

**TESTIMONY FROM NYCHA GENERAL MANAGER VITO MUSTACIUOLO  
AN UPDATE ON NYCHA'S PLAN TO ADDRESS CHRONIC MOLD CONDITIONS AT  
NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2020 – 1:00 PM  
REMOTE HEARING (VIRTUAL ROOM 2)**

Chair Alicka Ampry-Samuel, members of the Committee on Public Housing, other members of the City Council, NYCHA residents, and members of the public: good afternoon. I am Vito Mustaciuolo, NYCHA's General Manager & Chief Operating Officer. I am pleased to be joined by Chief Compliance Officer Daniel Greene, Vice President for Healthy Homes Rassoul Azarnejad, and Senior Director of the Office of Mold Assessment and Remediation Elena Tenchikova. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss NYCHA's efforts to provide residents with the healthy and safe homes they deserve.

Under the leadership of Chair Russ and our *Blueprint for Change* vision, and in collaboration with partners like the federal monitor, we are transforming this agency so we can be a better landlord for our residents and improve their quality of life. Combatting mold is a key focus of this work, and we are eager to share with you the progress we've made as well as our plans for continued improvement.

### **The Challenges**

Although mold has been a persistent challenge at the Authority over the years, we have made its prevention and remediation a top priority. In light of the pandemic, we increased our focus on mold remediation and we understand the importance of these efforts. Before I describe our work in this area, I'd like to give you some context on why mold is so challenging and how we got to where we are today.

The majority of NYCHA's buildings are more than a half century old. Many of them haven't received the needed major capital improvements vital to their infrastructure. Mold is a symptom of our ailing buildings, a consequence of a severe lack of funding to properly maintain and repair aging infrastructure; replace leaking roofs, windows,

pointing, crumbling pipes, and old ventilation systems; and our ability to maintain sufficient staffing to keep up with the mold that results from these conditions.

Mold is a challenge for any building owner, especially those operating large, multi-family buildings. Mold is everywhere – its spores are present in the air both indoors and outdoors. Many building materials provide a favorable environment for it to grow, making its occurrence very common – so this is something that many landlords contend with and is not unique to NYCHA. At NYCHA, the issue is twofold. We lack the funding to make all the capital repairs that are needed (due to decades of federal government underfunding, our buildings are now confronting over \$40 billion in capital needs). And identifying the source of mold is not straightforward. The moisture that promotes mold growth can come from a leaking roof, leaking pipes, or another apartment. If the source, or sources, are not properly identified, the mold may come back. Once the source is identified, the correction can sometimes involve complex repairs to address it or may even require full capital replacement of a system.

To address this critical issue for our residents, we implemented Mold Busters, an innovative program to combat mold; developed a Mold and Leaks Action Plan in collaboration with the federal monitor as well as residents and resident advocates; are working with an independent, court-appointed Ombudsperson to resolve mold issues; and are bringing major renovations to our buildings through a variety of preservation strategies and investments.

## **The Background**

In 2016, NYCHA began working with a court-appointed Special Master, a certified industrial hygienist, and building systems experts to improve and update our mold inspection and remediation processes. This was part of our work to fulfill the obligations of the 2014 Baez Consent Decree, which requires NYCHA to abate mold and excessive moisture and their root causes in a timely and effective manner. Under the guidance of the Special Master, we launched the Mold Busters pilot program at 38 developments in 2017. In 2018, we established NYCHA's first-ever Office of Mold Assessment and

Remediation. In accordance with the Revised Baez Consent Decree, we began rolling out Mold Busters to all our developments in January 2019, a process we completed in September of that year. An independent Ombudsperson and Ombudsperson Call Center (OCC) were also put in place as part of the Revised Baez Consent Decree to address residents' complaints about leaks, mold, and excessive moisture repair orders. The Ombudsperson and OCC work with NYCHA to prioritize mold reports and expedite their remediation.

## **Mold Busters**

Mold Busters is the foundation for our progress in this area. Developed in consultation with industry experts, it's an aggressive program that enables our staff to more successfully identify the source of mold and remediate it. Its five key components, which are focused on finding and correcting the source of mold, mark a significant evolution in our approach:

- 1) **New tools:** Our staff use high-tech tools that provide them with information to determine the source of the excessive moisture that is causing the mold. This includes moisture meters specially designed to differentiate between condensation moisture (which is related to ventilation) and moisture within the wall, from a leak, or water infiltration. Other tools are anemometers, which measure ventilation; hygrometers, which measure relative humidity; and boroscopes, which provide a less invasive view into the wall. Finding the right source, or sources, of the excessive moisture is the first step to correcting the underlying condition causing the mold.
- 2) **New materials:** We are using a mold-inhibiting paint after remediating some of our toughest mold cases, where we are concerned with mold recurrence.
- 3) **New strategies:** All of this vital information is being recorded in a new inspection format, designed with a mold expert and enhanced by our IT staff. This new format is on staff's handhelds, and it guides them through recording the information and then choosing the next steps and remediation methods, all with system-guided checks along the way. In the end, this produces a documented project plan with information that can be passed along to each craft involved in

completing the work.

- 4) **New training:** Our staff received new, enhanced mold assessment and remediation training through eight hours of classroom training and a hands-on field training day at each development. In addition to training the superintendents and assistant superintendents, we included skilled trades representatives so they could learn the new remediation methods alongside the staff who would be directing them.
- 5) **Accountability:** The new protocol requires photos taken of the area involved, from the first work order to the last, at each step and new craft involved, providing a documented remediation plan. Additionally, after all the work is completed, the superintendent or assistant superintendent is then required to complete a follow-up inspection, certifying the work was done and also documenting it with a photo.

### **Taking Action on Mold and Leaks**

Since July 2017, NYCHA has completed inspections for over 38,000 mold work orders and performed remediation work for nearly 22,000 work orders. As mentioned earlier, we established NYCHA's Office of Mold Assessment and Remediation (OMAR) in 2018, whose staff are dedicated to addressing mold. Since then, NYCHA has invested \$15 million in OMAR, and will be investing an additional \$20 million over the next five years. OMAR is also investing \$50 million in capital funding for ventilation work. In 2019, in partnership with training experts, we trained 2,870 staff who perform or supervise mold remediation work. We also trained over 550 staff in nearly 1,400 field training sessions. Our training program was put on hold in March due to the pandemic, but restarted last month in accordance with COVID-19 safety protocols.

OMAR is organized into the following units:

- The Mold Response Unit, which is composed of project managers and Resident Communication Associates focused on customer service. They work with the independent Ombudsperson Call Center (OCC) to resolve mold and leaks that

haven't been addressed by the NYCHA staff who initially respond. The Resident Communication Associates interact with both residents and development staff to ensure inspections are scheduled and to expedite the completion of work orders; residents are pleased with this improved communication and dedication to customer service.

- Contract Administration, which works to improve building ventilation by spearheading the ventilation initiative, where engineering and contractor services are used to assess and modernize the ventilation systems. It also oversees contracts to remediate the most critical mold and leak cases.
- Analytics & Process Change, which works with independent data analysts to analyze mold data and determine how we can further refine the Mold Busters process. This team improved data reporting and transparency through a metrics dashboard accessible to all staff, and it's currently developing a new Standard Procedure for addressing leaks.

OMAR already revised NYCHA's Standard Procedure on addressing mold complaints and OMAR is leading the efforts outlined in our Mold and Leaks Action Plan, which was developed as part of the 2019 HUD Agreement and approved by the federal monitor in March of this year. The Mold and Leaks Action Plan outlines strategies for:

- Preparing and providing remediation plans for residents within 5 days;
- Eliminating the backlog of long-term work orders (remediating mold and its underlying root cause within 7 days for repairs that can be performed by a maintenance worker or caretaker, or within 15 days for repairs that must be performed by skilled trades);
- Increasing staff and vendor capacity for mold and developing relocation policies;
- Restructuring skilled trades scheduling and improving communications practices;
- Improving and repairing mechanical ventilation;
- Developing clear and enforceable protocols for roof and roof fan inspections;
- Improving communication and engagement with residents on mold prevention and remediation processes;

- Training staff on mold response;
- Increasing staff capacity for addressing emergency leaks; and
- Creating a new Standard Procedure for leak control.

To improve how we address mold at the Authority, we have been collaborating with partners such as the mold remediation specialists at Microecologies, Inc.; the Baez Independent Data Analyst, Stout; the Ombudsperson Call Center (CCC) and the court-appointed Ombudsperson Cesar de Castro; and the federal monitor. These relationships are proving to be successful. For instance, in the latest reporting period (May 2020 through July 2020), no cases required action from the mold Ombudsperson.

In addition, residents now have several channels for reporting mold complaints: NYCHA's Compliance Department, the federal monitor, and the OCC – entities that all communicate and coordinate regularly to address residents' concerns. NYCHA informed residents of how they can obtain assistance from the OCC through the NYCHA website, a rent insert, emails, newsletters, flyers, social media posts, a *NYCHA Journal* article, as well as outreach to resident leaders. It's an effective partnership – the OCC has assisted over 2,200 households with mold and leak-related complaints as of July 31, 2020; as of that date, NYCHA is in the process of resolving complaints for 74 percent of those families and fully resolved cases for 525 residents.

## **Building Investments and Improvements**

I would like to note that neither the HUD agreement nor Baez requires NYCHA to replace roof fans – we are doing this proactively to ensure we comply with the requirement that all roof fans are operable. We are replacing roof fans portfolio-wide, thanks to a variety of funding streams. And we inspect roof fans on a monthly basis, repairing (or replacing) them whenever necessary. Since 2018, we've spent nearly \$3.7 million on repairing and replacing roof fans.

We are also replacing nearly 950 roofs, benefitting 180,000 residents, thanks to a \$1.3 billion investment from Mayor de Blasio. These upgrades will go a long way in eliminating the leaks that create favorable conditions for mold. Please note that the timeline to complete this work has been impacted by the pandemic.

The connection between aging infrastructure in dire need of repair and mold growth and recurrence cannot be emphasized enough. That is why our *Blueprint* preservation strategies, which will bring top-to-bottom renovations of every building in our portfolio, are an essential part of our work to combat mold across the Authority. These renovations involve new kitchens and bathrooms, ventilation, and piping – areas that are critical to preventing mold from occurring in the first place. We thank you for your support of these preservation ideas and strategies, which will bring improved quality of life for our residents in so many ways.

### **The Way Forward**

While mold is a longstanding and challenging issue, we have the partners and plans we need to overcome it. With the Mold Busters program, the Mold and Leaks Action Plan, major capital investments, and partners like the federal monitor and OCC, we will continue to make real improvements at the Authority that make a real difference for residents.

Again, we thank you for your support. As always, we welcome your suggestions as well as feedback from our residents on how we can continue to make progress together. Residents, of course, are our most important stakeholder and are at the center of everything we do.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have.



**Testimony of Javier Lopez, Chief Strategy Officer, Red Hook Initiative, before the  
Committee on Public Housing  
Wednesday, October 7 at 1:00 p.m  
NYCHA's Plan to Address Chronic Mold Conditions at NYCHA Developments**

Organizational Background

The Red Hook Initiative (RHI) is a community based organization based out of Red Hook, Brooklyn. For 18 years RHI has worked with the tenants of NYCHA's Red Hook Houses and other low-income community members to carry out resident-led solutions to neighborhood problems. RHI has developed and led a proven comprehensive model for place-based social change that serves over 65000 Red Hook residents each year.

Testimony

Good Afternoon Chair Amply-Samuel and members of the Committee on Public Housing. My name is Javier Lopez and I am the Chief Strategy Officer at the Red Hook Initiative (RHI).

Since 2014 RHI has worked tirelessly with neighborhood and city-wide partners to better understand NYCHA's mold crisis. We have examined mold's impact on resident's health, we have reviewed NYCHA's plans on mold removal and we have created safe spaces for NYCHA tenants, where they are able to educate us on the barriers they face in removing mold from their apartments.

In 2017 our Founder and Former Executive Director Jill Eisenhard testified on mold's impact on NYCHA's Red Hook Houses in front of this very Committee. The stakes were high in 2017, but they are even higher now.

Before I offer our mold removal recommendations, I would be remiss if I did not mention NYCHA's most recent attempts to remove mold from its units. Both NYCHA's roof-fan replacement project, which is behind schedule, and its Mold Ombudsperson Call Center (OCC), which struggles to meet the expectations associated with the volume of tenant calls, can be viewed by some as progress but both cannot be seen as the City's sole mold problem solving agents. NYCHA, as we all know, is facing a level of fiscal and operational uncertainty that sets up these initiatives to struggle and ultimately fail. To meet the end of this mold crisis NYCHA and its tenants deserve a city-wide response.

A reminder that unaddressed mold in the home damages one's immunity and negatively impacts their respiratory health. According to a 2018 New York State Department of Health report, 30% of NYCHA apartments registered as having mold. That percentage of mold in NYCHA apartments has shifted this crisis into a five alarm emergency. This "emergency" showed its tragic side earlier this summer (May) when the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene released statistics showing 7,818 of NYCHA's 382,000 tenants had tested positive for COVID-19. It is important to note that this one community during the height of the pandemic experienced a 2% infection rate.

Compare this 2% infection rate to the current percentage of people tested citywide who are positive for COVID-19:

- **NYC threshold is now under 5% positive [formerly 15%]**
- **NYC's 7-day rolling average [new indicator] 1.65%**

Also included in the City's early summer COVID-19 report was NYCHA tenants mortality statistics. The report stated 1,241 NYCHA tenant deaths were attributed to COVID-19 or "likely due to COVID-19." These glaring COVID-19 transmission inequities and mortality rates experienced by NYCHA tenants requires a different level of urgency and response.



**It is for these reasons mentioned above that we are asking you Chair Amply-Samuel and the members of the Committee on Public Housing the City to declare NYCHA's mold crisis a city-wide emergency and for NYCHA's mold removal to be part of the Public Health and Medical Emergency that is COVID-19. The unfortunate yet clear relationship between mold in NYCHA units and its impact on NYCHA tenant's vulnerability to COVID-19 requires: a) every health code be reviewed and updated b) new public health laws to be written c) the expansion of hyperlocal and accessible health care services d) the establishment of an multi-sector mold removal taskforce.**

NYCHA cannot address this mold emergency on its own. More must be done. New York City's brilliant Public Health and Medical minds, including but not limited to NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dave Chokshi, President and Chief Executive Officer of NYC Health + Hospitals Dr. Mitchell Katz, as well as all the Presidents and CEOs of NY Greater New York Hospital Association must know that in order to beat COVID-19 you also have to include removing all environmental factors that can turn a positive transmission into a severe illness that can ultimately result in a hospitalization or death. NYCHA's mold removal problem solving table has to be big enough to include them.

**This Committee can bring New York City's Public Health and Medical leaders and sister agencies together to help NYCHA remove mold and address the respiratory health of every NYCHA resident. It is the right approach to take.**

Respectfully Submitted:

Javier Lopez

Chief Strategy Officer

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Wednesday, October 7, 2020

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**Oral Testimony**  
Before New York City Council  
Committee on Public Housing

Michele Holmes  
*Member, WE ACT for Environmental Justice*

Good afternoon Chair Ampry-Samuel and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding mold conditions in NYCHA.

My name is Michelle Holmes, and I'm a resident of NYCHA. and I have been dealing with the impacts of chronic mold in my home for a very long time. I am also a member of WE ACT for Environmental Justice, together we are fighting for healthy housing in NYCHA.

I am testifying today in support of increasing efforts to address chronic mold conditions in NYCHA. This includes increasing transparency to tenants about how the issue is being address. Most importantly, we need more action. We have been dealing with chronic mold conditions for decades, even though the issue is 100% preventable.

I moved downsized an apartment that was covered in mold, and the mold was just painted over. NYCHA came and wiped some solution ovet the mold, let it sit for 20 minutes, then painted over it. Usually within 6 months, the mold comes through darker at that exact same spot. And, I was exposed to the toxic fumes from the cover up. It was the apartment from hell, and we became used to the terrible living condition. My infant daughter living with me was exposed to the mold for a long time. With WE ACT's help, I was able to get my apartment remediated. But, this issue still exists because it has just been band-aided for decades instead of actually getting the issue fixed.

Mold has been a major public health issue in NYCHA for a very long time. It affects all people's health. Mold exacerbates respiratory and cardiovascular issues. It triggers asthma, a condition for which children of color (and adults) are disproportionately affected. Asthma has major implications for the lifespan. Not only is it a direct threat to life and safety. But also, because asthma attacks lead children to miss school. Asthma attacks in New York City amount to over 100,000 missed days of school each year. You can imagine this has huge impacts on the long-term success of our children.

It is important to act fast to address our mold crisis in NYCHA, because we public housing residents deserve to live healthy lives. NYCHA is an asset to our City. Our population amounts to 600,000 people – that is larger than some cities around the world. For too long we have been pushed to the side, our health and wellbeing has been ignored, and now with the additional crisis of COVID-19, we are dealing with



even great social, economic, and political impacts. The environmental and systematic racism that has led NYCHA to disrepair must be brought to justice now.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Michele Holmes



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My name is Ray Lopez. I am the Director of Programs and the Director of Environmental Health Services at LSA Family Health Service, a CBO in East Harlem. Thank you to Chairwoman Ampry-Samuel, Council Member Torres and the rest of the Committee for giving us this opportunity to testify in favor of Int. No. 1911, to ensure all tenants are notified about the independent Mold and Leak Ombudsperson.

I have worked at LSA for 19 years visiting people in their homes who suffer from asthma that is made worse by housing conditions. In that span, I have inspected thousands of apartments, more than half of those apartments have been in NYCHA buildings. I am also a leader with Metro IAF. Working with NYCHA residents and other leaders citywide we helped to push for repairs to hundreds of apartments and broader improvements. However, court-appointed Ombudsperson established through the *Baez v. NYCHA* consent decree Rev Cruz discussed has led to more concrete improvements for NYCHA tenants than anything I have seen in two decades.

The court-appointed, independent Ombudsperson, Cesar De Castro is supported by the independent court-appointed mold and leak Ombudsperson Call Center (OCC). The OCC opened November of 2019, and since July 2020 all NYCHA tenants can make their appeal to the Ombudsperson by contacting the OCC at 888-341-7152 or at <https://ombnyc.com>, if NYCHA does not fix their mold in 15 days.

The OCC helps and pushes NYCHA to take effective action to remediate mold. The Ombudsperson even has the authority to hire independent contractors at NYCHA's expense to make mold and leak related repairs if necessary. While the Ombudsperson hasn't yet had to take enforcement action, he and the OCC have made significant positive progress. While we in Metro IAF won repairs in about 700 units across the city in 7 years, between 11/1/19 and 9/21/20, the Ombudsperson and OCC had the following impacts, according to recent information provided by the OCC:

- Over 3,400 NYCHA households have filed a complaint with the OCC

- Nearly 1,900 NYCHA households have had some work performed in response to their mold or leak complaint, and over 1,200 of them had their mold and leak complaints fully resolved
- Roughly 1,000 others families have had their complaints referred to NYCHA's mold response unit
- 500 more complaints are in various stages of intake

The Ombudsperson and the OCC have the authority of the federal court, the access to all of NYCHA's data and a direct line of communication with key staff to help and push NYCHA to significantly improve conditions, identify NYCHA operational "pain points," and other patterns in NYCHA's work that can be improved. Most importantly, the OCC models effective communication with NYCHA tenants, who finally have recourse if they are left waiting at home for workers who don't show up.

Scores of tenants we work with have gotten real help from the Ombudsperson and the OCC. Later you will hear from a tenant leader from LSA, Ms. Diana Vazquez. Ms. Vazquez is from the Jefferson Houses will testify about her experience, but I'll share two other examples

- A resident from Metro North Houses experienced frequent leaks that severely damaged her bathroom and bedroom. The resident first reported the problem on January 2nd, 2019, she submitted several complaints to NYCHA and housing court. NYCHA workers would fix the walls but failed to identify the source of the leak; causing the leak to keep coming back . Over a year later, on the 6th of February 2020, the resident called the OCC to report the leaks and damages in her home. The OCC quickly got in touch with the management at Metro North and coordinated repair dates with the resident, and even got NYCHA workers to show up when they missed their first appointment. As of yesterday, the resident happily reported no leak had returned.
- A senior citizen from Jefferson Houses experienced a severe leak in her kitchen, spilling all over her bottom cabinets and floor. She called NYCHA and submitted a 24 hour emergency ticket for the leak. No one showed up within 24 hours, meanwhile the senior citizen spent the day mopping over and over again in an effort to contain the leak. We advised her to call the OCC and within a couple hours someone showed up to stop the leak and help her clean. The Plumber showed up the following day to replace the pipes. The resident was surprised how quickly NYCHA responded after she reached out to the OCC and how effectively they communicated with her.

The OCC has worked so well that Metro IAF's attorneys plan to make a motion to the court to extend the OCC for at least another year, and will work to ensure it continues as long as NYCHA needs this outside oversight.

Unfortunately, far too many tenants still are not aware of the Ombudsperson and OCC. It is important that every tenant who suffers from mold and leak issues can benefit from their

valuable oversight. That is why Metro IAF strongly endorses Bill 1911. We thank CM's Torres for writing this Bill, and to CM's Ampry Samuel, Ayala and Gibson for supporting it. We are eager to work with City Council to ensure it passes and is properly implemented.



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**Manhattan Together Statement at Committee on Public Housing hearing as delivered on Thursday, October 7, 2020 virtually via Zoom-Webinar regarding Oversight: An Update on NYCHA's Plan to Address Chronic Mold Conditions at NYCHA Developments, and the following item:**

- **Int. No. 1911, in relation to the provision of information to tenants of the New York city housing authority regarding the mold ombudsperson**

Good afternoon,

I am Rev. Getulio Cruz Jr., Pastor of Monte Sion Christian Church, located in the Lower East Side. Thank you to Chairwoman Ampry-Samuel and the rest of the committee for allowing us to testify.

I'm here with Metro IAF, to discuss our efforts to hold NYCHA accountable to really fixing mold in general, and to strongly endorse the City Council's Bill to ensure everyone knows about the great services of the mold Ombudsperson in particular.

New York City Metro IAF is made up of Manhattan Together, South Bronx Churches, East Brooklyn Congregations, & Queens Power, and is the largest network of faith-based institutions, schools and community organizations leading our city forward for everyone. We connect people from within our diverse groups to act together to push for concrete improvements in their communities and beyond. Because tens of thousands of our members, including half of my congregation, lives in public housing, we have been working with tenant leaders for over 20 years to document problems to fight for repairs and improvements.

Despite some early success, NYCHA continued to ignore the anguish of tenants who suffer with asthma and other respiratory problems. They painted over the mold and ignored the leaks that vigorously aggravated the tenant's health condition, especially of children and seniors.

So, we took NYCHA to Federal Court, and in December 2013 forced them to sign a historic class-action consent decree in Baez V NYCHA that required them to fix almost all mold cases in 15 days or less. After four long years of continued breach, we and our legal team, with the support of the 2016 appointed Special Master, got them to sign a revised consent decree in 2018 that brought in strong independent oversight via an Independent Data Analyst, an Independent Mold Analyst, and the Mold Ombudsperson

The important work done by the June 2019 court appointed Data Analyst (IDA), Neil Steinkamp, and Mold Expert (IMA), Bill Sothern demonstrated how much NYCHA was still falling short on fixing mold and leaks properly and identified specific things that NYCHA could do that would solve most mold and leak problems, as detailed in the Baez v NYCHA Joint Status Report submitted to the court on May 2020, that states, "Significant progress has been made under the Revised Consent Decree, but much is left to be done."

Four months ago we were hopeful that the progress would continue at a steady pace but have been grievously disappointed. Far too many tenants are still suffering from mold and leaks, and in far too many cases NYCHA still isn't living up to its commitments to remediate and prevent these problems.

Four of the most important steps they need to take are:

1. **Replacing all roof fans.** As NYCHA has known since 2016, thanks to the IMA, adequate ventilation is key to stopping mold and asthma. It was further determined that most of NYCHA's current fans were not providing enough ventilation to the 65% of bathrooms that depend on them.

In August of 2019, after we made the case that this was the single most important thing they could do to protect the tenant's health and safety, NYCHA committed to replacing all roof fans. However, given continued lack of progress, we are seriously concerned that NYCHA will not be able to meet their goal of replacing 1,669 roof fans by the end of the year or replacing all the roof fans by its June 2021 deadline in the HUD action plan. This will compromise tenants' health and safety. As Greg Smith's story in [thecity.nyc](http://thecity.nyc) this morning points out, there is strong reason to believe it will increase tenants' risk of contracting Covid-19 as well.

We know NYCHA is in conversation with contractors who we hope can make real progress on the ventilation issue. They must move forward as quickly as possible to make a deal with companies who can install hundreds of roof fans every week as soon as possible."

**2. More Mold Remediation Workers.** NYCHA identified the need to hire hundreds more mold remediation workers, but still has yet to do so.

**3. Resolving Scheduling Problems:** As the independent experts have confirmed, many of the complications in fixing mold and leaks come from NYCHA employees not showing up for appointments, not informing tenants of when they will come, or showing up in the wrong order. Two solutions have been identified:

-The creation of Resident Coordinators, to ensure residents and workers connect for appointments. We know that tenants who have worked with the 19 RCs are having a far better experience. However, NYCHA was required under the HUD Action Plan to hire at least 30 by September, and it is likely more will be needed.

- An automated scheduling system designed to eliminate bottlenecks in the repair process. A pilot finally began on October 1. However, to understand what this actually means, we need to know how long the pilot will last, and how it will be evaluated.

**4. Leak Standard Procedure.** We are still waiting to see the Comprehensive Protocol on how to fix leaks which NYCHA expected to complete by September 30, 2020. This is critical because leaks, which lead to mold, accounted for 77% of open work orders at the end of Quarter 23.

However, some real progress has continued over this period. Particularly, thousands of tenants who have contracted the independent mold and leak Ombudsperson Call Center have seen real relief. My colleague Ray Lopez will now testify on that subject.



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Hello Everybody.

Thank you to the City Council for this opportunity to testify about my experience with the OCC.

My name is Diana Vazquez and I am a resident at Jefferson Houses in East Harlem, I have been living there since December 1981. I also am a volunteer tenant leader with Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service and Metro IAF.

On Oct 24th 2018 I was having mold and water issues in both my bedroom and bathroom with cracked walls and ceiling. My bathroom was in shambles. I was not able to use my bathroom. I had to pay someone in order to use their bathroom for a lot of months.

When I would report these issues to NYCHA, Housing would show up and look and say they would be back, but never

return to do any work. It was like a merry go round, I have had floods in my apartment. My health started to deteriorate from having COPD, Asthma, and Bronchitis

Things changed when the OCC launched in November of 2019. When I called and spoke with Gabriella, there was a drastic change with Housing's response to my issues. They appeared at the date and time of appointments and they also adjusted to my schedule during the time I was in the hospital. Repairs are complete, things are already much better. Thanks to the work of the OCC, my home is now a healthy and safe place for me and my family.

# **NYCHA Health**

**Raja M Flores, MD**

**Professor and Chairman**

**Department of Thoracic Surgery**

**Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai**

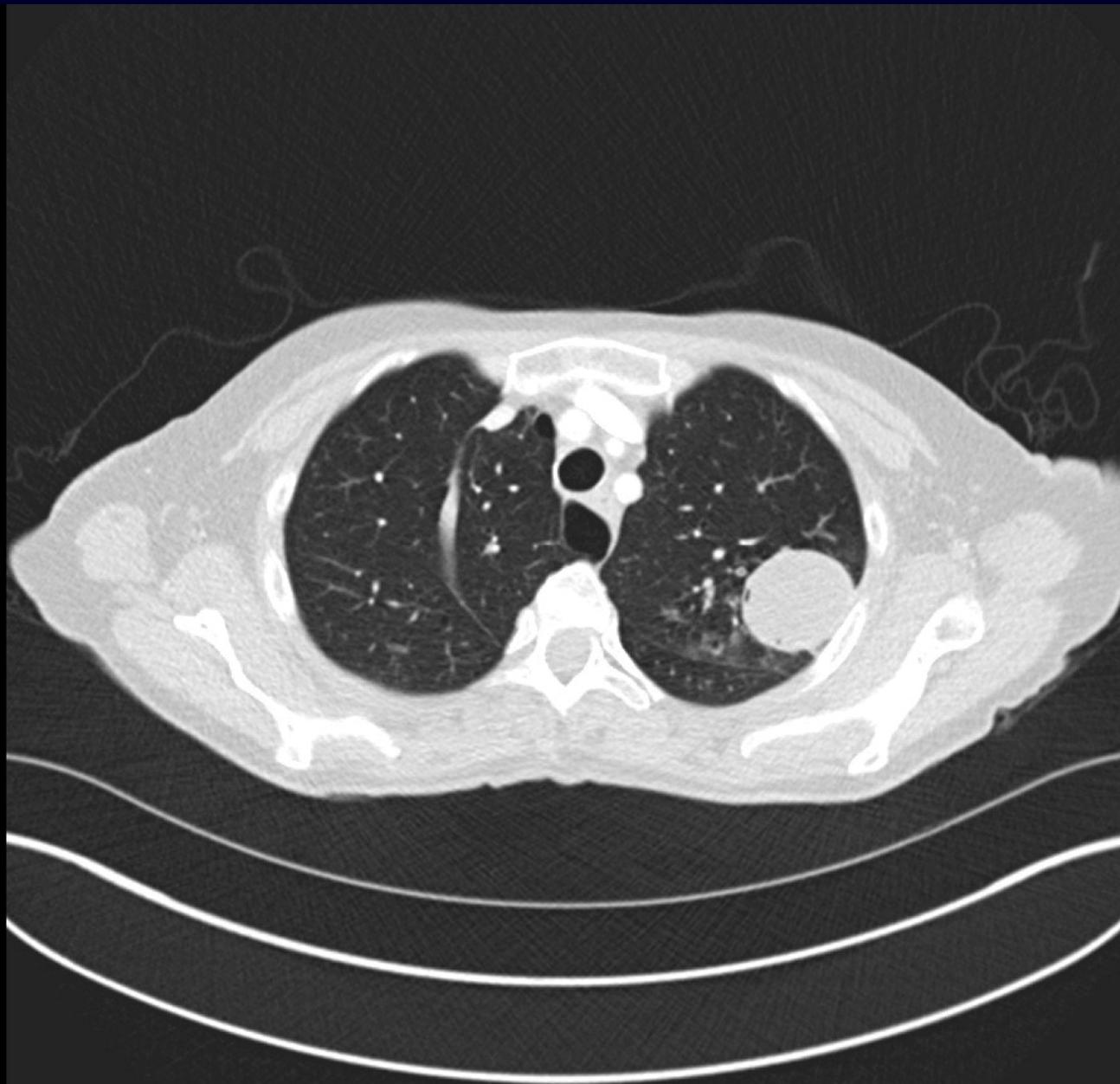
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# MOLD (Aspergilloma)

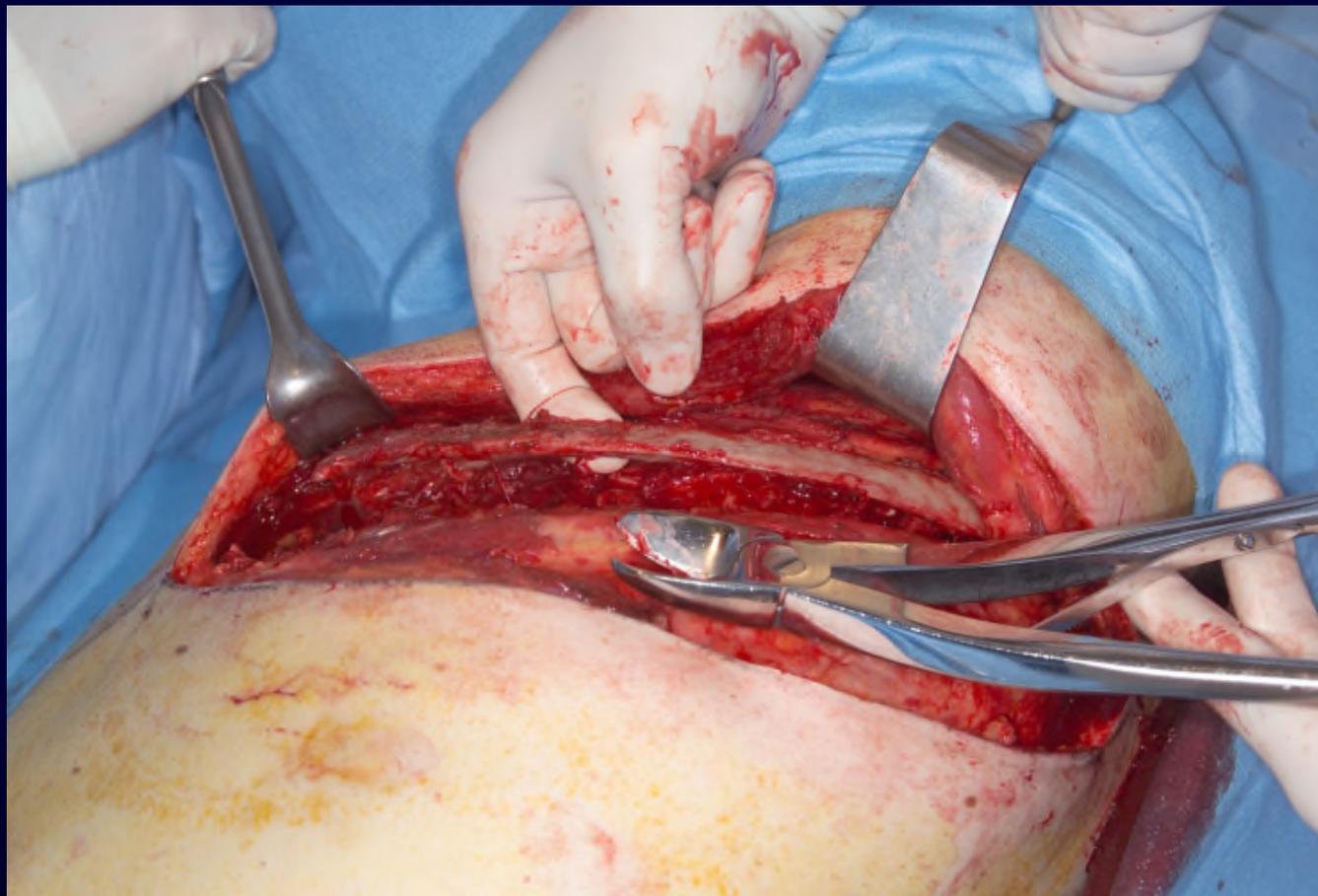
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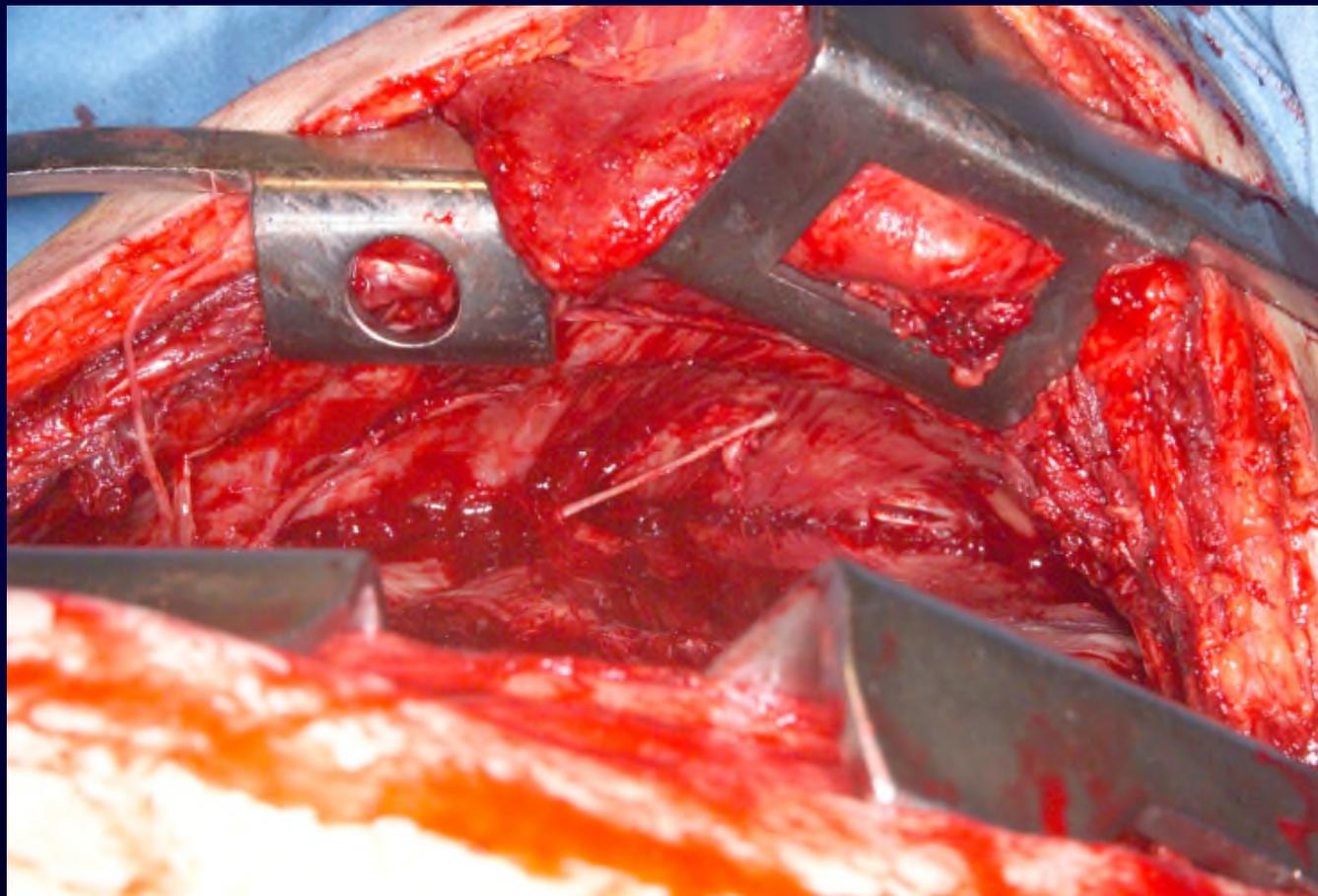
# Standard Thoracotomy

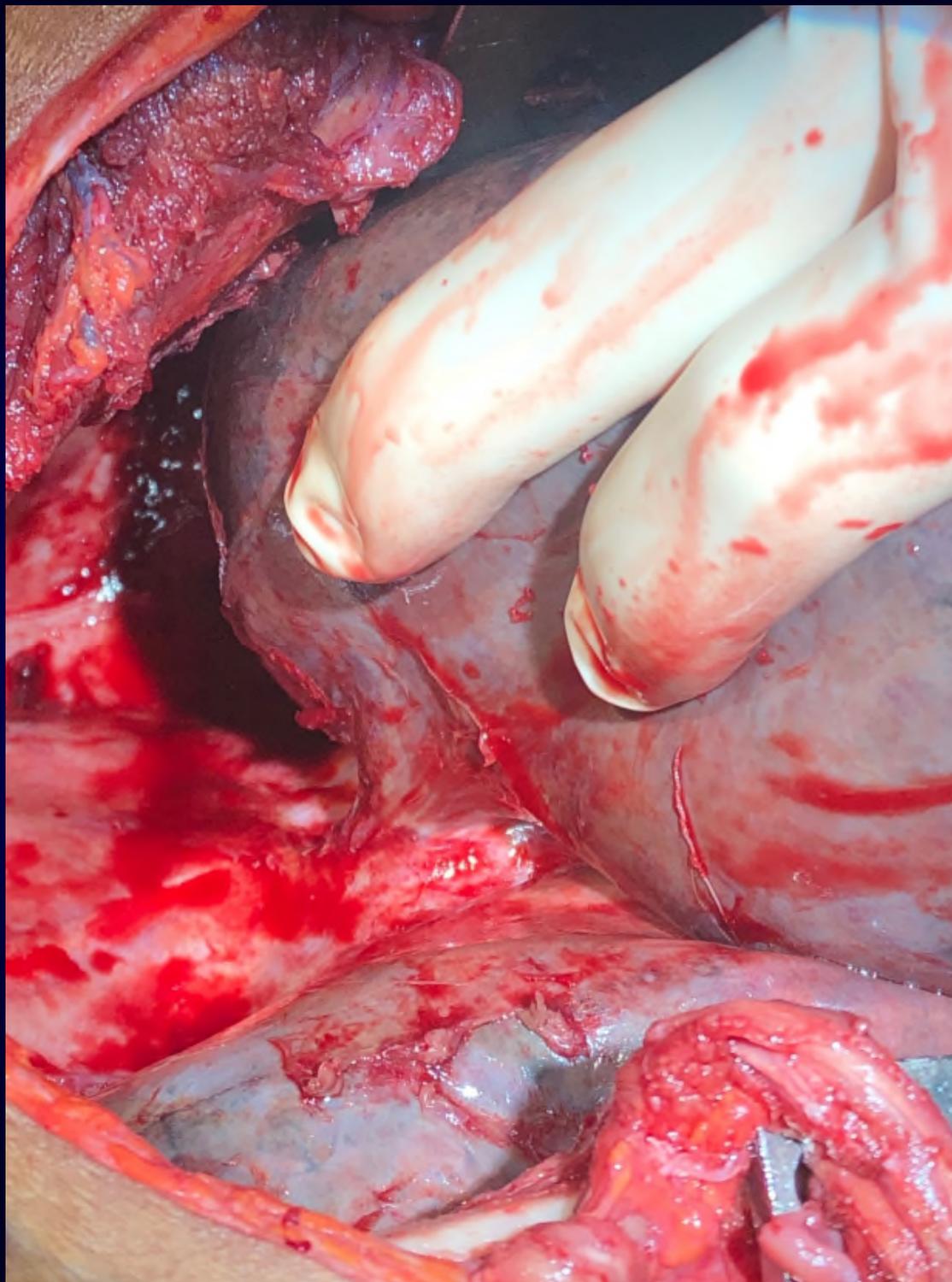


# Standard Thoracotomy



# Standard Thoracotomy





# Empyema



**Preventable**



**Department  
of Health**

# Assessment of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Properties

# 83% apartments had a severe health hazard

- Mold
- Asbestos
- Lead
- Pest infestation
- 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> hand cig smoke, marijuana, vaping