

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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December 6, 2023  
Start: 10:49 a.m.  
Recess: 10:55 a.m.

HELD AT: COMMITTEE ROOM - CITY HALL

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

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

2 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone  
3 check for the Committee on Housing and Buildings in  
4 the Committee Room recorded on December 6, 2023, by  
5 Layla Lynch.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning and  
7 welcome to the New York City Council vote of the  
8 Committee on Housing and Buildings.

9 At this time, can everybody please  
10 silence your cell phones?

11 Thank you for your cooperation.

12 Chair, we are ready to begin.

13 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: [GAVEL] Good  
14 morning. I am Council Member Pierina Sanchez, Chair  
15 of the Committee on Housing and Buildings.

16 We are here today to vote on Proposed  
17 Introduction number 195-B sponsored by Council Member  
18 Carlina Rivera and two resolutions to strengthen and  
19 protect the Right-to-Counsel in eviction proceedings  
20 throughout our State.

21 By 2030, New York City needs to produce  
22 over 500,000 units of housing including deeply  
23 affordable and supportive housing to keep pace with  
24 demand and stem the tide of losing residents to our  
25 suburbs and other parts of the nation. As we discuss

2 and do our part to further possible solutions to this  
3 challenge, we also need to ensure that we are  
4 utilizing spaces and units that we have available  
5 today. Given the shortage of available housing to  
6 many New Yorkers, it may come as a surprise to hear  
7 that there are vacant lots and empty apartments  
8 throughout the city. Unoccupied apartments, they fall  
9 into disrepair affecting neighbors, tenants, and  
10 building-wide systems. These units are often lower  
11 priority for building owners since they are  
12 unoccupied. There may be little reason to make  
13 repairs to ensure that the empty spaces are in good  
14 condition, and there is no tenant occupying the unit  
15 to report hazardous conditions, but the longer that  
16 these units are unavailable and neglected, the harder  
17 it is to rehabilitate these units and the more likely  
18 that they can affect neighboring tenants. Today, we  
19 will vote on Proposed Intro. 195-B sponsored by  
20 Council Member Rivera in relation to requiring  
21 inspections of unoccupied dwelling units which would  
22 require the Department of Housing Preservation and  
23 Development to inspect unoccupied units when they are  
24 causing hazardous or immediately hazardous conditions  
25 in occupied units. It would also create a duty for

owners to keep unoccupied units in a state of good repair and for HPD to publish violations for the unoccupied units on their website.

Next, as our City continues to confront a pandemic-exacerbated housing crisis, housing quality at existing homes is declining and, even still, a majority of New Yorkers are housing cost burdened. An increasing number of New Yorkers, especially vulnerable New Yorkers, are facing eviction, and we must look at all the tools in the City's toolkit and the State's toolkit to confront the crisis. In 2013, only 1 percent of tenants in New York City were represented in housing court. When the City Council passed the Universal Access to Counsel legislation in 2017, more commonly known as Right-to-Counsel, we began shifting the balance toward tenant empowerment, providing tenants with an attorney in housing court. According to the 2022 report from the Office of Civil Justice, 78 percent of households represented by an attorney in housing court were able to stay in their homes, receiving much needed assistance and guidance in navigating their situations, but legal service providers have been stretched thin to provide these vital services to eligible New Yorkers. In order to

2 fulfill the promise of Right-to-Counsel, the program  
3 must be strengthened, and further protections at the  
4 State level are needed to ensure that eligible  
5 tenants and occupants are able to obtain counsel in  
6 their proceedings.

7           To that end, we will be voting on two  
8 resolutions. Proposed Resolution number 345-B  
9 sponsored by myself calling on the New York State  
10 Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign A1493  
11 and S2721 in relation to establishing a New York  
12 State Office of Civil Representation to provide  
13 access to legal services in eviction proceedings.  
14 This legislation would expand Right-to-Counsel  
15 throughout the state by creating an Office of Civil  
16 Representation, providing the right to free and full  
17 representation to all New Yorkers in all cases that  
18 might result in their displacement. The State  
19 legislation also includes notice requirements and  
20 requires adjournments until a tenant has been able to  
21 secure an attorney which would help address the  
22 burden on legal service providers that are beyond  
23 capacity in providing services to low-income New  
24 Yorkers in eviction proceedings, and Proposed  
25 Resolution number 499-B sponsored by Council Member

2 Shaun Abreu calling on New York State Legislature to  
3 pass and the Governor to sign A4993/S3254 requiring  
4 that any party eligible under Local Law for free  
5 legal counsel for an eviction proceeding may be  
6 granted an adjournment by the court for additional  
7 time to secure counsel.

8 I am joined today by my Colleagues who  
9 will be named when we call the roll, and so I would  
10 like to thank my Chief-of-Staff, Sam Cardenas, and my  
11 Legislative Director Kadeem Robinson as well as the  
12 Housing and Buildings Committee Staff, Taylor Zelony,  
13 Claire MacLachlan, Jose Conde, Andrew Bourne, Dan  
14 Kroop, and Brooke Frye.

15 I will now turn it over to the Clerk to  
16 call the roll.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Good  
18 morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk. Roll call  
19 vote Committee on Housing and Buildings. All items  
20 are coupled. Chair Sanchez.

21 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Aye on all.

22 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Dinowitz.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Aye on all.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Feliz.

25 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Aye on all.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Abreu.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER ABREU: Thank you, Chair  
4 Sanchez. Aye on all.

5 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Avilés.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Aye on all.

7 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Barron.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER BARRON: Aye on all.

9 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Cabán.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABÁN: Aye on all.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Hudson.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Aye.

13 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Carr.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CARR: No on all.

15 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: With a  
16 vote of eight in the affirmative, one in the  
17 negative, and no abstentions, all items have been  
18 adopted by the Committee.

19 Madam Chair, that is a full Committee.

20 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you, Clerk.

21 This hearing is now closed. [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 December 11, 2023