

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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June 21, 2023
Start: 12:50 p.m.
Recess: 12:58 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - COMMITTEE ROOM, 14TH
FLOOR

B E F O R E: Pierina Ana Sanchez, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Shaun Abreu
Alexa Aviles
Charles Barron
Tiffany Caban
David M. Carr
Eric Dinowitz
Oswald Feliz
Crystal Hudson

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a prerecorded
3 test for the Committee on Housing and Buildings.
4 Today's date is June 21, 2023. Today's hearing is on
5 Housing and Buildings, and it's being recorded by
6 Dean Hope.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon and
8 welcome to the New York City hybrid hearing on the
9 Committee on Housing and Buildings.

10 Please silence all electronic devices.

11 Chair, we are ready to begin.

12 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much,
13 everyone, for attending. [GAVEL]

14 Good afternoon. I am Council Member
15 Pierina Sanchez, Chair of the Committee on Housing
16 and Buildings. We are holding on one second.

17 [GAVEL] Good afternoon. I am Council
18 Member Pierina Sanchez, Chair of the Committee on
19 Housing and Buildings.

20 We are here today to vote on a resolution
21 calling on the federal government to change the area
22 median income calculations as it relates to
23 affordable housing. At the heart of concerns and
24 debates around affordability is the ever-present
25 question, affordable to who, and AMIs, area median

2 incomes, are the core culprit. Many of us on this
3 Council, in this state, and in many communities
4 across the country, we're tired, we're tired of
5 arguing about whether the affordable housing that we
6 are creating is affordable and is serving the people
7 who need it the most in our localities.

8 Each year, the U.S. Department of Housing
9 and Urban Development, or HUD, sets the AMIs for all
10 cities and urban areas. AMI is an extremely important
11 metric because it is used to determine whether a
12 household meets income eligibility standards for
13 certain affordable housing programs, and it is used
14 to set the rent charged to tenants in certain
15 apartments. AMI is the benchmark for what is
16 considered affordable in any development, any
17 affordable housing created through government
18 dollars, federal government dollars, and, quite
19 simply, it is done incorrectly for New York City.
20 This is because New York City's AMI calculation
21 incorporates not only the five boroughs' data but
22 also Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland counties which
23 have higher median incomes and lower cost of living
24 compared to New York City. For example, according to
25 the most recent census data, the median household

1 income in Putnam county was 111,617 dollars in 2021
2 while the median income for a household in the Bronx
3 was 43,726, and in my District a worker earns just
4 23,000 dollars as a single adult. Yet, we are all
5 lumped together.
6

7 These additional counties are not the
8 only problem with the method of calculating AMIs
9 currently. HUD also uses a high housing cost
10 adjustment which further increases the AMI by linking
11 AMIs to the fair market rent, not household income.
12 Simply put, this cost adjustment further inflates the
13 AMI, leaving the lower affordability levels even less
14 affordable to those who need the most assistance.
15 Said differently and simply, the way that AMIs are
16 calculated leave out the lowest income families most
17 vulnerable to eviction, displacement and thus most in
18 need of the very assistance that AMIs are supposed to
19 determine. Relying on AMIs for calculating affordable
20 housing creates a scale of affordability that just
21 isn't actually affordable to New Yorkers in our
22 communities. Creating more affordable housing starts
23 with fixing this problem, fixing this measure by
24 which we define affordable housing.
25

2 With that, we are here to vote on
3 Resolution 80, which was sponsored by Council Member
4 Brannan, calling on Congress to pass and the
5 President to sign legislation in relation to
6 increasing the supply and affordability of housing
7 and to adjust the calculations of area median incomes
8 to reflect local realities for the purpose of federal
9 low-income housing assistance.

10 I am joined today by Members of the
11 Committee.

12 Before I ask the Clerk to call the roll,
13 I want to see if my Colleagues have questions or
14 comments.

15 Council Member Barron.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: I know y'all are
17 surprised. I'm going to support this, but this is
18 weak, this is very weak. It's not defined. It's very
19 general. We don't even define affordability in this.
20 We leave it up to the feds, and we already know that
21 they're not capable of doing that. The area median
22 income I think right now of New York is about 109,000
23 dollars for a family of three, and so when HUD
24 defines affordability as 80 percent of that, we're
25 talking about 90,000 dollars for a family of three.

2 When I first came in, the area median income of New
3 York was 86,000 for a family of three and, even then,
4 I wouldn't sign anything that had that because that
5 was 64,000 for a family of three, and my neighborhood
6 area median income is 36,000 dollars for a family of
7 three so even if you did way back then, it still
8 wasn't affordable. Then the other thing that we have
9 to do is look out for, if you do a housing project
10 today and you got 33 percent affordability, that's
11 for today. As the area median income goes up, what
12 you signed on today is no longer affordable five
13 years from now. It usually takes four and five years
14 for them to build things so I just think that the
15 Council, in the meantime, we should do something
16 better to this. We should have local power, local
17 authority to determine our area median income for our
18 local City of New York. Also, while this is happening
19 and while stuff is in place, you still have the power
20 to determine what the area median income could be in
21 a project if it gets the support of the City Council
22 so this is what they're telling you it is, which
23 we're not bound by that. Even our Mandatory
24 Inclusionary Housing is much too low, 25 percent, is
25 much too low because you're saying 75 percent can be

2 market, and that's how gentrification happens in our
3 neighborhoods, and that's how a lot of our people are
4 in trouble so I'm going to support this, but it has
5 no teeth and it has no real substance, but I'll
6 support it in spirit and say we in the City Council,
7 we should judge it project-by-project so when these
8 projects come in, at least we can say no if it's not
9 60 percent affordable as the Chairwoman said as
10 affordable to our definition of affordability then we
11 don't have to pass it until that happens so we can
12 still not be enslaved to HUD's definition of
13 affordability. I will be voting in the affirmative
14 with those concerns.

15 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much,
16 Council Member Barron. I join in your statements.

17 Okay, well, thank you all to my
18 Colleagues. I'll now ask the Clerk to call the roll.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Good
20 afternoon. William Martin, Committee Clerk. Roll call
21 vote Committee on Housing and Buildings, Resolution
22 80. Chair Sanchez.

23 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Aye on all.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Dinowitz.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Aye.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Feliz.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Aye.

4 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
5 you. Abreu.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Aye.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
8 you. Aviles.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILES: Aye, and agree
10 with Council Member Barron. Thank you.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Barron.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Okay. That's my
13 vote, okay.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Caban.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER CABAN: Aye.

16 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
17 you. Hudson.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Carr.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: Nay.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: By a vote
22 of eight in the affirmative, one in the negative, and
23 no abstention, item has been adopted by the
24 Committee.

25 Madam Chair, that is a full Committee.

2 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much to
3 all of my Colleagues for attending today.

4 With that, this hearing is closed.

5 [GAVEL]

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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 June 28, 2023