



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Jumaane D. Williams

**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC HOUSING**

MAY 19, 2023

Good Morning.

My name is Jumaane D. Williams and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. Thank you very much Chair Avilés and members of the Committee on Public Housing for holding this hearing and allowing me the opportunity to provide a statement.

The City of New York has been in a perpetual housing crisis suffering from predatory landlords, skyrocketing rent, and the increase of evictions among communities of more color. The center of this crisis is the affordability of NYC's existing housing stock. The need for more supportive and special needs housing, as well as more housing for low, extremely low, and middle-income New Yorkers should be prioritized. More than 50% of New Yorkers are currently rent burdened.

I have been a housing advocate for as long as I can remember and currently this is the worst I have seen. My office and I have released a report on NYCHA called, [*How the Other Half Lives in Public Housing*](#), highlighting the unjustified and dangerous conditions at NYCHA developments that we witnessed during our 5 Borough Tour in 2022. It has been eight months since this report was published and these issues have yet to be addressed in a meaningful way. I am calling on my colleagues to take a deeper dive into my proposed recommendations so that we can help the nearly ½ million NYCHA residents.

NYCHA has failed to create a safe and healthy living environment for its residents. Every New Yorker deserves quality housing irrespective of what type of housing they reside in. We need leaders from all levels of government to provide NYCHA the necessary resources including the funds to address residents needs as well as the aging infrastructure of its buildings.

My recommendations are as follows:

1. Amend Local Law 55-2018 to include NYCHA. Local Law 55 known as the Healthy Homes Act prescribes the manner to abate mold and pests, as well as imposes monetary fines for failure to correct;
2. Amend Local Law 127-2021 to mandate automatic inspections by NYC inspectors and the issuance of any building or housing code violations;
3. NYCHA should develop a reliable list of contractors that can apply through the RFP process to do work within their developments;



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Jumaane D. Williams

4. Department of Buildings oversight to determine whether NYCHA is complying with Local Law 152-2016 that requires inspections of gas lines every 4 years by a licensed master plumber;
5. Approval by the NYC Office of Management and Budget to allow NYCHA to utilize the Job Order Contract (JOC) for certain capital eligible projects that will assist in fast tracking much needed capital work so it is not subject to the long delays that are inherent in the federal procurement process;
6. Mandate that NYCHA, in advance of a resident meeting, provide one month's notice and proof thereof, that states the date and time when it will present at a Resident Association meeting on its upcoming capital work in that development;
7. Create an administrative process for residents to follow in disputing closed tickets when the work has not been completed. The process should conclude with a written document that determines whether the work was not completed and, if not, a return date for repairs must be scheduled, and a referral to the supervisors of the employee who closed the ticket without doing the work;
8. NYCHA should provide training to their staff and to all Resident Association leadership on the use of the Service Interruption Portal;
9. Complaints to 311 must trigger dispatching city inspectors to inspect NYCHA apartments, independently assess complaints, document housing authority violations as part of the city's violation databases, and be given a letter grade for each violation with the assigned time to cure the violation or incur monetary fines;
10. NYCHA must enforce and comply with Section 3 of the HUD Act of 1968. If OMB approves additional capital projects to go through the JOC process, then there are immediate opportunities to utilize Section 3 with the added benefit of employing people who live in or near NYCHA that look like or are the residents of NYCHA;
11. NYCHA should scale the number of live-in supers to the number of residents and units at each building to ensure they are proportional to each other. Once the OPA receives previously requested headcount information from NYCHA, the OPA can recommend a number. For example, buildings can be grouped together to allow for three supers to be assigned to a designated number of residential units. Ideally, the three supers would be available to work a different 8 hour shift, thereby creating 24 hour coverage, and enabling them to address issues that arise outside of the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. working hours;
12. NYCHA should have security in senior citizen buildings;
13. NYCHA must have roof doors with silent working alarms that alert (management or the NYPD or both) when an unauthorized person opens the roof door, but it is silent so that it doesn't interfere with the quality of life of building residents. Currently, residents and



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Jumaane D. Williams

non-residents both have access to the roof, which creates a dangerous living environment and puts residents at risk; and

14. There should be greater investment in community based resources that can improve public safety in NYCHA houses.

We must adequately invest and support NYCHA residents who deserve fair housing and the opportunities that come with it. I would like to see a different approach taken by the administration as we continue this discussion and how we can protect and create new opportunities without harming long standing communities.

Thank you.