. For Class C violations we generally audit about 50 percent of the certified violations. For self-closing doors specifically for last Fiscal Year we attempted to audit about 40 percent of self-closing door violations.

CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: So, there are self-closing door certifications that aren't re-inspected to confirm that it has actually been fixed. There is

1 a good number, a good chunk of certifications that  
2 aren't audited.

3  
4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: So, while  
5 that is correct, Council Member, there is a process  
6 as part of the certification process to notify  
7 tenants that the owner has submitted a certification  
8 to us, and that notice to them asks them to contact  
9 us if the condition is not corrected, right? Bearing  
10 in mind that in order for us to verify, the tenant  
11 has to be home if it's an apartment door, right? So,  
12 tenants may not wish to spend another day waiting for  
13 us to come to check out that, whether that door has  
14 been corrected, if in fact it has. And we do receive  
15 challenges from tenants in general about the  
16 correction of conditions when we send this notice.

17 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And generally, out of  
18 all the tenants that you contact to confirm whether  
19 the violation has been fixed, how successful has been  
20 contacting and reaching tenants been?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Well, we  
22 mail the notice to the same address of the building  
23 that we have associated with the complaint. So we  
24 would assume that all of the tenants received the  
25 notice and we do receive back challenges from the

1 tenants. I don't have that number with me today,  
2 Council Member, but we can certainly provide that to  
3 you.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: But it is fair to say  
6 that HPD does face challenges reaching and getting  
7 responses from tenants?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Well,  
9 tenants, the assumption that if we've reached out to  
10 you and you haven't reached out to us, that the  
11 condition is corrected. Our notice doesn't ask  
12 tenants to contact us to confirm that the condition  
13 has been corrected, only to contact us if they have  
14 an issue with the certification from the landlord.

15 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay, and just to  
16 repeat my earlier question. So, there is a good  
17 number of violations that are self-certified by the  
18 landlord, but aren't re-inspected or there's no  
19 follow-up on those re-inspections. You had mentioned  
20 approximately 40 percent of the self-closing door  
21 violations, you're able to reach tenants or go back  
22 into the building. So, 60 percent there isn't a  
23 follow-up. Is that an accurate assessment of your  
24 earlier summary?  
25

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: No, again,  
3 Council Member, I would consider our outreach with  
4 the letters to the tenants to be follow-up with the  
5 tenant to assess whether or not the repair has been  
6 done.

7 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. Thank you so  
8 much. Want to give an opportunity to my colleagues  
9 to ask additional questions, but before that, I want  
10 to ask a few more questions on heating laws. Can  
11 walk us through the process for responding to a  
12 heating complaint by a tenants?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Certainly,  
14 Council Member. So, when HPD receives a heat  
15 complaint from a tenant, we, as we do with all  
16 complaints-- and again I'm going to first talk about  
17 our general process. Whenever we receive a complaint  
18 from a tenant, we attempt to make a call to the  
19 registered owner to let them know that we've received  
20 a complaint. We attempt to make a call back to the  
21 tenants to find out if the condition has been  
22 corrected. If the condition hasn't been corrected, we  
23 schedule that. We take that complaint and put it out  
24 for inspection. Generally, we do that in the order  
25 in which it's received. For heat complaints

1 specifically, because we may receive multiple  
2 complaints for the same building, we have a process  
3 where we identify the first complaint that has come  
4 in and treat that as a primary complaint, and that  
5 will be the primary apartment that we attempt to  
6 verify the condition in. So, the inspector will be  
7 routed to the building. They will take the  
8 temperature outside the building the complaint is  
9 from during the day, because the outside temperature  
10 needs to be below 55 degrees for a violation to be  
11 issued. Now, if it's at night, as was pointed out,  
12 there is no outside temperature requirements, and  
13 that's between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. in the  
14 morning. The inspector will take the temperature  
15 outside. They will attempt to access the primary  
16 complainant's apartment to find out if heat has been  
17 restored. If the primary complainant is not home and  
18 we do have other complaints from the building, the  
19 inspector will attempt to gain access to one of those  
20 other apartments to verify. If we have no other  
21 complaints for the building, the inspector will  
22 attempt an inspection, a cold knock at a door next to  
23 or above or below the apartment that filed the  
24 complaint. We do receive a very fair amount of  
25



1 anonymous complaints, in which case we just find an  
2 apartment in the building and make an attempt to  
3 contact someone.  
4

5 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. And going back  
6 to my earlier line of questions. So HPD takes many  
7 different approaches to confirm that a violation has  
8 been cured, including calling or sending a letter to  
9 tenants. Do we generally ask tenants whether they  
10 are-- if they have any type of training or they  
11 understand the law and what is the violation related  
12 to let's say self-closing doors?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: I don't  
14 know how specific we get on discussing that, but  
15 certainly when we're conducting the inspection, I  
16 believe our inspectors make it clear why they're  
17 checking the door, right? So, they do-- you know,  
18 this isn't something that they do without the tenant  
19 necessarily noticing, because they have to open the  
20 door all the way, make sure that it closes, in terms  
21 of the self-closing doors. In terms of the heat, the  
22 tenant has called us already to say that the heat is  
23 inadequate. So the confirmation with them is are  
24 they now saying that heat is adequate.  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: For something as  
3 serious as self-closing doors, does HPD think that it  
4 would be appropriate to ask a tenant who might not be  
5 trained on the issue to somewhat confirm whether a  
6 self-closing door has been cured or not, based on the  
7 standard that we have?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
9 Council Member. And I think, you know, to your bill  
10 about defining what a self-closing door is, in terms  
11 of us coming up with some script to use with the  
12 complainants, I think that that could be helpful.

13 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: At any point, is  
14 there ever any type of re-inspection of self-closing  
15 doors even when a landlord certifies? Let's say if a  
16 building has 20 [sic] self-closing door violations in  
17 just one building, does anything ever trigger an  
18 automatic re-inspection?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: As I said,  
20 we audit conditions. So I believe when a building,  
21 whatever the type of violation is, has an  
22 extraordinary amount of certifications, we would look  
23 to that building to do some re-inspections.

24 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank you  
25 so much. So I have a few more questions, but I want

1 to give an opportunity to my colleagues to ask  
2 questions. So I'll pass it back to Williams.  
3

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Member  
5 Sanchez [inaudible]. I'm going to pass it to Council  
6 Member Ariola after that.

7 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much,  
8 Chair Feliz. You asked a lot of questions that I  
9 also had. So I really want to appreciate that. So,  
10 hello. My first set of questions are going to be for  
11 the FDNY. So, Chief, you gave us some information  
12 about the RBIS and the methodology that you use, and  
13 an internal analysis by the Council shows that it's  
14 pretty good. The RBIS is pretty good. You about an  
15 eight-- a .86 correlation between Council Districts,  
16 at least, at the Council District level predicting  
17 the number of fires that are going to occur there,  
18 and then the number of actual fires. But here's my  
19 concern. When you start of sort to dig in and look  
20 at the map of where the inconsistency is, I noticed  
21 that there are many lower income communities that are  
22 predominantly that people of color like Council  
23 Member De La Rosa's district in Inwood, Council  
24 Member Althea Stevens in the South Bronx, and Diana  
25 Ayala in the South Bronx, and Harlem and East Harlem,

1 Council Member Richardson Jordan. There is-- there  
2 are a lot more fires, you know, in those districts  
3 than the RBIS would predict. So I understand that  
4 the methodology for the RBIS is proprietary. Can you  
5 tell us a little bit about why-- if there is any  
6 hesitancy that the Department has about sharing that  
7 methodology, and you know, I think that if-- if  
8 sunlight is the best disinfectant, why not share it  
9 with the public and help, you know, help the Council,  
10 as your colleagues, but also help the public make the  
11 methodology better.  
12

13 CHIEF HODGENS: Sure. The algorithm is,  
14 you know, composed of the things that I had described  
15 earlier and it's always changing. You know, we're  
16 always improving it. We're always looking at data,  
17 fires, where they are occurring, and you know, just  
18 trying to make it as robust and accurate as possible.  
19 I don't have any specific figures, but I do know that  
20 when we have a fire, we look to see how that building  
21 scored, and it is has been pretty accurate as that  
22 that would be a high-risk building where we do have  
23 these fires. As far as, you know, sharing the data,  
24 I do not have any information about, you know, a  
25

1 reason why that wouldn't happen, but I don't know if  
2 the Commissioner does.

3  
4 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, I  
5 didn't know of that request. We can discuss it and  
6 get back to you [inaudible]. I should also mention,  
7 our fire safety education is also targeted based on  
8 risk, so those educational seminars are also-- we try  
9 to allocate them in that way based on risk of the  
10 neighborhood and housing stock.

11 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, and I  
12 look forward to having that conversation because I  
13 think it would just be helpful. Algorithm bias does  
14 exist, you know, and anything that we can do to  
15 reduce it, we should. The second question is also  
16 about data availability, and that is just-- even in  
17 looking at the information, we saw that Open Data is  
18 about a year and a half-- there's about a year and a  
19 half lag. So thank you for sharing with us how many  
20 fires there have been in the past four months, but we  
21 don't have access to that information. Can you  
22 commit to us to provide updated information in the  
23 higher frequency?

24 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, we  
25 will. Some of the staff was allocated during COVID

1 from some of those offline units, but we've corrected  
2 that and we're getting back to the regular reporting,  
3 so we'll definitely commit to doing that for you  
4 guys.

5  
6 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Wonderful. Thank  
7 you. And thanks again, you know, there are no words  
8 to express the gratitude to our first responders and  
9 the way that they just jump into harm's way. So I  
10 just want to, you know, thank you so much for the  
11 Department and all of the fire fighters and EMS  
12 workers and all that they do. And so a few questions  
13 for HPD. Hello, Deputy Commissioners AMH and AMS,  
14 which is what I used to call you, but I will now call  
15 you by your proper name. So, a few questions. So,  
16 kind of continuing the thread from Council Member  
17 Feliz, or actually from the FDNY questions. So, we  
18 know a few things about heating season. We know that  
19 when it's colder outside there are going to be more  
20 heat and hot water complaints, and then you answered  
21 some of my questions about proactive HPD inspections,  
22 but can you tell us whether it's AEP or, you know,  
23 the different programs that trigger HPD proactive  
24 enforcements? How does that correlate with what we  
25 know about heating season? A winter like this

1 winter, this winter has been particularly cold. How  
2 did that inform HPD's activities in the realm of  
3 inspections?  
4

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
6 Council Member. And so we don't have a targeted  
7 enforcement program around heat at this time. As you  
8 may know, for both the alternative enforcement  
9 program or our underlying conditions program, the  
10 selection for those buildings is in the Housing  
11 Maintenance Code, and so the criteria are very clear  
12 and publicly available. You know, it has been good  
13 through this process for us to learn more about the  
14 Fire Department's risk-based system, and that might  
15 be something, you know, that HPD can also look at in  
16 terms of future inspections, whether targeted for  
17 fire safety issues or other, and so I think we're  
18 open to having those kinds of conversations around  
19 heat as well. So, you know, we find that using the  
20 data to point us in the right direction is definitely  
21 helpful in terms of targeting those resources to  
22 those property owners and those areas where there are  
23 known problems.

24 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: So, at this time,  
25 FDNY and HPD and DOB do not share information. The

1 RBIS methodology is only within-- only used within  
2  
3 FDNY? It's not used at HPD and DOB?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: We do not  
5 use it at the current time, no.

6 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Is the Executive  
7 Order requiring more coordination among agencies  
8 going to be changing that?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: And I  
10 think that's part of the discussions that we're  
11 having right now, Council Member, in terms of the  
12 data sharing as well as the outreach and education  
13 portion for us to work more closely together.

14 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. You  
15 shared in your testimony that last year there were  
16 22,000 self-closing doors violations, 18,000  
17 corrected, more than half by landlords. Yet, we  
18 still spent two million dollars? HPD still spent two  
19 million dollars. Can you tell us about fee recovery,  
20 fine and fee recovery there with those ERP charges?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: I only  
22 have numbers today overall on ERP. If you would like  
23 us to drill down on self-closing doors, we can  
24 certainly do that, but for Fiscal Year 21, we've  
25 recovered about 13 million dollars in emergency



1 repair, and alternative enforcement program emergency  
2 repair, which is basically the same just through a  
3 different internal process. The year before in 20, we  
4 recovered 15 million. In 19 we recovered 20 million.  
5 So part of that, you know, revenue is based on  
6 people's ability to pay, obviously, and COVID did  
7 affect that, and part of it is based on some reduced  
8 workload we had during the COVID period of time.  
9

10 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. And  
11 what percentage of the actual expenditure or at  
12 least-- actually, the fine and fee amount does that  
13 represent 13 million dollars recovered this year or  
14 2021 out of how much?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: So, and  
16 let me just step back too for some further  
17 clarification there. ERP is not a fee or a fine  
18 necessarily. We do have inspection fees and we  
19 collections on inspection fees. It's a separate  
20 number. So we collected approximately three million  
21 dollars in inspection fees also during Fiscal Year  
22 21, and we also collect housing litigation division  
23 civil penalties, and that was another almost three  
24 million dollars in Fiscal Year 21. So there are a  
25 number of breakdowns of places where the agencies

2 recovers fees or civil penalties or emergency repair  
3 charges. So all three of those categories of  
4 collection-- in order to give you a percentage again,  
5 I'd have to go back and do some more math on that.  
6 So, I only have the total collected.

7 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Got it. So you  
8 don't have the total today for ERP, AEP for  
9 inspection fees and for housing litigation?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: No, I have  
11 the amount for how much we collected during those  
12 periods, but no-- you had asked about a percentage of  
13 the total that's outstanding, and that amount I don't  
14 have today. So we can provide all of that to your  
15 office.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Yes, yes. I  
17 understand that it is terrifyingly low as a  
18 percentage in each of these categories, and that's  
19 one of the things that this Council really wants to  
20 look at and work with HPD to make sure that we are  
21 collecting, right? We want our fees and our fines to  
22 be real deterrents to good maintenance in our  
23 buildings. We don't want them to be slap on the  
24 wrist. So we want to work with you on that. Thank  
25 you. So, then on heat inspections, heat and hot

1 water inspections,-- so do tenant complaints become  
2 immediately available to the public on 311?  
3

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Absolutely  
5 on HPD online, which is our basic interface with  
6 displaying information to the public. The day after  
7 a complaint is filed, you can see the complaint there  
8 on the HPD online page about complaints. Same for  
9 violations. Our HPD Online is updated daily. That  
10 information is also available through Open Data. I'm  
11 not sure if that is a daily upload or that is a  
12 monthly upload, but we can confirm that for you.

13 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Okay, thank you.  
14 And then what is HPD's protocol in terms of informing  
15 a landlord before you send inspectors out into a  
16 building to inspect for heat and hot water  
17 complaints?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: So, our  
19 general protocol is to contact the landlord as soon  
20 as we get the complaint. Our goal is to have the  
21 condition corrected as quickly as possible. Holding  
22 the notification to the landlord means that we have  
23 not put them on official notice that whatever  
24 condition was complained of exists. And so, you  
25 know, the goal being by the time we are doing an

1 inspection, that he landlord has already corrected  
2 the condition, and in some cases that does occur  
3 where the fuel is delivered, the super comes and  
4 makes a repair-- and again, I'm speaking in general  
5 terms. And the condition has been addressed.

7 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: I probably speak on  
8 behalf of many of my colleagues when we say that  
9 there are too many stories to count of landlords  
10 being informed that an HPD inspection was going to  
11 take place, and then they correct the condition for a  
12 few hours in time for the HPD inspection. So, how  
13 does HPD-- what tools does HPD have? Or to my  
14 colleagues' questions before, how are we auditing  
15 that these fixes are actually taking place and are  
16 taking place for the long-term?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: When our  
18 inspector goes to the building to conduct an  
19 inspection, what they have to do is make a  
20 determination at the time that they're there about  
21 whether the condition exists or not, and that is what  
22 the inspectors do. if we do see repeat complaints in  
23 the building, we do have another division called our  
24 Division of Neighborhood Preservation that does  
25 follow-up on buildings with excessive number of

1 complaints specifically related to heat I'm talking  
2 about, to follow up with those buildings, to talk to  
3 landlords, to talk to tenants, to monitor whether or  
4 not we continue to receive complaints, and they may  
5 request that we do an unannounced inspection if, you  
6 know, the pattern is such that the-- it seems clear  
7 that there is a problem at the building.

9 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: So, then that  
10 brings me-- that brings me to my next question which  
11 is there was a heat sensor pilot that was passed by  
12 then Council Member Ritchie Torres and then Borough  
13 President Eric Adams to work with the 50 worst  
14 landlords in terms of heat and hot water complaints,  
15 and I understand that roughly half of those that were  
16 in the pilot program didn't participate at all. So  
17 question number one is, what outreach did HPD conduct  
18 to try to get those landlords in compliance, and what  
19 are you doing into the future? And then part two,  
20 there were very positive results for the buildings  
21 that did participate in the heat sensor program.  
22 Conditions were addressed, and so what is HPD's  
23 position, if you have one at this time, about  
24 expanding that heat sensor pilot to a broader part of  
25 the city in more buildings?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank  
3 you, Council Member. So, as you know, we did do a  
4 report as mandated by the law regarding only the  
5 first year. The second year is soon to end. And so  
6 I think we're still in a position of evaluating that  
7 program. What we did see was improvement in both  
8 categories of buildings, buildings that did install  
9 and buildings that did not. There was a greater  
10 improvement in the buildings that did. However,  
11 there were a few outliers in the buildings that did  
12 not, and we did bring litigation against two of those  
13 properties, and heat sensors have-- I believe since  
14 been installed in both. So we are still evaluating  
15 that process. You know, generally speaking, as I'm  
16 sure you all know, there are numbers of reasons why  
17 buildings have heat complaints. There are some owners  
18 that require assistance, financial assistance maybe  
19 to bring their buildings into compliance. There are  
20 some buildings that do have a temporary loss of heat  
21 for some reason, a gas leak, or some other, you know,  
22 really-- an issue that happens at a point in time  
23 that is not really indicative of a longer problem, a  
24 bigger problem in the building, and once that point  
25 in time issue was resolved, the heat issue goes away.

1 So, we haven't really had a chance yet to deep dive  
2 into those 50 buildings, and so I think we believe,  
3 as we stated in the report, that we need a little  
4 more time to evaluate whether the impact of that  
5 program is what changed the behavior of those 25 who  
6 did, and what happened with the 25 who did not.  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Great. Thank you.  
9 I think that's going to be really important to dig  
10 into. So, last set of questions for you. With  
11 respect to HPD's Red Cross operations and your  
12 collaboration there with Red Cross in the case of a  
13 fire, so can you-- can you share in what instances  
14 does HPD via Red Cross provide accommodations for  
15 tenants that were affected by a fire? And what  
16 determines, particularly with hotel stays-- what  
17 determines the amount of time that they're able to  
18 stay in a hotel.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: And thank  
20 you for that question, and now I will turn it over to  
21 AMH for answers.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HENDRICKSON: Good  
23 morning, and thank you Council Member for that  
24 question. So HPD has a contract with the American  
25 Red Cross, and under that contract, American Red

1 Cross is what we call our immediate emergency  
2 responder, and typically they will go out where there  
3 are fires and/or vacate for any sort of structural  
4 conditions, you know, conditions that have been  
5 identified by Department of Buildings or essential  
6 conditions by HPD. Under the contract, Red Cross  
7 provides at least two days of service, hotel service.  
8 So they'll automatically will pick families up that  
9 are in need of relocation services. What we will  
10 then do is identify if those households need longer  
11 term accommodations, and go through what we call the  
12 HPD registration process in which they would come to  
13 HPD if they need a longer term sheltering.

14  
15 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. And so  
16 after, if there is a determination that there's need  
17 for longer term sheltering, what are-- what options  
18 are tenants provided?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: So, the  
20 options that HPD can provide post Red Cross stays, we  
21 operate three Family Centers with not for profits in  
22 three of the boroughs. We also use private SROs to  
23 accommodate adult-only households that need longer  
24 term stays.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. And you  
3 mentioned DOB, so what exactly DOB's role-- let me  
4 preface this by saying that subsequent to the Twin  
5 Parks Northwest tragedy there were-- there have been  
6 many fires across the City. and in my district there  
7 was an instance in which tenants were denied the  
8 ability to work with Red Cross and be located to a  
9 hotel, and it was-- what was said to me was, "Well,  
10 DOB hasn't weighed in yet, and so we don't-- we  
11 cannot have Red Cross-- Red Cross cannot work with  
12 these tenants if DOB does not weigh in." So what  
13 DOB's role? And thank you Deputy Commissioner AMH or  
14 AMS for working with me on that and working with  
15 those tenants afterwards. In what condition-- in  
16 what circumstances does DOB weigh in, and what in  
17 particular do they need to find before Red Cross can  
18 help the family?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Well,  
20 again, typically the contract with Red Cross-- and  
21 thank you again for that question. It's structured  
22 where we're picking up families that have a-- where a  
23 city agency has vacated the premises. So, Department  
24 of Buildings, for example, handles structural  
25 conditions, and they would be the ones vacating if

1 they thought a building was structurally unsafe. HPD  
2 typically is vacated for essential positions, lack of  
3 heat, no hot water, things of that nature. So what  
4 we typically ask Red Cross to do is pick families up  
5 immediately, for at least the first days until we can  
6 kind of get a better evaluation from the agency on  
7 what the longer term issue would be.  
8

9 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. And just  
10 to say thank you Chairs for this time. I do want to  
11 work more closely with HPD on these criteria to make  
12 sure that we are vacating a household that's  
13 appropriate, and that we don't put barriers that are  
14 bureaucratic, you know, in the way of families  
15 getting the services that they need. But thank you  
16 so much for answering all of my questions.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: You're  
18 welcome.

19 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,  
20 Council Member Sanchez, for all the questions. And  
21 now I'll give the floor to Council Member Joanna  
22 Ariola, but before that I want to acknowledge Council  
23 Member Krishnan who has joined, also Council Member  
24 Gennaro. Also wanted to ask some super brief follow-  
25 up questions to the re-inspections and the follow-ups

1 when there's a self-closing doors violation. We  
2 cannot allow another Twin Parks tragedy to occur  
3 anywhere in the City of New York. We have to create  
4 a system that will not allow any room for any type of  
5 error when it comes to self-closing door violations,  
6 and I think our entire city is in agreeance with  
7 that. So, you had mentioned that when there is a  
8 self-closing doors violation, there are cases where  
9 there's a re-inspection and sometimes there's follow-  
10 up via phone call or letter. What language is the  
11 letter sent in, the four languages.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you  
14 Council Member, and I'd be happy to provide you with  
15 copies of those letters. The letters are provided  
16 primarily in English. However, all of the letters  
17 have as part of the letter package translation. I  
18 believe we use the 10 languages that we're required  
19 to under the law to give a brief description of what  
20 the letter is about and ask the tenant to contact us.  
21 obviously, not all the details because or else we'd  
22 have to give 10 letters, are translated but enough  
23 information is translated to let the tenant know that  
24 we are trying to contact them about an emergency  
25 violation that was issued and asking them to contact

1 us back to find out more information about the  
2 details and what needs to happen next.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And could you repeat  
5 again what percentage of tenants that you contact to  
6 confirm whether the violations were actually cured,  
7 how many respond via either letter or email or phone?  
8 What percentage? Rough numbers if you don't have the  
9 hard numbers in front of you.

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Yeah,  
11 thank you, Council Member, and I don't have that  
12 specific for the certifications that we did in Fiscal  
13 Year 21, but we'd be happy to share that information  
14 with your office and with the Council.

15 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And what type of  
16 training do inspectors have on the issue of self-  
17 closing doors? What are general instructions or  
18 education that is given to the inspectors on the  
19 issue of self-closing doors?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: And thank  
21 you, Council Member, again. This issue was-- is a  
22 very important one. Primarily, the instruction that  
23 was given to the inspectors was to check the doors as  
24 kind of the Chief outline. However, we are working on  
25 a new-- a retraining for our staff, and we will work

1 with the Fire Department on making sure that that  
2 happens in the very near future.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. And also, can  
5 HPD provide information via emails, I guess, after  
6 the hearing as to the percentage of tenants that  
7 respond to the audits of certifications?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Yeah,  
9 that's the question that I understood you were  
10 asking, Council Member.

11 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yes, I was--

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO:  
13 [interposing] So we will provide you with that  
14 information.

15 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Two final  
16 questions. How many inspectors does HPD currently  
17 have?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: so  
19 currently we are, as we mentioned at our budget  
20 hearing with Chair-- excuse me-- Chair Sanchez. We  
21 are in the process of back-filling some vacancies  
22 that we have. So, we have approval to go ahead and  
23 fill those vacancies. There is a list out right now  
24 that we're trying to work with. The housing  
25 inspectors are-- have a civil service title, and we

1 are looking for candidates all of the time. So we  
2 appreciate any outreach that you yourselves can do.  
3 I'm happy to share. I think we did share once  
4 before, but happy to re-share what is required, you  
5 know, the minimum qualifications for a housing  
6 inspectors. And as kind of maybe you've gotten taken  
7 away from this hearing, we have a very wide breadth  
8 of responsibilities for that inspector looking for  
9 health conditions, looking for fire safety  
10 conditions, building issues. So we are looking for,  
11 you know, very good [inaudible] technical people to  
12 be able to observe all of the violations we write.  
13 So, we're happy to share all of that with you, again,  
14 after the hearing.

16 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Okay. And  
17 approximately, if we implement this law that would  
18 require the re-inspection by HPD as opposed to  
19 auditing half or less than half and then requiring  
20 the tenants to respond as well, how many--  
21 approximately how many additional inspectors would be  
22 required to fully implement and also fully enforce  
23 this legislation?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
25 and we are still in the midst of coming up with those

1 estimates not only for your bill, but also, I  
2 believe, Council Member Hudson's bill on proactive  
3 inspections or the annual inspections, and once those  
4 analysis-- once that analysis is completed we'd be,  
5 you know, happy to share that with you.

7 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And to your  
8 knowledge, if there's a self-closing door violation--  
9 if a tenants calls 311, places a complaint for the  
10 self-closing doors violations and that is the only  
11 single violation being called for, how long would it  
12 take for an inspector-- how long does the process  
13 take, not of obtaining the inspector, but once the  
14 inspector is ready to do the inspection, how long  
15 does it take the inspect the self-closing doors?  
16 Seems like it's a three-second process, right? Just  
17 open and shut the-- let the door shut on its own.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: And again,  
19 Council Member, to go back to my testimony, an  
20 inspector will never go into an apartment and just  
21 check for a self-closing door. If there's a child  
22 under six, we have to do a lead inspection while  
23 we're there. If there's a child under 11, we need to  
24 check the window bars. If there's-- not if there's--  
25 all the time we will be checking for mold and pests,

1 right? These are things that an inspector's required  
2 to do once he's in that apartment. So it is not a  
3 simple check the door and leave inspection. Our  
4 inspections take some time for the inspector once  
5 they're there.  
6

7 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: How long does the  
8 inspections usually take for the apartment self-  
9 closing door inspections and also for the common area  
10 self-closing door inspections?

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: I think  
12 generally, assuming that there is not a child under  
13 six and we don't have to do a lead inspection, an  
14 inspection can take from 20 to 30 minutes depending  
15 on the size of the apartment. If there is a child  
16 under six, again, depending on the size of the  
17 apartment where we have to check every painted  
18 surface for peeling paint, that inspection can take  
19 an hour, an hour and a half.

20 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: What about an  
21 inspection of the common areas, which would require  
22 much less than the inspections of the apartment, I  
23 think?

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Generally,  
25 we don't do full common area inspections, as I



1 mentioned. The inspector is checking any self-  
2 closing doors that he would see or she would see on  
3 their way to the apartment in question where they're  
4 doing the inspections. So, that's going to depend on  
5 the type of building and how many doors they have to  
6 go through if they have to go through any.

8 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank you  
9 so much. Thank you for the answers. Now I'll pass  
10 it on to Council Member Joann Ariola, the Chair of  
11 the Fire and Emergency Management Committee.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Council Members, if  
13 you have any questions, please use the Zoom raise  
14 hand function. Council Member Ariola, and then we'll  
15 move on to Council Member questions after that.

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you, Chair. I  
17 also want to say thank you to the Fire Department,  
18 EMS, and all of the first responders that went to the  
19 Twin Parks fire and saved so many lives. It does not  
20 go unnoticed, and it does not go unappreciated.  
21 Chief Hodgens, I want to thank you for the knowledge  
22 and the honesty you bring in each and every testimony  
23 hearing that I've sat at and that I've held. I  
24 appreciate that. We've done a lot of talking about  
25 inspections and fire inspections. So, what I think

1 we need is more frequent inspections. Is there a plan  
2 to put together inspection teams of fire officers or  
3 inspectors outside of their regular tour of hours  
4 that would be helpful in getting more inspections  
5 done since we have fallen so far behind since the  
6 COVID pandemic shutdown?  
7

8 CHIEF HODGENS: So, as you know, all of  
9 our fire units, which is you know, over 300 citywide  
10 are doing inspections daily throughout the City. as  
11 far as-- we also, each division of which there's nine  
12 in the City has what's called a Building Inspection  
13 Taskforce, and those are fire officers and fire  
14 fighters that go out independent of the other  
15 inspections and they inspect special situations such  
16 CDA buildings and other complaints that may be  
17 received from the public. And anywhere where the  
18 fire units may be falling behind on anything, we do  
19 have taskforce in each division that does assist with  
20 those inspections.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. And would you  
22 be asking for additional money during this Fiscal  
23 Year to perhaps expand that program?

24 CHIEF HODGENS: We're always open to, you  
25 know, conducting as many inspections as we can. I

1 mean, that would be a decision we'd have to discuss  
2 as to whether we could, you know, feasibly expand it.

3  
4 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I should  
5 also mention that as part of the UFOA contract that  
6 we negotiated last year, there is actually an  
7 increase in the number of inspections that are  
8 completed as part of a pilot program that we  
9 formalized through that contract, so you actually  
10 will see probably higher numbers of inspections being  
11 completed by field units than you did in past years.

12 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you. Thank  
13 you very much. The Twin Parks fire quickly went out  
14 of control and lives were lost. I have been very  
15 vocal about the need for the fifth fire fighter in  
16 our fire companies and engines. We know that the  
17 first line that's put into place in a fire can save  
18 lives. The engines that responded to the Twin Parks  
19 fire did not have the fifth fire fighter. How long  
20 was it before the second engine arrived at the scene  
21 to get the first line in?

22 CHIEF HODGENS: First Engine Company  
23 arrived in three minutes and 16 seconds. The second  
24 engine was right there, right before four minutes  
25 that they were to help assist.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Would having-- with  
3 your vast knowledge, your experience with the  
4 Department, would having the fifth fire fighter on an  
5 engine make the fire fighters able to get into that  
6 fire more quickly, and it is a preventative for loss  
7 of lives?

8 CHIEF HODGENS: Each fire and depending  
9 on the building and the layout of the street and  
10 where the fire hydrants are and where we can put our  
11 apparatus, each situation is unique. That building--  
12 well, let me just say that, since 1990 we have  
13 primarily been responding with four fire fighter  
14 engines, and we've come up with procedures that-- as  
15 you know, we use the-- we team up the engine  
16 companies to get the first line positioned as quickly  
17 as possible. The fifth fire fighter at that fire,  
18 particular fire, although you know, obviously more  
19 hands is better at that-- we had over 200 fire  
20 fighters respond to that fire, and with the companies  
21 that did respond, it would have resulted in, I  
22 believe, four additional fire fighters, you know,  
23 with the amount of five fire fighter engines we have  
24 now. Yes, I mean, you know, it's-- like I said, five  
25 fire fighters, as in anything, is always better, but

1 we have adapted and respond effectively with our  
2 methods that we use now.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Right, and if there  
5 were five fire fighters, five fire fighters that were  
6 responding, perhaps we would not have need-- this is  
7 a question. Would we have not needed as many units  
8 responding leaving gaps in other areas that are also  
9 at high risk for fires?

10 CHIEF HODGENS: Well, that fire was  
11 advanced upon arrival with, you know, heavy smoke  
12 throughout the building, so in that particular fire  
13 we were going to need many units to fight that fire.  
14 In fact, we transmitted an alarm, an additional  
15 alarm, at that fire just to help with-- you know, we  
16 had so many patients. We had 32 people in cardiac  
17 arrest, and they came out of the building, you know,  
18 very quickly, and we needed more hands to work on  
19 these victims. So we did transmit an additional  
20 alarm just for that purpose, and these fire fighters  
21 came in with their medical equipment to just do  
22 whatever they can for these victims.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: But we do agree that  
24 having a fifth fire fighter re-assigned to the  
25 firehouses is a benefit to people who are in a fire,

1 and it does give-- it does provide more coverage so  
2 that lives can be saved. Rhetorical question. I  
3 just-- from all the research that we've done on it,  
4 it does prove that the-- fifth fire fighter proves  
5 beneficial when going to a fire, when addressing a  
6 fire, when putting out a fire, and when lives are at  
7 risk when saving lives. So, thank you for that  
8 testimony. At the hearing that we held with Fire and  
9 Emergency Management, we discussed the CAD system,  
10 and I know that there's been some problems with it.  
11 They were going to be addressed. The CAD system did  
12 go offline again most recently. So I just wondered  
13 what's being done and if anything, we spoke about it  
14 at Fire and Emergency Management, and it went offline  
15 again. I just wonder what's being done to address  
16 that issue with that system.

18 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I think  
19 the recent outage, you're referring to the EMS CAD, I  
20 believe? Correct?

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Oh, okay, yeah.

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: So, the  
23 EMS CAD and the Fire CAD are both-- we have planned  
24 outages, but we also plan that it is going to be down  
25 at times as with any technology, and so we do have

1 redundancies built-in so there are no operational  
2 issues when the CAD is down, whether it's a planned  
3 or unplanned outage. In the case of the EMS CAD, that  
4 is an older piece of technology, and it is in the  
5 process of being operated.

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, thank you.

8 I'm going to switch now to the Mayor's Executive  
9 Order. The Mayor's Executive Order 12, "The Fire  
10 Department is instructed to work with the Department  
11 of Education to conduct outreach in schools,  
12 including teachers, staff, students regarding fire  
13 safety measures and evacuation procedures." Will  
14 there be outreach in every school every year, all  
15 grades, and are there presentations with literature  
16 and media, and will they be in many languages?

17 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes to all  
18 of the above. We were going to have-- our field  
19 companies will be present in schools. We also, as we  
20 mentioned, have educational materials online, and  
21 we're working with the DOE to package them as  
22 curriculum so that teachers can integrate them into  
23 their curriculum, and the DOE has been a great  
24 partner with that-- us on that. So it's going to be-

1  
2 - we're going to have a very significant presence in  
3 schools going forward thanks to that partnership.

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Good. and moving  
5 forward, since we are advancing that type of a  
6 program, will there be any type of results from that  
7 program data and the number of outreach, the outreach  
8 that the percentage of the outreach done and what the  
9 result was?

10 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yes, we  
11 track all of our fire safety education presentations,  
12 and so after we've implemented this for a period of  
13 time, we'll be able to report back to the Council.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay. And just to  
15 get back to the inspections, we were talking about  
16 self-closing doors and such. The inspections are  
17 also done on sprinklers and fire alarms as well  
18 within these dwellings? And is there data on that?  
19 Like, how many have been out in your capacity of  
20 going in as inspectors? How many were found out?  
21 How many were found non-operational? And were  
22 violations given for that?

23 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, we  
24 don't have that in front of us, but we could produce  
25 that for you.



1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Okay, great. My next  
3 questions will be for HPD. Deputy Commissioner  
4 Sanchez, listening to your report, it just reminded  
5 me of getting a resume and reading it and thinking  
6 this is a perfect candidate to hire, but when the  
7 candidate came in, very little of what was in that  
8 resume was true. I have HPD buildings in my  
9 district. We're constantly getting calls from the  
10 tenants. Now you have management companies that are  
11 within these buildings, correct?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: I'm sorry,  
13 Council Member, can you just clarify. Are you  
14 talking about buildings that--

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] HPD  
16 buildings--

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO:  
18 [interposing] HPD owns, or?

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Multi-family  
20 dwellings, they have management companies that HPD  
21 contracts with.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: In terms  
23 of enforcement?

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Supers-- nope.  
25 Supers, porters, someone who takes-- who they contact

2 in case there is an issue, an emergency line where  
3 people answer when there's issues and it's a weekend  
4 or overnight, right? Do you have management  
5 companies in those buildings that you contract with?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Just--  
7 again, just to clarify, Council Member, my-- what  
8 I've been speaking about in terms of enforcement is  
9 enforcement in privately-owned property. It's not  
10 regarding HPD property. If your--

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] No, but  
12 Twin Parks--

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO:  
14 [interposing] If your question is about HPD--

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] was a  
16 multi-family dwelling. It was a large complex.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: It was  
18 private. It's privately-owned property which  
19 contracts mostly with New York State on the  
20 management of the property. I believe-- yeah, it's a  
21 state Mitchell-Lama. So, HPD doesn't have direct  
22 oversight in terms ownership of the property. I'm  
23 just-- I'm trying to understand the question.

1                   CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: No, I get it, but  
2  
3 there are HPD buildings within my district on the  
4 Rockaway peninsula that are not Mitchell-Lama.

5                   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Okay.

6                   CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That are co-ops, HPD  
7 co-ops, and they have management companies that run  
8 them for HPD.

9                   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Yes, and  
10 for that I will turn it--

11                  CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Yeah.  
12 So the answer is yes. So the complaints that I get  
13 at my office are about heat, hot water, self-closing  
14 doors, elevators that are out and need repair,  
15 structural repair, and poor signage. Often times,  
16 these complaints go to the management company for--  
17 to be addressed or on the emergency line for HPD to  
18 be addressed, and the reason why I know about them is  
19 because neither the management company nor HPD  
20 addresses these issues within the timeline that you  
21 testified for today, and that concerns me. So I went  
22 and did my own inspection in the buildings. The  
23 common areas had-- did not have self-closing doors,  
24 and in fact, were chocked open. Now, if you have  
25 management companies inside those buildings, which

1  
2 you do, how do they communicate with you when they  
3 see violations in common areas, as well as in  
4 tenant's apartments?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HENDRICKSON: So,  
6 Council Member, good afternoon. My name is Anne-  
7 Marie Hendrickson and I run HPD's Office of Asset and  
8 Property Management. I do believe you're probably  
9 speaking about either city-owned, city Mitchell-  
10 Lama,--

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] They're  
12 not city Mitchell-Lama.

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HENDRICKSON: Okay,  
14 so if you're talking about private co-ops, they're  
15 private--

16 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] HPD-  
17 run.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HENDRICKSON: No, no.  
19 We have a distinction. There are buildings that HPD  
20 owns and we manage directly. Then there are  
21 buildings that HPD may have financed and sold to an  
22 affordable housing developer. They then put in their  
23 own private management companies to operate, kind of  
24 run the building, the management of the buildings.  
25 What I'd like to do if possible with you is let me

1 get the addresses of which buildings you're speaking  
2 of, and it probably makes better sense for us to talk  
3 offline about the complaints you're bringing to our  
4 attention about management companies and/or owners of  
5 buildings that are not responding to tenant issues,  
6 complaints, making appropriate repairs, not having  
7 self-closing doors. Again, without information on  
8 which buildings we're speaking about, I can't take  
9 the corrective action that may be needed.  
10

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And I'm happy to  
12 speak to you offline about that, but I want to know  
13 what your procedure is when complaints are made,  
14 because HPD is copied on the emails that I'm copied  
15 on. What is your procedure to deal with these  
16 management companies that are not taking care of  
17 what's happening the buildings.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HENDRICKSON: Thank  
19 you, Council Member. Again, the management companies  
20 are reporting and they have contracts with the  
21 owners. So, if in the event that a management  
22 company is not making repairs that are needed or  
23 warranted, HPD could potentially step in and replace  
24 that manager and request that the owner replace that  
25 management with someone more professional and someone

1 who is going to be more attentive to the residents.

2 So, again, I would love to follow up on this  
3 conversation with you, you know, with my colleague  
4 AnnMarie Santiago on enforcement so we can take the  
5 corrective action that been needed if the management  
6 company is not performing their job well.  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I don't think it's  
9 just specific to my district. I think it's citywide  
10 in the is-- in that type of situation. So, a  
11 question was asked earlier about how many inspectors  
12 you have that go out, and honestly it was sidestepped  
13 because you just said we're backfilling and we're  
14 looking for new candidates. How many do you have  
15 right now that go out and do inspections?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: So,  
17 Council Member, we have approximately 270 or so  
18 inspectors, but I do want to clarify. Tenants who  
19 are experiencing the issues that you raised with  
20 their managing agents should also call 311 for the  
21 types of responses that I've been discussing. So,  
22 we-- when you give-- you know, you speak with Anne-  
23 Marie Hendrickson about those addresses, we can  
24 certainly look to see how many complaints have been  
25

1 filed and what have been the results of inspections  
2 by HPD. So, we'd be happy to do that as well.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I agree with you,  
5 and that is what the tenants do, they call 311, and  
6 they call their management company. They send emails  
7 to HPD, and then at a point where they've not seen  
8 any type of result, that's when my office is called.  
9 So-- and we instruct them on the procedure, but it  
10 seems that they have an issue. So I will talk to you  
11 about it offline, but it is not just parochial to my  
12 district. It is, you know, throughout the City of  
13 New York. Of the 270 inspectors you have, how many  
14 HPD buildings that you're discussing today do you  
15 have?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: The  
17 inspectors that I am referring--

18 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] There's  
19 270, but how many buildings--

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO:  
21 [interposing] They--

22 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] that  
23 come under the umbrella of todays--

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO:  
25 [interposing] They inspect as many-- 170,000

1 buildings in the City come under our purview. Not  
2 all of those buildings file complaints. There are  
3 some buildings in the City where they-- the tenants  
4 don't file complaints, whether the building is in  
5 good condition or the tenant chooses to not file a  
6 complaint, but that's a-- any building is subject to  
7 our--

9 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So you only react  
10 upon a complaint, and in buildings where maybe some  
11 tenants are less likely to make a complaint, then  
12 those issues are not addressed, is that what you're  
13 saying?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Absolute--  
15 no, no, Council Member. I would beg to differ, and I  
16 think, you know, this is kind of where I talked a  
17 little bit about some of our proactive enforcement.  
18 So we are responsive to-- in those cases a lot of  
19 times tenants are more likely to go to Community  
20 Boards or they're more likely to go to your offices,  
21 and certainly we're responsive to any type of housing  
22 maintenance issue that you bring to our attention,  
23 even if the tenants wish to not be directly  
24 identified or named, or they don't wish to file  
25 complaints. You know, we are active in looking for



1 those buildings. We have community groups that are  
2 on contract with ourselves, with other city agencies  
3 who do bring buildings to our attention, and  
4 certainly we're responsive to that.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So this is-- I'm  
7 going to ask the question, and then I'll just go back  
8 to FDNY. A number of the bills that came forth and  
9 we've discussed in the beginning and in both your  
10 testimonies, you deferred to other agencies. Does  
11 that mean HPD that you're not taking a position on  
12 it, or you're just deferring? Do you have no-- no  
13 opinion on those bills?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: In  
15 general, we're deferring to the other agencies and  
16 most Department of Buildings, because they're the  
17 technical experts on the subject matter. So, we have  
18 no objection or concerns about the bills, and so any  
19 concerns that are raised would really come from those  
20 agencies.

21 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: So no objection?

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah,  
23 similarly, we-- you know, we support anything broadly  
24 that's going to increase fire safety, but a lot of  
25 time we're talking about a code and it's not under

1 our code, so we just don't want to speak to how it  
2 would be specifically enforced.  
3

4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: That's fine. Thank  
5 you. Thank you very much. And I-- as soon as this  
6 hearing is over we will be sitting together. Thank  
7 you.

8 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,  
9 Council Member Ariola. I have a follow-up question  
10 on the issue of correction of self-closing doors  
11 violations. There was an article recently posted  
12 stating that in 2017 there was a self-closing door  
13 violation detected by PHD, 2017 at the subject  
14 building 333 East 21<sup>st</sup> Street, and that the violation  
15 existed and it was cured only three years later. Is  
16 that information accurate, and if yes, what in the  
17 system failed given that we have so many procedures  
18 that require that it be cured?

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Sorry.  
20 Thank you, Council Member. In 2017 those self-  
21 closing door violations were not emergency repair  
22 violations, and so the follow-up was very different  
23 than the follow-up that it is today. Again, after  
24 the fire in 2017, the City Council passed a law  
25 making that self-closing door violation a Class C

1 violation which is immediately hazardous, and so the  
2 process today as I've described it was not the  
3 process in 2017.

4  
5 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. And now  
6 Council Member Sanchez.

7 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Chair.  
8 I just wanted to follow up on Chair Ariola's remark  
9 about agencies that are-- were deferred to but are  
10 not present. I think it's-- I'm just making a  
11 statement. It's very important that when a bill  
12 addresses an agency that that agency either is able  
13 to provide their perspective on that bill with  
14 agencies that are at the dais or that they are able  
15 to share that. So, I think we-- we don't have DOB  
16 here today. I think two or three of bills pertain  
17 directly to their code and their expertise. They  
18 should have been here today. DCWP is not here, and  
19 their perspective would have been helpful on the  
20 space heater legislation, and Environmental  
21 Protection's perspective would have been helpful on  
22 the minimum heat requirement legislation as well. So,  
23 they're not here today. I believe they should have  
24 been, and we look forward to their perspectives on  
25 this as these piece of legislation move forward.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you  
3 very much, Council Member, and we will definitely  
4 take that back. We are working with those agencies  
5 to prepare some feedback for you, and that will be  
6 provided to you as soon as we can.

7 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. And I  
9 will give the floor to Council Members that have  
10 raised their hands.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair  
12 Feliz. For Council Member questions, again, use the  
13 Zoom raise hand function if you're online. Present  
14 we have Council Member Dinowitz followed by Council  
15 Member Hanif followed by Council Member Avilés who  
16 will be on Zoom.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Alright. Good  
18 afternoon everyone. I first want to thank the Chairs  
19 Feliz, Ariola, and Sanchez for this important  
20 hearing, and of course, all of you for attending. My  
21 first question, HPD. Do you have-- or FDNY. Don't  
22 really care. Do you have a breakdown of where fires--  
23 - where these fires occur relative to income and  
24 immigration status of the residents.

1  
2                   ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We don't  
3 have a breakdown by that, but we could give you a  
4 breakdown of where fires occur so that it can be  
5 overlaid with those data sets that we don't keep.

6                   DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: HPD is  
7 not-- does not keep track of all the fires in the  
8 City, so I defer that to the Fire Department.

9                   COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, so  
10 there's I guess no data tracking to see that, you  
11 know, low income communities and immigrant  
12 communities are facing deadly fires more so than  
13 other communities. That data doesn't exist right  
14 now?

15                   ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I wouldn't  
16 say that that data doesn't exist. Like I mention we  
17 target our fire safety education outreach to the  
18 communities that are most vulnerable based on where  
19 there are the largest number of fires. And as you  
20 point out, we often find that those are immigrant  
21 communities. So a lot of our materials are  
22 multilingual. Often we send fire safety educators  
23 who might be from that community. So we do target  
24 our outreach about that. I was just commenting, you  
25 know, we don't keep that data ourselves. We could

1 overlay it for you, but that's certainly the way we  
2 make decisions around where fire safety education  
3 occurs is based on vulnerability.  
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, I do want  
6 to talk about the education in a second, but first I  
7 want to talk about this word I keep hearing,  
8 "proactive," and every time you're describing it, it  
9 sounds like it is in response to something. In other  
10 words, it's in response to a 311 call. You are  
11 inspecting in response to a community group doing  
12 something. You are responding to a 311 call, and then  
13 you proactively-- whatever else is in the line of  
14 sight, according to this report, you inspect. Do  
15 your inspectors ever go into a building without  
16 anyone asking you to or telling you to?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Generally,  
18 we focus our resources where we have a known issue of  
19 some sort. So whether that known issue comes to us  
20 via a complaint, or whether that known issue comes to  
21 us via some violations that were issued, or that  
22 issue comes to our attention via, again, a community  
23 group, an elected official. We really would have no  
24 reason to be that building other than we are trying  
25

1 to address some condition that exists that is  
2 affecting the lives of the tenants that are there.

3  
4 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: So I'm going to  
5 respectfully disagree because I may not know that a  
6 door needs to be self-closing. I think Council Member  
7 Ariola mentioned it. There are some people who don't  
8 want to or don't call 311. I can tell you that my--  
9 my children, a friend close to our family, they go to  
10 their apartment, and their fire doors are not self-  
11 closing, and they don't have handles on them. But  
12 that building's never inspected, or people in the  
13 building may not think to call 311. So, I would  
14 really just appreciate if maybe you changed the word,  
15 "proactive" because it sounds like you go out to the  
16 building throughout the community, you go out to  
17 buildings throughout the City and do necessary  
18 inspections, but again, it doesn't sound like that's  
19 the case. It sounds like people need to bring you  
20 complaints. That's more fair and accurate, right?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: And I  
22 think to that exact point, Council Member, as you  
23 were raising, this education piece and this  
24 information piece is very key to bringing us to where  
25 people have concerns, right? The fact that they

1 didn't know that their door needed to be self-  
2 closing, you know, despite the fact that there should  
3 be a sign on the back of their door telling them that  
4 or something posted in the building, right? That's  
5 where we really need to make sure that people  
6 understand what they're entitled to as a renter, and  
7 I know that as part of their lease they should be  
8 receiving some documents that's required, you know,  
9 too inform them about not only that but lead-based  
10 paint, about window guards. You know, we make every  
11 effort to make sure that tenants are aware of what  
12 they're entitled to as a renter.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Thank you.  
15 [inaudible] Chair, if I could ask just one more  
16 question about the education? Thank you. I agree the  
17 education is very important. You know, again, I just  
18 wish you would say, "No, we don't proactively out to  
19 buildings because we don't have enough resources." I  
20 think that would just be a more honest and  
21 appropriate answer if that's the case, because we're  
22 here to keep people safe. I don't think any of us  
23 believe that you don't want people to be safe, and we  
24 have to fix it so that people don't die. This is a  
25 very serious reason why we're here. So, I just want



1 to get to the education very quickly. I got this in  
2 the mail. This you? Yeah, I know. I'll bring it to  
3 you. Am I allowed to do that? Yeah, okay. Okay,  
4 I'm just showing I don't know it's about a 10-page  
5 document that I received in the mail from the FDNY  
6 with a lot of important information. I think this  
7 speaks to the education we're talking about, and I  
8 said I would mail this to you and I will. So, I have  
9 a couple of concerns about the education versus what  
10 I'm receiving in the mail. I first, you know, want  
11 to make it very clear. I do want to thank you. You  
12 had one of your fire fighters present to my community  
13 over Zoom very informative, and you know, goes  
14 without saying the fact that your fire fighters run  
15 into danger to keep the resto of us safe. It's  
16 something that words can't do justice, right? That  
17 is something that I don't think any of us here do,  
18 can do. So I want to thank you for that, but I also  
19 want to make sure all of us have the education we  
20 need. So this is a document that I think was sent  
21 out by the FDNY. It has your logo on it. It's about  
22 10 pages with very, very, very, very small font size.  
23 And two things jump out at me. One is as we're  
24 talking about educating and reaching everyone, I  
25

1 mean, the size of the font alone it's probably not  
2 ADA complaint. I would have to check that. It's  
3 probably not. But it's also written in such a way  
4 that it's very dense. And simply the fact that the  
5 information is there doesn't necessarily keep people  
6 safe. You mentioned the signs on the back of doors.  
7 Very small type. Very hard to read, very dense. The  
8 other thing that jumps out at me is there's nothing  
9 in here that lets people know that this is available  
10 in any other language. So, who does this help? This  
11 helps people with good eyesight. This helps people  
12 who can comprehend thick texts, who have the time and  
13 ability to read through 10 pages, and who speak  
14 English. And I'm-- I don't want to take any more  
15 time but I do want to say, as you're working with  
16 the-- you say you're working with the DOE. I hope  
17 that the employees of the DOE that you're working  
18 with are actually teachers and educators. Many of  
19 the employees there are not. So I hope the people  
20 you're working with are teachers and educators, and  
21 perhaps you can collaborate with them on more than  
22 just the curriculum. I've been looking through your  
23 website and it seems to me that a lot of the fliers  
24 and tips have great information on them, but they're  
25

2 presented in such a way that is inaccessible to a lot  
3 of people, particularly-- once we get the data--  
4 particularly the people who probably need that  
5 outreach and that very digestible information which  
6 is typically low income New Yorkers and immigrant New  
7 Yorkers.

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, I  
9 completely agree. So, I'm a teacher myself.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Alright.

11 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I'm also a  
12 community organizer, and think the staff behind me  
13 from Community Affairs will probably nod when I say  
14 this, but I make them crazy in reviewing all of our  
15 materials and making sure that they are accessible.  
16 We actually contract with a firm called Ideas 42 that  
17 does exactly that, that actually studies, you know,  
18 how people absorb information and make sure that it's  
19 clear and that we're getting the point across,  
20 because to exactly what you said, the information is  
21 not useful even if it's accurate if not accessible,  
22 and that can mean accessibility by size, by language,  
23 often the way information is presented even using  
24 visual aids and also doing it in multiple different  
25 fashions, right? Not just writing, but also video.

1  
2 Everybody learns differently. So we're regularly  
3 reviewing everything and making sure it fits. We  
4 actually have sort of standards and guidance around  
5 what education materials are supposed to look like.  
6 I do know we have a lot that's produced by our  
7 members, which is sometimes well-intended but maybe a  
8 bit lengthy or inaccessible. So if you sent me that,  
9 we would defendants review it and make something a  
10 little more readable. So thank you for bringing that  
11 attention to that document. But that is always our  
12 outlook is to try to make things accessible and in  
13 multiple languages, and make sure that we're actually  
14 teaching and not just kind of leaving documents  
15 behind, right?

16 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Yeah, and when  
17 did you hire that firm?

18 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Oh, we  
19 have always had them or as long as I've been there  
20 had them on contract, and we regularly review our  
21 materials with them.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Okay, so I  
23 don't know this contractor, but I would just  
24 generally say that as an educator yourself, you can  
25 look through the materials that are posted on your

1 website. It's [nyc.gov/assets/FDNYdownloads](http://nyc.gov/assets/FDNYdownloads)  
2  
3 [inaudible] PDF. They are-- I would just have them or  
4 maybe someone else start reviewing them because in  
5 general I've been looking through a lot of these not  
6 accessible. And again, as you are working with the  
7 Department of Education, I urge you to please  
8 actually work with teachers, educators, people who  
9 are doing the work, interacting with children of all  
10 ages to know how to make things accessible. That's--  
11 that is their job. That's their job to do that.  
12 They're typically very good at it, and so I encourage  
13 you to do that, because this is-- it is not about  
14 creating a doc-- like you said, like I said, it's not  
15 about just creating a document that has the  
16 information. It does no good for anyone. We have to  
17 keep people safe, and I agree, education is a huge  
18 part of it and this is one step. I'm looking forward  
19 to receiving that information about the breakdown of  
20 where these fires are, and I hope that maybe in the  
21 future you're proactive in real life about checking  
22 for safety.

23 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council  
24 Member. Council Member Ariola is going to ask a quick  
25 question, and then we're going to pass it off to

1 Council Members Hanif, Avilés, Fariás, and then  
2 Kagan.

3  
4 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Hi, I just wanted to  
5 go back to the inspectors. So we know we have 270  
6 inspectors. You said you're going to hire-- you have  
7 hired more. How many lines do you have to fill to  
8 bring it to the point where you're at capacity for  
9 inspectors?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: so, we're  
11 working with a little bit of an excess of 100  
12 backfills to fill, and we're looking forward to doing  
13 that as quickly as possible.

14 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: And any additional  
15 to the backfills, or it's just backfilling in?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: It's  
17 backfills at this point. With COVID we did have, as  
18 every agency did, some losses, and so we're working  
19 to backfill that.

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.

22 Council Member Hanif?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you, Chairs,  
24 and I appreciate Council Member Dinowitz's comment  
25 about the necessity of having this data breakdown and

1 just the dissemination of neighborhoods, because we  
2 know that the worst fires have taken place or have  
3 taken the lives of immigrants in our city from the  
4 Triangle Shirtways Factory to the Twin Parks fire. So  
5 I'm putting on my Immigration Committee Chair hat on  
6 as well. And so I'll start with more language access  
7 related questions. First, appreciative that your  
8 website lays out materials in multiple languages.  
9 Could you elaborate how these materials reach  
10 communities and residents? And then how big is your  
11 outreach team? And then how do they gather feedback?

12  
13 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: And so in  
14 terms of how do we reach people, we have the website  
15 obviously. We also have a team of fire safety  
16 educators. Some of them are actually retirees that  
17 we bring back just to do fire safety presentation  
18 educations, and then our field units are also  
19 involved in fire safety education. So, it's really  
20 the entire Department, actually, works on that issue.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then are you  
22 able to share how many of those folks speak another  
23 language?

24 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I don't  
25 know off-hand, but it's one of our key tools when we

1 recruit for the unit, that we ask people if they  
2 speak a second language, and we not only look for  
3 people who speak a second language, but people who  
4 are from the community that they might be teaching in  
5 so that we can match someone who is enmeshed in that  
6 community, not only speaks the language, but may know  
7 community leaders may be able to better access  
8 members of the community who are influencers.

9  
10 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And would you be  
11 able to share that information with us?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, we'd  
13 be happy to.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great. And then in  
15 terms of this outreach, is it just dissemination or  
16 is there a component that is community providing  
17 input?

18 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: There is  
19 definitely regular input. We have a pretty robust  
20 Community Affairs Unit, and so they're regularly  
21 reaching out to various community members including  
22 some of the Council Members here to talk about what's  
23 needed. They also work with fire operations to  
24 understand the causes of a fire in any given year and  
25



1 target the outreach based on, you know, any increases  
2 in causes of certain fires.

3  
4 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. And then  
5 does this outreach happen on a sort of public  
6 calendar? Like, what's the frequency of outreach?

7 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: It-- so it  
8 depends on the nature of the event. Some-- when we  
9 actually ask, you know, is this going to be a public  
10 event or not. So sometimes it's a closed event, like  
11 if we're going to a school, obviously we're not going  
12 to put that out to the public, but that's just for  
13 that school. In some cases we have a forum often  
14 when the Council Members sponsor events they're  
15 public, and so we will promote that ourselves in  
16 addition to whoever's hosting it with us.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Got it. So  
18 there's no sort of like-- how for example, the  
19 Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs does like public  
20 Know Your Rights Town Halls or webinars. Is there  
21 something of a frequency that--

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH:  
23 [interposing] We do some of that. I'm looking at  
24 [inaudible]. We do do some of that, yeah. I can get  
25 you some specific data on how often.

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Okay. Got it  
3 great.

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: But it's  
5 [inaudible] love to know that.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: And then another  
7 question for the FDNY. I appreciate you saying that  
8 the goal of Intro 106 is laudable. Given that this  
9 issue is within the purview of the agency, I'd like  
10 you to elaborate a little bit more. Could you share  
11 the Department's position? I know you deferred to  
12 DCWP.

13 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Oh, yeah.  
14 I mean, as the Chief mentioned-- I was just making  
15 sure I had the right bill. as the Chief mentioned,  
16 we-- you know, space heaters are a cause of fires,  
17 and sometimes that's due to an electrical component  
18 like an overloaded outlet, and sometimes that can be  
19 the heater itself if it catches say a blanket on  
20 fire. And so, you know, we're very supportive of  
21 anything that prevents that. Just in terms of the  
22 text of the bill, we defer to them on how it would be  
23 implemented and how it would be most effective.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great. Good to  
25 have your support. And then this is for HPD. The

1 owners of 333 East 181<sup>st</sup> Street has 123 buildings in  
2 New York City and tenants made nearly 2,500 heat and  
3 hot water complaints over the last the three years,  
4 which includes all of the COVID era. Could you share  
5 what steps HPD took in response to these complaints?  
6 Whether-- during the duration of when the complaints  
7 were coming in or post fire tragedy. And could you  
8 share if HPD has filed a lawsuit against this  
9 predatory landlord?  
10

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you  
12 for your question. I don't have stats on the whole  
13 portfolio of the owner of this building. I do know  
14 that for 333 specifically we had received two heat  
15 complaints in the heat season prior to the fire, and  
16 those two heat complaints were for one apartment only  
17 in the 120-unit building, and the complaints were  
18 closed based on a call back to the tenant indicating  
19 that he had been restored. So, for that same building  
20 in previous heat seasons, again, we only had two or  
21 three complaints each heat season, and we did not  
22 issue any violations. So we would have to do further  
23 research. If you're asking about the portfolio. I  
24 couldn't answer--  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: [interposing] Yeah,  
3 that portfolio would be great. This is something  
4 that came out in the days following the tragedy, and  
5 not just heat and hot water issues but pests and all  
6 other issues that the owner needs be held accountable  
7 to. But in the past, I know that HPD has taken  
8 action against these kinds of landlords. So I was  
9 just curious to see what steps were taken immediately  
10 after the tragedy.

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: In general  
12 for heat violations when we have repeat offenders, we  
13 do seek civil penalties in Housing Court, but I can't  
14 again speak to the specifics of this landlord.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: But you can get me  
16 some details.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: We can.  
18 We can.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Great.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Absolutely.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER HANIF: Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: thank you so much,  
23 Council Member Hanif. And I actually have a few  
24 follow-up questions on that same topic. Heating law  
25 violations can be tricky given that a tenant could

1 complain about lack of heating or insufficient  
2 heating. By the time an inspector comes, the heating  
3 could be back on. So it could be pretty difficult,  
4 or in some cases impossible under the current system  
5 to properly detect and enforce those heating laws.  
6 Just curious, how long does it take for HPD to send  
7 an inspector and get an inspector into the building  
8 when a heating complaint has been placed?  
9

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
11 Council Member, and I believe we report this  
12 regularly on our Mayor's Management Report.  
13 Generally, it takes about two and a half days to  
14 respond to a heat complaint. It could be quicker.  
15 The times when it is kind of at that level is when it  
16 may be particularly cold and we have an excessive  
17 number of heat complaints, and then we are really  
18 trying to focus on the buildings that have absolutely  
19 no heat in those cases because that is where the  
20 greatest risk lies in terms of the tenants and the  
21 coldness of the building.

22 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: I think that timeline  
23 is problematic. Our weather changes rapidly. It  
24 could be 40 degrees one day. It could be negative 10  
25 the next day. If tenants have no heat during that

1 negative 10 degree day, I think it's problem if they  
2 cannot get an inspector to inspect and also pays the  
3 violation. Is there any point where HPD conduct  
4 random inspections? Let's say for example, 20  
5 heating complaints have been placed all week. There  
6 might not be a violation due to the challenges that  
7 are before us in terms of enforcing the violations  
8 and getting someone there quickly, but if there are  
9 many complaints, is there any point that HPD says  
10 lets conduct a random inspection? So that we won't  
11 have to go through that 48-hour process?  
12

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: And again,  
14 thank you Council Member. As I mentioned before,  
15 buildings that have a particularly high number of  
16 complaints, we do try and watch more carefully with  
17 our Division of Neighborhood Preservation, reaching  
18 out proactively to tenants, even if they have not  
19 filed a complaint or reaching out proactively to  
20 owners to say what was the cause of the fact that we  
21 have 100 complaints in your building. So we do do  
22 that. And in the instance where we determine that  
23 there is no heat based on that kind of follow-up, we  
24 can send an inspector without a specific complaint at  
25 that time.

CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Now,  
let's hear from Council Member Alexa Avilés? The  
floor is yours. Thank you.

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Hello, good  
afternoon. Thank you so much, Chair Feliz, Chair  
Sanchez, and Chair Ariola for this joint committee  
hearing. I have several questions. I guess the  
first thing is it feels like we have to make sure  
that we do not forget the focus of many of these  
tragic situations which is landlords who are not  
providing adequate services that make tenants depend  
on things like space heaters or ovens for services  
that they're paying for and they should be receiving.  
And I'm particularly concerned about those buildings  
that are receiving-- landlords who are receiving  
public subsidies, right? And yet manage to continue  
to violate the law and not provide the services that  
they're supposed to. I was curious about in  
particular-- and thank you to the HPD staff who is  
going to provide the information about the particular  
landlords in Twin Parks around the many violations  
that they have. But I was specifically interested  
also in learning about what happens when fees are

1 not-- when fees are not collected in a timely  
2 fashion. How does that get escalated to the point of  
3 like real accountability? I feel like we hear about  
4 these cases dragging on and on and on, and repeat  
5 offenders across the city, and yet people continue to  
6 suffer. So if you could describe a little bit to me  
7 around what are the actual next steps that happen  
8 when we have these repeated fines that are not  
9 collected, are not being collected?  
10

11 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
12 Council Member. So, as I had outlined previously,  
13 there are basically three categories that we're  
14 talking about. Inspection fees and emergency repair  
15 charges are both billed through the Department of  
16 Finance, and the enforcement mechanism there, I guess  
17 to be determined by the Council was the tax lien sale  
18 or other mechanisms that Department of Finance has to  
19 enforce collections. You know, I don't know where  
20 that lays at this point, but the charges are  
21 transferred. Interest accrues if it's not paid over  
22 time, and it accrues at the same rate as I believe  
23 your tax, property tax. So that's the enforcement  
24 mechanism on those. In terms of penalties obtained  
25 in Housing Court, those are filed with the court and



1 those remain open against the property. That would  
2 require payment certainly before any property is  
3 transferred. Most title search companies will find  
4 that on a title search, because they are cataloged  
5 against the property. So, that's the enforcement in  
6 terms of HPD fees, civil penalties, and emergency  
7 repair charges.  
8

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Got it. So it's  
10 attached to the property as opposed potentially to  
11 the owner.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: That's  
13 correct. It's attached to the property.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Which is  
15 definitely an easy mechanism to spur [sic]. In terms  
16 of-- I'm going to switch really quickly. We've had a  
17 constituent inform us that HPD and Department of  
18 Building inspectors have been-- are not trained in  
19 fire prevention standards, are actually doing  
20 inspections in buildings. Can you talk to us a little  
21 bit about HPD investigators are trained? What's the  
22 training?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Sure.  
24 Thank you, Council Member. So, as I mentioned, our  
25 training had really just been about looking for the

1 self-closing door, making sure that the door is  
2 closing properly and that it's an A fire rated door.  
3 We are intending to do additional training for our  
4 inspectors with a little more detail, and certainly  
5 based on the introduction here today, assuming that  
6 that moves forward, would incorporate any definitions  
7 that are placed on self-closing doors by the Council.  
8

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Great. We would  
10 love to see a full training that meets the National  
11 Fire Protection Association's standards so that both  
12 HPD and DOB inspectors are doing full inspections  
13 that are required. I wanted to just switch, also  
14 last week, to some of my colleagues in terms of Intro  
15 131. I think along the veins of language access that  
16 we've heard Council Member Hanif and certainly  
17 Council Member Dinowitz mention, I think one of the  
18 omissions in the bill that we should definitely  
19 address is mandating language in terms of to ensure  
20 that there is outreach in adequate languages in the  
21 communities. We know that if it is not mandated,  
22 unfortunately, it falls off the table due to lack of  
23 resources. So one of the things I would love to  
24 implore my colleagues is to add language around  
25 mandating accessible languages.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank you  
3 so much, Council Member Avilés. Now we'll pass it  
4 back to Council Member Sanchez who has a few  
5 additional follow-up questions.

6 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Just one for FDNY.  
7 Was the Twin Parks Northwest building or any of the  
8 buildings in the Twin Parks portfolio, were they  
9 flagged in RBIS? Had there been proactive  
10 inspections ahead of the fire on January 9<sup>th</sup>?

11 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: There was  
12 an inspection of May in 2021 from the local fire  
13 company, and I do believe those buildings are at a  
14 little bit higher risk in the system. The Chief can  
15 speak to that.

16 CHIEF HODGENS: So, since 2013, that  
17 particular building was inspected six times, which is  
18 a lot. So that means that it is scoring on the high-  
19 risk category.

20 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. And can  
21 you elaborate on why? What were the triggers in  
22 particular that causes six inspections?

23 CHIEF HODGENS: I can't get into  
24 specifics, but generally it would be 311 calls  
25 received for complaints, and any other type of, you

1 know, violations that were given, although the Fire  
2 Department in those six inspections only issued one  
3 violation which was for a faulty fire alarm system,  
4 which was corrected, you know, at that time.  
5

6 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you, Council  
7 Member Sanchez. Now, Council Member Amanda Farías.  
8 The floor is yours.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Hi, good  
10 afternoon. Are we in afternoon? Yeah, good  
11 afternoon, everyone. Thank you for all of your  
12 service and everything that you folks do. Thanks to  
13 my colleagues for hosting this. I want to take  
14 advantage of the timing, because I have a lot of  
15 different questions. In the areas that we spoke  
16 about with HPD around education, should the agency be  
17 mandated to send out like notification mailer so we  
18 can make sure that complaints are actually-- or the  
19 information on where to or how to manage complaints  
20 are notified by every resident or can be notified to  
21 every resident. I'm here by the way.

22 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Oh, oh,  
23 I'm sorry. I'm looking for you on the screen. That  
24 was my bad.  
25

1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: I'm was like, why  
3 are you looking in a different direction.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: I'm so  
5 sorry. I apologize. Certainly anything we can do to  
6 communicate with tenants and provide information is  
7 helpful. Just note that on every inspection we do  
8 hand a pamphlet to the tenants which covers all of  
9 the nine points that I spoke about earlier, the  
10 health issues and the four fire safety concerns, and  
11 explains to them a little bit about what those are.  
12 Every tenant also has an opportunity, and I believe  
13 it's covered in the pamphlet as well. To get a  
14 longer document or ABC's of Housing, either by  
15 calling 311, by requesting it online. So we're happy  
16 to talk to you about any tenant communication that  
17 you feel--

18 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: [interposing]  
19 Great.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: might be  
21 helpful.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: And just want to  
23 reference around the bill changed that's going to go  
24 from 21 days to 10 days right now. What or how does  
25 HPD consider corrected? Is it when a vendor which

1 has been chosen and inspected and will begin work, or  
2 is it when service is rendered or work is completed?

3  
4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: A  
5 condition is corrected when work is complete--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: [interposing]  
7 Okay.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: whatever  
9 the condition is has been addressed.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Sure. So do we  
11 feel or can we assume based off of previous cases  
12 that a 10-day time frame is actually realistic in  
13 terms of correction? And I ask this just because of  
14 during the pandemic we saw that there were just like  
15 a really tight timeline on how to get resources, get  
16 tools, get wood, get paper, whatever it's been  
17 because there's been backlogs. So do we see a 10-day  
18 timeframe as realistic right now in this current  
19 state?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: I think  
21 that that is still the case for many building owners.  
22 There still is a crush on supplies.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Right.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: But I  
25 think, you know, our concern with the 10-day window

1 is not just that. Right? It has to do with making  
2 arrangements with the tenant. As I said, most of the  
3 violations we issued are not at the request at the  
4 tenants, meaning they didn't ask us to come in there  
5 and right this violation, and if they only called us  
6 about pests, you know, and now they have to take off  
7 extra days to be home for either the landlord or for  
8 us to do the work, there are concerns about that  
9 scheduling. And I think, you know, we're also  
10 concerned that not every fix is an easy quick one,  
11 right?  
12

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Sure.

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: There are  
15 certainly ones where you just have to replace the pin  
16 in the door, and there are some where the door frame  
17 is not going to hold the door properly so that it  
18 will hang so that it doesn't scrape on the floor or  
19 whatever is holding it from closing. And so I think  
20 that that also comes into play in terms of our  
21 concerns.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Great, thank you.  
23 And so I have a couple of management companies in my  
24 district, particularly, that prefer complaints from  
25 tenants to go straight to the management company's

1 office. Do we right now have a reporting mandate or  
2 mechanism for building management companies or owners  
3 to self-report the amount of complaints that come  
4 directly to them instead of 311?  
5

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: No, we do  
7 not.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, thank you.  
9 And then-- oh, 18 seconds, that's too bad because I'm  
10 going to ask more questions. So just on self-closing  
11 doors, and then I can see if there's a second round.  
12 I have spoken with some fire safety personnel or  
13 auditors or inspectors, and they've stated that  
14 there's a difference between a self-closing door and  
15 fire safety or fire safe self-closing door. Is that  
16 accurate, how I'm reporting that back?

17 CHIEF HODGENS: I'm not positive about  
18 the terminology, but a self-closing door would be for  
19 an apartment or a stairwell. Some buildings have,  
20 depending on the square footage in certain types of  
21 buildings require that the hallways are divided, and  
22 that would be like maybe something that you're  
23 talking about it.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay.  
25



1  
2 CHIEF HODGENS: Also, they're required to  
3 close, self-close.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Sure. I guess my  
5 question is more so around is there a difference in  
6 terms of how the doors need to completely close to be  
7 fire safe. Like, does it matter if there's a door  
8 knob or if it's just closed enough that fire won't  
9 seep through.

10 CHIEF HODGENS: Yes. When the door is  
11 fully opened, it's released, and if it fully closes.  
12 That would be a-- yeah, self-closing door.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay.

14 CHIEF HODGENS: That would prevent fire  
15 from spreading.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, great. And  
17 then I have a last question if the Chair doesn't  
18 mind?

19 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: [inaudible]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay. He's like  
21 whatever. It's around Intro 106 and the sale of  
22 space heaters. I might just have a question around  
23 if it meaningfully changes the dynamic or do we need  
24 this on a larger macro scale to be coupled with  
25 inspecting electrical outlets and having each of

1 these buildings owners or property managers actually  
2 have annual or some sort of inspections of the  
3 electrical outlets in each of the buildings or  
4 apartments.  
5

6 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I would  
7 say that the majority of space heater malfunction are  
8 related to either an overloading of an outlet.  
9 That's more of an education issue, I think, or of the  
10 heater being too close to something flammable.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, great.  
12 Thank you. I'll-- I think I'm done.

13 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much  
14 Council Member Fariás. And now Council Member Kagan.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Thank you so much  
17 [inaudible]. Thank you, Chair Feliz, Chair Sanchez,  
18 Chair Ariola for a very important meeting, very  
19 important public hearing, and of course, talking  
20 about the [inaudible] people. My question is to the  
21 New York Fire Department Chief. In my district on  
22 March 13<sup>th</sup> there was a death of one tenant in NYCHA  
23 building in Sunset Gardens, 2960 West 31<sup>st</sup> Street,  
24 and also there was a fire in the beginning of  
25 February at [inaudible] 25<sup>th</sup> Street. My question is

1 like about Fire Department investigations. What does  
2 is the usual timeline on the results of these  
3 investigations, and what could be [inaudible] to all  
4 responsible parties including city agencies, like  
5 NYCHA? And in some cases could be from Fire  
6 Department if a previous complaint from the area  
7 given the result or any kind of-- any kind of  
8 [inaudible] Fire Department or in case [inaudible].  
9 So, I'm wanting results of investigation and would  
10 could be become sequences for all responsible parties  
11 from [inaudible] agencies?

13 CHIEF HODGENS: Whenever we have an  
14 incident, you know, are Bureau of Fire Investigation  
15 does an investigation. They come to their findings  
16 as to the cause of the fire, depending upon, you  
17 know, the complexity of the incident, how much damage  
18 was done and how effectively they can navigate the  
19 area. Sometimes it could be done within a day or two  
20 and sometimes it could take, you know, several weeks  
21 to come to a conclusion. When we are on a scene of a  
22 fire, if there are any fire, you know, violations of  
23 the Fire Code, those are addressed on the scene by  
24 the units that are there, immediately. And if  
25 there's any structural issue, it's referred to DOB

1 and or any agency that we -- that has the  
2 jurisdiction over the issue.  
3

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: But the  
5 responsible party is New York Housing Authority.  
6 It's a city agency, so what could be the consequence  
7 if NYCHA didn't do proper inspections and proper  
8 repair or providing heat in the case of Sunset  
9 Gardens and tenants were forced to use space heaters.  
10 Or in case of 125<sup>th</sup> [sic] Street, if inspectors for  
11 Fire Department didn't do job properly, then what  
12 would be the consequences for responsible parties?

13 CHIEF HODGENS: Any consequences would  
14 commensurate with the violation that we-- we would  
15 observe, or if we observe any violation on the scene,  
16 we'll either enforce it if it's within the Fire Code  
17 or refer it to other agencies.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: But is it possible  
19 that NYCHA just will ignore. Okay, another fire or  
20 like if agencies responsible-- okay, it's another  
21 fire. What can we do? It's not private landlord.

22 CHIEF HODGENS: Even a city agency we  
23 will, you know, collaborate with the other agencies  
24 and we also issue violation orders just to document  
25

1 the incident, and we work together with the agency to  
2 make sure it's corrected.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER KAGAN: Okay, thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you, so much  
6 Council Member Kagan. Next up is-- next up is  
7 Council Member Holden and then Council Member  
8 Krishnan, and then Riley, and then Williams. So,  
9 Council Member Holden?

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Thank you,  
12 Chairs, for this important hearing. My question is  
13 directed to FDNY. We heard at the last Fire and  
14 Emergency Management Committee hearing that during  
15 the COVID emergency period, 2020 and 2021, fire  
16 inspectors were re-assigned to do COVID-19  
17 inspections and enforcement to see if businesses and  
18 organizations were complying with the mask mandates,  
19 for instance, and other COVID mandate. Is this true,  
20 and if so, how long were the inspectors reassigned,  
21 and was there a drop in building and fire  
22 inspections?

23 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: There were  
24 not only FDNY inspectors but inspectors from a number  
25 of other agencies that were re-assigned. There were

1 different levels at different periods of COVID  
2 whether or not we were at various peaks. So the  
3 numbers shifted over time, but they have been  
4 returned to the FDNY, those inspectors.  
5

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Right, but did we  
7 learn our lesson here?

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Not sure I  
9 understand the question.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Well, if a fire  
11 inspector-- how many fire inspectors are there?

12 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We're  
13 budgeted for approximately 630.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: 630 fire  
15 inspectors for the entire city, and of those 630 or  
16 so, how many we were assigned, like an average re--  
17 you know, reassignment? Was it half? Was it, you  
18 know, was it 20? I mean, how many? Do you have like  
19 an average?

20 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Yeah, as I  
21 said, it varied over the period, so we could look at  
22 that.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] I  
24 know, an average.  
25

1  
2                   ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I would  
3 say like 50 would be sort of an approximate number at  
4 any given time. It was not half.

5                   COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Alright, but it  
6 was a-- what we did-- what we did find out is-- I  
7 mean, I don't-- I don't personally I don't fire  
8 inspectors being re-assigned to see if a business is  
9 complying with a mask mandate or something like that.  
10 I want fire inspectors to-- because there's so many  
11 buildings and so many complaints that we heard, that  
12 I just think any re-assignment of fire inspector-- we  
13 know what tragic fires can occur in New York City,  
14 and how the loss of life could be, you know,-- learn  
15 from like what was mentioned in the Triangle-- going  
16 back to the Triangle Shirtwaits factory. So, I would  
17 hope that we'd learn a lesson, that if we need  
18 inspectors to do COVID that we get that from either  
19 Health or we get that from -- or we create a new  
20 agency or hire new people, but by just having re-  
21 assigning fire inspectors which we don't have enough  
22 of, obviously. To do that is a waste of certainly  
23 their expertise, I think. That's my-- but I would  
24 hope that FDNY would also push back if the Mayor did  
25 that, and say, you know what? We have a-- we have a

1 lot of, you know, inspections to do. You know, do we  
2 have an average caseload for these inspectors?  
3

4 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: I don't  
5 have that on hand.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Can we-- can you  
7 get that?

8 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: WE can.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay, because we  
10 did have an allegation, I believe it was by a union  
11 at the last hearing, that the Twin Parks inspection  
12 didn't happen because inspectors were re-assigned.  
13 And I don't know if that's correct, but do you have  
14 any opinion on that, or?

15 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: That is  
16 mistaken.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: Okay. Alright,  
18 HPD, your-- I guess that your inspectors were  
19 reassigned during COVID, your building inspectors?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Good  
21 afternoon. Only at the very beginning, Council  
22 Member. So, in 2020 we did have some inspectors  
23 reassigned. In 2021 and to-date we have not had any  
24 inspectors reassigned.



1  
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: It doesn't appear  
3 that we're doing that now as much, but again, I want  
4 to make sure that we learn a lesson here, that we--  
5 we don't make the mistakes of the past. If we're not  
6 inspecting buildings and we're doing, you know, COVID  
7 enforcement-- again, I think that could be done--  
8 especially, you're down so many. I mean, by-- I  
9 think you said there were 270 you were budgeted for  
10 or you have, and then you're down about 100  
11 inspectors, is that what you said?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Yes,  
13 that's--

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time  
15 expired.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Yes,  
17 Council Member, I'm sorry. That's correct.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: And how long does  
19 it take-- I'll just clear this up quickly. How long  
20 does it take to hire someone? I mean, because 100 is  
21 a big number. It's a big part of your inspection  
22 workforce, right?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Yes, and  
24 we're working with OMB closely. We're working with  
25 DCAS, because as I mentioned these are civil service

1 titles, so there's a list out there now. There is  
2 another test coming up in April where we hope to be  
3 able to pull candidates.  
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: So, this month,  
6 April, you're having a test?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: There is a  
8 test, yeah. I don't have the exact date off-hand,  
9 Council Member, but we can certainly--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] So,  
11 what's your target for just for filling the hundred  
12 positions? You say like the summer, or--

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO:  
14 [interposing] It's as quickly as possible. Council  
15 Member, as quickly as possible.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: I don't know how  
17 long it takes--

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO:  
19 [interposing] I can't estimate--

20 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] to  
21 hire someone. Does it take months? Does it take--  
22 you know, what-- does it take a week?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Again,  
24 we're working with OMB to make sure that approvals  
25 come as quickly as possible once we've identified

1 candidates. As always, there's a process of  
2 interviewing, identifying, calling people in,  
3 interviewing, you know, and we're looking to do that  
4 as quickly as possible. I can't--

6 COUNCIL MEMBER HOLDEN: [interposing] I  
7 just hope you'd have like say, yeah, by July we want  
8 to have 100 hired, you know, that kind of thing. As  
9 quickly as possible is good, but I think there's got  
10 to be some kind of target where we reach-- you know,  
11 we have to have some kind of target to accomplish our  
12 goals, don't we? I mean, so I would say that not as  
13 quickly possible, hire them by-- you know, 100 by May  
14 15<sup>th</sup> or something like that. So I would hope that  
15 that would happen, and then even hire some more after  
16 that. Thanks you Chairs. Thank you so much.

17 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,  
18 Council Member Holden. And now Council Member  
19 Krishnan.

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you so  
22 much to the Chairs Feliz, Sanchez, and Ariola for  
23 today's critical hearing on an issue of grave concern  
24 to so many of us all over the City. our thoughts are  
25 with the victims and those who have all suffered from

1 fire as well as the previous fires and many other  
2 fires, including my own district, that have occurred  
3 over the years. And I'm so glad to be having this  
4 hearing. I want to give some background here, and my  
5 questions are specifically for HPD. I have  
6 represented tenants in this city for 12 years, and in  
7 situations where there have been fires, where  
8 landlords have taken sledge hammers to their  
9 buildings and destroyed them overnight, where tenants  
10 have been forced out of their homes because of vacate  
11 orders by HPD, and then have remained out of their  
12 homes for years before getting back in. I've also  
13 represented tenants and tenant associations that have  
14 no heat or hot water, and not seen a dime in  
15 enforcement or collection by the agency. In fact, I  
16 would be very curious to know of all of the  
17 violations, Class A, B, and C in the City, where the  
18 time limit has passed for correction, how many fines  
19 has HPD actually collected over the number that are  
20 outstanding that they could collect? And I would  
21 submit that this is not just an issue of enforcing  
22 tenants' rights, which is the most critical thing,  
23 there's also a readily available set of resources  
24 that could be used and capitalized on to further  
25

1 support tenant rights if HPD would actually collect  
2 fines and those violations. But I'm going to start  
3 my first question with just noting that we have an  
4 incident in my own district on 89<sup>th</sup> Street where  
5 tenants-- there was a fire over a year ago. Tenants  
6 have been out of their homes for over a year at this  
7 point, and they have tried to get back in to get  
8 their belongings. That's been extraordinarily  
9 difficult, and while they remain out in hotels and  
10 fighting to ensure they can stay in the hotels. I'd  
11 like to know, having seen the situation and fought  
12 against HPD many times in these situations, what is  
13 the plan here for HPD to ensure that tenants can  
14 return home? When can they return home? And what is  
15 the plan to ensure that the work the landlord will do  
16 after this fire will be to have the tenants come back  
17 home instead of to re-rent the apartments to tenants  
18 who can pay far more?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
21 Council Member. I'm familiar with that fire. That  
22 was a big fire. That's in Jackson Heights, right?

23 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: That's correct.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Yeah. We  
25 have litigation against that property which we

1 started not that long after the fire. We have been  
2 seeking restoration of the building. We have  
3 established a timeline as part of our litigation for  
4 the owner to make the necessary repairs, and I can  
5 let my colleagues speak to more details if you have  
6 questions. But we have provided hotel stays for  
7 tenants who have been unable to find long-term  
8 placement as of now. I believe that number has been  
9 going down and we did assist quite a number of  
10 tenants with finding long-term placement. That was a  
11 particularly bad fire. The roof, I believe, was on  
12 fire and so the damage was throughout the property.  
13 So, basically most building systems need to be  
14 replaced in that fire. This is not a fire where  
15 there were only few affected apartments. There's  
16 significant work that needed to be done on electrical  
17 systems, on plumbing. There was significant mold  
18 work in every apartment. So we are taking steps. I'd  
19 be happy to discuss in more detail with you where we  
20 go next.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Deputy  
23 Commissioner, I'd love to hear, and I'd actually  
24 request both a status update meeting, and I know I  
25 have a meeting coming up with the HPD Commissioner,

1 but also with you and all those working on the 89<sup>th</sup>  
2 Street case, because I would like to know what the  
3 status is. Litigation was very belated, and at what  
4 point the tenants will be able to return home,  
5 because that's the most important question. Chair,  
6 if you permit, just one more question, but if you  
7 give me a little bit longer to finish my questioning.  
8

9 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yep, that's fine.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. I  
11 would like a full status update on when HPD-- the  
12 status of the litigation, what legal remedies HPD is  
13 seeking from the landlord, what the enforcement will  
14 be if the landlord fails to comply with the  
15 deadlines, and when realistically will the tenants be  
16 able to return home. And I--

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO:

18 [interposing] Thank you, Council Member. We're happy  
19 to meet with you on that.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you. And  
21 here's the larger point, and this goes back years  
22 with HPD, this is all not working. Landlords resort  
23 to fires. They demolish buildings to destroy them to  
24 get rent stabilized tenants out overnight to then  
25 rebuild the buildings for luxury and tenants who can

1 pay far more and turn the buildings over as schemes  
2 to get around rent stabilization. The biggest  
3 failure when it comes to housing laws in our city is  
4 utter lack of enforcement by HPD and DOB of the  
5 housing laws. We can write all the laws in the  
6 world, put all the rights on paper, but if they're  
7 not enforced in reality, they mean nothing. And I've  
8 just seen it happen far too many times, and not even  
9 just-- the most I would say-- the most, the gravest  
10 situation for tenants is when a fire occurs and  
11 there's a vacate order placed on the building,  
12 because that's when you'd think every agency would  
13 descend upon the building to make sure tenants are  
14 returned home, and that is when the agencies are the  
15 least helpful. The vacate orders put them out for a  
16 long time. They're fighting to remain in hotels that  
17 are often far flung in different neighborhoods away  
18 from their communities, and the timeline for them to  
19 return, if they're able to return, is completely  
20 unknown. And so that's at the far end, but then we  
21 can find so many instances, and I'd love to see the  
22 buildings now with Class C hazard violations of no  
23 heat or no hot water and where HPD has actually  
24 collected fines from those buildings. So, it's not  
25



1 working at all, the enforcement, and so I'd love to  
2 hear and look forward to more conversations, but  
3 you're hearing it from my colleagues, too. I'd love  
4 to know has HPD given any thought to rapidly changing  
5 the way it actually conducts enforcement of housing  
6 code violations.  
7

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
9 Council Member, and certainly we're open to hear your  
10 suggestions and talk with you about, you know, what  
11 works and what doesn't, if you believe anything  
12 works, when we meet with the Commissioner, and we'll  
13 take it from there. I-- we do respond to vacates.  
14 We do work to monitor, in the larger fires, the  
15 return of tenants. Sometimes it does take some time  
16 and it may seem like nothing is happening. So,  
17 certainly maybe transparency is one of the things we  
18 can talk about, but open to meeting with you on these  
19 issues.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: I look forward  
21 to it and I would be very happy to talk through  
22 numerous buildings where this occurred, because  
23 again, I'll just close by saying that it's the lack  
24 of enforcement in this city of housing code that  
25 incentivizes landlords to see breaking the law as a

1 cost of doing business. That's it for them. And  
2 because of lack of enforcement, they will keep  
3 destroying buildings overnight and vacating tenants  
4 using fires as an excuse to gut rehab buildings and  
5 remove them from rent stabilization, and I think if  
6 this agency is going to fulfill its mission and going  
7 to protect tenants' rights, we need to radically  
8 rethink the way enforcement is done in this city by  
9 HPD, and I'll add in DOB, but for now for this  
10 purpose we'll focus on HPD. Thank you.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: And we are  
13 absolutely committed to enforcing the housing codes  
14 to the best of our ability and to protecting tenants,  
15 and we have made changes over the years in order to  
16 get closer to that place, and certainly in addition  
17 to the Council Member raising the issues today, any  
18 other Council Member is free to reach out to us for  
19 specifics in their districts.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER KRISHNAN: Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,  
22 Council Member Krishnan, and I just want to echo what  
23 the Council Member said. If I'm correct, he is a  
24 tenant lawyer. I too am a tenant lawyer. I was  
25 practicing prior to getting elected to the City

1 Council in Bronx Housing Court, defended many tenants  
2 is repairs cases. One thing that I noticed was that  
3 HPD moves forward to make sure that repairs are made  
4 in many cases, but however, landlords are not held  
5 accountable. Landlords could be required to pay fees  
6 and civil penalties for violating our laws and  
7 harassing our tenants. In many cases, they don't  
8 move forward with those actions. So we would be very  
9 interested and look forward to talking about how we  
10 can also hold landlords accountable for failing to  
11 abide by our housing laws.  
12

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much.

15 Next up is Council Member Kevin Riley. Then Council  
16 Member Natasha Williams.

17 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you, Chair

19 Feliz, Chair Sanchez, and Chair Ariola for this

20 hearing. My question is directed to the FDNY. You

21 guys spoke about the community affairs officers. I

22 just want to know how frequently do these officers

23 actually go out in the community, and do they partner

24 with any nonprofits in the community as well?  
25

1  
2                   ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: So, our  
3 Community Affairs Unit does go out into the community  
4 regularly, and it also partners with our fire units  
5 which are already in the community, and they do  
6 regular outreach to nonprofits, religious leaders,  
7 elected officials, and we try to find any  
8 partnerships we can to get better foothold and better  
9 access to the community.

10                   COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Okay. I've worked  
11 with the State and now with the City. I had never  
12 saw a Community Affairs Officer from the FDNY, and I  
13 worked with for the past decade, and I haven't seen  
14 this outreach. So, is it possible that you guys  
15 could connect with me offline to see if we can get  
16 this outreach out there? I know NYPD have a principle  
17 of having the Council, precinct, clergy that they  
18 kind of work with, that they get information of that  
19 helps when we're trying to focus on public safety.  
20 Have you guys thought of having a model like that to  
21 kind of give communities information about what's  
22 going on with fires in the community in areas that  
23 have been impacted the most?

24                   ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: We do. We  
25 send officers to Community Board meetings to meet

1 with Community Board and discuss any concerns they  
2 have in their community, and we'd be more than happy  
3 to talk to you about who we've connected to in your  
4 community and see if we can expand that outreach with  
5 you and with your community members.  
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER RILEY: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,  
9 Council Member Riley. And next up is Council Member  
10 Natasha Williams.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Hello, I'm  
13 back. So, thank you so much Chairs for allowing me  
14 to ask a question. So, I know I have a bill before  
15 the committee, and I've also had quite a few issues  
16 with HPD. One of the main issues in my district is  
17 the lack of HPD complaints being addressed. So,  
18 similar to what has been said numerous times today is  
19 enforcement, and going out to actually address  
20 concerns when people do file 311 complaints. Many of  
21 the constituents have issues with heat in their  
22 buildings, and we want to ensure that they do not  
23 have to use the dangerous means to keep warm as in  
24 using space heaters. What is your process for  
25 addressing these concerns in terms of, sort of-- when

1 a 311 complaint comes in, how does HPD determine when  
2 to send someone out to a building and/or reach out to  
3 that person who is making the complaint.  
4

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
6 Council Member. So, if we have a telephone number of  
7 a tenant if the complaint is not anonymous, we do try  
8 to contact every tenant to find out if the condition  
9 was corrected, and if we don't get confirmation from  
10 a tenant that the condition was corrected, we do send  
11 an inspector. So we-- there's no complaint that  
12 would go undressed in some way.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, and do  
14 you have a timeline on when this is completed?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: So,  
16 specifically for heat and hot water, our average  
17 turnaround time is about two and a half days. We do,  
18 you know, it can be more quickly. It can be a little  
19 longer, but that's the general response time for  
20 those types of complaints. For different types of  
21 complaints, you know, they are prioritized behind  
22 heat and immediate emergencies.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay. And I'm  
24 interested in how the Agency tracks this on the back  
25 end, because there's been a lot of commentary today

1 around sort of this idea of what HPD is doing, but  
2 how can we like cross-reference that, because there's  
3 been countless times that I have had to reach out to  
4 the Administration and go even above the Agency  
5 because the Agency was not responsive to my office,  
6 and the comment was somebody went out. And then when  
7 I go back and speak to the constituent they say no  
8 one came out. And so what is, like, the paper trail  
9 on the back end to sort of cross-reference that these  
10 sort of agents or investigators or inspectors that  
11 actually going out and adequately checking and  
12 properly closing out cases?  
13

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you  
15 for that question. So we do have information on HPD  
16 Online, which is our website that lists all the  
17 complaints that came in for the building. It would  
18 list the status of those complaints. So you can  
19 select the complaint you're looking for, put in the  
20 number and see what the result was. Certainly, if  
21 you have further concerns than that, our  
22 Intergovernmental Office is-- receives many, many  
23 inquiries in a day, and we can provide more detailed  
24 information. We do keep records of which apartment  
25

1 was inspected, of course, which tenant was spoken to.  
2  
3 So that information is available.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay, and  
5 again, not to reiterate a lot of what was said, but  
6 we understand the causes of the fire in relation to  
7 the self-closing door exacerbating the fire, and one  
8 of the reasons that I am proposing changes is because  
9 a lot of what has been said around enforcement.  
10 making sure and mandating that HPD actually has to go  
11 out at a specific time I think is critical and  
12 important, because what we have seen is a lack of  
13 enforcement and a lack of corrective measures, and I  
14 believe in your testimony-- you can correct me if I'm  
15 wrong-- you mentioned that you don't agree with it  
16 because it wouldn't allow HPD flexibility to address  
17 more pressing concerns, is that correct?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: That's  
19 part of our concern, Council Member. We do have-- in  
20 order to meet a certain timeline, if we have a number  
21 of immediate emergency complaints come in, a ceiling  
22 is falling on someone or there's no electricity in  
23 the building, we want to make sure we have the  
24 flexibility to adjust. Also happens during storms in  
25 response to different weather conditions. We may see



1 more of one type of complaint or another. Having  
2 such a tight timeframe is very difficult for us  
3 sometimes to manage.  
4

5 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: Okay.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER WILLIAMS: I'll yield my  
8 time. Thank you so much, Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much.

10 And just a follow-up question on that. If HPD  
11 doesn't have enough inspectors to be able to meet all  
12 the demanding emergencies, wouldn't a better approach  
13 would be to hire more inspectors rather than having a  
14 faster timeline to correct conditions?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Thank you,  
16 Council Member, and I think we're trying to do both,  
17 right? We are always prioritizing the most serious  
18 complaints that we receive for inspection, and we are  
19 making sure that we are getting to all of those in a  
20 very timely manner. But once you start expanding  
21 mandates around response times, and certainly we're  
22 always looking to meet the shortest timeline  
23 possible, to get out on complaints as quickly as we  
24 can, and those timelines will go down as we continue  
25 to replace lost inspectors. But it puts us sometimes

1 in a little bit of a box when we have to meet a  
2 certain timeline. And we want to make sure that  
3 we're meeting those timelines, that they're  
4 reasonable for us to be able to have some flexibility  
5 and so that's all we're asking for consideration on.

7 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: But given the  
8 seriousness of defective self-closing doors being  
9 able to cause a tragedy that we saw that ugly Sunday  
10 morning in the Bronx, wouldn't the better approach be  
11 to hire more inspectors rather than say, hey, we need  
12 more time to cure something as serious as self-  
13 closing doors?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: I think  
15 that the timeline that you're referring to partially  
16 is the correction of the condition, which is mostly  
17 the responsibility of the property owner, and there I  
18 think we're just looking for the consideration to  
19 make sure that it's a reasonable timeline for them to  
20 get that done. In terms of the re-inspections,  
21 again, there are processes in place primarily to  
22 address if it's been certified. And again, we can  
23 talk about maybe how to improve that process. We're  
24 certainly open to that. And those are the-- a 10-day  
25

1 timeline to re-inspect, I believe it's 10 days after  
2 the certification, is a tight turnaround time.

4 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: Absolutely  
6 we want to make sure that the doors close, Council  
7 Member. I think that's the goal that all of us are  
8 trying to get to, and the question is just whether  
9 it's that timeline or it requires an inspection.

10 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And respectfully, we  
11 do have a way of improving the system. A way to  
12 improve the system is by requiring that a certified  
13 HPD inspector who knows what they're doing, that they  
14 actually go back to the building to inspect to  
15 determine whether the violation has been cured. So I  
16 think Council Member Farías has a follow-up question,  
17 and then Council Member Sanchez has a follow-- we'll  
18 go with Council Member Farías [inaudible]. Oh,--

19 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] I just  
20 want to piggyback on what Chair Feliz is talking  
21 about. Everyone who's come on today talked about the  
22 fact that we need more inspectors in these buildings  
23 and not being inspected regularly. They're not being  
24 followed up on and people are losing their lives. So,  
25 currently with 270 inspectors and the amount of

1 buildings that you told me before there are that you  
2 oversee, they would have to visit 629 buildings for  
3 the year. That's an awful big caseload for an  
4 inspector. So, if we've learned one thing here, it's  
5 that we really have to work, and your agency has to  
6 work on making sure that you hire the maximum  
7 capacity of inspectors necessary to make sure those  
8 buildings are safe so that when people live there and  
9 emergency services has to go in there, that lives are  
10 not lost.  
11

12 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,  
13 Council Member and Co-chair Ariola. And now Co-chair  
14 Sanchez and Council Member Fariás has an additional  
15 follow up.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Yeah, just a-- just  
17 a quick question, and using the timeline for heat  
18 inspections is an example, could you tell us how  
19 long-- we know that with the current headcount the  
20 time to answer an inspection is two and a half days,  
21 and then to close a violation, I believe it's  
22 something like 11 or 12 days for heat and hot water.

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: I don't  
24 have that number to confirm it, but let's--  
25

2 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: [interposing] So,  
3 well you might not have this then either, but with  
4 the 370 headcount was there a time when you had that--  
5 - when HPD had that headcount, and do we know how  
6 long it was taking to close similar violations?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER SANTIAGO: We're  
8 talking about complaints or violations, certainly we  
9 can get you both numbers, Council Member, but we'd  
10 have to do the-- look at the data. I don't have that  
11 today.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you. That'd  
13 be great. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,  
15 Co-chair Sanchez, and now Council Member Amanda  
16 Farías.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Hi everyone. I'm  
18 back. So just two quick questions that I didn't get  
19 to ask earlier for FDNY. You said something earlier  
20 about transmitting an additional alarm to bring more  
21 resources in to respond to some of the fires. My  
22 initial question was when you added an additional  
23 alarm to bring in more FDNY personnel or fire  
24 fighters and EMT or EMS, do we have a differentiation  
25 between do we need more fire trucks, for example,

1 versus more EMTs or EMS personnel? Because you were  
2 stating that we had a lot more people in cardiac  
3 arrest and people that needed actual assistance,  
4 which-- and correct me if I'm wrong please-- that  
5 doesn't necessarily mean we need more fire fighters  
6 on the scene.  
7

8 CHIEF HODGENS: So, it happened so  
9 quickly that we had--

10 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: Sure.

11 CHIEF HODGENS: you know, 32-- we had  
12 upwards of 100 people that we rescued out of the  
13 building. When I-- I actually responded to the fire.  
14 So when I heard there was 32 people in cardiac  
15 arrest, I'd never heard anything like that in my  
16 life. So it was a devastating scene. And what I was  
17 saying before is that, you know, we called all  
18 paramedics in the City to the scene because they have  
19 special life-saving equipment. So even with that  
20 going on, we had the victims out of the building  
21 relatively quickly. We transmitted an additional  
22 alarm of fire fighters, because fire fighters are  
23 CFRD trained. They are actually--

24 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIAS: [interposing]  
25 Okay.

1  
2 CHIEF HODGENS: you know, medical  
3 providers. So, instead of coming in to fight the  
4 fire, they came in and worked as--

5 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: [interposing] Got  
6 it.

7 CHIEF HODGENS: in their medical  
8 capacity. That's what happened.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Okay, great.  
10 Thank you. I just wasn't sure if on our end we  
11 should be working with the agency to figure out how  
12 to have two separate alarms, but that makes a lot of  
13 sense. And then just for HPD around Red Cross, that  
14 I wanted to ask earlier, but the other questions were  
15 more pertinent. I also had about four fires in 11  
16 days in my district just a couple of weeks ago, and  
17 we had a lot of folks that were displaced, and  
18 through my experience with working with HPD and Red  
19 Cross, we have the standard as you mentioned earlier  
20 of what the emergency-- what the folks get off of it  
21 just being an emergency and them being displaced  
22 which is two days, I believe, right? But I also had  
23 folks that were undocumented or their documents were  
24 damaged and not recoverable in their household from  
25 the fire who could not produce the required documents

1 with enough time of those-- that two-day timeframe to  
2 work with HPD to be housed somewhere else. And there  
3 was a disconnect, and you know, thankfully my team  
4 and I were involved and we were able to ask for an  
5 additional day or additional night for some folks,  
6 and then work with the other agencies to find the  
7 nectary documents. But my question is around how are  
8 we ensuring folks are given the additional time  
9 either through Red Cross or through requests from HPD  
10 to Red Cross so that they're able to have the time  
11 needed and allocated to get the documentation. And  
12 coupled with that, how active are we in the  
13 engagement of those updates per family from Red  
14 Cross?  
15

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HENDRICKSON: so,  
17 thank you Council Member for that question. As we  
18 said, Red Cross is immediate response for the first  
19 two days. We will always work with a family if they  
20 need additional time, and typically it is HPD saying  
21 to Red Cross, you have to give another day or so for  
22 families to be able to click the documents needed to  
23 register for HPD services. Just to be clear, HPD is  
24 only looking for proof of identity and proof of  
25 residency. We're not concerned about immigration or



1 anything like that. So, what I would suggest is we  
2 just work collectively together, prospectively, to  
3 make sure that you have HPD's number, that families  
4 that you know need additional time to get that  
5 documentation and provide it to them.  
6

7 COUNCIL MEMBER FARIÁS: Great. Yeah, I  
8 was kindly harassing a lot of people for my  
9 residents, but I appreciate that. I'm happy to  
10 follow up offline. I just have one clarification on  
11 my question earlier to FDNY, because a testimony came  
12 in front of me, and I incorrectly said the question.  
13 But we have testimony here from Jacob Wexler [sp?]  
14 from Legacy Manufacturing that highlights that Intro  
15 104 should also include fire rated as part of the  
16 self-closing doors, because there are metal  
17 components in the doors that could melt that could  
18 either inhibit the doors from fully closing or not to  
19 properly work. And so I just wanted to know how-- is  
20 that something we've looked into or we have on our  
21 radar, and is there something legislatively that we  
22 could include in the bill that could rectify that, or  
23 is this language sufficient?

24 CHIEF HODGENS: Well, fire rated door--  
25 so when a building is built in the beginning, the DOB

1 determines, you know, things of what rating depending  
2 on the size of the building and potential for fire  
3 spread. You know, what rating would be needed on the  
4 door. So the fire rating is always included in  
5 determining, you know, which door is-- you know,  
6 which is actually used.  
7

8 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay.

9 CHIEF HODGENS: And the Twin Parks  
10 building is considered fire-proof, meaning that only  
11 the contents would burn and not the building itself,  
12 but these doors were definitely fire rated.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER FARÍAS: Okay, thank you  
14 so much.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Council  
16 Members. Any Council Members have further questions  
17 please use the Zoom raise hand function. Were any--  
18 no? Okay, we're going to close it out here and move  
19 on to public testimony. Thank you everyone.

20 ACTING COMMISSIONER KAVANAGH: Thank you.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: For the first panel  
22 of public testimony we'll hear from Local 2507. So  
23 we'll hear from a panel of Oren Barzilay, Darryl  
24 Chambers, and Michael Reardon.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

OREN BARZILAY: Afternoon, Committee

Chair and Council Members. My name is Oren Barzilay,  
President of FDNY's EMS Local 2507 representing over  
4,000 members of the EMS service and our great City's  
FDNY fire protection inspectors. I am here today to  
spotlight the essential and critical role our city's  
small yet impactful FDNY Fire Protection Inspectors  
play in protecting lives and property. This is a  
city of tens of millions of square feet of  
commercial, retail, and residential space. Our city  
is dominated by thousands of high-rise buildings and  
well over 100,000 businesses. Let me say beyond  
doubt, our city does not have enough Fire Protection  
Inspectors within the FDNY to fulfill the needs of  
this big city in guaranteeing that the buildings  
within it are safe. Over the last few years of the  
pandemic, the prior Administration and City Hall had  
its priorities mixed up. They felt that our force  
would be used to conduct inspections of: A,  
restaurants and bars, to make sure that we're not  
serving meals indoors at time when only to-go or  
takeout was allowed. B, to guarantee that barkeepers  
and restaurants were checking patrons for COVID  
vaccinations cards. C, to inspect temporary sidewalk

1 sheds that restaurants and bars were allowed to  
2 erect, and to which many often ran electricity and  
3 heat to. We got lost in the prioritization by the  
4 last Administration and City Hall was that perhaps  
5 the buildings our citizens lived in, worked in, or  
6 shopped in also needed to be inspected. It is  
7 someone's job to guarantee that the owners of tens of  
8 millions of square feet, the owners of hundreds of  
9 thousands of apartments and places of businesses were  
10 following the rules and being true to our city's  
11 critical fire safety standards, occupancy limits, and  
12 building safety codes. Why is this critical? There  
13 are countless times in our city's history when these  
14 critical priorities had been forgotten by greedy  
15 property owners trying to get rich. At the Happy  
16 Land Social Club fire 87 perished. The Triangle  
17 Shirt Shop Factor 146 perished. On January 23<sup>rd</sup>,  
18 2005, also known as Black Sunday Fire, three FDNY  
19 fire fighters were killed in two fires, two at a  
20 tenements fire in [inaudible] section of the Bronx  
21 with four others being seriously injured. Those  
22 apartments had been illegally converted by greedy  
23 landlord that had zero regard for public safety.  
24

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

2 OREN BARZILAY: [inaudible] fire fighters  
3 trapped who got out alive had to jump from four to  
4 five stories. Let us not forget the fatal Deutsche  
5 Bank building fire at the World Trade Center site  
6 where two New York bravest perished over and over 100  
7 New York City fire fighters were trapped above the  
8 fire floor with no capacity to get water because the  
9 stand [sic] pipe had been illegally tampered with and  
10 cut by unscrupulous and greedy contractors trying to  
11 take that building down as quickly as possible  
12 without following rules or having regards for public.  
13 The role of FDNY Fire Protection Inspectors play is  
14 critical to protect citizens and to protect fire  
15 fighters. Their job is to make sure that all  
16 sprinkler systems are operational and must guarantee  
17 that all building water systems and alarm systems are  
18 functioning properly. And as we are walking the  
19 halls, corridors, basements, courtyards, and roof of  
20 buildings, these highly trained inspectors find  
21 problems, because fire safety inspections during or  
22 after a fire and they take action. Just last week  
23 one of our inspectors in the Kingsbridge section of  
24 the Bronx found a loaded semi-automatic handgun  
25 hidden on the roof of the building. He contacted the

1 NYPD to determine if it has been used in a shooting.

2 In the recent few years, Nassau County tried a Fire

3 Inspector privatization experiment which failed

4 miserably. They decided to outsource Fire Protection

5 Inspectors to a third-party company. This type of

6 system is primarily based on an honor system. It

7 relies on the honor and truthfulness of landlords and

8 their building managers and construction teams and

9 the integrity of the outside third-party company who

10 will vouch for the landlord. As it work, this

11 outside company would have civilian third-party

12 employees go around buildings to simply take

13 photographs and submit them as proof that a building

14 owner or their superintendent were 100 percent

15 truthful and compliant with any and all safety rules.

16 What's wrong with this system? Well, the County of

17 Nassau thought it was so flawed, it threw out that

18 baby out with the bath water. We are hearing

19 rumblings that a certain high-ranking official at the

20 FDNY loved this concept, privatizing the job of the

21 FDNY fire safety, fire prevention inspectors. That

22 would be a fatal mistake, and the history has shown

23 lives are on the line. The lives of your

24 constituents are the ones in greatest jeopardy. In

25

1 closing, I thank the Council for the Intro bills. We  
2 are in full compliance and support of it. I want to  
3 thank our men and women for their heroic work at the  
4 Twin Parks and throughout the year. My testimony, I  
5 will also have some comments that I would like to  
6 respond to. They're in my colleagues testifying.

8 DARRYL CHALMERS: My name is Darryl  
9 Chalmers. I'm on the Executive Board of Local 2507.  
10 I am also a Deputy Chief Inspector, part of the CDA  
11 Unit, which is the unit that was started because of  
12 the Deutsche Bank fire in Manhattan where the two  
13 fire fighters passed away. So I'm just going to read  
14 you a synopsis on what we do so you'll have a full  
15 understanding, and I just want to get deep into other  
16 things that we do and why our job is so important to  
17 this city based on that accident that happened in the  
18 Bronx, because there's other situations besides that  
19 with the self-closing doors that we also have to look  
20 at. I have to speak on it, because it's very  
21 important that a lot of people are not aware of. The  
22 New York City Fire Department's Bureau of Fire  
23 Prevention is a safety and revenue producing bureau  
24 generating approximately 72 million dollars annually  
25 for the Department. The Bureau of Fire Prevention

1 members consist of 414 Fire Protection Inspectors and  
2 Inspectional Units which check for compliance of all  
3 fire and building code regulations directly related  
4 to fire safety. Fire Protection Inspectors are  
5 tasked to inspect and witness testing of safety  
6 equipment in buildings for firefighting operations  
7 such as stand pipe systems, sprinkler systems,  
8 etcetera at various locations throughout New York  
9 City including our bridges, tunnels, piers, rooftop,  
10 ladders, subway, construction sites, restaurants,  
11 basements, commercial, residential high rise  
12 buildings. Fire Protection Inspectors make sure that  
13 the systems used for firefighting operations on  
14 premises are in working order, plus protecting the  
15 lives and property of city residents, employees, and  
16 visitors. The effort of the Fire Protection  
17 Inspectors over the past several years has resulted  
18 in significant reduction of fires and deaths related  
19 to fires at record low history for the New York City  
20 Fire Department within the five boroughs. And also,  
21 just to add, when you see the Macy's fireworks,  
22 that's us on the barge. We handle that. Times  
23 Square, we're on the roof. We handle that. And  
24 every fireworks show you see in the five boroughs is  
25



1 done by us. It's not done by anybody else in the  
2 FDNY but us. The reason why we're here is because  
3 our job-- let's take the fire in the Bronx. Our job  
4 is to check the stand pipe system before fire  
5 fighters can fight any fire. When fire fighters go  
6 to do a job, when they hook up to these connections,  
7 we witness that test before they get there so they  
8 know for sure when they go to that building they're  
9 going to get water, because that's their number one  
10 tool. They can't do anything without water. So, if  
11 the standpipe-- the standpipes are usually in the  
12 stairway. We also check the self-closing doors in  
13 the stairways. If we see it, we're trained in the  
14 Academy at the Rock that if that door had to be self-  
15 closing and latched, not just self-closing. You got  
16 to hear it click and close because those doors have a  
17 two-and-a-half hour rating on them. Those doors also  
18 have a two-and-a-half rating on them on the apartment  
19 doors, and the reason why I know that because I used  
20 to be an HPD inspector before I joined the Fire  
21 Department. I was there for seven years. So  
22 everything that Commissioner said earlier was true.  
23 But right now, the Fire Department-- a certain  
24 rumbling going on in the Fire Department as my  
25

1  
2 President spoke on where they want to do some type of  
3 privatize where a person would actually just pan--  
4 take a piece of paper from a contractor doing the  
5 test on the sprinkler system that we do all the time,  
6 and we're not there to witness it, and what happens  
7 is he just sends it to the Fire Department and says,  
8 "The contractor said he did the test." That's a  
9 problem. Because when we walk through buildings, we  
10 look for the propane. We look for the locked exit.  
11 We look for the rubbish. We don't just do the test.  
12 We walk through the building to check for the fire  
13 hazards, because we got to make sure if fire fighters  
14 go through that building, we want to make sure that  
15 they're safe too and the public. So that's the job  
16 that we do. So we just wanted to bring that to your  
17 attention, and I'm going to pass it on to Mike  
18 Reardon, my partner who's part of the Local.

19 MICHAEL REARDON: Good afternoon  
20 everyone. My name is Michael Reardon, Deputy Chief  
21 Inspector Bureau of Fire Prevention. I sit on the  
22 Executive Board at 2507. I would like to thank the  
23 City Council Members for allowing me to speak on  
24 behalf of my brothers and sisters in the Bureau of  
25 Fire Prevention today. I'd like to touch on a little

1 bit of what-- some of the things we do in fire  
2 prevention, because a lot of people really don't know  
3 what we do. When they hear FDNY, they assume we're  
4 fire fighters. We're not. We're not fire  
5 inspectors. Fire Prevention Inspectors are out  
6 performing their inspections testing of foam [sic],  
7 fire protection systems, dry chemical fire protection  
8 systems in gasoline service stations, private fueling  
9 stations, including all city agency fueling  
10 facilities. We're at power plants, methane recovery  
11 facilities, L&G, C&G, co-gen [sic] facilities,  
12 including overseeing three pipeline companies which  
13 provide gasoline, jet fuel and oils to the JFK  
14 Airport and LaGuardia Airport. We inspect and test  
15 the sprinkler standpipe systems, as Darryl said,  
16 throughout the five boroughs, inspecting and testing  
17 fire protection systems on our range hood [sic]  
18 systems in our restaurants, performing inspections on  
19 on-site tests of high-rise buildings, performing  
20 inspections at all construction sites, which Darryl  
21 stated, at times sometimes seven days a week we have  
22 to be there. We are checking unsafe, hazardous  
23 materials, junk yards, scrap metal yards, commercial  
24 and private locations of illegal storage of propane,  
25

1 oxygen, and acetylene, sometimes are found inside box  
2 trucks, in buildings, along with gasoline and other  
3 hazardous materials stored in 55 gallon drums above  
4 ground at these facilities sitting next to propane  
5 and other dangerous chemicals. We're inspecting  
6 places of public assembly for unsafe, overcrowding,  
7 and all times of events. We have a hazardous cog  
8 [sic] unit inspecting the gasoline fuel trucks  
9 throughout the city. We have a laboratory unit  
10 inspecting the hospitals and laboratories, shelter  
11 taskforce unit. Our district officers are inspecting  
12 heating oil burn unit systems and refrigeration  
13 systems on our rooftops. I'd like to also touch on  
14 that the Department had also taken away our CL [sic]  
15 meters from us. Their reason for taking those CL  
16 meters away was because fire fighters have them.  
17 Fire fighters are not in the buildings that we're in  
18 every day. Our people are out there every day in  
19 buildings doing testing on systems. We've had these  
20 systems go off several times. We've proven this and  
21 still we're told we can't have them. I just find  
22 that odd that some agencies do have them, but yet,  
23 we're out there every day doing our job in basements  
24 or buildings where these meters could actually go  
25

1 off. We've had instances on rooftops gone off, but  
2 yet the Department will make excuses of reason why we  
3 don't need it. I thank you for your time today.

4 DARRYL CHALMERS: And I'd like to say  
5 that HPD inspectors and Buildings Department  
6 inspectors do have CL meters, and the Fire Department  
7 gave them to us, and then for some reason they took  
8 them away from us. We don't know why. It doesn't  
9 make sense because we're in more buildings than  
10 anybody. The fire fighters will tell you that, EMS,  
11 my brothers and sisters from EMS, and the fire  
12 fighters and I, we're very close because if they need  
13 help on a situation when they're doing safety  
14 inspections or joint inspections, they'll call me  
15 down. They'll call Mike or they'll call another  
16 Deputy Chief Inspector to assist them because we know  
17 the codes. We know the NFPA. We're trained at that.  
18 But at the same time we also look at things in their  
19 eyes to make sure that they're safe and the public is  
20 safe. So, that's just my testimony. Any questions?

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Oren, do you have  
22 additional things to comment on?

23 OREN BARZILAY: Ariola asked a few  
24 questions and Holden asked a few questions. You know,  
25

1 the Fire Department sits here giving false  
2 information and false narrative. They don't even  
3 have the integrity to acknowledge the fire inspectors  
4 in the FDNY. They keep talking about fire fighters  
5 doing inspections. No, it's Fire Inspect-- Fire  
6 Prevention Inspectors are the ones who are conducting  
7 a majority of the inspections in our city. They  
8 mention that they are budgeted for 630 fire  
9 inspectors. There's only 414. That's a third that's  
10 missing. We have buildings that haven't been  
11 inspected in over five years, thousands of buildings.  
12 I'm not talking about a few dozen. I'm talking about  
13 hundreds and thousands of buildings that are yet to  
14 be inspected. Council Member Holden asked if my  
15 statement at last month's hearing was true, that that  
16 building was supposed to be inspected. The fact is  
17 that building was supposed to be and scheduled to be  
18 inspected by our Fire Prevention for their sprinkler  
19 system. Had they been in that building, they would  
20 have noticed any other infractions. So for them to  
21 sit here and flat out lie that they don't have fire  
22 inspectors scheduled to do that building a few months  
23 prior is just so offensive. They will do and say  
24 anything to avoid any public humiliation, shameless,  
25

1 or the possibility of liability claims against them.  
2  
3 There was another question asked about EMS staffing.  
4 The young lady left. EMS is so short-staffed. This  
5 has been an ongoing issue for decades. On a daily  
6 basis the Bronx is so overwhelmed that we have an  
7 entire station from Queens get relocated to the Bronx  
8 to assist them. There's not enough units in the  
9 Bronx in any given day. At any given day there's not  
10 enough units anywhere in this city. We're constantly  
11 pulling units and resources from other divisions to  
12 keep up with the call volume. Our city is growing.  
13 The population is growing. The elder community is  
14 growing. We just don't have enough resources, and  
15 for them to say that they called additional CFR Units  
16 to assist us, no we need paramedics on scene to treat  
17 32 patients from cardiac arrest. These are advanced  
18 street doctors that can bring back life, and this is  
19 on a daily occurrence that we are short-staffed, and  
20 it's a shame that they would sit here and  
21 continuously fabricate information that's  
22 contradicting the public safety.

23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I want to thank you  
24 for your testimony. I want to thank you for the  
25 information that you just relayed, and I assure you I

1 will be addressing those issues with the Fire  
2 Department, with the Acting Commissioner, and with  
3 the Chief, because these hearings are meant to find  
4 out what the truth is. These hearings are meant--  
5 and especially hearings regarding fire and Emergency  
6 Management are geared to protect people, and if we're  
7 not getting a true baseline, then we're never going  
8 to be able to protect people. So will take this  
9 information, and I will make sure that we get the  
10 correct answers for it. I appreciate you for coming  
11 forward the way you did at our Fire and Emergency  
12 Management hearing and being so bold as to say that  
13 the Twin Parks fire could have, may have, should have  
14 been prevented. If fire inspectors were doing what  
15 they were supposed to be doing instead of standing on  
16 corners and giving out masks or visiting restaurants  
17 to make sure that they were in compliance with the  
18 mask mandate. Thankfully, the new Administration has  
19 seen fit to put fire inspectors back into their job  
20 description. What I find additionally concerning is  
21 that we're talking about self-certification here for  
22 issues that need to be certified by trained  
23 professionals like yourselves. I for one would never  
24 support a laymen, a contractor, a landlord, a  
25



1 business owner to self-certify anything when it comes  
2 to an issue where lives can be lost. And I  
3 appreciate you bringing that up. Additionally, the  
4 CO [sic] meters, why wouldn't you have CO meters?  
5 And I'm going to address that immediately. We have  
6 to have -- you have all the tools necessary to make  
7 sure, because without the CO meters people will die  
8 too. and as you said, if you have them with you and  
9 they go off, it'll cause you to maybe look at  
10 something else, whether it's the sprinkler, the  
11 standpipe, the-- you know, the fire alarms, the self-  
12 closing doors. You're geared for that. That's what  
13 you're trained to do. And you're right, we have to  
14 stop utilizing methods where people are not as  
15 trained to do this kind of work, especially where  
16 lives are at risk. We cannot have what happened in  
17 Council Member and Chair Feliz's district happen  
18 again. I'm thankful for your testimony, and I will  
19 follow up with the Fire Department on the issues, and  
20 I will have answers for you. Thank you very much.

22 OREN BARZILAY: I just want to add, they  
23 didn't have the number of how many inspectors were  
24 assigned to the taskforce. I have the numbers. It's

25 percent of them, 92 of the 400 were taken to  
conduct the masks inspections.

CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Thank you.

DARRYL CHALMERS: and I'd like to also  
make a statement [inaudible] so gracious of you  
Councilwoman to talk about the situation about the CO  
meters. The Fire Department when we were issued the  
CO meters, they even put stories in the Fire  
Department on their website of how great it was that  
the fire inspectors were able to find that there was  
serious situations of carbon monoxide in buildings  
and even put the inspectors picture on their  
Instagram page, everything. And we have a lot of  
incidents. A lot of fire fighters who I know, and we  
work very close with the fire fighters. I just want  
you to understand. Because remember, fire fighters  
and fire inspectors, we use the same paperwork. We  
have the same understanding of fire safety exits,  
including this building. We inspect this building to  
make sure it's safe for you. So the issue is the  
fire fighters, they understand. You guys are in more  
buildings than us. We do familiar [inaudible]. We  
go around. We go into neighborhoods. We check the  
building, but we're not in there like you guys. You

1  
2 guys are in the buildings. So even the fire unions  
3 didn't understand why would they take the meters from  
4 you guys.

5 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: What-- if you don't  
6 mind me asking-- you may not have the information,  
7 but when were they taken from you, at what point?

8 MICHAEL REARDON: They're taking our cars  
9 away. That's the new thing.

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: No, when were the CO  
11 meters taken from you.

12 MICHAEL REARDON: Oh, the meters, they  
13 were taken away [inaudible]. A year ago-- two years?  
14 Yeah.

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I didn't hear.

16 MICHAEL REARDON: Two years ago.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Two years. So, this  
18 is a new Administration, and it's a new  
19 Administration that prides itself on public safety,  
20 and this is all part of public safety. So I'll make  
21 sure that-- we all will make sure that the  
22 Administration is aware of this and see if we cannot  
23 put CO2-- CO2 meters back-- or CO meters back in your  
24 possession when you're doing your inspections so that  
25 you can do a full inspection.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

MICHAEL REARDON: Okay.

CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: And also, I see our time is up, but I wanted to ask a brief follow-up question on the issue of the training of the inspectors that you had mentioned. So you had mentioned earlier that overwhelming percentage of the inspectors aren't fire fighters. Could you elaborate on that? Who is inspecting? Who are these majority inspectors? What's their training? And then another question.

DARRYL CHALMERS: So we train-- the fire fighters train at the Rock. And the fire inspectors train at the Rock, too. EMS is trained in Queens at Fort Totten. So, what happens is we do intensive training on the fire code, and we understand the fire manage-- in fact, we also do fire awareness where we actually put on the fire gear. We put out fires at the Rock so we understand what fire fighters are going through. So actually, when we actually walk into a building, we look at it in their eyes, too, to make sure that they're safe. But our main job, the training we're trained is to make sure it's safe for the public, make sure exit doors, exit signs, make sure that the fire fighters get water. And you again

1 ask any fire fighter, the Chief that ws here, he'll  
2 tell you his number one tool when he's working is to  
3 make sure he's able to get water to put out a fire.  
4 If he can't get water, he can't do anything, and  
5 that's our job. Our job is to test it, witness it,  
6 before they even get to the building, and most of the  
7 fire companies, if they do have a problem they will  
8 call us and say, "Listen, we had problems getting  
9 water. You know, Chief, can you come here and take a  
10 look at it." You know, and then we'll go there and  
11 find out. The other-- last week, I had to go to the  
12 post office 341 Ninth Avenue because the fire  
13 fighters hooked up, they couldn't get water on two  
14 sides, but one side the administrative company was  
15 able to, but we found out that the construction  
16 company ws doing torch work and they cut the pipe.  
17 When they cut the pipe, they couldn't get water. So  
18 we gave them summonses. They corrected everything,  
19 but remember that post-- that building also had post  
20 office workers in the building at the same time. So  
21 it was construction and it was partially occupied.  
22 So we take our job seriously, the inspectors. We  
23 really do. When we wear that patch on our uniform,  
24 we take it seriously because we don't want to see any  
25

1 fire fighter get hurt and we don't want to see the  
2 public get hurt. So that's why we're serious when  
3 you check self-closing doors. When we're in the  
4 hallway if there's a standpipe and there's a  
5 connection, we check it. We make sure that door  
6 shuts, slams. In the hallway, we're in a hallway  
7 walk-through, we make sure that door shuts. Now, as  
8 far as HPD is concerned-- I used to be there. I was  
9 there for seven years. I was an inspector. HPD does  
10 the same thing in the apartments. The inspector  
11 would knock on that door, stand back, and make sure  
12 that door is self-closing. But we take our job very  
13 seriously. What bothers me-- and we're down  
14 inspectors. We need more fire inspectors.

15  
16 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you. Thank you  
17 so much for your testimony. Any other Council  
18 Members have any other questions?

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
20 testimony everyone. We're going to turn now to a  
21 Zoom testimony from George Farinacci. After George  
22 Farinacci we'll hear from Ryan Monell, Frank Ricci,  
23 and Kelly Ferrell in person. So we're going to first  
24 hop on the Zoom for this little bit here and then  
25 we'll move on. Thank you.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

GEORGE FARINACCI: Hello, folks. How you  
doing? This is George Farinacci on behalf of the  
UFOA, Local 854 representing the Fire Officers in New  
York City. Thank you to the Fire Department and  
especially the Council Members who are working to  
ensure the tragic loss of life at Twin Parks will not  
be vain. Fire units were on the scene, 1084 in three  
minutes and 16 seconds. The second engine required  
to support the first engine to put the first hose  
line into operation, I understand arrived in under  
four minutes. My question to all of you is how long  
is 43 seconds when you or your loved ones are in a  
fire breathing super-heated toxic gas? You could  
just think about that for a minute. Getting water on  
a fire is the most critical component to fighting a  
fire. One of the simple ways of facilitating water on  
the fire is getting the first hose line into place  
and operating with sufficient fire fighters on the  
scene as quickly as possible. Currently, there are  
some fire engines that are staffed with only four  
fire fighters versus the optimal five fire fighters.  
On the day of the Twin Parks fire, the first two  
[sic] engine responsible for the first hose line was

1  
2 staffed with four fire fighters. Providing the fifth  
3 fire fighters in all units will ensure that units are  
4 fully capable of getting the critical first hose line  
5 into operation. Having full staffing gets the water  
6 there quicker. This impacts the lives and safety of  
7 both civilians and fire fighters, not only at the  
8 scene of one fire, but also impacts the availability  
9 of units for other fires or other emergency around  
10 this city. when a forth fire fighter engine responds  
11 to a fire, a second fire engine responds to provide  
12 essentially a single fifth fire fighter, consequently  
13 requiring two fire engines to do the work of one.  
14 Often following this, a third engine will be assigned  
15 as a relocating unit, depleting the resources from a  
16 distant neighborhood somewhere in the City. The  
17 relocater will now travel across the City to fill in  
18 for that second engine that provided that single fire  
19 fighter for the first hose line. In the time it takes  
20 for a relocating engine to traverse the City, maybe  
21 in times of traffic, you know, from Staten Island to  
22 the Bronx, possibly in some situations. Think about  
23 all that travel time where that unit is essentially  
24 unavailable. You know, they're not on the  
25 communications for where they came from, an they're



1 not on the communications for where they're going.  
2  
3 So they're just in transit. That's a couple of hours  
4 that each way-- you know, combined that they're out  
5 of service. I'd also like to ask for support to  
6 expand our building inspection taskforce,  
7 specifically to address life safety issues relative  
8 to fire operations. Unfortunately, mishandling a  
9 space heater or chocking open the fire doors, an  
10 occurrence that happens too frequently. By  
11 increasing our inspection resources, we can identify  
12 and address these hazards sooner with immediate  
13 correction or issuance of a violation. While the  
14 RBIS computer-based program has its benefits, there  
15 are dangerous buildings that don't trigger the  
16 inspection metrics. In my experience there is no  
17 substitute for fire officers putting their eyes and  
18 feet in the building to identify and often mitigate  
19 life hazards on the spot. Inspections will result in  
20 communications via our Department CIDS, Critical  
21 Information Dispatch Program that will assist fire  
22 fighters when they have to respond to a fire  
23 emergency at that location and will assist them in  
24 their life-saving efforts. I thank you all for the  
25

1  
2 time to speak here today, and I apologize about going  
3 over a few minutes or seconds. Thanks.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
5 your testimony. Next we'll hear from the individuals  
6 who are present, Ryan Monell, Frank Ricci [sp?], and  
7 Kelly Ferrell [sp?]. Go whatever order works for  
8 you.

9 RYAN MONELL: Great. Thank you. Well,  
10 my name is Ryan Monell, and I'm the Vice President of  
11 Government Affairs at the Real Estate Board of New  
12 York. Thank you Chairs for the opportunity to  
13 testify today. REBNY aims to ensure that the  
14 industry can serve as a useful partner and  
15 stakeholder in the policy decisions that must be made  
16 in support of greater public safety, fire prevention,  
17 and building maintenance. I would like to briefly run  
18 through where REBNY stands on a few bills being heard  
19 today. First, REBNY supports Intro 104. While the  
20 existing housing maintenance code establishes  
21 requirements for self-closing doors, there's no  
22 definition of this term. Adding such a definition to  
23 the Administrative Code would solve for this issue  
24 and bring greater consistency to the obligation.  
25 Where REBNY supports codifying a definition, we

1 believe that any definition should include that the  
2 door must be required to cross a strike plate and  
3 latch. We look forward to working with the Council  
4 on this bill. Secondly, REBNY supports Intro 105 in  
5 Pre-considered Intro 20220647. Intro 105 identifies a  
6 more appropriate penalty schedule for non-compliance  
7 for self-closing door, and in conjunction with  
8 T20220647 would help create a more rigorous  
9 enforcement regime for self-closing doors which will  
10 ultimately save lives. In addition, REBNY supports  
11 raising penalties to the amounts outlined in the bill  
12 for willfully failing to correct violations. While  
13 REBNY supports this bill, the Council needs to ensure  
14 that HPD has the appropriate resources to facilitate  
15 inspections in the new timeline established under  
16 this legislation. As resources for inspectors are  
17 already limited to HPD, DOB, and FDNY, this could be  
18 a considerable challenge. And lastly, Intro 115.  
19 Raising minimum temperature requirements may seem  
20 like a reasonable pragmatic solution to reduce the  
21 use of space heaters that can pose fire risks.  
22 However, this legislation has significant unintended  
23 consequences that must be fully evaluated, including  
24 substantial additional energy use and related carbon  
25

1 emissions in costs. In addition, evidence  
2 demonstrates that raising the temperature as outlined  
3 in the bill would not actually increase indoor  
4 comfort in many buildings. We appreciate the intent,  
5 but hopefully we can identify alternative proposals  
6 such as assistance for efficiency upgrades to work  
7 with the Council to accomplish. We also wanted to  
8 raise through our testimony, and I won't go through  
9 them at this point due to time constraints, but a  
10 number of different and additional measures that  
11 could be utilized to help prevent fires in the future  
12 and we hope to work with you on those as well. So,  
13 with that said, thank you for the opportunity to  
14 testify today.

16 FRANK RICCI: Thank you. My name is  
17 Frank Ricci. I'm the Executive Vice President of the  
18 Rent Stabilization Association. I'm joined today by  
19 Kelly Ferrell [sp?] who is our Senior Policy Analyst  
20 at our site, and I might mention a former counsel to  
21 the Housing and Building Committee here at the City  
22 Council. I'm not going to read my testimony. We  
23 handed it out. I'll summarize it in the interest of  
24 time. We also support Intro. 104, giving a clearer  
25 definition to self-closing door. I would just add

1 that the addition of language in there that it  
2 shouldn't be a double cylinder lock is really  
3 superfluous. The Housing Maintenance Code already  
4 prohibits double cylinder locks, and my members never  
5 install double cylinder locks. And I think in prior  
6 testimony I've heard over the years from HPD they  
7 will tell you that one of the most common violations  
8 that they write is a double cylinder lock, but since  
9 it's tenant clause violation, and oftentimes owners  
10 are powerless to do anything about removing those  
11 because once they do then the tenant just reinstalls,  
12 but there needs to be a bigger discussion about how  
13 to deal with that issue, but in general we support  
14 Intro. 104. For those of you who aren't familiar with  
15 the difference between RSA and the Real Estate Board  
16 of New York, we're primarily just residential  
17 buildings in all five boroughs. We have a lot of  
18 building owners who have six to 20-unit buildings and  
19 some larger buildings. We do have a bit of a problem  
20 with Intro 105, and it's similar to what HPD had  
21 expressed about the timeframe for correction of C  
22 violation. A lot of our members-- and this pre-  
23 COVID, so COVID has only exacerbated it. But they  
24 have difficulty finding responsible contractors to do  
25

1 work. Seems like every plumber and electrician and  
2 carpenter in the City would love to get the account  
3 for a large building because it's more steady work,  
4 but to come to a six-unit building to do something  
5 like required here is difficult for many members,  
6 especially in different parts in the City. However,  
7 we understand that the need for increased focus on  
8 this to have something like a self-closing door  
9 corrected much faster. So we'd like to work with you  
10 on that. We also don't think it's fair to-- the way  
11 it's written, this increases the fines for C  
12 violations for every C violation, not just self-  
13 closing doors, and I think it should just be isolated  
14 to self-closing doors. We fully support Intro 106.  
15 There's been similar thing is done in the City in the  
16 past like water-saving devices and fixtures rather  
17 than, you know, putting the emphasis on an owner to  
18 put in something like that just to prohibit the sale  
19 of those in the City goes a long way to getting  
20 compliance. And I think on all these bills at the  
21 end of the day, everyone wants to see compliance,  
22 owners, tenants, and certainly the City, and  
23 obviously the Council. The last bill I'll mention is  
24 Intro 115 which would raise the temperature. I was--  
25

1 only when I heard Council Member Hudson explain the  
2 amendment to the bill was I aware of it. Even the  
3 notice I got from the Council yesterday was talking  
4 about the original version of the bill which was  
5 raising the nighttime temperature, but I think the  
6 issue is still the same, and I think my colleague  
7 from REBNY, Ryan, raised the same issue. There's  
8 unintended consequences. We have Local Law 97.  
9 We're two years away from full-- less than two years  
10 away from full implementation. Owners are going to  
11 be expected that are subject to Local Law 97 to  
12 really reduce emissions dramatically just in the  
13 first two years, and definitely by 2030. The last  
14 time the Council raised the nighttime temperature,  
15 the environmental impact statement that was prepared  
16 by the City pointed out that just that one change was  
17 raising the-- 135,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide  
18 into the air every year. This would be-- raise  
19 dramatically more if it was the daytime temperature  
20 that was raised, because you have many more hours  
21 that you'd have to do it. I think most people who  
22 focus on these issues, whether they're in the  
23 environmental field, engineers, they will tell you  
24 that the reason it's 68 degrees in the daytime is  
25

1 normally people are away from their homes during the  
2 daytime working. To heat unattended homes really  
3 makes no sense. So I don't think this is the way to  
4 solve the problem that people want to solve, but  
5 we're certainly available, open to discussing all  
6 these issues with Council at any time to come up with  
7 some viable solutions. Thank you.  
8

9 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much for  
10 your testimony. Does any Council Members have any  
11 questions? Alright. Well, thank you so much. Thank  
12 you for your testimony. Thank you for joining us  
13 today.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Okay, next we'll move  
15 on to some testimony on Zoom. Next we'll hear from  
16 Andrew Sokolof Diaz followed by Angelina Atheno [sp?]  
17 and Yadhira Rodriguez.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 ANDREW SOKOLOF DIAZ: Hi. Good afternoon  
20 Council Taskforce and Committee Chairs, Committee  
21 Members. My name is Andrew Sokolof Diaz. I am a  
22 lifelong Queens's resident, Co-founder and Co-  
23 President of the 89<sup>th</sup> Street Tenant Unidos  
24 Association located at 8907, 8911 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue,  
25 Jackson Heights. I just want to thank you all for



1 the opportunity to speak. Our Council Member,  
2 Council Member Krishnan, spoke earlier about the  
3 challenges and quite frankly the insanity that we  
4 face the past year. We're a volunteer group  
5 representing 550 tenants, and one year ago today on  
6 April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021, a massive eight-alarm fire spread  
7 across our two buildings, displacing us all in an  
8 instant. It was this fire that injured our neighbors  
9 and dozens of fire fighters. The cause of the fire  
10 is said to be because of an electric overcharge, and  
11 the burden and blame placed on the senior tenant who  
12 had no self-closing door. We're speaking here today  
13 on behalf of all our displaced neighbors, several  
14 dozen who remain in hotels and houseless, and for the  
15 many fire and flood displaced New Yorkers, your  
16 constituents who will be affected today and in the  
17 future. Based on our lived experience and advocacy  
18 the past year, we have several policy recommendations  
19 that are intricately linked to the legislation we are  
20 discussing. New Yorkers deserve a humane and  
21 dignified path to rebuild who were displaced by these  
22 fires, floods, and elements. And so our policy  
23 recommendations are as follows and are in our  
24 testimony submitted today. Number one, ensuring  
25

1 oversight of New York City HPD and that they have the  
2 proper resources and functioning management to meet  
3 the demands of the housing crisis and emergency needs  
4 of New Yorkers is essential here. The lack of HPD  
5 enforcement and follow-up regarding outstanding self-  
6 closing door violations is alarming. We've all  
7 spoken about it today, and it's been documented.  
8 Number two, our tenants in this sanctuary city have  
9 faced discrimination, prompted with immigration  
10 questions, lack of language access, and commentary  
11 from caseworkers. The internal mismanagement and lack  
12 of staff in the emergency housing and voucher program  
13 units like Section 8 is also very alarming and should  
14 be looked into by this body. Number three, financial  
15 relief is needed for displaced New Yorkers who lose  
16 their homes and everything they've owned in order to  
17 survive and rebuild. Creating a New York City Fire  
18 Victims Relief fund is needed. There is currently no  
19 real financial help that exists. And number four, we  
20 must prevent the extent of displacement after a fire  
21 or flood. HPD with the Red Cross must coordinate  
22 better protocols to ensure displaced residents are  
23 placed in hotels as close as possible to home, and  
24 for long-term stays, not just the two to three days  
25

1 before shipping us off to shelters. HPD has zero  
2 shelters in the largest borough of Queens. Our  
3 second most populated in our city. Queens's  
4 residents are sent out of the borough to shelters  
5 every day, furthering our displacement. Our advocacy  
6 this past year has set precedent in New York City by  
7 finally allowing affected families to remain in  
8 hotels as opposed to sending us off to shelters in  
9 the outer boroughs. The further from home we are,  
10 the more our communities gentrify--

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time  
13 expired.

14 ANDREW SOKOLOF DIAZ: and the more we  
15 hurt. And finally, tenants need better protections  
16 for victims of burglaries, more direct support from  
17 NYPD when filing reports. Just like our neighbors in  
18 the Twin Parks fire were facing burglaries and lack  
19 of assistance from NYPD to report them. We need the  
20 housing code to be updated to reflect protections of  
21 tenants' belongings after fires and during vacate  
22 orders. We sincerely the work of your respective  
23 taskforce and committees will address these urgent  
24 needs. To the Chairs and Council Members present,  
25 one year later we continue to advocate for ourselves

1 and our community. We are able and willing to join  
2 this taskforce to advise and help inform final  
3 recommendations that will come of it. Our contact  
4 information is listed below, and we look forward to  
5 contributing. It is in your power and will to get  
6 this accomplished before the next fires and floods  
7 that will sadly continue to occur in our communities,  
8 primarily those of color. Thank you for your time.

9  
10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
11 testimony, Andrew. Next we'll hear from Angelina  
12 Atheno [sp?] followed by Yadhira Rodriguez, followed  
13 by Jessica Bellinder.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Angelina Atheno,  
16 you're on to testify now. Angelina, are you present?  
17 Okay, we're going to move on to the next person.  
18 We'll hear from Yadhira Rodriguez followed by Jessica  
19 Bellinder [sp?] followed by Jacob Wexler [sp?].

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

21 YADHIRA RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon,  
22 Council and Chair Members. Thank you for conducting  
23 this hearing today. It's deeply sad that it has to  
24 be after an event of this magnitude. Thank you for  
25 the opportunity to speak. I'm a resident at 333 and

1 I have a question for HPD. As most of the members  
2 have stated, not everyone knows about self-closing  
3 doors. Why does-- why does the agency allows the  
4 buildings with a significant amount of violations to  
5 self-certify them instead of sending inspectors?  
6

7 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,  
8 Yadira Rodriguez, and so sorry that you and your  
9 neighbors had to go through that. HPD is no longer  
10 present, but that is the exact questions that all of  
11 us were asking when they were here. Why not require  
12 a re-inspection so that a certified inspector trained  
13 in that field could be the one re-inspecting to make  
14 sure that the violation is actually fixed. So thank  
15 you so much for that question. HPD is not here, but  
16 those were the same exact questions that we were  
17 asking that one when they were here.

18 YADHIRA RODRIGUEZ: Thank you, Council  
19 Member. And I have a question for you and your  
20 colleagues as well. What are you guys doing to  
21 educate the community about the self-closing door and  
22 fire hazards? Have anyone thought about a campaign  
23 of why the doors needs to be closed instead of just  
24 telling people to close the doors, you know, in the  
25 event of a fire?

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much for  
3 the question. This is the time for testimony, but  
4 I'll still answer the question. We completely agree  
5 with you. we're working with the City Council and  
6 everyone involved to make sure that we're doing  
7 everything needed to improve not only fire safety but  
8 also fire education, including we're working on  
9 potentially doing commercials just like we did for  
10 the Coronavirus, PSA's where we talk about importance  
11 of the vaccine, etcetera. We're talking about doing  
12 something very similar with fire safety, including  
13 why are self-closing doors important, how to request  
14 an inspection and get them corrected. Also, much  
15 more including how to use fire extinguishers, what to  
16 do in case of fire if you live in a fire-proof  
17 building. So those are all items that we're working  
18 on it, working to resolve.

19 YADHIRA RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
21 your testimony. Next we're going to hear from  
22 Jessica Bellinder followed by Jacob Wexler, followed  
23 Steven Zirinsky. Jessica, you may go ahead.

24 JESSICA BELLINDER: Thank you. My name's  
25 Jessica Bellinder. I'm a Supervising Attorney with

1 the Legal Aid society Bronx Neighborhood Office, and  
2 I'm here to present testimony on behalf of the Legal  
3 Aid Society and our clients. You have my testimony  
4 in written form. I'm going to skip through some of  
5 it. We have a long history of representing tenants  
6 in a lot of areas across the City. I'm part of the  
7 Group Advocacy Practice which represents largely  
8 tenant groups in attempting to improve the condition  
9 in their apartments, defend against landlord  
10 harassment, and displacement, and address violations  
11 of the housing laws. In our work, we have been  
12 representing tenants in every borough who are exposed  
13 to fire hazards due to condition in their buildings  
14 who have been displaced from their homes after fires  
15 or other emergencies. We understand that the  
16 existing network of laws and programs to ensure  
17 tenant safety has significant room for improvement,  
18 and we approve of the legislation before you, but we  
19 urge you and this commission, this Council, and this  
20 Mayoral Administration to go further to make  
21 meaningful changes to protect New Yorkers from fires  
22 in their homes and support them when their lives have  
23 been completely disrupted. We represent low-income  
24 tenants, a majority of whom are black and brown New  
25

1  
2 Yorkers who are living in housing where their  
3 landlords have failed to maintain the buildings and  
4 have allowed them fall into disrepair. Our clients  
5 are also working long hours for low wages or have  
6 disabilities or family care obligations that leave  
7 them with low fixed incomes. When their housing  
8 conditions deteriorate and they do not have better  
9 options or places where they can easily move, they  
10 have to stay and endure poor conditions or stay and  
11 fight with their landlords and often the City to fix  
12 their homes. Devastating residential fires occur in  
13 our clients' communities at much higher rates than in  
14 affluent parts of town, and the trauma of people in  
15 homelessness that those fires cause is especially  
16 devastating to our clients because they-- when they  
17 lose their homes due to a fire, they often have no  
18 savings or ability to relocate quickly to some place  
19 safe and affordable for their families. We must do  
20 more to prevent these residential fires from  
21 disrupting the lives of New Yorkers by focusing on  
22 meaningful enforcement of the Housing Maintenance  
23 Code, Building Code, Electrical and Fire Codes to  
24 ensure that the buildings are being well-maintained,  
25 that adequate heat is being provided and that the



1 electricity that is provided to tenants is actually  
2 supporting the lifestyle the 21<sup>st</sup> Century entails.

3 We also want to see the implementation and broader  
4 use of fire safety plans that are required under the  
5 New York Administrative Code. We also have to do  
6 more in the after effects of residential fires to  
7 make it less disruptive and traumatic for families by  
8 ensuring that relocation services are provided with  
9 families that enable them to be rehoused within their  
10 communities so that they can preserve their health,  
11 employment, and their children's care and education.

12 You've heard this from others. I'm going to say that  
13 this is absolutely true for our clients. The city  
14 agencies that are tasked with public health, safety,  
15 and maintenance standards need to take greater  
16 responsibility for enforcing and inspecting these  
17 standards and placing violations and regularly  
18 inspecting for hazardous conditions. We've heard a  
19 lot about inadequate heat. This is an underlying  
20 problem. The issue is not just whether the space  
21 heaters or supplemental sources of heat are  
22 dangerous, but it's also that fundamentally our  
23 tenants are not getting enough heat. And the process  
24 for making those heat complaints is broken. The  
25

1 testimony that you heard from HPD about how they call  
2 the landlord, then the landlord turns the heat back  
3 on, that's the end of the issue-- is just a vicious  
4 cycle, and it causes tenants to become frustrated and  
5 demoralized, and so they don't actually bother to use  
6 that process after a while. What they need is  
7 someone to come and place a violation that can then  
8 be enforced, and then we can dicker with the landlord  
9 about whether they're going to turn the heat back on.  
10 One of the other problems that we see, and they  
11 testified to this as well, is that they'll talk to  
12 one tenant, and if that tenant says yes the heat is  
13 back on, then all the complaints for the entire  
14 building are sort of treated as if they're resolved,  
15 where in fact what we're finding is that there are  
16 micro-climates [inaudible] in buildings. The whole  
17 lines of the building maybe have inadequate heat  
18 where another part of the building may be  
19 sufficiently heated. Alternatively, you know, one  
20 tenant may be risk adverse and not want to get into  
21 further conflict with their landlord, and may say  
22 that the problem has been resolved because the super  
23 has come to knock on their door and threaten them,  
24 and that sort of resolves the whole problem for the  
25

1 building when that isn't actually the case. I'm  
2 going to skip ahead a little bit. One of the things  
3 that I also wanted to underscore is that a lot of the  
4 sources of these fires are electrical, and our  
5 clients live in buildings that were built in the late  
6 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but they live in the 21<sup>st</sup>  
7 Century. They have all of the home appliance,  
8 personal computing uses that you or I have, and yet  
9 they live in apartments where they often cannot run  
10 the air conditioner and the microwave at the same  
11 time without blowing out a whole line of apartments.  
12 And so we need to do more to upgrade the electrical  
13 facilities in these units so that people aren't  
14 tempted to use power strips or electrical devices  
15 that cause things to become dangerous. That is a  
16 coping mechanism or a response to a problem and the  
17 underlying problem is the thing that we need the City  
18 to address. And as the-- one of the tenants just  
19 testified, we have seen a lot of issues with these--  
20 with the settlement or sort of the-- what's the word  
21 I'm looking for here? Sorry. When tenants are  
22 needed to be relocated, what we're seeing is that the  
23 services are really inadequate for the need, and this  
24 includes fires. It includes floods. It includes

1 mold and lead paint abatement and other conditions as  
2 well. We need the City to really look at what other  
3 services are being provided and are they meaningfully  
4 supportive to families so that we're not putting all  
5 of the burden of the discomfort of these conditions  
6 onto tenants who can least afford to bear them. And I  
7 will conclude. Thanks.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
10 your testimony. Do we have Jacob Wexler present? He  
11 may have left? Okay. Next we'll hear from Steven  
12 Zirinsky, followed by James Lloyd, followed by Monica  
13 Bartley.

14 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: [inaudible] The red  
15 button. Oh, look at that. I don't need to be  
16 shouting now. You'll be disappointed. Okay. Hi, my  
17 name is Steven Zirinsky. I'm an architect. I  
18 represent the AIA New York Chapter. I'm Co-chair of  
19 the Building Code Committee. We have 6,000 members,  
20 and I have done my fire-proof self-closing doors.  
21 I've done my-- when I design buildings, I design them  
22 with corridors and with the hour-and-a-half doors  
23 that you need, and the three-quarter-hour doors in  
24 separation between the various spaces. So I know all  
25 of the stuff that you're grappling. I'll look at the

1 text here in a second, but one thing I noticed today  
2 was that fire doors work both ways. They keep the  
3 fire from going out and they keep the fire from going  
4 in. And those people who died, died because they  
5 left the apartments. If they stayed in the  
6 apartments they'd be alive today, and that's where  
7 the education comes in. So, and I talked about this  
8 at the Fire Department when they walked out, and I  
9 asked them before [sic], and that's a big deal. It's  
10 nothing we didn't cover before here. That's  
11 something I picked up just sitting here. Anyway, now  
12 I'll-- and the other thing I thought of was that, you  
13 know, when I-- after I finish a building, I sign off  
14 on the self-closing doors, and I walk through with  
15 the Building Department. We both make sure  
16 everything's working properly and so on, and then  
17 it's like a baby. [inaudible] throw it out there,  
18 and then all of a sudden it's gone, and we have no  
19 control over it anymore. I'm thinking perhaps in the  
20 same way as we do facades, you know, five-year  
21 inspection, maybe this-- you know, this should be-- I  
22 don't want to burden the Building Department  
23 necessarily, but maybe there should be a special  
24 inspection every two, three, or four years, something  
25

1 like that. And that way it's just-- you know, it  
2 gives it a little-- it's not like 15 different  
3 agencies getting involved. It puts the onus right on  
4 the building. Anyway that's it, and I'll go back--  
5 go to the speech. And thank you to the City Council  
6 for holding this hearing. I have 59 seconds. I'll  
7 go quick. The New York Chapter supports the Intro's  
8 104, 105, 106, and 131, and we have no problems with  
9 those. We are a little concerned with Intro 115  
10 because the mandated requirements for energy code,  
11 and how the two will mix. And I also know problems  
12 with heating systems in buildings generally speaking,  
13 you know, one-- it might be creating subzones will  
14 solve the problem, and maybe NYCHA buildings don't  
15 have that. Maybe it's just one thermostat controls  
16 the whole thing, but maybe it needs to be looked at.  
17 It takes time and money and all those other stuff.  
18 So, but rather than just cranking up the heat. So,  
19 if you want to ask me any questions about self-  
20 closing doors I can answer them all. I know all  
21 about the stuff.

22  
23 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I appreciate your  
24 level of expertise and business that you're in, but I  
25 don't believe it's fair to ever blame someone for

1 leaving the door open when they're fleeing because  
2 there's a fire, because they're not thinking about--  
3 no, no. They're not thinking about--

4 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: [interposing] Oh, no,  
5 no, I'm not-- I would do the same thing. I know--

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] Yeah,  
7 and understand that our purpose is to make sure that  
8 those doors close automatically.  
9

10 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: No, I agree.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: because that's  
12 what's most important.

13 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: No, I'm talking about  
14 the pe--

15 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] because  
16 when you're leaving--

17 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: [interposing] No, I  
18 understand. I'm not talking about the people that  
19 fled the apartment. I'm talking--

20 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] You  
21 said that. You said-- you even said to the Fire  
22 Department, when they fled if they closed the door,  
23 if they stayed in the apartment it wouldn't have  
24 spread.

25 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: No, no, no--

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] But  
3 people are not thinking rationally when they're--

4 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: [interposing] No, no,  
5 no, not--

6 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] when  
7 they're place is on fire, so--

8 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: [interposing] You're  
9 mis--

10 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] I take  
11 exception to that statement, that's all.

12 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: I'm mis-- it's not--  
13 maybe I said it incorrectly. Not the people fleeing  
14 the apartment. I'm talking about the other residents  
15 of the building. The door acts as-- it's an hour-  
16 and-a-half door. It acts as a barrier between you  
17 and the fire. When you go out into a darkened  
18 hallway, you know, you're not getting killed by the  
19 fire. You're killed by the smoke. So it's better to  
20 stay put. It's very hard to do when the fire-- when  
21 there's a fire raging to just stay in the door and  
22 not leave the apartment. I'm not saying I'd do any  
23 different. But that's a problem.

24 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: I think it's just  
25 very easy to say in a very rational, controlled



1 environment like this, but when there's a fire in  
2 your building.

3  
4 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: So maybe we need to  
5 have like a fire alarm system that alerts people.  
6 That maybe-- I'm just--

7 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: [interposing] We need  
8 fire inspectors to go out who are qualified to  
9 inspect these buildings and not--

10 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: [interposing] Oh, yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: be self-certified by  
12 laypeople. We need these buildings to be certified.  
13 We need them to be checked. We need the fire doors  
14 to be-- to self-close, and we need to do more  
15 education. I will agree with you on that.

16 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: Yes.

17 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: To people who live  
18 within the buildings and to our residents in this  
19 city at-large for what to do when a fire does occur.

20 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: Right, and I agree, and  
21 we certainly support the concept of self-closing  
22 doors. We sign off on it when we-- yes. No  
23 argument.

24 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
25 your testimony.

2 STEVEN ZIRINSKY: Alright, thanks.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: You're welcome.

4 We're going to actually turn to Borough President  
5 Vanessa Gibson from the Bronx, and then we're going  
6 to continue on with public testimony after that. So,  
7 it's be Borough President Gibson. You may go ahead.

8 BOROUGH PRESIDENT GIBSON: Thank you so  
9 much. Good afternoon, members of the City Council.  
10 Thank you all for having this very important hearing.  
11 To my distinctive chairs, to Chair Oswald Feliz,  
12 Chair Pierina Sanchez, and Chair Joann Ariola, the  
13 Committees on Housing and Buildings, Fire and  
14 Emergency Management, and the Twin Parks Citywide  
15 Taskforce for Fire Prevention, thank you for the  
16 privilege to be before you. It feels good to be  
17 back, even though it's in a virtual setting. As a  
18 former member of the City Council I know how  
19 important all of these hearings are. And I want to  
20 thank the three Chairs and the members of the  
21 Committee, Speaker Adrienne Adams, Deputy Speaker  
22 Diana Ayala, the members of the Bronx delegation, and  
23 really all of you. This has truly been a labor of  
24 love, and on behalf of the borough of the Bronx, I  
25 want to say thank you. Thank you to New Yorkers,

1 Bronxites and so many others that came forth to help  
2 the residents and families of Twin Parks Northwest.

3 I never imagined taking office on January 1<sup>st</sup> in the  
4 first week of my Administration, our borough would be  
5 faced with one of the most horrific five-alarm fires  
6 that the City of New York has ever seen following the  
7 Happy Land fire as well as fires in the Belmont  
8 community and Highbridge community. And we gathered,

9 we joined together. we were able to do so much on  
10 the ground in the initial days, and even three months

11 later I want to remind everyone that work still is  
12 being done, and it's very important to make sure that  
13 the legislative package before the City Council does

14 not only analyze but really look at in very, very  
15 important detail, because making sure that agencies

16 like the Department of Buildings and HPD and the Fire  
17 Department are actually working together; sharing

18 information, and sharing data on inspection is  
19 critical. One thing that I want to be very clear on

20 to all of my colleagues in the City Council is  
21 somehow in the middle of pain we can find purpose.

22 We can learn from this tragedy so that it not only  
23 never happens again, but we also are educating our

24 residents, holding landlords and property management  
25

1 companies accountable to make sure that self-closing  
2 doors actually close. We are regulating space  
3 heaters. We're working with all of our colleagues at  
4 the state level and the federal level for their  
5 bodies of government to also implement similar  
6 measures, but we are also strengthening the  
7 inspection process, the 311 process. We are  
8 increasing the standard by which minimum heating  
9 standards are applied for New Yorkers, because I want  
10 to be clear, what happened at Twin Parks Northwest  
11 could have happened anywhere in the City of New York.  
12 And even after January 9<sup>th</sup>, we've seen residential  
13 fires all across the City of New York, and we've seen  
14 some fatalities, some injury, but many families have  
15 been displaced. Many have been traumatized trying to  
16 pick up the pieces and rebuild and return to  
17 normalcy. There was a reason why families are forced  
18 to use space heaters in the first place. So we have  
19 to acknowledge the conditions that many of our  
20 families and constituents are living in today. So  
21 this package of legislation before you, colleagues,  
22 is a great step forward. It is a great step for  
23 progress, but we know that it will not solve every  
24 single problem. We have to make sure that we are  
25

1 holding agencies accountable. We have a sufficient  
2 level of inspectors at every single agency, but also  
3 that we are following on through on 311 calls. There  
4 are many instances where tenants are calling 311 as  
5 we ask them to do, but there's no follow-up. There's  
6 days before inspectors come out. We cannot allow  
7 that to happen. So I am grateful to all of you.

8 Colleagues, Chairs, thank you for not only your  
9 support of the Bronx, but realizing that this could  
10 happen anywhere in the City. And I also think it's  
11 important as we talk about short and long-term goals,  
12 there has to be a standard that we set for the level  
13 of services that we are providing to families that  
14 are displaced by a fire. The American Red Cross has  
15 been instrumental. Emergency Management,  
16 instrumental, FDNY, NYPD. But all the community  
17 groups on the ground, we want to recognize them as  
18 well and make sure that they have the support they  
19 need. Organizations like IGNA [sic] Relief, the  
20 Muslim Network Association, the Latino Restaurant  
21 Association, the Bronx group, the Oyate [sp?] Group,  
22 our Gambian Youth Organization, so many clergy and  
23 every-day residents stepped up to help their  
24 neighbors, and for that we are grateful. Somehow in  
25

1 the middle of a storm we will find strength, and we  
2 will learn from this tragedy and not let those that  
3 we've lost, the 17 neighbors, nine adults and eight  
4 children, their deaths will not be in vain. We have  
5 got to learn something in this city that causes us to  
6 wake up. These are wake-up calls, calls to action,  
7 and calls to attention with a recognition that fires  
8 happen all the time, and I appreciate you Madam  
9 Chair, recognizing that in our work, language is very  
10 important. So we also want to be very careful  
11 talking about fire education and fire safety. We do  
12 not want to blame tenants. It is not a tenant's  
13 fault that they feel the need to use a space heater  
14 because they're not given sufficient heat. It is not  
15 their fault that they are making decisions for the  
16 safety of themselves and their children, their  
17 babies, and their elders, but it is our  
18 responsibility as a government to do better by the  
19 tenants in this city. And so this tragedy at Twin  
20 Parks was absolutely preventable. It should have  
21 never happened, but it did happen and we will never  
22 forget it. The lives that we have lost, we will never  
23 forget those families and the relatives that we've  
24 lost, but we will find purpose in the middle of pain.  
25

1  
2 As the Bronx Borough President, we have invested so  
3 much time into not just the families at Twin Parks,  
4 but to helping everyone with short-term, long-term  
5 counseling and social services and trauma-informed  
6 care. As many of the families have decided to  
7 relocate, can you imagine the trauma of families  
8 going to sleep and hearing the cries and screams of  
9 neighbors and children as they escape for their  
10 lives? That's the reality of what Twin Parks and so  
11 many other New Yorkers have faced when they're  
12 victims of fires as well. So I just want to speak  
13 and go on record in support of this package of  
14 legislation. I appreciate my colleagues in  
15 government, and thank you all for all of your  
16 overwhelming support. There were many members of the  
17 City Council that don't even represent the Bronx that  
18 came to the Bronx to help us, came to Monroe College,  
19 came to help us sort through clothing. I am forever  
20 grateful as your Bronx Borough President. And of  
21 course, I have to acknowledge the members of the  
22 Bronx delegation, our Co-Chairs Council Member Eric  
23 Dinowitz, Council Member Althea Stevens, and of  
24 course, I want to recognize our Chairs, Chair Pierina  
25 Sanchez and Chair Oswald Feliz. Thank you for

1 stepping up. Thank you for being the leaders that we  
2 need for such a time as this. We will get through  
3 this. we will continue to talk and strategize and  
4 collaborate in partnership together, because at the  
5 end of the day we must do our part to prevent fires,  
6 to educate New Yorkers to hold landlords and property  
7 owners accountable, and make sure that we are doing  
8 the work that we've all been called to do. So we  
9 will be officially submitting our written testimony  
10 to the committees in the next several days. Thank  
11 you so much for this important hearing today, and to  
12 all the members of the City Council. The Bronx is  
13 grateful for your commitment, your dedication, and  
14 your investment in saving the lives of all New  
15 Yorkers. Thank you so much.

17 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much  
18 Borough President Gibson. Next we'll hear from James  
19 Lloyd, followed by Monica Bartley, followed by Salim  
20 Drammeh, and Ajifanta Marenah. Apologies for the  
21 mispronunciation there. Mr. Lloyd, you could go  
22 ahead.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 JAMES LLOYD: Afternoon Chair Feliz,  
25 Sanchez, Ariola. NYSFAFH is the trade association



1 for New York's affordable housing industry. We're  
2 400 members. We're responsible for the vast majority  
3 of subsidized housing both across the City and State.  
4 We're the nation's largest affordable housing trade  
5 group. Twin Parks fire was a terrible tragedy.  
6 NYSFAFH strongly supports fire prevention measures to  
7 prevent such fires in the future. For instance,  
8 Intro 131 for residential education outreach for  
9 space heaters is extremely important. We also  
10 encourage the Council to work with Fire Department to  
11 educate tenants as to what actions to take in the  
12 event of a fire. For instance, as you all know, at  
13 250 Broadway, you do annual fire drills. However,  
14 you know, we don't see the Fire Department doing that  
15 in residential buildings. Additionally, Intro 106,  
16 the standard of space heaters, very much in support  
17 of-- in support of that. T2020632 [sic] of course,  
18 and of course, support of the Intros to improved  
19 enforcement around self-closing doors. For instance,  
20 you know, I live in a rent stabilized building with  
21 about 50 units. We don't have any self-closing doors  
22 at all. So, forget, you know, whether or not they  
23 are actually functional. We have none. So we're  
24 very much supportive of those and of your effort to  
25

1 improve education, to improve enforcement across the  
2 city and of course, to improve standards around the  
3 sales of those space heaters. However, NYSAFAH  
4 strongly opposes Intro 115, which would increase the  
5 minimum indoor temperatures. Increasing interior  
6 temperatures will seriously impair the ability of the  
7 City to make Local Law 97 goals. It will probably  
8 result in increased carbon emissions as opposed to  
9 reduction of them. The buildings are responsible for  
10 two-thirds of New York City's carbon emissions. Most  
11 residential buildings are heated by burning natural  
12 gas or fuel oil. Fuel oil, number two oil these  
13 days, is chemically identical to diesel. Natural  
14 gas, of course, is extremely potent greenhouse gas.  
15 You know, it leaks in the pipelines resulting in a  
16 lot of global warming. Also, both them release a  
17 nitrous-- a nitrogen oxide when burned, and of course  
18 fuel releases sulfur dioxide. Both of these will  
19 increase asthma rates if our members have to burn  
20 more of them to heat buildings to a much higher  
21 specification. Also, this will impair cost of  
22 buildings operations, which ultimately goes back to,  
23 you know, city coffers given that there are, you  
24 know, government regulatory agreements [inaudible]  
25

1 operations funds, so on and so forth. Also, fossil  
2 fuel industry closely with-- linked to conflict and  
3 human rights violations across the world. You know,  
4 of course you all know that Russia uses the sale of  
5 fossil fuels to fund its war machine in Ukraine. So,  
6 instead, we urge the Council to work on ways which  
7 the existing law can be better enforced, how  
8 buildings can be insulated and retrofitted to make  
9 temperatures consistent throughout the building while  
10 diminishing the need for fossil fuels at all. So,  
11 that concludes my testimony. Happy to take any  
12 questions.  
13

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much for  
16 your testimony. Next we'll hear from Monica Bartley  
17 followed by Salim Drammeh.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

19 MONICA BARTLEY: Good afternoon. Thanks  
20 Chairs for allowing me to testify today. My name is  
21 Monica Bartley, Manager Community Organizers at the  
22 Center for Independence of the Disabled New York. I'm  
23 a wheel-- CIDNY strongly supports the package of  
24 bills under consideration at this meeting. I'm a  
25 wheelchair user, and I when I observed the tragedy

1 that occurred at Twin Parks it gave me great cause  
2 for concern, as I know it would have been difficult  
3 for me to evacuate that building. As a wheelchair  
4 user, it is difficult to close the door behind me  
5 when I go through it, and this would even be more so  
6 in the case of an emergency like a fire. So it is  
7 very important that self-closing doors function as  
8 they should. I live on the second floor. If this is  
9 a fire-- if there is a fire, I would probably have to  
10 shelter in place until someone comes to assist me,  
11 because it would be very difficult to try to escape  
12 through a window, as the elevators would be out of  
13 service. If we could ensure the fire is contained  
14 where it started, it may give people like myself a  
15 better chance of safely evacuating the building.  
16  
17 CIDNY supports reducing the amount of time for a  
18 landlord to correct the violation to keep or maintain  
19 self-closing doors from 21 days to 10 days. People  
20 with disabilities and seniors are more likely to use  
21 space heaters to stay warm because of inadequate  
22 heat. So it is essential that space heaters are  
23 properly certified to meet safety standards. There  
24 is need for public education and awareness on the  
25 proper use of space heaters. It is also very

1 important that the Fire Department knows the units  
2 where people with disabilities reside, people who  
3 require additional assistance such as seniors with  
4 mobility issues, people who are blind or deaf who may  
5 not be alerted at the start of the fire. I am told  
6 my building has sprinklers. How do I know it works?  
7 It has never been tested. So it is helpful if there's  
8 an evacuation plan in place in all buildings for  
9 people who need additional assistance. It is very  
10 disconcerting to think that many of us who have  
11 disabilities are likely to perish in situations like  
12 these. CIDNY fully supports the package of bills  
13 being discussed today, because this would guarantee  
14 that proper safety measures are put in place that  
15 would assist people who need additional assistances  
16 like myself and would protect all residents in a  
17 building generally, because it is very sad to see the  
18 number of lives lost in the Twin Parks fire that  
19 could have been prevented if proper regulations were  
20 in place. Thank you very much.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
23 your testimony. Next-- sorry about that. Next we'll  
24 hear from Salim Drammeh followed by Ajifanta-- or  
25 [inaudible] sorry. Salim, you may go ahead.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

SALIM DRAMMEH: Hello, everyone. My name is Salim Drammeh. I'm the President of the Gambian Youth Organization. As many of you know, my organization and partner organizations have been at the forefront of relief efforts in response to the Twin Parks Northwest building. I want to thank the Council, thank CM Sanchez, CM Feliz, you know, for taking the right steps in introducing legislation to, you know, ensure that the tragedy that happened on January 9<sup>th</sup> never ever happens again. So, I've said it before and many have said today, you know, that this tragedy did not need to happen. The reason why, you know, 17 innocent lives were taken on January 9<sup>th</sup> because one, corporate greed, lack of enforcement, and lack of keeping the building up to code, not a space heater. Also, negligent landlord that needs to be held accountable. As recent as today some units in the 333 building, you know, still have-- they still don't have sufficient heat, and it's both dangerous and traumatizing for our community member that return to the building. So the Bronx Faith-- Park Phase Three Preservation, you know, received 2,468 heat and hot water complaints submitted to the City's 311

1 service within the past three years. The Twin Parks  
2 Northwest specifically had numerous complaints  
3 including no heat, broken radiators, broke doors, a  
4 broke pipe a month prior to the fire. One apartment  
5 had 10 complaints. That's unacceptable. And it's  
6 unacceptable at 2022 that if you still have buildings  
7 with open violations not, you know, again being held  
8 accountable. Yeah. So we ask that, you know, the  
9 package of legislation being introduced by the  
10 Council today to take in account the five  
11 recommendations I'm going to mention from our 333  
12 Community Advocacy Plan. This is plan that was  
13 formulated by GYO and tenants and other partner  
14 organizations and larger community members which has,  
15 you know, gained support of over 700-- it gained over  
16 700 signatures, and I'm going to mention some of  
17 those recommendations as we go by. so for housing,  
18 you know, we know that right now 333 residents, they  
19 are still in hotels, and the hotel stays have been,  
20 you know,-- have been extended to May 7<sup>th</sup>. We're  
21 saying that we want-- that this-- we want the housing  
22 process to be expedited so that, you know, those that  
23 are displaced can get a permanent housing, which  
24 includes, you know, undocumented residents,  
25

1 additional families that are not the lease. There's  
2 no reason, again, you know, to have to constantly  
3 extend hotels. Also, all 333 residents should be  
4 provided, you know, some kind of rent relief, which  
5 they have, but I'm saying ongoing if there has to be  
6 like an extension of hotels, that this rent-- that  
7 the rent be waived, and probably even pathway to home  
8 ownership should be provided to 3e3 residents. And  
9 we're here-- I have fines here as well. We  
10 understand that there's already a fine of \$250 to  
11 \$500 per day for heat and hot water violations. The  
12 City has--

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time  
15 expired.

16 SALIM DRAMMEH: [inaudible] the government  
17 to increase the monetary fines. Even a thousand  
18 dollars per day on negligent landlords to have been  
19 found to provide inadequate heat and hot water and  
20 have failed to, you know, provide routine  
21 maintenance, because they're making millions. These  
22 landlords are making millions off hardworking  
23 tenants, and you know, they cannot be left off the  
24 hook like this or while they ignore complete. We're  
25 asking that-- we recommend that there's a suspension



1 of payment of Section 8 housing vouchers or CVR. The  
2 negligent landlords who are recipient of these  
3 Section 8 housing vouchers or CVR should have their  
4 payment suspended until they are found to be in  
5 compliance. These negligent landlords who have also  
6 been found to have an excessive amount of violation  
7 accounting for 15 or more calendar-- for 15 or more  
8 days of the calendar year should have criminal  
9 charges pursued against them by the City. We have  
10 another one for HPD. HPD should be-- should revamp  
11 its building inspection apparatus to show that  
12 buildings are properly inspected and landlords  
13 rectify any violations. These residents should be  
14 notified by mail and public posting in their  
15 buildings of any pending violations in accessible  
16 languages, the language that they understand. And  
17 also, inspections of residential buildings of the  
18 City, of the-- you know, should be decreased from  
19 five years to three years as someone just mentioned,  
20 because it should not take five years [inaudible]  
21 three years. And as for Executive Order 12 from the  
22 Mayor's Office, HPD and FDNY should immediately  
23 conduct a thorough inspection of Twin Parks northwest  
24 building located at 333 East 181<sup>st</sup> Street for fire  
25

1 safety and building code violations. Number six, all  
2 residential buildings-- all residential housing units  
3 should have temperature control monitors inside their  
4 apartment. The current temperature law, we already  
5 know, during the winter months in the City is set at  
6 62 degrees from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m., they should be  
7 increased to 68 degrees to better accommodate the  
8 decreasing temperatures during the city's-- I'm about  
9 to end right now. I'm about to end right now. Go to  
10 fire safety. The city government should install, you  
11 know, hallway sprinklers, self-closing doors, and a  
12 two-way operating intercom system. [inaudible]  
13 someone mentioned here that, you know, that residents  
14 should have stayed inside, but again, how-- when  
15 you're in the chaos, you know, you're not thinking  
16 about that, okay? But let's say what if we had a  
17 two-way intercom system that these fire fighters can  
18 communicate with residents. Maybe there's an  
19 announcement being made, "Stay in side." Something  
20 that could have-- should have-- could have helped  
21 out. The last thing, the city government along with  
22 the FDNY should ensure that all apartments or  
23 residential buildings throughout the City of New York  
24 have a smoke detector or fire extinguisher or fire  
25

1 escape plan accessible again in all languages. Every  
2 residential building in the City of New York should  
3 have a [inaudible] designated Fire Marshals  
4 responsible for executing the building's fire escape  
5 plan. And I'm ending off here. I urge the committee  
6 and housing agencies to make it a priority to invest  
7 these city dollars and first install these safety  
8 measures in all existing buildings in NYC. And I  
9 want to thank you all for your Council Member and  
10 time and look forward to hearing from you and working  
11 with you all in the future. Appreciate you all.  
12 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: thank you so much,  
15 Salim, and we really appreciate all the work that  
16 you've been doing 24 hours a day, to help families  
17 affected by the fire. We also agree that these are  
18 steps that we're taking, but much more is needed.  
19 When there's a fire, the smoke spreads through every  
20 possible place, not only through the hallways, but  
21 also even through the air vents, and that could be a  
22 scary thing for tenants when they are-- when they go  
23 into their apartments, given that their apartment is  
24 fire-proof, and [inaudible] smoke entering through  
25 the air vents. That could be a very scary situation.

1 So thank you so much, and we are definitely working  
2 on every possible item to make sure that nothing like  
3 this ever happens again. So thank you so much. Next  
4 up is Ajifanta Marenah from GYO, the Gambian Youth  
5 Organization.  
6

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

8 AJIFANTA MARENAH: Good afternoon  
9 everyone. Thank you all. Thank you to all the  
10 Council Members here for your time and for  
11 introducing this very much important legislation. My  
12 colleague Salim has already touched on our legis--  
13 our recommendations and the need for all of them to  
14 be addressed and included in the legislation package.  
15 I'm just here again to just emphasize again the need  
16 for holding landlords and building owners  
17 accountable, for making sure that they follow  
18 building codes and fire safety requirements and for  
19 the need of inspections, especially in the Bronx and  
20 the south Bronx where the fire-- in the South and  
21 West Bronx where the fire happened. Too often our  
22 communities have been neglected. We have been  
23 forgotten. And when we make these complaints and  
24 reports as tenants it is always ignored and not  
25 addressed. I just want to again just urge the

1 Council Members and thank them for holding HPD, FDNY,  
2 and landlords accountable again, and making sure that  
3 whatever legislation is passed, it's-- and forth  
4 [sic] I think the importance here is the enforcement  
5 of it, because we see what happens when it is not  
6 enforced. So once again, thank you all and we do  
7 hope you take the GYO own recommendations into  
8 account as well.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Great. Thank you so  
11 much for your testimony. Next we'll hear from Pilar  
12 DeJesus followed by Noelle Francois, followed by  
13 Lyric Thompson [sp?].

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

15 PILAR DEJESUS: Sorry, excuse me. I was  
16 munching on my pizza, forgive me. Caught em off-  
17 guard. Good afternoon. My name is Pilar DeJesus. I  
18 a Senior Advocacy Coordinator at TakeRoot Justice,  
19 specifically in the Tenant Unit. I'm here today both  
20 as, you know, a Senior Advocacy Coordinator but  
21 mostly as friends of, you know, I've become friends  
22 of many of the tenants and the organizers like GYO.  
23 And I just wanted to speak to and I want to echo all  
24 the things that GYO just mentions and some of things  
25 that Legal Service mentioned. You know,

1 accountability, especially in my experience-- I've  
2 been working with tenants and community-based  
3 organizations that have been going after, you know,  
4 some of the landlords that are on a list that exist  
5 in the city, the worst landlords. You know, this  
6 landlord, particular, I think HPD had mentioned they  
7 weren't sure about how many violations. If you go to  
8 the website Who Owns What, you can look up that the  
9 landlord owns, based on this data, 128 buildings.  
10 And in this data, when I like do a little, you know,  
11 the-- I sort it out. I don't-- this is just me  
12 roughly estimating. Ninety percent of the complaints  
13 listed here are heat and hot water, and again, that's  
14 just a rough estimate. It could probably be lower  
15 than that. But this information is available.  
16 Tenants have been filing HP cases against landlords  
17 for this very same thing. In my experience in  
18 working with tenants, this has become somewhat of a  
19 tactic of the landlords with this no heat, no gas,  
20 taking their time to make repairs, having tenants  
21 live in such-- some really horrific conditions, and  
22 then using-- let's say especially because majority of  
23 this happens in our marginalized communities. And so  
24 a lot of the times you won't see a lot of the 311  
25

1 calls, because a lot of the tenants are scared about  
2 the retaliation because a lot of-- in my experience  
3 in talking with tenants, landlord uses the 311 calls  
4 to retaliate against tenants. So it doesn't mean  
5 that the violation doesn't exist. It just means the  
6 landlord, again-- and this is not all landlords, but  
7 a lot of the landlords that I've worked with, with  
8 tenants, this is their experience. They believe that  
9 also, you know, they get that call from HPD, the  
10 landlord, and then they make the repairs so when the  
11 inspector comes out it looks like there's no  
12 violation, and then it goes back and it becomes a  
13 game. And this is something I've seen in the last  
14 seven years working with tenants, and it's really,  
15 really-- I really would love to really see some  
16 accountability when it comes to this. When it comes  
17 to holding landlords really accountable. The small  
18 fees that are-- forgive me, my dogs are playing now.  
19 The fees that are given to these landlords are not  
20 enough, because what's happening to tenants is their  
21 livelihood. It's, you know, as we can see what it  
22 did to 333. It's really harmful and it can cause a  
23 lot of instability to their mental health. And  
24  
25

1 forgive me, I've thrown off by my two doggies here  
2 who decided to play. But I just want to--

3  
4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time  
5 expired.

6 PILAR DEJESUS: that-- let's please  
7 listen to the tenants, and you know, I don't know if  
8 this could really happen, but maybe it's time to go  
9 after these landlords in a criminal way, because  
10 honestly, in my experience with Housing Court,  
11 bringing the landlord to court for the basic  
12 necessities is just not-- there-- it's a long process  
13 that it's exhausting. And it-- in my experience,  
14 doesn't really get what the tenants deserve. And I  
15 have-- I'll put so much more in my testimony, but  
16 HPD, you know, and the landlords really need to be  
17 held accountable, and if you guys as legislators need  
18 information, you can get this information to see.  
19 Like, just put the landlord's address on Who Owns  
20 What, and there's-- you can see all the data and all  
21 the properties they own, and you can start seeing for  
22 yourself there's a theme here. Alright, thank you.  
23 Sorry for that noise.



2 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: No worries. Thank  
3 you so much for you testimony. Next we'll hear from  
4 Noelle Francois followed by Lyric Thompson.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

6 NOELLE FRANCOIS: Hi everyone. Thank you  
7 so much to Council Members Feliz, Sanchez, Ariola,  
8 Hudson, and the many co-sponsors of Intro 115 for  
9 recognizing the opportunity to make our city safer  
10 and prevent horrible tragedies like the Twin Parks  
11 fire in the Bronx. My name is Noelle Francois and I'm  
12 the Executive Director of Heat Seek, a nonprofit that  
13 works exclusively with tenants experiencing  
14 insufficient heat in their apartments in the winter  
15 time. We use smart temperature sensors to accurately  
16 and reliably document the indoor temperature during  
17 the winter months and help tenants prove when the  
18 temperature in their apartments is too low. While  
19 many of our tenants experience egregiously low  
20 temperatures, far below the current thresholds, we've  
21 also come to understand through our experience  
22 working with hundreds of tenants over the past seven  
23 years, that the thresholds themselves are also too  
24 low. The existing temperature thresholds are cold.  
25 They're not comfortable temperatures for many people

1 in the winter months, especially for the elderly and  
2 young children. We also know that many landlords  
3 straddle the line heating apartments one to two  
4 degrees below the threshold in order to save money,  
5 knowing that they are unlikely to get caught. Even  
6 though the daytime threshold is currently 68 degrees,  
7 our understanding based on conversations with HPD  
8 inspectors and written violation reports that we have  
9 reviewed, is that HPD does not issue a heat violation  
10 unless the temperature in the apartment is 64 degrees  
11 or below. This buffer is unacceptable. I don't know  
12 if you can see this, but this is a photo of the nine-  
13 point inspection brochure that Ms. Santiago mentioned  
14 from HPD which very clearly states that HPD  
15 violations are only issued for temperatures 65  
16 degrees and below. This tenant who shared this photo  
17 with us, this tenants had an inspection on January  
18 30<sup>th</sup>. The landlord ignored the heat violation. HPD  
19 initiated the process to come in and make repairs to  
20 this tenant's apartment, and yet, it is now April  
21 6<sup>th</sup>, and it is currently 63 degrees in this tenant's  
22 apartment. This tenant has over 2,000 hours of  
23 illegally cold temperatures in their apartment, and  
24 even when HPD's process works exactly as it's  
25

1 supposed to, this tenant cannot get a resolution in  
2 an acceptable timeframe. This tenants is not unique  
3 to the tenants that we work with. We believe  
4 increasing the temperature threshold and providing a  
5 mechanism for ensuring adequate enforcement of the  
6 law with a focus on resolution should happen to keep  
7 New Yorkers safe. We agree with the comments by  
8 Council Member Krishnan that the entire HPD  
9 enforcement system is broken and needs to be  
10 radically reimaged. When people cannot stay warm  
11 in their homes, we see them turn to space heaters,  
12 stovetops and ovens to heat their homes. In the  
13 recent tragedy in the Bronx showed yet again how  
14 dangerous this can be. If we want to reduce the  
15 likelihood of tragic outcomes for alternatives-- from  
16 alternative heating--

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time  
19 expired.

20 NOELLE FRANCOIS: We must increase the  
21 threshold temperatures, so that a truly warm  
22 temperature is maintained in the building with the  
23 building's existing heating system. Increasing the  
24 temperature thresholds will keep thousands of New  
25

1  
2 Yorkers safe and truly warm in their homes. Thank  
3 you.

4 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much.  
5 Next we'll hear from Lyric Thompson [sp?].

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

7 LYRIC THOMPSON: Hi, good afternoon. For  
8 the last six years I have had to fight HPD over  
9 egress and door standards. For the first four and a  
10 half years we had approximately 30 violations written  
11 removed on a door that never should have been on the  
12 building. Can you hear me? I'm getting all these  
13 little things.

14 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Yes, we can hear you,  
15 yes.

16 LYRIC THOMPSON: Okay. Yeah, for the  
17 first four and a half years, they wrote violations  
18 and removed on a door that never should have been  
19 there. January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, my neighbor calls me. The  
20 door is sealed shut. They can't get out of the  
21 building, and it took about 45 minutes to open this  
22 door. Now, as I'm opening the door and wandering if  
23 there were a fire, where would these people go? She  
24 lives on the third floor. We don't have fire  
25 escapes. All she has is a balcony. So there is no

1 access out through the backyard because we caught the  
2 landlord hacking at gas lines when he was hacking out  
3 our common area heating. So we don't have that  
4 access. All she would have is this little exit  
5 discharge. When I opened the door I realized that  
6 only was the door not fire rated, but there was a  
7 vent in the smoke stopping fire-rated all. We called  
8 HPD. They came out. They said everything's fine,  
9 tightened a screw on the broken striker plate. It  
10 took me getting DOB's Commissioner Tim Hogan involved  
11 before I got a violation written for this non-  
12 compliant door. Now, that was 2019. HPD came out,  
13 wrote a violation, and May 13<sup>th</sup> they came out in  
14 perfect form and removed the violation without the  
15 repair being done. Six days later, the FDNY had to  
16 come out and remove that defective door hardware  
17 before it burned our building to the ground. HPD  
18 does not take their responsibility to enforce the  
19 multiple dwelling laws or the Housing Maintenance  
20 Code seriously, as I believe was testified by  
21 AnneMarie Santiago this afternoon when she said, she-  
22 - they didn't really check self-closing doors before  
23 2017. Well, the laws for self-closing doors have  
24 been written-- were written a long time before 2017.  
25

1 I mean, in the 2008 construction code, they have not  
2 only the definition of self-closing doors, but they  
3 also go on to say that exit passageways at all  
4 corridor or exist passageway doors shall be self-  
5 closing, non-combustible, and smoke-proof. I am  
6 currently fighting with HPD over clearance and gaps  
7 in the door. HPD sent out, about a week ago-- two  
8 weeks ago, I'm sorry. HPD, DOB, and DOI came out to  
9 check our egress doors, and they said they were fine.  
10 Now, I was stumped, because they're not fine. NFPA  
11 codes, which I'm glad the Chief testified that those  
12 are the codes that govern these doors, NFPA 252  
13 requires no more than one-eighth of an inch in  
14 between the door and the door jam, and I can stick my  
15 hand through the door, and I'm a normal-sized person.  
16 I'm not a hobbit with paper-thin fingers. I should  
17 not be able to do that. Yet, these three agencies  
18 said that this was fine. So I called DOB  
19 Development--  
20

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time  
22 expired.

23 LYRIC THOMPSON: [inaudible] the  
24 buildings, those are the guys that have to know these  
25 codes for doors and for egress. I asked the guy

1 about the standards. I told him the conditions, and  
2 he told me what I knew, what I already knew, that I  
3 was not incorrect. These doors are not compliant.  
4 We then discussed his training. They have to take  
5 NFPA classes and courses. They have to pass tests,  
6 because these are the fire construction codes. Now,  
7 you know who doesn't have to take those test or  
8 courses is HPD and DOB enforcement, two portions of  
9 two different agencies that are tasked with enforcing  
10 these standards. How is HPD to know the standards  
11 and enforce them if they have never been taught these  
12 standards? Now, these laws that you suggested, 0104,  
13 redefining self-closing doors, my concern is that you  
14 add from-- you know, you add that it does not require  
15 a key from the inside of a dwelling. Now, the  
16 definition of a dwelling is any building occupied in  
17 whole or in part as a temporary or permanent home or  
18 residence for one or more families. So, technically  
19 my apartment is a door that I open with a key in a  
20 dwelling. So, you should probably look at that.  
21 With regards to the timing and inspections for HPD, I  
22 agree, a self-closing door should be a C violation,  
23 but gaps in a door should also be a C violation,  
24 because those gaps in the door are going to let smoke  
25

2 and fire, you know, penetrate and cause my fire door  
3 to fail. Yet, HPD thinks that's fine. It's not  
4 fine. A plastic vent in a smoke-stopping, fire-rated  
5 wall-- I literally had to DOB Commissioner involved  
6 to explain to AnneMarie Santiago that you could not  
7 have vent that shares air in a wall that is supposed  
8 to stop air and have to pass an air leakage test.  
9 The landlord just plastered over that. So we still  
10 have fire penetration issues. Our problem are not a  
11 lack of laws. Our problem is a lack of qualified  
12 people in management and all the way down. Training  
13 is elementary to doing this job, and I can't see how  
14 AnneMarie Santiago takes it very--

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: [interposing] Time  
16 expired.

17 LYRIC THOMPSON: [inaudible] when this  
18 long into her career, she still doesn't know these  
19 codes. I was going to go on about the heating, but  
20 I'll stop here. Does anybody have any questions?

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you for your  
22 testimony. Moving on, we'll turn to the last person  
23 who is Robert Eustace on Zoom. Robert, you may go  
24 ahead once you're unmuted.



1  
2 ROBERT EUSTACE: Thank you. My name is  
3 Robert Eustace. I'm the Vice President of the  
4 Uniformed Fire Fighters Association. I'm also a fire  
5 fighters in Ladder 27. That was the rig parked in  
6 front of the building you saw. I'm the fire fighters  
7 with the baby. That was the same company as my  
8 company, Ladder 27. There's been a lot of these  
9 tragedies over the years. I want to go through and  
10 highlight some of them, and then I'm going to kind of  
11 get into some of the points I want to discuss. You  
12 know, someone touched on the Black Sunday fire  
13 earlier which was illegal compartmentation where six  
14 fire fighters had to jump out of a fifth floor  
15 window. Two of them died from their injuries that  
16 day. Three others are basically crippled. One died  
17 later from their injuries. That was because of  
18 illegal compartmentation because of the landlord.  
19 There was a Prospect Avenue job within the Belmont  
20 section of the Bronx. I was actually working that  
21 day where 13 people died where another window or door  
22 was left open. Laws were passed after that fire to  
23 prevent that as well. Twin Parks North, we talked  
24 about that. There was the Mike Davidson fire. That  
25 was on a movie set. What happened there was we

1 showed up and the building wasn't [inaudible] as  
2 seen. There was miscommunication as far as what it  
3 should have been and what building was inside. The  
4 building was disguised. There was a lot of very,  
5 very hot fire due to the plastics that were  
6 disguising the building that were inside there. This  
7 building-- another thing that needs to be touched on  
8 that people talked about multiple times today is  
9 self-closing doors and people standing in, staying  
10 out. There's commercials about closing the doors.  
11 Keep the doors closed. Keep the doors-- keep the  
12 doors-- keep the doors closed. Every floor in this  
13 building is a level and it's three stories. I don't  
14 know if people are aware of that. These are federal  
15 buildings that run and up down Webster Avenue. The  
16 building down the road on Tebout [sic] Avenue is what  
17 we call my first two buildings that I've been in.  
18 Today's my 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary on the New York City Fire  
19 Department. Twenty-one years ago I started in EMS  
20 and I worked three years. I was there before I became  
21 a New York City fire fighters. I respond to three  
22 different types of these buildings. They're very,  
23 very difficult to navigate. So part of the other  
24 reason that these buildings are very, very difficult,  
25

1 the reason I'm mentioning this, is because it comes  
2 into play with building inspection, knowledge of  
3 these buildings, and how far out civilians exit these  
4 buildings. You have a hotel mentality. If you look  
5 at the front of the building in Twin Parks, you'll  
6 look at it and there's a carport, if you will,  
7 underneath the side there, and then the staircase  
8 exit, exits in what they call the back, we call the  
9 2-3 corner which empties to a lot. The other  
10 buildings empty into locked courtyards. The reason  
11 I mention that is no one would ever go down these.  
12 If you go into the standard public housing building,  
13 most of the staircases empty into the lobby or enter  
14 the front of the building, so people would commonly  
15 use them. When a building's level is three stories  
16 in between, you're not going to take those staircases  
17 down one or two stairs when it's that far, and when  
18 the staircase doesn't go anywhere you're definitely  
19 not going to take that. So it's something to be  
20 considered when consider about education and  
21 different things like that along those lines, which  
22 makes these buildings extremely unique. You know,  
23 someone once told me that the Zoning Committee in New  
24 York City is like the KGB. You know, when Amazon  
25

1 came around you couldn't know what was going on or  
2 anything. We need to have some sort of understanding  
3 about when these buildings come in here, because we  
4 can go in there and learn them as much as we want,  
5 but we need to get a heads up on them. That brings  
6 some to my point. If there's boots on the ground for  
7 what we do as the New York City Fire Department, and  
8 then there's the fire inspectors. The fire  
9 inspectors brought up a really good point, and my  
10 point is this, we need to have a lot more money in  
11 the New York City fire budget. The tragedy that  
12 happened on Black Sunday-- we had ropes in the New  
13 York City Fire Department. They were taken away from  
14 us, and those six fire fighters that jumped that day  
15 didn't have those ropes. They were taken away. They  
16 won a significant lawsuit because of that. The fire  
17 inspectors are talking about their CO monitors were  
18 taken away. Ninety-one percent of the New York City  
19 fire budget is what they call operational, which  
20 means in some way or form you're going to respond to  
21 911. So every time they say, "cut across the board,  
22 that's equal, because we need to trim the haircut" or  
23 something like that. That just can't be with the New  
24 York City Fire Department. They need a lot more  
25

1 money. The fire inspectors need a lot more money.  
2  
3 If you're doing a building inspection, you know, of  
4 the Empire State building and you try to send a fire  
5 truck-- we're doing a once-over. That's 20 minutes  
6 if you try to go to the 80<sup>th</sup> floor to get back down  
7 stairs, to get up and down. That's not feasible for  
8 911 operation. These fire inspectors are critical  
9 for what they do, and like you said, they're under-  
10 staffed. They have dozens and dozens of positions  
11 unstaffed. That is very critical. For us, what we  
12 call the fifth fire fighter was mentioned,  
13 highlighted. Deputy Chief Vinnie Dunn [sp?] is one  
14 of the significant contributors to the fire fighters  
15 FDNY books. He did a study on getting water to the  
16 fire on a six floor tenement. If you have five fire  
17 fighters on that rig and you stretch a hose line,  
18 it'll take you about six minutes to do that. If you  
19 have four fire fighters it'll take you eleven  
20 minutes. It's nearly half the amount of time. And  
21 the most significant safe thing you can do in a fire  
22 is to put water on that fire, and that's just a fact.  
23 So, you know, fire fighter Danny Swift [sp?] was  
24 awarded the bronze star in Iraq, because fire  
25 fighters Chris Angleton [sp?] died. Chris Angleton

1 died because he was sitting in the front seat of a  
2 Hum-v, and that was back in Iraq if you remember  
3 because there was no protection on the front seats.  
4 So they had to make their own thing. It ws kind of a  
5 lesson learned that day, and it was like how you  
6 cover things up. And there ws no protection that way  
7 so we tried to learn form that mistake and move  
8 forward. You know, the Fire Department used to--  
9 before they had Neederman [sp?] System, which is an  
10 exhaust to stop the rigs from backing in. they used  
11 to firehouses black. That's a true story, so that  
12 you didn't seen the exhaust stains. These are the  
13 things that we want to try to prevent moving forward  
14 and we need more money in the budget to do this. And  
15 this-- for all these tragedies and for myself working  
16 in these neighborhoods, working in the Bronx for 21  
17 years now, we need significant help. Fire Prevention  
18 needs significant help, and a lot of the things--  
19 some brought up carbon footprint, and that was a  
20 great point. The more you want to save on these  
21 things, the more you want to do a lot of these  
22 things, the more plastics you're going to put into  
23 apartment. A lot of the immigrants coming into this  
24 country, a lot of the different people in my family,  
25

1 you know,-- this next year will be 100 years for my  
2 family coming over to this country. They're going to  
3 buy cheaper things. They're going to buy cheaper  
4 products to bring to this country, and to make ends  
5 meet to try to get by in these poor neighborhoods.  
6 So, we're going to have to be able to adapt to that.  
7 The fire fighters are going to have to be able to  
8 have that and fire prevention is going to be  
9 [inaudible]. We almost need a CCRB for housing, in  
10 my opinion, to cover everything from HPD to Fire  
11 Prevention to everything to monitor this. But we  
12 need to put significant money in that because there  
13 seems to be people that are getting around this. So,  
14 that's just my two cents on this, and thank you very  
15 much for you time, Council Member Feliz, Chairwoman  
16 Ariola, and all the rest of the City Council. Thank  
17 you very much.

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you so much for  
20 your testimony, Bobby. We're going to finish off.  
21 There's an individual who's on Zoom who's labeled as  
22 SB. If you'd like to testify, please speak now. One  
23 last time. Person on Zoom labeled SB, if you'd like  
24 to testify? Hearing no response, we're going to turn  
25 to Chair Feliz to close out this hearing. Thank you.

1  
2 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much. I  
3 want to thank everyone that testified today, from the  
4 Fire Department to HPD, to tenants affected by the  
5 fire, to GYO, the Gambian Youth Organization, and  
6 every single legal organization that testified at  
7 today's hearing. I'll conclude the hearing by  
8 mentioning and reiterating what I mentioned earlier.  
9 The Twin Parks tragedy was a horrible tragedy. We  
10 must do everything within our power to make sure that  
11 something like that never happens again. We have to  
12 create a stronger system of housing laws and fire  
13 safety laws, and we also have to make sure as we  
14 heard today that we are aggressively enforcing our  
15 laws. The fire and the tragedy at Twin Parks was  
16 preventable, and we have to make sure that something  
17 like that never happens again. We have to enforce  
18 our heating laws, our self-closing door laws, and  
19 never create the situation where families feel like  
20 they have-- they have to use a space heater in order  
21 to survive a cold winter. Landlords are already  
22 required to keep apartments in a safe and habitable  
23 condition, and that requires and includes proper  
24 heating. So I want to thank everyone that testified  
25 today. This committee, the Committee on Fire



1 Prevention is committed to building that stronger  
2 system of enforcement to make sure that our families  
3 and our tenants are protected. So I want to thank  
4 everyone that testified today, and I'll also briefly  
5 pass it off to the co-chairs. Have any additional  
6 comments before we conclude?  
7

8 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Yeah, thank you.  
9 Thank you, Chair Feliz. Thank you, Chair Ariola, for  
10 collaborating on this hearing and creating this  
11 space, and I also just want to echo the thank you to  
12 everybody who testified today.

13 CHAIRPERSON ARIOLA: Absolutely the same  
14 sentiment. Thank you for everyone who testified, and  
15 I am proud to be part of this amazing team that's  
16 addressing this issue, and the legislation that's  
17 going to be put forth. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON FELIZ: Thank you so much,  
19 and that concludes today's hearing on fire safety in  
20 the City of New York. Thank you so much.

21 [gavel]  
22  
23  
24  
25

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TWIN PARKS CITYWIDE TASKFORCE ON FIRE PREVENTION,  
COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT,  
AND COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS 250

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TWIN PARKS CITYWIDE TASKFORCE ON FIRE PREVENTION,  
COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT,  
AND COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

251

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25

C E R T I F I C A T E

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



Date May 26, 2022