

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH COMMITTEE

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ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE JOINTLY WITH THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

April 29, 2019
Start: 10:06 a.m.
Recess: 12:09 p.m.

HELD AT: Committee Room - City Hall

B E F O R E: ROBERT E. CORNEGY
Chairperson

ROBERT E. CORNEGY
Co-Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ADRIENNE E. ADAMS
FERNANDO CABRERA
MARGARET S. CHIN
RAFAEL L. ESPINAL, JR.
VANESSA L. GIBSON
MARK GJONAJ
BARRY S. GRODENCHIK
BRAD S. LANDER
BILL PERKINS
ANTONIO REYNOSO
CARLINA RIVERA
HELEN K. ROSENTHAL
RAFAEL SALAMANCA, JR.
RITCHIE J. TORRES
MARK TREYGER

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ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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

John August Bridgeford
Community Organizer at Neighbors Together, Lead
Organizer for TOP

Dennis Powell
Leader in the Three Quarter House Tenant
Organizing Project, TOP

Eddie Jones
Leader in the Three Quarter House Tenant
Organizing Project, TOP

Amy Blumsack
Director of Organizing and Policy at Neighbors
Together

Jeff Thamkittikasem
Director for the Mayor's Office of Operations

Bruce Jordan
Chief Homelessness Prevention Officer within HRAs
Office of Homelessness Prevention Administration,
HPA

Anne-Marie Hendrickson
Deputy Commissioner for Asset and Property
Management at the Department of Housing
Preservation and Development, HPD

Felix Plaza Hernandez
Member of VOCAL-NY and TOP

Giselle Routhier
Policy Director at the Coalition for the Homeless

Josh Goldfein
Staff Attorney at the Legal Aid Society

Linden Miller
Staff Attorney at the Community Development
Project of the Urban Justice Center, CDP

Patrick Tyrrell
Staff Attorney at Mobilization for Justice

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

Scott Andrew Hutchins
Resident of New York City Homeless Shelter System

Joseph Ventour
Assistant Commissioner of the New York City
Department of Buildings

Benjamin Fitzrby
FDNY

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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON CORNEGY: Good morning, good morning. Good morning everyone, I'm Council Member Robert Cornegy, Chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. I want to thank Chair Levin who unfortunately can't be here but fortunately is... his wife is giving birth as we speak. I asked him to name his child after me, we'll see what happens for chairing his hearing, yeah, no? Alright, maybe. Alright, the... and as the Chair of General Welfare and other members of the Committee on General Welfare and Housing and Buildings for joining this hearing on three quarter houses. Three quarter houses are typically one- and two-family homes or larger apartment buildings run by operators who rent beds to single adults. These houses are often presented as programs, frequently as places for individuals exiting correctional facilities, shelters and residential substance abuse treatment facilities. However, they typically provide no services in house, are unregulated and generally are legal. These facilities often have multiple building code violations and are dangerously overcrowded. Although there are many issues with three quarter houses, they

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are the only alternative to the street or shelter for
many individuals. In a survey conducted of residents
of three-quarter houses, individuals reported that
despite the problems associated with three quarter
houses they preferred living in these houses and
live... as opposed to living in shelter or on the
street. Although the exact number is unknown, it's
been estimated that over 10,000 individuals reside in
three quarter houses. Rents in three quarter houses
are typically tied to a resident's public assistance
rent levels, which for those who only receive public
assistance shelter allowance set by the state is 250...
15 dollars a month. The schedule setting that rate
has been unchanged since 1988. Evidence suggests that
residents of three-quarter houses are sometimes
required to attend a specific substance abuse
treatment program even if they do not need such
treatment with operators of three-quarter houses
receiving illegal kickbacks from providers of such
programs. In 2015, an interagency task force was
convened by the Mayor to target known and suspected
three quarter houses to inspect the facilities and
relocate tenants. In 2017, the Council passed Local
Law 13 requiring the Mayor's Office of Operations to

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2 report on the process of the task force on a
3 quarterly basis. From June 1st, 2015 through December
4 31st, 2018 115 three quarter houses sites were
5 inspected leading to 3,829 total violations. In the
6 three and a half years covered in the last report,
7 677 individuals have been relocated from 56 three
8 quarter houses into temporary emergency housing and
9 803 have been placed in permanent housing. Of those
10 placed into permanent housing, 93 percent received
11 an... a SEPS voucher, only five sites out of the 115
12 have zero violations, one building had 170 open
13 violations. The legislation requiring this reporting
14 sunsets on January 1st of this year. Today we're
15 hearing a bill sponsored by Council Member Levin,
16 proposed Intro Number 153-A which would codify the
17 three-quarter housing task force and continue
18 submissions of the quarterly reports. Around the time
19 that Local Law 13 was passed, the Council also passed
20 additional pieces of legislation that were meant to
21 protect residents of three-quarter houses. Local Law
22 12 requires HRA to provide rental subsidy recipients
23 with a written statement explaining the protections
24 within the administrative code prohibiting unlawful
25 evictions. Local Law 15 of 2017 prohibits landlords

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2 from mandating medical treatment as a condition for
3 occupancy with the exception of family members and
4 legitimate programs such as rehabilitation clinics.
5 Local Law 14 of 2017 removes the time limitation for
6 applying for relocation services and makes clear that
7 any tenant who moves out while a vacant order... while
8 a vacate order is in effect is entitled to
9 appropriate relocation assistance from H, HPD. Today
10 we'd like an update on the implementation of these
11 laws. While three quarter houses are illegal, we
12 don't want to pull the plug... we don't want to pull
13 the rug out from under anyone, we want to ensure that
14 people are housed but we also cannot tolerate bad
15 actors who are taking advantage of vulnerable
16 populations. We at the Council working with this
17 administration need to ensure that we build a fully
18 legal and appropriate infrastructure that would be an
19 effective alternative to this unregulated and illegal
20 system that's in place today. We look forward to
21 hearing from HRA, HPD, tenants, advocates and
22 providers on how the system has changed in the last
23 few years and how we can work together moving forward
24 to ensure the most vulnerable in our city are safely
25 housed. I'd like to thank my fellow committee members

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2 present, who do we have; Antonio Reynoso, Helen
3 Rosenthal, Vanessa Gibson, Margaret Chin, Fernando
4 Cabrera, pastor and Barry Grodenchik, oh Carlina
5 Rivera, I'm sorry. I'd like to remind everyone who'd
6 like to testify today to please fill out a card with
7 the Sergeant, we'll be sticking to a two-minute clock
8 for all public testimony and now we'll administer the
9 oath. Oh, we'll ask the administration to join us.
10 Okay. I understand that today we'll be starting with
11 the public panel and we'll ask that panel to start
12 with Amy, Amy Blumsack, please... John August
13 Bridgeford; Eddie Jones and Dennis Powell. Before you
14 begin, begin your testimony temporarily I will have
15 to take a leave and I'm going to ask Council Member
16 Margaret Chin to continue to convene the hearing
17 until I can return.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: We've been joined
19 by Council Member Lander. Okay, you, you may begin.

20 JOHN AUGUST BRIDGEFORD: Good morning, my
21 name is John August Bridgeford, I'm a Community
22 Organizer at Neighbors Together and I'm the Lead
23 Organizer for TOP. Unfortunately, one of our tenant
24 leaders, Monique Frasier is ill today so I'm going to
25 be reading her testimony. Good morning, my name is

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Monique Frasier and I'm a leader in the Three-Quarter
Tenant Organizing Project, also known as TOP. On
behalf of TOP I want to thank the General Welfare
Committee Chair Stephen Levin, the Housing Committee
Chair Robert Cornegy and the other members of this
Committee for the opportunity today to provide
testimony. I'm here today because I'm homeless. The
city does not consider me homeless but I am. Because
I live in a three-quarter house, I fall outside of
the safety net that the city provides for the people
they consider homeless. There are thousands of people
like me, who need the city's help to get out of the
deplorable conditions they're living in and into
permanent housing. I live in a three-quarter house in
Central Brooklyn. if you aren't familiar with three
quarter houses, they are private homes operated by
landlords who profit off of poor people in need of
housing. These landlords rent out individual bunks
and increase their profit margins by cramming as many
as eight people to a room. Most tenants I know pay
the 215-dollar shelter allowance as rent but for
those like me, on SSI, we pay over 400 dollars. I
have endured winters without heat and hot water,
dealt with bed bug infestations and been threatened

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2 with illegal eviction for missing curfew or not
3 attending a house meeting. My landlord calls the
4 house a program, but it is not licensed by any state
5 or city agency and does not provide any services.
6 Despite these horrible conditions, when my first
7 three quarter house closed down, my only option
8 besides entering the shelter system was another
9 three-quarter house. Currently, the task force
10 inspects houses if ten or more unrelated adults on
11 public assistance reside in a single address. I pay
12 my rent with social security and the operator of my
13 house specifically seeks out tenants who are on
14 social security or pay their rent by working to avoid
15 being inspected by the task force. Without TOP, I
16 would never have known about the task force or
17 learned about my rights as a tenant. By passing Intro
18 153, to strengthen the three-quarter house task
19 force, new city agencies including the Commission on
20 Human Rights, the Department of Health and Mental
21 Hygiene and the Department of Corrections will become
22 members of the task force. This will provide new
23 databases and information for the task force to
24 inspect three quarter houses. In addition, the bill
25 establishes how often the task force conducts

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2 inspections, and the know your rights information
3 provided to tenants during those inspections.
4 Currently, too many tenants like me, who live with
5 the constant threat of homelessness, are unknown to
6 the task force. This bill will provide new
7 information for the task force to use and find and
8 inspect new houses. Thank you.

9 DENNIS POWELL: Good morning, my name is
10 Dennis Powell. I'm a Leader in the Three-Quarter
11 House Tenant Organizing Project also known as TOP.
12 TOP is a tenant union made up of current, former
13 three-quarter house tenants building a movement for
14 fair and just treatment to tenants. On behalf of TOP
15 I want to thank the General Welfare Committee, Chair
16 Stephen Levin; the Housing Committee Chair Robert
17 Cornegy and the other members of these Committees for
18 the opportunity to provide testimony. I live in a
19 three-quarter house for almost a year. I rent out a
20 single bunk in a four-person room. There are a total
21 of 25 tenants in my house and we all share one
22 working toilet and shower. After two people... after
23 two people take a shower, the water turns cold. I
24 have to wake up between 2:30 and 3:30 in the morning
25 to take a warm shower. Some of the tenants at my

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2 house have a planet fitness account just so they can
3 use the bathroom and take a shower. Cleanliness is so
4 important to me because like many three-quarter
5 houses, my house is infected with roaches, rats and
6 bedbugs. I never seen a bed bug until I moved into
7 the three-quarter house and once, I get out of my
8 house I never plan on seeing one again. A new
9 landlord recently bought the building I live in and
10 is attempting to evict us. First, he evicted the
11 operator and tried to force us tenants out as well.
12 Through TOP, we got housing lawyers to help stop the
13 eviction, we also called the task force to request
14 rental assistance vouchers. The attorney stopped the
15 eviction, but the task force only issued vouchers to
16 half the house. The task force only provided rental
17 assistance vouchers to tenants in an active eviction
18 proceeding and who have a history of homelessness. I
19 won the first eviction case but now there will be
20 more to come. However, I never have been in a shelter
21 before, the task force refused to issue me a voucher.
22 Without a voucher I will end up in the shelter system
23 at the age of 67. Passing the Intro 153 will give me
24 access to a voucher and allow me to look for
25 affordable state housing. Without the passage of this

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bill three quarter tenants like me will continue to
enter the shelter which tenants are forced out and
have no shelter history. Thank you.

EDDIE JONES: Good morning, my name is
Eddie Jones and I'm a Leader at the TOP, the Three-
Quarter House Tenant Organizing Project. I was
released from prison on 1/17/18 in, into a three-
quarter house. Before I was released, I had a plan. I
knew that I could not resume the profession that I
had previously done which was security. So, I made a
decision to re-educate myself and decided since I
like to cook that I would get educated in the
culinary arts. I arrived... I arrived at Horizon Hope
three quarter houses in the spirit that I would use
that place as a steppingstone to reintegrate myself
back into society and become a productive citizen.
The first week living at Horizon Hope, I was lying in
a bottom bunk of a bed that I was assigned and
noticed that my legs was... and feet were extremely
agitated. I was scratching my legs until scars
appeared. I was told... I told my roommate about it and
he told me that Horizon Hope had a severe infestation
of bedbugs. I had up until that point never
experienced bedbugs in my life. He also informed me

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1 that I had to buy bed bug spray. My budget was what
2 public assistance affords me which is 123 dollars
3 twice a month and which 100 is used towards the rent
4 as well as other expenses. With the need of bedbug
5 spray, I had to manage my money wisely. I got
6 connected with several organizations to help me to
7 get into school for the culinary arts. At the time...
8 as time went by and the temperature became warmer, I
9 noticed that we also had a mice and rat infestation.
10 There are two showers and two and a half bathrooms at
11 my house. One shower was inoperable and the half
12 bath, bath was also inoperable. We have 25 people
13 living in our facility so it's impossible for
14 everyone to use the shower, so they use the sink to
15 get clean. We call them birdbaths. We also mean... it
16 also means that people are up all night trying to
17 take care of their hygiene. HPD, through the task
18 force, did come to fix the showers but did not secure
19 the drain covers that keep the debris from going down
20 the drain and the drain is still clogged until today.
21 The, the half bathroom is out of order and the full
22 bathrooms have never been serviced. No help was ever
23 offered by Horizon Hope Incorporated; all Horizon
24 Hope did was provide us with documents that we
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2 presented to the public assistance so that they could
3 collect our shelter allowance as rent. Through these
4 deplorable conditions, which still exist now, I
5 completed and graduated Culinary Tech Center on March
6 15th, 2019. On January 2019 I learned that Horizon
7 Hope was being evicted by the new landlord. I learned
8 this by meeting the marshal at the front door and
9 trying to enact an illegal eviction. Fast forward to
10 the present, Horizon Hope has been evicted from the
11 premises and the legal aid lawyers stopped us from
12 being illegally evicted by... with Horizon Hope. The
13 new landlords do not want us there and we are
14 expecting, expecting future eviction proceedings
15 against us. When I reached out to the task force to
16 get some help to get out of the house, I could.. I
17 could not get a, a rental assistance voucher because
18 I went straight to Horizon Hope from prison and did
19 not enter the shelter system. The task force demands
20 that I have a shelter history which means the only
21 way for me to get a voucher is to enter the shelter
22 system, that does not make sense to me when I am the
23 same... in the same situation as other tenants in my
24 house who receive vouchers because they have prior
25 shelter history. Vouchers should be available to all

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2 regiments... I mean residents that find themselves in
3 the situation like mine. Part of the... part of the
4 reason my bathroom was never fixed, and I cannot get
5 a voucher is that the three-quarter house tenants do
6 not have representation on the task force. Who better
7 to represent the tenants of a three-quarter house
8 than the people who live there and their advocates?
9 That is why we need to pass this bill. So that we,
10 the tenants, can, can have important issues and
11 concerns to us addressed so that we can make sure
12 that the task force makes repairs that makes things
13 better so that the tenants have a way out of unstable
14 three quarter houses and into safe, affordable
15 housing. Thank you.

16 [applause]

17 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: If you love what he
18 says go like this.

19 AMY BLUMSACK: Hi, good morning, my name
20 is Amy Blumsack, I'm the Director of Organizing and
21 Policy at Neighbors Together. We're a community-based
22 organization and soup kitchen located in Central
23 Brooklyn. I work with TOP; I've organized with them
24 for a long time now and I'm very grateful for all of
25 you today and for the time of the Committee members

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2 and the Chairs. I am submitting joint testimony from
3 Neighbors Together and VOCAL-New York, our partner in
4 the organizing work and so you can read that later. I
5 just want to go over a few highlights. So, we were...
6 both TOP and advocates were very grateful when the
7 task force was formed after the big expose came out
8 in the New York Times in 2015, the task force has
9 proved to be a really critical and important resource
10 for three quarter house tenants. It has been able to
11 as you know, inspect a number of houses, address
12 repairs and relocate a number of three-quarter house
13 tenants into permanent housing and that's a major
14 victory. Before the, the task force existed there was
15 nothing like that and tenants were on their own.
16 However, we're here today asking you to pass Intro
17 153 because we've seen a change over time in the
18 commitment of the administration to three quarter
19 house tenants and three-quarter houses. As you heard
20 Chairman Cornegy say, you know there were many, many
21 inspections done originally in like the first year or
22 two of the task force but from 2017 to 2018 only two
23 new houses were inspected, that seems woefully
24 inadequate given that there are over 100... you know
25 over 400, some say as many as 600 at... known addresses

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2 of three quarter houses in New York City at the last
3 count and additionally one other thing that the
4 Chairman said was that of the people who were
5 relocated 93 percent of them were relocated with the
6 SEPS voucher, that's true I assume because the, the
7 fact he gave and I want to highlight that SEPS has
8 been eliminated and consolidated under the city FHEPS
9 voucher but the city FHEPS voucher rule essentially
10 cuts out three quarter house tenants from
11 eligibility. Three quarter houses thrive on illegal
12 evictions and so most three-quarter house tenants
13 will never ever be taken through housing court. So,
14 they're never going to be eligible for the city FHEPS
15 voucher. The task force does have the ability to
16 refer for, for rental assistance vouchers but they're
17 adhering so strictly to the city FHEPS rule which is
18 written in a way that excludes people that they
19 essentially forcing tenants to choose between
20 intolerable conditions or entering the shelter system
21 and in a city in the midst of a homelessness crisis
22 that is at our all-time high that seems to be not
23 only morally unconscionable but also simply bad
24 policy. Tenants shouldn't have to make the choice to
25 become homeless in order to get housing when they

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1 already should have a path through the task force.

2 The other thing that I think is really important

3 about Intro 153-A that is critical to this bill and

4 its effectiveness and making the task force effective

5 is that tenants in houses inspected by the task force

6 should get access to city FHEPS and they need rapid

7 rehousing services. I think anyone familiar with the

8 rental assistance vouchers knows that they are not at

9 fair market rent so it's very hard to find housing

10 with them and additionally there's a massive and

11 pervasive problem of source of income discrimination

12 so without additional help to find housing with the

13 voucher we feel like many people will struggle and...

14 as many folks do in the shelter system just sit with

15 voucher in hand looking for a place. I think 93

16 percent of the people who were housed with SEPS were

17 able to do so because at that point the task force

18 was giving people rapid rehousing services so that's

19 a critical component that we feel like needs to be

20 addressed in this bill. And I think the last thing

21 that I want to say is that in fiscal year '16 the

22 city did commit five million dollars to the task

23 force to help inspect houses, make repairs and

24 relocate tenants and I think it's really important

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2 that the city continue its commitment both by
3 codifying the task force through this bill but also
4 financially so that the task force is able to be as
5 effective as possible. This is a very critical
6 resource for tenants, and we hope that we'll you're
7 your support on this bill. Thank you.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. My
9 colleagues have questions. Oh...

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I just have a
11 quick question, Amy is there anything that you heard
12 today that you could say we'd need to add to this
13 bill, a way that we could make it better or, or a new
14 bill that would... that will help the cost?

15 AMY BLUMSACK: I think this bill is a
16 strong bill, I think it will do a lot for tenants. I
17 do think that it's really important that rapid
18 rehousing services if possible be included in the
19 bill and that the language is crystal clear that all
20 tenants in three quarter houses inspected by the task
21 force have access to the voucher and that they not be
22 required to meet the strict eligibility standards as
23 written in the city FHEPS rule, that the task force
24 should be its own... its own avenue to the voucher
25 separate from... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Okay... [cross-
3 talk]

4 AMY BLUMSACK: ...the city FHEPS rule,
5 thank you.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Thank you.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Council Member
8 Lander.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you guys
10 for being here and for the advocacy work that you're
11 doing both on your own and together, it, it's really
12 important and you know it's, it's hard to keep up the
13 level of attention to something like this, you get
14 that expose, you focus on it and then it kind of
15 disappears so I appreciate that guys do the
16 organizing and that you're here helping push to make
17 sure we do better. The way you testified actually
18 help clarifying a question for me that I haven't
19 asked before about three quarter houses and I'm
20 curious and you can answer this for your own personal
21 experience or more broadly, you know they, they sort
22 of do two different things, one of which... or, or we
23 want them to do two different things neither of
24 which they really do that well currently, one of
25 which is to be a pathway through services and

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2 programs to something else so in which case rapid
3 rehousing and getting the vouchers and having decent
4 services are important. The other is being a place to
5 rent a cheap and... but safe and decent room in a city
6 where there's no affordable housing and maybe you
7 don't need services and a pathway it's just like
8 renting a room on the model of what SROs used to
9 offer so you could pay less because you don't have a
10 whole kitchen and you know a... and like that's not
11 maybe where people want to stay forever but it can be
12 a good option for folks for a while and in that case
13 we would need to figure out how to make it more safe
14 and decent and adequate and do the inspections and
15 deal with the rules that make it illegal to have
16 unrelated individuals that are being... that, that
17 folks are using the form of these organizations to,
18 to get around. So, I guess just... that's my question
19 like in terms of your own search and the other people
20 you know how much are people looking for a safe but
21 inexpensive room to stay in for a decent long period
22 of time versus some services and an organization that
23 provides a pathway so it's transitional to something
24 else in the long term and it could be both but I'm
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2 just curious its... yeah, we'll leave it there, sure
3 but I'm interested in everyone's perspective.

4 EDDIE JONES: Well at the three-quarter
5 house that I live in we have rooms, right, but you
6 have multiple people in those rooms so you might have
7 four, five people in one... you know in one room. The,
8 the, the provider that we had he didn't really assist
9 us in anything, you know what I'm saying, I think
10 that... you know this is my opinion, I think that three
11 quarter houses are needed but it's a stepping stone
12 into getting your own... you know into... getting your
13 own housing, it's... you know it should be a... where you
14 get yourself together and then go into, you know
15 housing. It's not... it, it... to me it's not like
16 permanent housing but for the time, you know people...
17 you know some people need that, that place to stay in
18 order to... you know for the... to get it as a stepping
19 stone but that's how I feel about, that's my opinion.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright. Thank
21 you.

22 DENNIS POWELL: My way of looking at this
23 is I've been out into the three quarter houses that...
24 dealing with the slum landlords that we have, okay,
25 they're inappropriate into the living quarters that

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2 we actually go into, the beds that we actually live
3 in or sleep on, okay, is wired beds which bent in the
4 middle which is unhealthy as far as our health first
5 of all. As far as the price, the living price as far
6 as being a three quarter house I think that's not the
7 issue, you know we quite naturally don't have no
8 money affordable for these expensive places but there
9 are areas that we should be able to go into to pay a
10 reasonable amount of money and then be able to move
11 back out into society but we're not given this here,
12 we're being as I say suppressed living with one
13 shower among 25 men, okay, after two people take a
14 shower the waters turned cold, we got rats infested,
15 bed bugs, that's ridiculous, you know we can't really
16 go into other people's areas because of these bed
17 bugs, we don't want to take these things out of the
18 house into somebody else's house, we all know how
19 they multiply. So, we're put in the.. a position right
20 now that we really need to see who's running these
21 three-quarter houses to actually help us get into a
22 better situation than what we're in.

23 JOHN AUGUST BRIDGEFORD: The one thing
24 I'd add to that is what I find most exciting about
25 this bill is that the task force would be charged

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1
2 every year of sending a report to the Speaker's
3 Office that would talk about okay, you have folks
4 that have been out of three quarter houses because
5 there's dangerous levels of overcrowding and those
6 folks get access to vouchers, rapid rehousing
7 services and then for the folks that remain if this
8 bill becomes law we'd like those folks to be able to
9 find housing with the voucher as well but we all know
10 how that... how difficult that is to find housing, you
11 know below market rent and so this bill through the
12 report that would be issued to the Speaker's Office
13 every year, the task force would look at how do we
14 keep folks in those three quarter houses but make
15 those three quarter houses livable so that people
16 would have access to showers, people have access to
17 decent conditions and an affordable way of housing
18 because what we don't want to have happen is that we
19 start talking about how these houses are illegal or
20 how we need to shut them down because that's just
21 going to add to the, the shelter population.

22 AMY BLUMSACK: And I think I would say to
23 your question, you're right it's at both ends, you
24 know three quarter houses exist because there is a
25 massive lack of truly affordable housing for the

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2 lowest income New Yorkers and many people are in them
3 just for that reason and then there are people who
4 have been referred through various means and do need
5 services and I think it... we have seen in other
6 localities that it does get tricky if you try and
7 sort of regulate those services into the houses so we
8 could talk about that more offline in more detail but
9 I think it's important to note that three quarter
10 houses... three quarter houses house different kinds of
11 people with different needs, some have higher service
12 needs, some people just need a place to live and so I
13 do think what John August mentioned about this bill,
14 this annual report to the Speaker on conversion to
15 safe, permanent housing once the task force has
16 inspected and removed people is a really critical
17 component and.. yeah and so I think it's good.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you and so
19 I'm certainly persuaded about the bill, I would like
20 to be signed on to it as a co-sponsor so this is not
21 a question about the bill, I think it's a question..
22 and I wouldn't imagine regulating the services into
23 the housing, I think there might be some more things
24 we could do to regulate the form of shared housing
25 which HPD is actually doing some, some pieces of that

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2 might give us more ability to insist on decent basic
3 conditions in the context of shared units where we
4 really currently have a... kind of a... sort of a black
5 hole in the law that says unregulated... unrelated
6 people can't live together except under some
7 circumstances like the ones we wound up creating
8 here. So, anyway I'll, I'll leave it there, I thank
9 you for your testimony and, and really appreciate
10 your advocacy and your, your organizing and you... and
11 your pressure.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Council Member
13 Cabrera has another question.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Amy I'm just
15 sitting here a little... a little... I'm, I'm troubled I
16 keep hearing one bathroom for 24, 25 people and I
17 know we're going to have the administration come in,
18 in a second, as far as you know what, what are the
19 regulations here, I mean one bathroom for 24 people,
20 is... as far as you know is... what's the standard,
21 what's required, is there a requirement or is it up
22 to the nonprofit to decide:

23 AMY BLUMSACK: There... because three
24 quarter houses are unlicensed and unregulated by any
25 government body there is no particular standard that

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2 a three quarter house has to meet, it really just...
3 like is a private landlord who hangs out a sign on
4 their front door and starts bringing people in to
5 make a profit off of them and so, you know the HPD
6 and DOB regulations still do apply but what we've
7 seen historically is that three quarter house
8 landlords and operators absolutely, you know ignore
9 them because their goal is to pack in as many people
10 as possible and make as much money as possible.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: Wait a second,
12 who's funding though, I'm going to go back to the
13 basics, who's, who's funding though?

14 AMY BLUMSACK: Nobody, they don't... they
15 don't receive government funding except for in as
16 much as that anyone who is on public assistance has
17 the shelter allowance and so you or I would be
18 entitled to take our shelter allowance and live with
19 a friend, a family member, someone we could rent a
20 room from and so three quarter house operators often
21 tend to rent to people who are either receiving the
22 shelter allowance from public assistance or people
23 who are on social security and are paying their rent
24 that way or they're... you know the... also there are a
25 number of working people who live in three quarter

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2 houses who just aren't making enough money to meet
3 market rate rent and so they're forced to choose
4 between the shelter and the street or somewhere like
5 a three quarter house and so... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: I, I'm looking
7 for ideas, ways that this cannot be part of the way
8 we business, this is inhumane, it really is. For
9 something like this to happen it just baffles me
10 that, that this is happening, nobody especially... you
11 know I heard your story, it moved me, it moved me. I,
12 I worked... I used to work in a rehab program and I
13 know how difficult it is to make that transition and
14 to... you know welfare just giving you peanuts to try
15 and make that transition you want to do the right
16 thing, you know you want to start a brand new life to
17 have... to go through that level of pressure, added
18 pressure, added distraction it just... it, it's
19 disturbing it really is. I know we could do better; I
20 know we could come out with laws, legislation that...
21 so this could stop, you know the... it... we have to do
22 better as a committee. I, I believe that we could
23 come up with something that this, this will stop and
24 we're looking for your input and all the nonprofits
25

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that are here today because we must do better. Thank
you for your indulgence and time, thank you.

AMY BLUMSACK: Thank you.

COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Council Member
Grodenchik.

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you
Chair Chin. I want to just add my voice to my
colleagues who have spoken so eloquently this
morning, I want to thank you for being here today. I
grew up in New York City public housing in the 60s
and the 70s and I never experienced anything like the
conditions that you are describing even remotely so
it's certainly been an education for me this morning
and I want to thank you for your testimony which was
moving and eloquent and I certainly took it to heart
and I also.. we are looking at this legislation right
now as I speak, my council is sitting behind me
looking at it and I expect to join onto this bill. It
is an outrage that people who should know better are
taking advantage of people who really don't have
anywhere else to go and that's the truth because if
you did you would never live in this kind of
situation and people who are trying to turn their
lives around so, I'm hopeful that this council which

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2 has been a stalwart moving forward on social justice
3 issues will correct these conditions, I expect to see
4 these conditions maybe when my grandparents were
5 living on the Lower East Side 100 years ago but not
6 now, we don't expect to see this in the wealthiest
7 city on earth so I think that your testimony today is
8 compelling and certainly will provide us with what we
9 need to go forward to move this bill. Thank you,
10 thank you for being here and thank you Madame Chair.

11 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. I also
12 have a question, is that... when you have a complaint
13 about the bed bugs who do you call, do you call 3-1-1
14 or do you call the task force?

15 DENNIS POWELL: Well we had called 3-1-1
16 but they don't... they don't respond like we expect
17 them to, the task force came out and said that they
18 would come back and do some, you know correction,
19 that hasn't happened so what we have to do is as was
20 mentioned earlier we have to take the money that we
21 have and... which we don't have money, okay, we have to
22 go out and buy a bunch of spray and constantly be our
23 own exterminators in this place and this is how we
24 actually have to get by day by day so... that's where
25 we're at right now.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I mean as, as I
3 join with my colleagues we, we just can't allow this
4 to continue to happen, there's got to be some rules
5 and regulations and oversight so we definitely thank
6 you for your advocacy and hopefully we can bring
7 about some changes as quickly as possible and thank
8 you for being here today.

9 DENNIS POWELL: Thank you Councilman.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. We're
11 going to call up the administration.

12 [off mic dialogue]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh, okay. Oh, okay
14 Bruce Jordan from HRA; Jeff from, from the Mayor's
15 Office of Operation, Jeff you have to help us
16 pronounce your last name.

17 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: You can always say
18 Jeff T. of course.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Jeff T. and Anne
20 Marie Hendrickson from HPD. Okay, Chief Inspector
21 Benjamin Fitzroy from FY... FDNY is going to be
22 available for questions and also Joseph Ventour from
23 DOB; Erin Drinkwater from HRA and Bruce Jordan from
24 HRA. The Counsel will swear you in.

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2 COMMITTEE CLERK: Margaret, sorry your
3 voice, are you okay?

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: We have the
5 Cultural Affair hearing across the hall that's why
6 all that music.. I got to talk to the Chair you know.
7 The Counsel will swear you in.

8 COMMITTEE CLERK: Please raise your right
9 hand, do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole
10 truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony
11 before this committee and to respond honestly to
12 Council Member questions?

13 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: We do.

14 COMMITTEE CLERK: You may begin.

15 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Thank you everyone,
16 good morning. Thank you to Chairman Levin who cannot
17 be here today, Chairman Cornegy, members of the
18 General Welfare and Housing and Building.. and
19 Buildings Committees additionally Council Member
20 Brannan for co-sponsoring this legislation, thank you
21 Council Member Cabrera for being here as well. Thank
22 you for inviting us all to appear before you to
23 discuss the three-quarter houses and Introduction
24 153-A. my name is Jeff Thamkittikasem, I am the
25 Director for the Mayor's Office of Operations. I'm

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1 joined today by my colleagues Bruce Jordan, Chief
2 Homelessness Prevention Officer from the Human
3 Resources Administration, HRA and Anne-Marie
4 Hendrickson, Deputy Commissioner for Asset and
5 Project... Property Management from the Department of
6 Housing Preservation and Development, HPD. Also,
7 colleagues from the Department of Buildings and the
8 Department... Fire Department are also available for
9 questions. Together these agencies represent the task
10 force on the three-quarter houses... on three quarter
11 houses. From the beginning of this administration the
12 city has made it very clear that it will not accept
13 the use of illegally subdivided and dangerously
14 overcrowded apartments to house vulnerable people in
15 need of critical services and has taken meaningful
16 action to address issues within three quarter houses.
17 As the former Chair of the General Welfare Committee
18 at the New York City Council, now Mayor De Blasio had
19 introduced legislation that prevented the Department
20 of Homeland... Homeless Services to... prevented the
21 Department of Homeland Services shelters for single
22 adults from referring clients to permanent houses in
23 buildings that meet one or more of a detailed
24 criteria for three quarter houses. In 2010, then
25

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1 Public Advocate De Blasio pushed for all city
2 agencies to stop referrals to three quarter houses.
3 In 2015, the city also worked with a federal court
4 receiver and Samaritan Village to ensure that the
5 1,200 residents that had been receiving services from
6 Narco Freedom, the substance abuse treatment provider
7 where the investigation resulted in criminal
8 indictments, were placed in appropriate programs and
9 living conditions. In 2015, Mayor De Blasio announced
10 the formation of an interagency task force to review
11 the use of three-quarter houses in New York City. The
12 Mayor's Office of Operations is tasked with managing
13 and coordinating multiple agency programs and
14 initiatives by using data to help make informed
15 policy decisions and strategic targeted investments.
16 The office was called upon to help stand up and
17 coordinate the work of the three-quarter house,
18 housing task force. From here on I'll just refer to
19 it as the task force. This task force was formed to
20 ensure that each agency's independent authorities
21 were brought to bear and that the issues surrounding
22 three quarter houses were taken seriously, we put
23 steps into place to address these issues
24 systematically, with each of the agencies providing
25

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1
2 their clients with the appropriate resources while
3 the city addressed broadly immediate health and
4 safety issues at these houses. This interagency task
5 force is made up of multiple city agencies, including
6 HRA, HPD, the Department of Buildings and the Fire
7 Department. The work of the task force began with a
8 review of all residences identified by HRA that
9 housed ten or more unrelated adults who received the
10 215-dollar state set public assistance rent
11 allowance. In addition to the addresses identified
12 using this metric, the task force also identified
13 locations based on information provided by advocates
14 as well as through 3-1-1 complaint. This combination
15 of information has been the best approximation of
16 three-quarter housing locations across the city as
17 there is no official registry or other means to
18 identify such locations. In an effort to address the
19 full universe of units, the task force continues to
20 try new methods of identifying new three quarter
21 houses, follow up... follows up on specific inquiries
22 received from the advocate community or 3-1-1 and
23 always welcomes input from the public to identify any
24 additional three quarter houses. Since the launch,
25 launch of the task force, inspectors from task force

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2 member agencies have visited and inspected the
3 locations to determine whether there are health and
4 safety violations identified at the three-quarter
5 houses. Each agency issues its own violations with
6 ranges from housing maintenance to fire safety to
7 overcrowding to lack of adequate utility services.
8 The task force convenes regularly for post inspection
9 discussion and follow up. If the inspectors from the
10 agencies are unable to gain access to a location, the
11 city follows agency best practices to get... obtain
12 access, including visiting sites at off hours or
13 alternate days of the week. The agencies work in full
14 collaboration to address immediate health and safety
15 concerns of these residents. Each enforcement... each
16 enforcement agency has a unique purview in its
17 inspection and in writing violations; HPD is focused
18 on maintenance issues such as heat and hot water, DOB
19 is focused on structural issues and FDNY is concerned
20 with fire safety, including smoke detectors and
21 necessary means of egress. These inspections result
22 in a number of actions. Each of the agencies, when
23 appropriate issues violations and follows up in
24 remediating hazardous housing conditions. For
25 example, the most serious violations result in the

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2 agency sending out inspectors to follow up within 30
3 days. Some conditions are remedied by HPD's Emergency
4 Repair Program, a program by which HPD completes the
5 repairs on the most serious conditions on a location
6 and bills the building owner for the repair. The task
7 force agencies conduct inspections every week and
8 follows up on violations and conditions as necessary.
9 As of March 31st, 2019, the member agencies of the
10 task force have relocated 692 individuals from 57
11 three quarter houses. Currently there are 115 three
12 quarter houses on the list and this number has
13 remained steady over the past year due to the
14 collaborative efforts of the task force and advocates
15 who work these.. with these residents. The
16 administration is proud of the work of the three-
17 quarter house task force since 2015 that has achieved
18 meaningful behavior change among operators of this
19 housing stock and supports the intent of the
20 legislation to continue to protect vulnerable New
21 Yorkers living in these homes. The administration
22 supports the production of quarterly reports with the
23 given reporting requirements and requests to
24 streamline the meetings and all reporting
25 requirements, including those on fines and liens in

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the task force meetings to a quarterly cadence. The administration has some privacy concerns around converting all task force meeting into public meetings given the sensitive nature of some of those conversations and additionally as the task force is a purely operational agency bringing to bear these individual operating agencies the administration welcomes further conversations with the Council on how to include additional agencies, advocates and members of the public in the work of the task force.

In sum, we look forward to working with the legislation... on this legislation with the Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I'll turn over testimony to Bruce Jordan to discuss the role of HRA specifically in the task force related to individuals who were relocated.

BRUCE JORDAN: Good morning members of the General Welfare and Housing and Buildings Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Bruce Jordan and I am the Chief Homelessness Prevention Officer within HRA's Office of Homelessness Prevention, HPA. HRA strives to keep New Yorkers stably housed and ensure they are connected to resources such as rental assistance and

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2 legal services. Within this mission in partnership
3 with our colleagues at the city agencies here before
4 you today, we have undertaken a variety of reforms to
5 ensure that New Yorkers have access to habitable
6 housing. As mentioned by my colleague, when Mayor De
7 Blasio was Chair of the General Welfare Committee of
8 the New York City Council, he introduced legislation
9 that prevented the Department of Homeless Services,
10 DHS, shelters for single adults from referring
11 clients to permanent housing in buildings that meet
12 the definition of three quarter houses. Today our
13 colleagues at DHS and my staff at HRA work in concert
14 with one another to ensure clients are not discharged
15 to three quarter house locations. As a member of the
16 Three-Quarter Housing Task Force, we work diligently
17 with our sister agencies to connect individuals who
18 elect to relocate to appropriate social services that
19 they need. Since 2014, HRA's program integrity unit
20 has been working with law enforcement agencies to
21 investigate operators of three-quarter houses that
22 were requiring residents to participate in specific
23 Medicaid funded drug treatment programs as a
24 condition of living in a three-quarter house. HRA in
25 collaboration with the task force members, developed

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1 a metric to begin to identify three quarter houses
2 for this investigative and enforcement work. The
3 metric consists of identifying locations at which ten
4 or more unrelated adults are receiving the 215-state
5 set aside monthly public assistance rent allowance.
6 Within HRA, the investigation, revenue and
7 enforcement administration, IREA unit, is responsible
8 for helping ensure the integrity of social service
9 programs administered by HRA, including Medicaid and
10 they work closely with city and state agencies to
11 provide oversight for Medicaid fraud in relation to
12 three quarter housing. These strong and collaborative
13 relationships have led to the successful arrest and
14 prosecution of individuals engaged in fraud which not
15 only diverts much needed from the medical assistance
16 program, but frequently victimizes those in need of
17 health care services. As my colleague mentioned, a
18 set of bills focused on improving the conditions of
19 three-quarter housing for tenants was passed by the
20 City Council. Intro 1164, Local Law 12 of 2017, which
21 requires HRA to provide rental subsidy recipients
22 with a written statement of protections and right in
23 the hope of preventing unlawful evictions and Intro
24 1166, Local Law 13 of 2017, which requires HRA to be
25

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1
2 a part of the Mayor's Three Quarter Housing Task
3 Force, fall within the scope of HRA's
4 responsibilities. Our agency has diligently worked
5 with our partner city agencies to implement these
6 laws to ensure that the fundamental rights of all
7 tenants are protected. We have worked to educate
8 tenants about their rights regarding unlawful
9 evictions and have actively participated in the
10 three-quarter housing task force. HRA also works with
11 three quarter house residents when they are
12 voluntarily relocated to emergency temporary housing.
13 Through partnerships with contracted providers, HRA
14 provides tenants with case management, harm reduction
15 and rapid rehousing services if they choose to
16 relocate from a three-quarter housing site deemed to
17 be overcrowded or unsound. Through our work with
18 three quarter house residents, 809 clients have
19 secured permanent housing. I will now turn my
20 testimony over to Deputy Commissioner for Assets and
21 Property Management at HPD, Anne-Marie Hendrickson.

22 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Good morning. My
23 name is Anne-Marie Hendrickson, Deputy Commissioner
24 for Asset and Property Management at the Department
25 of Housing Preservation and Development, HPD. In

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1
2 addition to the efforts Operations and HRA spoke to
3 in their testimonies, HPD aggressively enforces the
4 city's housing maintenance code by responding to
5 complaints, conducting inspections and issuing
6 violations with our task force partners. HPD
7 inspectors issue violations and conduct follow up in
8 three quarter housing as we would in all residential
9 buildings. For example, if an owner fails to address
10 emergency conditions in response to city orders or
11 qualifying violations, HPD steps in to protect
12 tenants through our emergency repair program. HPD has
13 spent over half a million dollars in emergency
14 repairs to keep residents safe. Some of the emergency
15 repairs performed by HPD have been in response to
16 referrals from advocates, who have been instrumental
17 in assisting us with coordinating access to these
18 dwellings. In the case of city vacate orders, where a
19 building or units within any residential building are
20 vacated for emergency and unsafe conditions, HPD will
21 provide temporary emergency shelter for tenants who
22 wish to use the city service. HPD further assists
23 these residents by helping them with affordable
24 housing lottery applications and providing
25 information on long term housing options as needed.

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1
2 34 buildings have received full or partial vacate
3 orders in response to emergency conditions with
4 approximately 230 tenants utilizing the city's
5 assistance for temporary shelter. On behalf of all of
6 my colleagues, I want to take the time to say thank
7 you to everyone who has worked on this critical issue
8 over the last few years. The Council and
9 Administration have taken unprecedented steps in
10 recent years to protect New Yorkers in vulnerable
11 situations. Thank you Chair Levin and Council Member
12 Chin sitting in for her... for him for your leadership
13 on three quarter housing over you two terms as the
14 General Welfare Committee Chair and thank you Chair
15 Cornegy, the one who has left the room, as you dove
16 into this topic with thoughtful consideration in your
17 role as Housing and Buildings Chair. Finally, the,
18 the administration wants to especially thank the
19 advocates, who have tirelessly worked with and for
20 three quarter house tenants. The three-quarter
21 housing tenant organizing project, TOP has been a
22 critical piece of the puzzle and a true partner
23 keeping open lines of communication with tenants and
24 agencies alike. Together, we have highlighted three
25 quarter houses in an unprecedented way and worked

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2 persistently to improve living conditions and meet
3 the safety standards in the city's housing and
4 construction codes. Thank you.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh, Council Member
6 Cabrera and then Council Member Lander, yeah.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So, please...
8 welcome everyone, thank you so much for your
9 testimony and please excuse my level of ignorance but
10 three-quarter housing are deemed technically illegal,
11 correct? Yes, okay but yet we're... and we have 10,000,
12 we're estimating about 10,000 people residing in
13 three quarter housing, that's the number that I have
14 based on the briefing, given in the Council. Let's,
15 let's assume that that is so, why not find a way to
16 legalize it in order for us to better have... to bet...
17 better regulate it, I, I feel like we're dancing
18 around a big elephant in the room, does that make
19 sense or...

20 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Yes, Council Member
21 I think... one thing just to step back I think that the
22 task force was immediately formed because of a
23 decade's long problem and an immediate crisis that
24 was happening at the time, the administration put
25 together and put to bear all of the resources of all

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2 of the participating agencies to really focus on the
3 most immediate safety concerns for those people at
4 that time. It is in fact an operational body that is
5 focused on responding immediately to any concerns
6 that can't... come up within the house... three quarter
7 houses, by doing so each of the agencies has set up a
8 process where we coordinate with our HRA to step back
9 because there is not official registry or official
10 list we as a city created a metric to evaluate and
11 thus go out and inspect for such houses and try to
12 find them using the standard of ten unrelated
13 individuals who are receiving the 215 dollar state
14 rental assistance subsidy and including as well other
15 kind of notifications, people giving us names, we'll
16 go out... residents, we'll go out and check but each of
17 the agencies then goes out, we do anywhere from four
18 to six inspections a week and we try on a regular
19 basis to get to every known three quarter house that
20 we have within six months continually repeating that
21 so that we constantly address the most immediate
22 concerns. I think it is fair to say that that is the
23 focus of the task force and we know that the city
24 broadly is trying to address the larger concerns
25 around not just affordable housing but services for

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1
2 those people who are most vulnerable and do tend to
3 fall into these categories.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: But the thing is
5 you're not going to catch up anytime soon, we're
6 talking about 62,000 people in shelters right now, we
7 did a fantastic job in bringing on seven... 70,000
8 units, right but we seem to end up in the same place
9 that we were years ago dealing with previous
10 administration's bad decisions that we're still
11 dealing with but the reality is that we have 10,000
12 people that are voting with their feet, that prefer
13 to go to three quarter housing other than shelter for
14 whatever reason, okay, so... but I, I... so when I hear
15 that there's one bathroom for 24 people you... it seems
16 that you have no leverage there because it's, it's
17 not... you don't have the... it's not legalized and since
18 it's not legalized we're dancing around the issue and
19 so we have to create a task force rather than deal
20 with it like we deal with every other housing issue
21 where the Buildings Department, HPD they go directly,
22 this is the set rules, you don't have like set rules
23 because it's not legalized but yet we're, we're
24 acting like it's legal and we, we're tolerating it
25 and let's legalize it, let's, let's put down some

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2 real rules on what it should look like, it's helping
3 people, they're more good than bad that's why they're
4 going into, you know three quarter housing and let's
5 make it better, I mean I just... I'm a little confused
6 here why not just make that step since you're dealing
7 with it as if it's okay for them to stay there, you
8 have no place to house them even if you were to shut
9 them all down 10,000 people the... we, we couldn't
10 absorb 1,000 right now if they were just to show up
11 at the doors. So, let's, let's look into that, I mean
12 let's start thinking outside of the box rather than
13 dealing with a task force that has limited powers at
14 the end of the day. Just my thoughts.

15 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Thank you.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you acting
17 Chair. I'm going to return to some of those questions
18 but I, I want to just get some... ask some questions
19 that really relate to what we heard from the first
20 panel and make sure we're sort of all on the same
21 page. So, I'm going to start with the numbers, you
22 guys have 115 houses in your report and it's my
23 understanding that in 2017 and 2018 you added two new
24 ones but the numbers that we've heard both from
25 advocates and from other research are much higher so

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2 the Times article a couple years ago references as
3 state officials, you said there was... we... thought
4 there were 600 such houses in Brooklyn, advocates say
5 they believe it's about 400 but in any case that's
6 far more than the 115 you have identified and only
7 added two so, help us understand what's going on
8 there, do you disagree with the advocates and the
9 state numbers, do you think 115 is actually the
10 number or are we just kind of turning a blind eye,
11 what happens when people call the 3-1-1 or the task
12 force, help us reconcile what seems to be a pretty
13 big discrepancy?

14 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Sure, Council
15 Member glad to. I think a couple different things, as
16 I think I said before but just wanted to reiterate
17 there is no official registry for three quarter
18 housing... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Understood..
20 [cross-talk]

21 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: ...and I think that
22 the task force in order to move forward set up
23 standards by which they could start to identify
24 possible three quarter houses, we used and we've been
25 very clear about, we used HRA data, we refresh it and

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2 look at it every week and we apply a rubric of
3 essentially ten unrelated individuals who are
4 receiving the state rental assistance, assistance but
5 in addition we take very seriously that we'll take
6 any address, any notification whether it's a 3-1-1
7 complaint about a certain location or advocates
8 bringing it up. Now with that being said we then do
9 take that, send out inspectors according... a
10 compilation of all of the different agencies who are
11 a part of the task force, they go out together in a
12 coordinated fashion to inspect. Some of the... as you
13 can probably tell some of the names that are... some of
14 the residents that are referred to or some of the 3-
15 1-1 complaints when don't apply in terms of kind of
16 making the HRA kind of data pool, they don't have
17 that requisite ten or more... [cross-talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: But can, can you
19 give us some data on this, see... am I right that you
20 added two to the list in 2017 and 2018?

21 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: That's correct.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay, so how many
23 inspections did you do that identified new addresses
24 that you concluded should not have been added to the
25

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2 list because they had five, six, seven, eight
3 unrelated individuals receiving shelter allowance?

4 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Thank you Council
5 Member, I believe in calendar year 2018 there were no
6 addresses that were referred to the three quarter
7 house task force that were not three quarter houses,
8 however, we receive all of our 3-1-1 complaints and
9 addresses from the advocates and furthermore the
10 agencies in the course of their regular inspections
11 are also looking out for something that may be a
12 three, three quarter house as well and are
13 comfortable referring those to the task force if
14 appropriate.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I'm just trying
16 to understand what you're saying, the... you're open
17 but there were no such referrals?

18 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: That's correct.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay.

20 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: We remain in close
21 contact with the advocate community and anytime that
22 they refer an address to us we respond within one
23 week to inspect that address.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And that has
25 happened twice or zero times?

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2 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: There have been two
3 new addresses in that time, yes.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay. Do you have
5 some sense of how many place... I mean I'm really
6 trying to understand just what... how to understand
7 this discrepancy so do you believe it's that there
8 are a lot of places with between four and nine
9 unrelated individuals who are at the shelter rent and
10 that's how we should understand this discrepancy,
11 like it's... you decided ten kind of arbitrary, the law
12 is three so four to nine if it was a one or two
13 family home, might be pretty reasonable number to
14 expect?

15 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: I think... I think
16 that's probably right sir, I mean just because there
17 are two new ones doesn't mean that we didn't go and
18 inspect a multiple number, I don't actually have that
19 number... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: It sounds like
21 you didn't... [cross-talk]

22 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: ...and happy to...
23 [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...though so that's
25 why I was asking and I just... unless I'm unclear you

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2 said you got zero other referrals, you did zero other
3 inspections and you got zero other referrals?

4 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Right, yes.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay.

6 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: But I just think...
7 stepping back I think the process has been
8 essentially that we will take referrals, if we don't
9 get any referrals we won't go inspect, if we do get
10 the referrals we do go and inspect, we then basically
11 one, either inspect if there are names provided...
12 residents provided, take a constant look at the HRA
13 list that comes with... and you're right, I mean it is
14 a... it is a standard that we have set as a city that
15 has been kind of the same practice we've continued
16 since the beginning of 2015 where those ton... ten
17 unrelated individuals within a certain single
18 residence who apply for the state rental assistance
19 subsidy, we did not want to stop there and so we
20 opened it up to 3-1-1 complaints that may impact
21 certain residents or where they refer to three
22 quarter housing in the 3-1-1 complaint as well we've
23 been open to communicating with the advocates and
24 take a look at those houses. I know that in the
25 beginning and I'll just have... not current but at the

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2 beginning there were a referral of I think around 300
3 residents and we did in fact kind of do inspections
4 related to that and samplings of the HRA data to try
5 to compare to that, they did not always match and so
6 those that did not qualify for the ten or more within
7 that list we did not proceed and identify it as a
8 three quarter house.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay, so let me
10 ask about that maybe then, I mean that 300 is the
11 original list from which the 115 were identified?

12 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: The 300 that's
13 referenced like in your briefing notes comes from a
14 2013 report from the prisoner reentry institute and
15 that list was sent over to the task force several
16 years ago, we inspected a subset of that list and,
17 and several of those addresses matched with our 115
18 addresses but some of the broader addresses that we
19 inspected did not... were not three quarter houses.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay. So, and,
21 and I'm really just trying to understand what's going
22 on here like either there aren't more, there are 115
23 and we've identified them all or there's a lot that
24 are in that three to... four to nine range or there's a
25 lot more and system forgetting the referrals and

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2 inspecting and adding them to the list is broken so
3 which of those three things is it; we have them,
4 there's a lot of small ones that we've just defined
5 to not be three quarter houses because they're small
6 or year, there's a bunch out there but somehow we're
7 not finding them?

8 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: I think it's a, a
9 combination of those items, you're correct that if
10 there were only four individuals living in a location
11 that would be legal permanent housing and they do not
12 meet our definition of three-quarter housing.. [cross-
13 talk]

14 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Four would not
15 though the city law is currently three, the state law
16 is four, it would.. we could change our city law to
17 match the state law but currently the city law says
18 three and I'll come back to that because we should
19 address this issue but right now four to nine would
20 be technically illegal... five to nine technically
21 illegal under state law, four illegal under city law
22 but at any case if we think there's a lot... is, is
23 there a lot of that or not, I guess that's what I'm
24 asking like are there a lot of these that are under
25 ten units?

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2 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: We can continue to
3 look at our data that we receive from HRA, we
4 continue to expand the definition and look at it
5 more, we can do some more analysis... [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay... [cross-
7 talk]

8 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: ...and get back to
9 you... [cross-talk]

10 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...and I really am
11 just trying to understand what's going on first here
12 like what... how big an issue... like how much do we have
13 the universe that we're looking at every six months
14 and how much is there an additional universe beyond
15 what we're inspecting that is also out there just not
16 being looked at and I, I don't... it sounds like... it
17 sounds like you don't know, that's... I mean if you
18 want to say we think we have the whole universe I'm
19 listening but... [cross-talk]

20 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: No... [cross-talk]

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...it, it doesn't...
22 I'm just not hearing that, it, it sounds to me like
23 we don't know.

24 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Yeah, I think the
25 city was committed right in the beginning to try and

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2 address the most serious problems, we identified a
3 rubric that matched up and was well communicated and
4 worked with the advocates to kind of identify a
5 rubric that would allow us to kind of focus on the
6 most serious safety problems and I think that's part
7 of what we've been trying to do is... it is hard to
8 then just... the focus has really been on using what
9 data that we have available to make targeted kind of
10 inspections, we do have to get and coordinate and
11 make sure the agencies can go out to places that are
12 identified and we have a system to kind of go back
13 and get them. I think we're always open to talking to
14 people about different ways we might want to take a
15 look at what would qualify.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I just... I worry a
17 little that another way of saying what you just said
18 is like there was a newspaper expose, we responded
19 and I mean we the City Council here, I'm not trying
20 to pin this on the administration like we responded
21 by doing a thing and like... that... we did that a couple
22 of years ago and now we don't... we haven't come back
23 to ask the assumption questions, we don't know how
24 many there are and whether we have the full universe
25 like it wasn't unreasonable to triage by the places

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2 we deemed most dangerous at the time but if we aren't
3 asking a set of updated questions, if we don't have
4 tenants on the task force it feels like we're a
5 little on autopilot so, anyway I'll, I'll leave it
6 there I want to ask one or two more questions and,
7 and I want to... you heard what advocates had to say
8 about FHEPS so I, I guess I want to understand what
9 the administration's approach there is, at least what
10 it sounded to me was that you could previously get a
11 SEPS voucher if you are a three quarter house tenant
12 under some circumstances but now we've folded all the
13 vouchers into FHEPS and we are not making FHEPS
14 available to three quarter house residents who didn't
15 first go to the shelter system and we don't really
16 want them to go to the shelter system but currently
17 we're not offering a voucher for them to find
18 permanent housing unless they do. So, is that
19 actually our policy?

20 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: I'll refer to my
21 colleague at HRA.

22 BRUCE JORDAN: So, let me clarify Council
23 Member, the city realizes that rental assistance is
24 important tool to combat homelessness both to prevent
25 it and to exit people from shelter and based on that

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2 they reinstitute it as you know rental assistance
3 after lesson learned from Advantage unfortunately. A
4 year ago, last summer, we streamlined the rental
5 assistance subsidies into city FHEPS so it's not
6 FHEPS, City FHEPS and we went through a public ruling
7 process, a public hearing where everyone had.. got a
8 chance to opine. We streamlined it because we had
9 different subsidies that were funded different ways
10 as you know; there was SEPS, there was Link one
11 through nine, there was City FHEPS, Home TBRA, we
12 combined them to make them more user friendly for
13 both the client, the advocates and to be quite frank
14 the agency itself in order to administrate it. The
15 prior rule was when it comes to three quarter housing
16 under SEPS and now City FHEPS, right, so City FHEPS
17 didn't change anything, all those other entities, all
18 the other eligibility requirements just got put under
19 one brand called City FHEPS, prior to three quarter
20 housing if you happened to have an illegal eviction
21 with a shelter history or you happened to have an
22 illegal eviction and, and be an APS, adult protective
23 subsidy client or if you happened to be a veteran or
24 if you had a shelter history in general facing an
25 eviction you are eligible for SEPS and you're

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2 currently now eligible for City FHEPS in that
3 instance, if you're in a three quarter housing but
4 the way we apply it more broadly is for anyone in a
5 three quarter house that the task force goes out to
6 and we deem that as overcrowded or any other unsound
7 situation and someone elects in that three quarter
8 house to voluntarily relocate to temporary housing
9 versus going to shelter and or if we don't get the
10 overages down then enforcement has to play out maybe
11 a different path maybe even vacate the whole place
12 those individuals that elect to go into temporary
13 housing are granted City FHEPS across the board
14 because they're now in a more tenuous situation,
15 right, they no longer have regular housing that they
16 were... for, for whatever its worth, regular housing
17 that was paying 215 shelter allowance, they are now
18 in one of our temp sites so in order to get them
19 permanent housing now we extend the voucher to them
20 but the way that the rule was written and the way
21 given the limited funding City FHEPS just like SEPS
22 in the community was a small portion, all of the
23 subsidies were really created and reinstituted more
24 as to move people out, the majority of people in
25 shelter or family with children and a majority of the

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2 feeder into shelter as per all studies is eviction
3 and DV, so hard choices had to be made with limited
4 funding.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay, so I just...
6 I'm going to again make sure I understand the
7 situation and, and I hear you that we don't have
8 enough money or enough vouchers for the whole
9 universe of people we would like to provide vouchers
10 to for sure, we don't have that in the shelter for
11 singles or families, we don't have that across the
12 board so... but just so I understand. If I'm a... like...
13 you know the gentlemen that were up here before
14 they're in a three quarter house, if we... if we issue
15 a vacate order or we move all of them to city
16 temporary facility because we've decided that the... a
17 violation count is too high or its dangerous or if
18 they are illegally evicted then they would be
19 available for City FHEPS but if they are a resident
20 of a three quarter house with one shower for 25
21 people that is clearly in violation of the laws and
22 would be in violation of better laws if we had them
23 but today we have decided not to vacate, move those
24 folks out into some city facility and they're not
25 illegally evicted even though they're in very

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2 precarious unsafe housing and at risk of illegal
3 eviction they are not eligible for City FHEPS unless
4 they leave their three quarter house and go to a
5 shelter? So, is that an... [cross-talk]

6 BRUCE JORDAN: So, Council... [cross-talk]

7 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...accurate
8 description, I think it is, I'm trying to restate
9 what I heard you say.

10 BRUCE JORDAN: No, Council Member, I mean
11 part of it when you started it is and if we vacate
12 you get City FHEPS, if you go onto temporary you get
13 City FHEPS. Our rental subsidies are not the only
14 eviction tool so anyone in a three quarter house
15 independent of the task force can still go to home
16 base, can still call HPD over violations, if the task
17 force comes out it might lead to... back to what we're
18 talking about which might make you eligible, you can
19 get legal services so there's still other things that
20 can be done to hopefully rectify the situation if the
21 task force is not involved.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay, but at the
23 base level if none of those things are taking place
24 at... I... the, the gentlemen that were up here on the
25 panel their path to a subsidy to permanent housing is

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2 by going into the shelter system? If they went into
3 the shelter system, they would very likely become
4 eligible for FHEPS, correct?

5 BRUCE JORDAN: City FHEPS in the shelter
6 not entry due to DV or eviction, probably not. As per
7 the rules if... you have to be working a minimum... we
8 reduced it, remember it was 30 hours, you have to be
9 working 20 hours or come in through DV or come in
10 through you being a vet, APS or an eviction, these
11 are eviction prevention supplements.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, for people
13 who live in illegal substandard three-quarter housing
14 we just... we don't have a path to a subsidy for them?

15 BRUCE JORDAN: Not through a subsidy but
16 there are other eviction prevention tools that have
17 been very successful; home base, legal services.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay but I mean...
19 [cross-talk]

20 BRUCE JORDAN: And, and HRA's emergency
21 rental assistance grants depending, some people
22 sometimes put together... they roommate, they get a
23 third party and if, if they can somehow get a
24 landlord or a broker to rent to them we'll pay the
25

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2 rent security and broker fee so there's, there's,
3 there's other tools out there.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: I understand but
5 like at least acknowledge that you appreciate the
6 irrationality of a system that says if you have the
7 good fortune to be illegally evicted from your
8 substandard three quarter house we have a subsidy for
9 you and if you don't have the good fortune of being
10 evicted from your substandard housing you're just
11 stuck there, can we just acknowledge... I mean like
12 that's an irrational system, I, I don't have an easy
13 solution for it, I'm not asking you to have a magic
14 wand but that is an irrational system and it's the
15 one we currently have, agreed? Okay, I'm just going
16 to note that the deputy Commissioner is nodding.
17 Again, this is not like you guys caused this problem,
18 this is not you should have a magic wand to fix it
19 but let's be honest about it I think that would,
20 would be helpful.

21 BRUCE JORDAN: Well one of the things
22 we're hoping to do for this population which we all
23 deeply care about, everyone on the task force not
24 just HRA... [cross-talk]

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And I'm not...
3 [cross-talk]

4 BRUCE JORDAN: ...and we know you guys...
5 [cross-talk]

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...I'm truly not...
7 [cross-talk]

8 BRUCE JORDAN: ...do too... [cross-talk]

9 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...questioning
10 that... [cross-talk]

11 BRUCE JORDAN: ...we're hoping to continue
12 the work with you to get the Hevisi Krueger bill
13 passed which would increase the shelter allowance
14 which will take the pressure off of the city's CTL.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: How... and how...
16 walk me through how you think that would help
17 residents of three-quarter houses?

18 BRUCE JORDAN: Because hopefully the 215
19 would be higher than 215 that's a... [cross-talk]

20 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And what... [cross-
21 talk]

22 BRUCE JORDAN: ...start... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...belief do you
24 have that the current operators of the three quarter
25 houses would take 300 bucks or 350 bucks or whatever

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2 it is and do something of value for the current
3 residents of three quarter houses because that's a
4 lot of good faith in a lot of bad actors?

5 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: I don't think that
6 it's a... first of all just to reiterate what the
7 Deputy Commissioner said, I don't think we're looking
8 for a one stop shop on any of this, we know that the
9 task force in and of itself is not the only solution
10 to this and I think that all we're trying to say is
11 that there are a couple of different broad policy to
12 your point sir proposals that have to be made some
13 locally and some at the state because obviously there
14 isn't just a... an issue of kind of the subsidy itself
15 but also data that we can share with the state.

16 Ultimately the focus for us has been trying to deal
17 with kind of the, the most serious issues whether or
18 not we have the right data to assess everything, you
19 know there... that's an open question but we are doing
20 what we can with what we have too just to mention
21 specific things we're happy to take any information
22 from the people who spoke here today to go
23 immediately and go inspect those locations, I mean to
24 your point one shower 25 people is not right, I don't
25 think anyone is trying to shy away from that as

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2 something that we shouldn't address. I think that... I
3 want to separate two things though, one immediately
4 we can take that address we can go and take a look
5 and do the inspection from the task force to
6 coordinate all of the different agencies to go there
7 separately from a task force function. I think what
8 we are trying to articulate though is that we do have
9 a process which has been set up not that we are
10 closed to expanding or changing some of the data that
11 we can try to include in that, we can be more open to
12 getting information from the advocate community if
13 they feel that that number is being represented
14 somehow but we do at the same time have some
15 guidelines that have allowed us to fundamentally kind
16 of change some of the behavior as well so we are
17 starting to address that issue of three quarter
18 housing and trying to lower the basically the
19 egregiousness of what was first tasked to us back in
20 2015 as a bridge to broader city policies that do
21 have to make a change.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Okay, and look
23 I'm not questioning the commitment of the individuals
24 working on this issue obviously and that's not an
25 issue that I have personally focused on so this is

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2 not... you know I'm not saying why haven't you
3 individually done more I think the triage that was
4 done when the task force was set up was a good idea
5 but the, the point of this hearing and the point of
6 the bill which I think is clearly necessary because
7 getting the advocates and the tenants in better
8 contact with you guys in a more regular way looks to
9 me to be necessary, that would be a better ongoing
10 vehicle... you know vehicle than lots of public
11 hearings and I think the bill is thoughtful about how
12 to let you do the operational agency work and have
13 the relation... formal relationship and feedback to
14 advocates and, and residents if you've got a
15 different model of that to propose than what's in the
16 bill I'm sure the Chair and sponsor will be glad to
17 talk to you about it, it sounds like you're open to,
18 to negotiating that, I'm not clear why what's
19 proposed in the bill wouldn't let you do both things
20 but I'm going to let that be between you and the... and
21 the chair and the sponsor to negotiate after this
22 hearing, I'm comfortable with enough with what's in
23 the bill to add my, my name as a co-sponsor and of
24 course I'm a big advocate of the Hevisi Krueger bill,
25 I just... it doesn't... it sounds like we need a next set

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2 of steps that we don't yet have planned and aren't
3 yet taking and whether those come out of this revised
4 task force or whether we develop them together,
5 whether you guys come up with them I'm open but the
6 triage made sense except now we still have a problem
7 and we need some new tools to solve it and some of
8 that is going to be new money so I'm going to close
9 my questions but I do just wasn't to come back around
10 and invite HPD into the dialogue about this long term
11 question because I know the share NYC RFPI, you got
12 responses to and when I heard that I was thinking
13 about that as more like high end co-living and new
14 development like but, but it... I actually think there
15 might be something here to, to explore together if we
16 believe what we need in the city is a new code, a new
17 type of unit that let's there be shared living or co-
18 housing so individuals when what they can afford to
19 do is rent a room can do it in a way which is decent,
20 which has standards, which is safe, which is
21 regulated, which you guys know where it is and its
22 authorized and licensed and we hold it to some
23 standards maybe... I don't know, I mean I guess maybe
24 my question for HPD is do you think of the Share NYC
25 RFPI as an opportunity to develop some new policy

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2 that lets us make this safe and then regulated if not
3 are you doing something else to do that and if no to
4 both of those things shouldn't we be thinking about
5 something here rather than just letting a don't ask,
6 don't tell system continue to leave people in
7 miserable conditions?

8 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Thank you for
9 that question Council Member Lander, as you know at
10 HPD we are always looking to increase the number of
11 housing stock that we have; preservation is important
12 and I think as we look at that shared... that shared
13 type of housing model, you know we, we are looking at
14 other ways to get at various population so I think
15 again as to your point we continue to look at various
16 ways to increase the housing stock, to make sure
17 that, you know we're keeping people in safe and... you
18 know safe conditions so again I look forward to
19 continuing that dialogue on what other models HPD can
20 bring to bear that would also help support the three
21 quarter population.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Alright, I'll...
23 I'm going to leave it there; I've gone on well past
24 long enough so...

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. I wanted
3 to go back to your testimony on page two from the 692
4 individuals that was relocated where.. do you have any
5 stats on where they were relocated to, was that to
6 shelters or permanent housing?

7 BRUCE JORDAN: Thank you Council Member
8 for that question. Those 692 are the TQH residents
9 that I was referring to that due to an overage or
10 other unsound conditions elected to voluntarily
11 transition into one of our temp sites that HRA along
12 with the task force helps to operate and from there
13 we provided certain services that got them in a
14 position so that they with a voucher could then move
15 to permanent housing.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, are the 57
17 included in the 115?

18 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Yes. Yes ma'am.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: So, the total is,
20 is 115?

21 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Yes, I mean the,
22 the 115 is... we never remove a three quarter house
23 from the list, it stays on the list, if it's been
24 verified as one and we've seen once and we'll just
25 keep... go checking back so that we ensure people don't

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2 continue to kind of have safety practices that are
3 inappropriate for the people living there.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: I, I just want to
5 also follow up with, with what Council Member Lander
6 was talking about that I know we've been working with
7 HPD and trying to legalize so called not legal units
8 in the community, I mean we know people are, are... you
9 know doubling up, tripling up they are what we've
10 been calling the hit in the homeless so I think
11 looking at this as an example if there's a way that
12 we can work on, you know rules and regulations to get
13 them legalized because not everybody can afford a lot
14 of money for rent. So, if they could afford, you know
15 with the government, you know subsidy is we got to
16 make sure that those housing are safe, I mean and our
17 population is growing and we just cannot build enough
18 permanent affordable housing so we have to look at
19 what we have now and how we can kind of work towards
20 to make them safe and legal.

21 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: I mean I, I
22 think one good... thank you Council Member Chin, I
23 think one important point here that we just need to
24 make is, you know a large portion of the three
25 quarter homes, you know that have been looked at are

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2 really one to two family homes, right, they're not
3 capitally eligible for a lot of the HPD programs at
4 this point, you know that we do a lot of work around,
5 you know homelessness and trying to figure out new
6 methods so what we try to continue to do is, you know
7 strengthen our term sheets, look for different ways
8 to build housing faster, you know and again we
9 continue to get pushed, you know this year was
10 probably one of our biggest housing production years
11 but again in light of the fact that, you know you
12 can't really legalize them, you know the one and two
13 family homes what we've tried to do is focus on the
14 safety of them, okay, trying to make sure that what
15 we can do as the task force is make sure that if
16 they're overcrowded that we're moving people to
17 better conditions and making sure that that's not an
18 issue and again trying to make sure that the owners
19 are held accountable for doing the repairs that
20 they're supposed to do.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Madame Chair can
22 I just... [cross-talk]

23 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, I mean...
24 [cross-talk]

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: ...what is over...

3 [cross-talk]

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: ...we were also
5 talking about legalizing basement units so... yeah.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: And I, I think it
7 is actually in the same... what does overcrowded mean
8 in this situation like they're all technically
9 illegal so what standard did you set for when they're
10 so overcrowded, you're going to move people out of
11 them?

12 JOE: That's a great question Council
13 Member Lander...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Can you identify
15 yourself when you speak?

16 JOE: Sure, I'm Assistant Commissioner
17 Joe Ventour with MIC Buildings. When we look at
18 overcrowding, we look at the housing maintenance code
19 as it pertains to max permitted occupancy based on
20 the square footage of that particular building.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: So, wouldn't it
22 make sense... this goes to the standards question like
23 I hear you that we don't kind of like have a magic
24 new HPD program that puts lots of money in but it
25 sounds like we might be able to define the thing we

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2 think is decent and this goes to what might happen if
3 the Krueger Hevisi bill goes into, into place like
4 what does it look like for people to take the
5 vouchers that they have especially if they're a
6 little better and use them in the private market
7 place to, to rent a decent room but what is decent
8 like what are the standards for it not being
9 overcrowded, what are the standards for it having
10 enough showers and baths and kitchens that... you know
11 and like is that great, it's not great, are people
12 still going to want to look to get somewhere
13 permanent, yes, but like let's think about drawing
14 the line between what we think is adequate and making
15 that legal and the line that's not adequate and
16 making it illegal and then being able to genuinely
17 enforce our law as opposed to this current situation
18 where it feels like the don't ask, don't tell nature
19 of the system just means we're going to stay stuck.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Council Member
21 Cabrera if you want to...

22 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So, let me ask
23 you a question, let me... I've, I've been to several
24 shelters, is there a different standard in terms of
25 square footage for shelters versus private homes?

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2 JOE VENTOUR: That's a great question
3 Council Member, yes there is.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So, why can't we
5 apply that three, three quarter housing, it seems to
6 me that that is almost the same and as long as the
7 FDNY is saying this is safe we have the adequate
8 amount of showers and whatever else or if we could
9 emulate what's happening in shelter and allow it to
10 happen in private homes what's the difference, it's
11 the same... it's the same thing? Or maybe we haven't
12 thought about it, which is fine, you know maybe today
13 is the beginning of a new day.

14 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Yeah, I think
15 generally Council Member I think one I want to get
16 back to and not to scurvy the question I think that
17 we are very much concerned about affordable housing
18 and kind of safe kind of housing for anyone in the
19 city. As an administration the focus has been on
20 trying to address this in a multipronged fashion that
21 includes efforts broadly to expand the affordable
22 housing stock itself, two, to better identify kind of
23 means by which we can increase the services and the
24 reach out to certain populations but this task force
25 has also been focused quite... you know not flippantly

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2 but operationally on trying to identify specific
3 places that have the most egregious concerns those
4 vulnerable New Yorkers who are unfortunately kind of
5 at the risk of kind of predatory and bad housing kind
6 of practices and so we're open to discussion around
7 what kind of those policy solutions can be at the
8 same time the task force is really an operational
9 focus on people who have very specific skills on
10 inspections, remediating those inspections, providing
11 immediate services for those people who may... we may
12 want to temporarily relocate or at the same time if
13 there's a full vacate order there's a, a different
14 means and process there but to kind of continue that
15 process so that we one, understand the population as
16 best as we can of residents that could fall under
17 this and again we are very open to talking with the
18 Council about what that kind of criteria is that we
19 think that our criteria is, is strong and at least
20 consistent and we are constantly talking to people
21 and hoping that they will bring attention and
22 residents to us and we'll always respond to those. At
23 the same time going back to it I think the city's
24 very open to kind of broader conversations, one, in
25 terms of negotiating how to really make this

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2 legislation effective but other things that may help
3 into... including your help with the state.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER CABRERA: So, let me just
5 close with this and thank you Chair, Interim Chair
6 Chin. The moment that you give any kind of voucher or
7 anything towards three quarter housing you're
8 legitimizing it in some way so if we could have... look
9 I've been to shelters where they're literally almost
10 sleeping right next to each other so I, I see almost
11 no difference that I see in three quarter housing, I
12 think that you will have more of a handle, more
13 authority, more of a consistency if you could come up
14 with a standard that is safe, that the buildings
15 department, FDNY and everyone else is responsible for
16 safety could indicate to the single... in this single
17 family home where its deemed safe I would think the
18 landlords would be more amicable to have because
19 they'll be more... you know they're not trying to fly
20 under the radar and you will be able to have a better
21 handle rather than to go through a task force you
22 could go directly with the agencies and I know you're
23 working through the agencies but you'll be able to
24 better regulate and that's... and I started, you know
25 hopefully we'll be able to move in that direction if

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2 it is deemed safe and for me if, if it is safe in the
3 shelters then it should be safe in other types of
4 situations that emulate the same type of, of
5 scenario. Madame Chair thank you so much for all the
6 time that you have allowed us to speak.

7 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you, Council
8 Member Grodenchik.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you. I,
10 I just want to comment I think my, my colleagues have
11 all hit it on the head, it... I just want to go on the
12 record, it bothers me greatly I, I look at the
13 numbers that we're spending on homeless services,
14 they're enormous and yet we don't seem to be getting
15 our money's worth here, I see an increasing number of
16 people riding the E train and the F train which is
17 the train that I ride because they feel they.. I guess
18 they have no other alternative, I've been a huge
19 supporter of the Hevisi Krueger bill since Chair
20 Hevisi first introduced it, we've held several press
21 conferences with him, we need to be doing a better
22 job. If you divide the number of people in the
23 homeless shelter system by, by the amount that we're
24 spending which is close to three billion dollars the
25 numbers are extraordinary, at 44,000 dollars in

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2 individual cash so we're certainly not getting our
3 money's worth and my question... one question that I do
4 have where would these folks... we heard some quite
5 compelling testimony this morning, where would they
6 be living if they weren't in these three quarter
7 houses? Would they be on the street or would they be
8 in a shelter or... and I know that this is not a one
9 size fits all answer but where do you think... you're
10 the experts?

11 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: I, I'll, I'll defer
12 to my colleague at HRA for a fuller answer but in
13 general I think that as other testimony has provided
14 and I think we are trying to be very cognizant as
15 well as a task force every circumstance is a bit
16 different, these are all unique individuals... [cross-
17 talk]

18 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: I, I get
19 that... [cross-talk]

20 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: So, in so far as...
21 [cross-talk]

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: ...and... get
23 that and I... and I understand the pressure on, on
24 these individuals is enormous as enormous pressure on
25 the city to try to keep up with the, the demand for

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2 affordable housing which just we haven't been able to
3 do but I know we're trying so I, I, I don't know if
4 they would be on the street but I think a lot of them
5 given the amount of money they have to spend they
6 would have to be in the shelter system, is that a
7 reasonable conclusion?

8 BRUCE JORDAN: Thank you Council Member,
9 I mean hopefully not like I've described not just
10 rental assistance but with all the tools that this
11 administration has, has, has authorized like I said
12 between homebased, legal services, I mean we have a,
13 a big population on the HRA case load with the 215
14 shelter allowance depending on, right and this is how
15 it is... it depends on the individual but depending on
16 their familial ties they double up as Council Member
17 Chin mentioned they double up with family members for
18 the 215 so... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Do you... if,
20 if I asked you to cite... I, I don't know... I, I assume
21 that this task force has had to evacuate premises
22 that were deemed to be an immediate hazard at some
23 point, is that correct?

24 BRUCE JORDAN: certainly...
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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: So, can you
3 give me a for instance did those people go to live
4 with relatives, did they go into the system or I
5 guess there's all kinds of different outcomes, though
6 typical human being because we're all different.

7 BRUCE JORDAN: Yeah, I think that's
8 absolutely correct, they all have different stories,
9 but I'll let HPD...

10 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Sure, thank,
11 thank you Council Member. Again in the case and, and
12 again it's been few, you know thankfully that we've
13 had to actually vacate the entire building but when
14 those... when that happens they are eligible for HPD
15 services for emergency housing and they are eligible
16 to come in and we will work with them to register
17 them and we will put them into the HPD shelter
18 program.

19 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Okay,
20 alright. Thank you, Madame Chair. Thank you all for
21 being here today.

22 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Thank you.

23 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Thank you.
24
25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Well thank you for
3 your testimony and we look forward to continuing to
4 work with you and thank you.

5 ANNE-MARIE HENDRICKSON: Thank you.

6 JEFF THAMKITTIKASEM: Thank you very
7 much...

8 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh, we were also
9 joined by Council Member Gjonaj, Council Member
10 Torres and Council Member Salamanca earlier. We're
11 going to call up the next panel. Linda, Linden
12 Miller; Scott Hutchins; oh, okay Patrick Tyrrell...

13 PATRICK TYRRELL: Hi Margaret.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Hi. Giselle
15 Routhier and Josh Goldfein, Felix Plaza Hernandez and
16 Lucy Queen Woody. Does everybody have a seat?
17 There're chairs here, on this side. Alright, who, who
18 wants to start first?

19 FELIX PLAZA HERNANDEZ: Alright, I wasn't
20 even going to speak today, I was just sitting down
21 listening and I felt the urge to say something, you
22 know what I'm saying because the way I found out
23 about... [cross-talk]

24 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Can, can you
25 identify yourself, could you give us your name?

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2 FELIX PLAZA HERNANDEZ: Oh, Felix, Felix
3 Plaza Hernandez and I'm a VOCAL and TOPS and I've
4 been with them for a while too. So, I found out about
5 the three quarter houses I was in detox for alcohol
6 in downtown somewhere around here so, Narco Freedom
7 came in there and they asked if some people wanted to
8 go to the program, you know what I'm saying so I went
9 and I signed up and when I got released I went
10 straight to them, one of the first things they asked
11 me was to go to HRA if you don't got no Medicare or
12 do this and do that, you know what I'm saying and so
13 I know the HRA know, I almost guarantee that
14 everybody... there's... every three quarter house that's
15 open right now has somebody... HRA paying for them, you
16 know what I'm saying so that way they should know how
17 many three quarter houses there is, you know what I'm
18 saying because they're paying the bill, you know what
19 I'm saying so they should know who they're paying the
20 bill to and they could figure out, that's one thing.
21 Another thing, the, the three-quarter houses too
22 they're bad places too, you know what I'm saying?
23 They're good that you got a place to rest and this
24 and that but most of them are over, overrun with
25 drugs and stuff like that. I was clean for four

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2 years, when I went in there within the week, I was
3 doing heroine, you know what I'm saying. So, they got
4 to fix that too and I want you guys to pass this bill
5 too especially we want... we need somebody in that task
6 force because we don't know what's going on, you know
7 what I'm saying? And not only one person I believe
8 that they should have a person from every borough
9 inside the task force so they can go and spread the
10 word out, you know what I'm saying because I believe
11 too that they'll gang up on one person and if you
12 only put one person in there I believe they'll gang
13 up on them, you know what I'm saying not let them do
14 nothing, you know what I'm saying and that's it I
15 believe.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you.

17 GISELLE ROUTHIER: Hi Council Member, my
18 name is Giselle Routhier, I'm the Policy Director at
19 the Coalition for the Homeless, we submitted joint
20 testimony with the Legal Aid Society. I want to thank
21 you all for the opportunity to testify today. As you
22 all know well New York city remains in the midst of
23 the worst homelessness crisis since the great
24 depression with 63,600 men, women and children
25 sleeping in shelters each night. Record homelessness

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2 is currently being fueled by a steep and ongoing
3 increase in the number of homeless single adults. In
4 February of 2019, an all-time record 18,200 single
5 adults slept in New York City shelters each night. An
6 unknown number of individuals additionally live in
7 three-quarter houses which are characterized by
8 illegal occupancy, extreme overcrowding, persistent
9 health and safety violations as, as we've heard about
10 today, failure to acknowledge tenancy rights,
11 fraudulent use of public benefits by operators and
12 serious fire safety hazards. The direct referral of
13 homeless individuals from shelter to three quarter
14 houses has been largely abated due to a rule
15 promulgated in 2010 prohibiting such referrals but
16 their continued existence remains fueled by referrals
17 from other sources including individuals released
18 from prison on parole, people with disabilities,
19 people with substance use histories who are seeking
20 treatment and others who are adverse to entering DHS
21 shelters. Many individuals in three quarter houses
22 struggle with housing instability, criminal justice
23 involvement and a lack of access to appropriate
24 health and mental health care and substance use
25 treatment. The lack of appropriate housing subsidies

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2 or other paths to stability for this population means
3 that these vulnerable New Yorkers remain trapped in
4 dangerous and unlawful three-quarter houses and might
5 cycle back and... cycle back and forth between
6 homelessness and extreme housing instability.

7 Coalition for the Homeless and the Legal Aid Society
8 therefore support, support Intro 153-A codifying a
9 three-quarter house task force with authority to
10 enforce existing laws, provide assistance for
11 residents of three-quarter houses and report
12 regularly on progress. Furthermore, the fact that New
13 Yorkers with extremely low incomes struggle to find
14 more stable housing placements than three quarter
15 houses underscores the urgent need to increase the
16 supply of permanent affordable housing so we'd be
17 remiss if we did not mention that this continued
18 existence is one of the manifestations of the ongoing
19 affordable housing crisis in New York City and we
20 have urged Mayor De Blasio to rectify this issue by
21 committing more of his Housing New York 2.0 plan
22 specifically for homeless and extremely low income
23 New Yorkers. So, I'll just plug here the House our
24 Future New York Campaign that we've been leading has
25 been calling on Mayor De Blasio to set aside 30,000

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2 units of affordable housing in his Housing New York
3 plan including 24,000 units to be created through new
4 construction in order to realign his housing plan
5 with the reality of record homelessness and housing
6 instability. Additionally, the city should accelerate
7 the pipeline of new permanent supportive housing for
8 people struggling with mental health and substance
9 use issues, rather than leaving vulnerable New
10 Yorkers with few choices other than three quarter
11 houses. We appreciate the Council's steadfast support
12 in calling for these desperately needed permanent
13 housing resources. And thank you again for the
14 opportunity to testify today.

15 JOSH GOLDFEIN: Good afternoon, I'm Josh
16 Goldfein from the Legal Aid Society, we are council
17 to Coalition for the Homeless and as Giselle
18 mentioned we presented joint written testimony. I
19 just want to highlight from her testimony that as..
20 when, when Bruce Jordan from HRA was asked... raised
21 the question of whether the, the state could solve
22 the problem by, by passing the bill that Assembly
23 Member Hevisi had proposed and Senator Krueger is
24 also co-sponsoring. The... certainly housing subsidies
25 are, are a huge problem that the state should be

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2 addressing that would help relieve some of the
3 pressure on this population but we also want to
4 highlight that the... another state agency, the
5 Corrections Department, DOCS is a primary driver of
6 this dynamic and whereas previously DOC parole would
7 send people to three quarter houses routinely as a
8 result of the work that was... that's been done by the
9 advocates, by... and, and the stories that were in the
10 paper the... DOCS no longer will approve three quarter
11 houses where they know about them and where they've
12 determined that they're dangerous and as a result
13 that, that group of people only has the shelter to
14 turn to or some other option that's even further
15 under the radar so when we look at... well the question
16 is where... was asked more than once where do people
17 go, you know the... these are the options that are
18 available to them and so a real route to housing is
19 the only way to solve this. We have people as Giselle
20 mentioned coming directly from state prison into the
21 shelter system at an increasing rate and that is a
22 primary driver at this point of the growth in the
23 shelter system. The city administration has managed
24 to level off and even start to reduce the number of
25 families with children in the shelter system but the

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2 number of single adults continues to grow and the... a
3 major source of that growth is coming from prisons
4 and we have people who have been... now... are now told
5 they can't go to three quarter houses and that also
6 means that that three quarter house operator is then
7 turned to other sources to fill their buildings. So,
8 housing subsidies are crucial, the state's
9 involvement is the... is going to be the only way to
10 get a full handle on this, it can't... the, the city
11 itself can't solve it without the state's assistance
12 but in the end what people need is permanent housing
13 and more permanent housing options. Thank you.

14 LINDEN MILLER: Thanks. My name is Linden
15 Miller and I'm a Staff Attorney at the Community
16 Development Project of the Urban Justice Center or
17 CDP. CDP's mission is to provide legal participatory
18 research and policy support to strengthen the work of
19 grassroots and community-based groups in New York
20 City such as VOCAL New York. CDP supports Intro 153-A
21 to codify and improve the three-quarter house task
22 force. Historically three-quarter house tenants have
23 endured dangerous conditions, severe overcrowding and
24 unspeakable abuse from unscrupulous land, landlords.
25 However, simply shutting them down en masse would

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2 result in displacement of thousands of people into
3 street homelessness or the shelter system. The answer
4 has never been to erase three quarter houses and
5 declare the people who need them out of sight, out of
6 mind. As long as the conditions foster three quarter
7 houses continue to exist, a severe housing crisis,
8 mass incarceration and a zero tolerance approach to
9 chemical addiction, three quarter houses will fill in
10 otherwise unmet need that can only be addressed when
11 targeted services... with targeted services to move
12 people one by one to safe and stable housing. And the
13 city took a big step towards making that a reality
14 when it created the three-quarter housing task force
15 and Intro 153-A provides the opportunity to both
16 preserve that progress and to improve upon it with
17 some smart changes. The task force has relocated
18 scores of tenants to safer permanent housing while
19 largely avoiding unintended consequences such as
20 forcing tenants into the street or shelters filling a
21 gap left by the shameful shortage of reentry and
22 transitional housing. Its common-sense balanced
23 approach should be continued not folded for
24 expediency into a one size fits all system that would
25 require three quarter house tenants to detour through

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2 the shelter system simply so they can be stamped
3 homeless before receiving a voucher. The proposed
4 legislation, Intro 153-A would ensure the continued
5 existence of the task force, it will continue its
6 current duties and will also distribute information
7 about tenants' rights for repair and be safe from
8 unlawful evictions. The addition of new agencies to
9 the task force as well as advocates and effected
10 people in advisory roles will enable it to take a
11 more holistic and informed view of the problems it is
12 addressing particularly the intersection of the
13 housing crisis and mass incarceration. We know the
14 impetus for this task force came from a shocking
15 expose in the New York Times in 2015 and we know that
16 as public attention shifts away from this issue vital
17 resources like this task force that are not codified
18 in law are at risk. It is crucial that we protect the
19 hard-won resources that currently serve this
20 vulnerable population. And we thank the sponsors, the
21 Speaker and the Committee members for your leadership
22 on the issue and we urge the Council to pass this
23 important bill. Thank you.

24 PATRICK TYRRELL: Good afternoon. Sorry,
25 good afternoon. My name is Patrick Tyrrell, I'm a

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2 Staff Attorney at Mobilization for Justice formerly
3 known as MFY Legal Services. We've been working with
4 three quarter house organizers, tenants through
5 advocacy, litigation and organizing for over a decade
6 now. Many of the three-quarter house tenants that we
7 represent are completely overlooked by social
8 institutions, I think the testimony taken today has
9 reflected that strongly, they slip through the
10 cracks. The task force has been an extremely
11 important gap filler and strengthening the task force
12 will continue to fill a gap but as Council Members
13 have pointed out there's a lot more to be done. I
14 want to address a few things that have been discussed
15 this afternoon and morning. First of all, as Council
16 person Lander dug into through some good questioning
17 the differentials between the numbers. How many
18 three-quarter houses are there? In my own research I,
19 I couldn't arrive at a conclusion either, but the
20 anecdotal reporting is there's a lot more than what
21 has been reported to the task force recently. I just
22 want to highlight through a couple of stories through
23 our recent advocacy why this might be the case. I
24 can't stress enough how precarious the tenancies are
25 in the three-quarter houses, tenants and residents

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2 face immediate repercussion for asserting their
3 rights. For instance, we worked with a group of
4 tenants in Prospect Lefferts in an illegal,
5 completely unlicensed, unregulated boarding house,
6 it's very overcrowded. The owner recently tried to
7 affect a wholesale illegal eviction by doing an end-
8 run game by evicting the operator but also naming all
9 of the quote, unquote occupants in the building. They
10 got a judgment and warrant and the Marshal showed up
11 and almost evicted all of the... all of the residents
12 as well, luckily we were able to intervene but when
13 the parole officers got word of this they immediately
14 started an emergency process to put all the residents
15 into shelters. We were able to reach out to the
16 parole officer's supervisors and say no, this is not
17 a lawful eviction, we're going to fight it tooth and
18 nail and we did and we won, we got the case dismissed
19 but it was only by sort of sheer luck and
20 coordination with extremely important organizations
21 like Neighbors Together that are on the ground every
22 day that we were able to evade that horrible
23 consequence of having a whole building of over 20
24 people put into shelter for no good reason. So, again
25 this is the kind of conditions that people... that,

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2 that folks face in three quarter houses and so it's
3 only logical that they wouldn't self-report
4 necessarily. I think that we have a lot of data, we
5 have a lot of agency communication. I could imagine
6 perhaps more effective auditing tools to identify new
7 three quarter houses, I could imagine through DOB
8 regulations especially new regulations around
9 converting and legalizing illegal units that we could
10 try to do pathways to fixing that problem but I think
11 until we actually protect tenants from the immediate
12 harm they're probably not going to point themselves
13 out to the city even if eventually the benefits are
14 there. I also just want to point out that in terms of
15 other policy changes that really could have an
16 enormous impact on, on dealing with three quarter
17 houses repealing the ban on private SRO housing. I
18 think that's the elephant in the room, a well-
19 regulated, you know new, new development of SRO
20 housing that's rent stabilized that affords tenant
21 protections that, you know is, is overseen by the
22 city I think that that is the actual... or at least a
23 much more viable long term solution to the needs that
24 communities are showing. So, anyways I'll just wrap
25 it up but all I have to say is that MFJ unequivocally

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2 supports this bill and we are happy to engage in
3 dialogue with City Council members who are interested
4 in discussing further steps as well. We're happy to
5 share the information that we've collected through
6 our years and years of litigation and advocacy around
7 these problems. Thank you.

8 SCOTT ANDREW HUTCHINS: My name is Scott
9 Andrew Hutchins and I'm with Picture the Homeless. I
10 didn't come with prepared testimony today because I
11 was expecting to have a fair hearing at HRA that has
12 been adjourned but I wanted to refer members of the
13 Council to a blog post there that I put on my word
14 press blog and again my name is Scott Andrew
15 Hutchins, that's the name of my blog and the blog
16 entry is called Tuesdays psychological torture and it
17 documents the second time... I've been a resident of
18 the shelter system for, it'll be seven years as of
19 May 25th and there have been two instances where
20 shelters have literally tried to dump me at three
21 quarter houses. The first occasion was the Eddie
22 Harris men's shelter in 2012 tried to force me into a
23 three quarter house in Far Rockaway, this was just
24 before hurricane Sandy and I didn't end up going to
25 that three quarter house but I did learn that it was

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2 flooded out during hurricane Sandy. The more recent
3 one was in July 2014 and its very heavily detailed in
4 that blog entry, Tuesday psychological torture. I was
5 sent by NAICA Bronx Park Avenue to the Foxhurst Sober
6 home on James A. Polite Street in the Bronx which
7 rejected me because I don't have a history of
8 substance abuse and they had a mandatory substance
9 abuse treatment program involved in this. This place
10 had very small rooms with three bunk beds in each
11 room so there's six men in a room, no lockers the way
12 a shelter system would and be, because, because I
13 don't have an addiction issue they were going to send
14 me to a drop in center and they said though we can't...
15 you... can't have you hear be... apparently they're doing
16 some kind of Medicaid scam, again its, its run by a
17 guy named Terrance Jeffries and it was called the,
18 the Foxhurst Sober Home and the... I got... I was trying
19 to... and this is detailed in the blog entry going back
20 and forth calling people at the shelter because they...
21 because they, they were threatening me, they told me...
22 they were calling the sober home permanent housing
23 and they said that they... that they... said that they
24 had given my bed away, they actually had not but they
25 were going to... they told me over the phone that they

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2 were going to send me back to Belleview and that I
3 would be sanctioned from the shelter system for an
4 entire year for rejecting permanent housing. Now I
5 don't think they could actually do that but this is
6 the kind of scare tactics that they use to try to
7 push you into the system and now hearing that the...
8 that people who are in these three quarter houses
9 can't get these vouchers my... that just makes
10 everything that happened to me even more disturbing
11 because these shelters are trying to push people into
12 three quarter houses and pass that off as permanent
13 housing so that's just what I wanted to talk about
14 today because it's very shocking what I've been
15 hearing relative to what, what I've been through with
16 the three quarter house experience and I've heard
17 lots of horror stories from residents about people
18 living in them, they... you had to sleep in the pantry
19 and things like that. So, that's, that's another
20 thing I wanted to say. Thank you.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Thank you. Patrick,
22 I had... just want to follow up with you in talking
23 about repealing the ban on SRO, I mean we've lost so
24 many SRO units so do you see that as maybe a better
25 alternative to shelters and...

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2 PATRICK TYRRELL: I, I think that for a
3 long time SROs were the last... the tenancy of last
4 resort, the, the gap filler between street
5 homelessness and the shelter system and people who
6 could not afford a traditional studio, one-bedroom
7 apartment. They... you know the political will against
8 them was intense and I think it still is, but we see
9 that SROs are effectively... De Facto SROs are
10 effectively being constructed for newer New Yorkers
11 with more middle incomes. It took... you know there's a
12 demand for it across the board even, even in the
13 middle class. I think for... definitely for very low-
14 income single adults this could be a, a very
15 effective means. Again and I... you know I stress well
16 regulated, well... you know over... a lot of oversight
17 and enforcement but it's, it, it certainly does seem
18 to be a logical alternative to an unregulated
19 industry that is essentially creating SROs, I mean...
20 another point I'll make in terms of the reporting, a
21 lot of times owners and operators will construct made
22 up apartments which are actually just rooms in a
23 single family unit and perhaps maybe that's how
24 they're evading, you know findings that there are ten
25 unrelated individuals in one unit if they split one

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2 unit into six units and then say okay, there's two
3 people per unit, okay, great they've already juked
4 the stats and evaded the current form of oversight.
5 There's no good faith from most of these operators
6 and owners, they're fairly savvy actually and I think
7 that they know how, how to evade regulations so
8 creating permanent SROs and lifting the ban we see it
9 as one very important piece to solving this.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Is the ban from
11 the, the state or the city?

12 PATRICK TYRRELL: I believe... [cross-talk]

13 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah, we... [cross-
14 talk]

15 PATRICK TYRRELL: I don't want to go on
16 record either... sorry, I, I, I believe it is city
17 code, but maybe legal aid can assist. The... there are
18 a number of prohibitions that... so there's a... there's
19 a local law that was drafted and as a result the city
20 adopted a rule, it was the first rule of the
21 Department of Homeless Services to avoid having a
22 local law passed that would prevent the shelters from
23 referring people directly to three quarter houses and
24 then subsequently the, the, the... as I mentioned the
25 state Department of Corrections prevented people from

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2 referring people to three quarter houses and with
3 regard to SROs, you know I mean I think we... as
4 Council Member Lander suggested there's an
5 opportunity to, to revisit whether there's an
6 appropriate mechanism to create safe, stable housing
7 for people that would satisfy all of these
8 requirements that we're looking at. The question is,
9 you know both how... what, what... we have to get
10 everyone to the table in order to develop such a plan
11 but also a way to finance it.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Yeah because some
13 of the, the project that we're working with HPD on, I
14 mean it would have to be some kind of SRO because
15 they share kitchens and bathrooms but at least they
16 will be safe and regulated so that's something that
17 maybe we, we would love to look at... into and get your
18 help on that.

19 PATRICK TYRRELL: Thank you Council
20 Member, be happy to assist.

21 COUNCIL MEMBER CHIN: Oh, Council Member
22 Treyger joined us earlier, thank you. Any other
23 questions? Well thank you very much for your advocacy
24 and for coming to testify today and hopefully we will
25 work on getting the bill passed. Thank you. Anyone

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else that wanted to testify? No, okay so this hearing

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is adjourned. ~~Three-quarter~~

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[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

May 18, 2019