

COMMITTEE 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 HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

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October 9, 2025

Start: 11:24 a.m.

Recess: 11:36 a.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - 8TH FLOOR - HEARING
ROOM 3

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

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Alexa Avilés
Eric Dinowitz
Oswald Feliz
Crystal Hudson
Lincoln Restler

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Farrah N. Louis

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone check for the Committee on Housing and Buildings, recorded in Hearing Room 3 on October 9, 2025, by Nazly Paytuvi.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to today's New York City Council hearing vote for the Committee on Housing and Buildings.

At this time, please silence all electronic devices. Please silence all electronic devices.

No one may approach the dais at any time during this hearing.

Chair Sanchez, we are ready to begin.

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

We're here today to vote on a pair of bills geared towards improving our City's housing lottery system and ensuring that all rentals provide a safe environment to children. I want to begin by grounding us in the why, to make our housing safer, fairer, and more accessible. First, Introduction 925-A, sponsored by Council Member Farrah Louis, would require biennial inspections of steam radiators in

apartments where a child under six lives and in common areas of those buildings as well. This legislation is born out of unimaginable tragedy. In 2016, two Bronx sisters, Scylee and Ibanez Ambrose, lost their lives when steam erupted from a faulty radiator. In 2016, Alex Pacheco was burned in over 70 percent of his body when a radiator exploded. And last year, a Brooklyn 11-month-old baby, Binyomin Zachariah, Ben Z, died in the same horrific way; a preventable death that occurred after an inspection had already found visible decay, but no violation. These were not freak accidents; they were failures of our system to act before tragedy struck. Intro. 925-A will be Ben Z's law. It would ensure that these catastrophic malfunctions never happen again. The bill mandates regular radiator inspections, prompt repairs, and immediate action when a radiator poses a life safety hazard. It's a proactive measure to ensure that all steam radiators are safe for operation, especially during the heat season. If an inspection reveals a defect or damage to a steam radiator, the building owner would be required to correct such defect within 14 days of the inspection, while the discovery of any condition hazardous to

life and safety would require the building owner to remove the steam radiator from service within 24 hours of the inspection, and repair or replace the steam radiator within seven days. Building owners would be required to maintain records of each inspection and be subject to civil penalties for insufficient record keeping. Inspection requirements would not apply to owners of condos and co-ops.

Next, we turn to Intro. 1265-A, which I am proud to sponsor. This legislation addresses another chronic frustration for New Yorkers, the inefficiencies of the Housing Connect system, which too often turns hope into heartbreak. To set the context, our housing lottery receives a median of 670 applications for every one unit, every single unit of housing listed, and between January 2014 and June 2020, a six-year period, 29 million applications were received on Housing Connect, compared to just 27,819 leases signed. That means that just one lease on Housing Connect is signed or is issued for every 1,000 applications submitted. My office hears daily from Bronx families desperate for an affordable home, those who are applying to this system. They're navigating a confusing system that offers little

transparency or communication. This bill would require an email and text notification for applicants, eliminate irrelevant alerts for units applicants are not eligible for, and allow users to designate a representative, such as a family member or a caseworker, to receive updates and help them manage the process. HPD would also be required to study how best to serve users who need this kind of support. In short, 1265-A makes the housing lottery system more accessible, efficient, and humane, because technology should simplify the access, our access to housing, not complicate it. While 1265 marks an improvement, I do want to note and highlight that recent incidents like a data breach that involved HPD's Housing Connect system reminds us that as we work to improve the efficiency and accessibility of the system, we must also protect not just applicants' housing hopes, but their privacy as well.

With that, I want to thank my Colleagues, our agencies, and especially the families and advocates whose experiences inspired these reforms. Together, we can make sure that our City's promise of

safety, dignity, and housing is real for every New Yorker.

Thanks to my team, Maria Villalobos, Ben Ratner, Gerard Fernandez, Dylan Campos, welcome, and Kim Castellanos. I'd also like to thank the Housing and Buildings Committee Staff, Senior Legislative Counsel Austin Malone; our Legislative Counsel Billy Eck; Senior Policy Analyst Jose Conde; Policy Analyst Dirk Spencer; Finance Analyst Carla Naranjo; and Data Scientist Reese Hirota for your work on this hearing.

I'm joined today by my Colleagues, and whose names will be called when we call the roll.

Any comments or questions from Colleagues?

I'd like to acknowledge Council Member Louis.

COUNCIL MEMBER LOUIS: Good morning, Housing and Buildings Committee, and thank you, Chair Sanchez, for your leadership and partnership in advancing this life-saving legislation today.

Intro. 925, also known as Ben Z's Law, is a result of thoughtful collaboration between families, advocates, trades, and property owners. It requires that radiators in apartments with children

under six and in common areas be inspected regularly by qualified professionals. The bill also mandates that landlords act swiftly to repair or replace any damaged or defective radiators and provide documentation to ensure accountability. Tenants deserve safe living spaces that protect them, not endanger them or their children. Children are among our most vulnerable New Yorkers, and we must protect them at all costs, including in their own homes. A child's home should be a place of safety and security, not a source of preventable harm. Throughout the drafting process, we work closely with labor unions, including the Mechanical Contractors Association, Steam Fitters, as well as the New York Apartment Association to create a framework that protects tenants while ensuring the requirements are practical for building owners and achievable for trained tradespeople. I want to thank Alex and Bessie Kuravsky, who's here with us today, for their remarkable strength and advocacy, which transformed devastating tragedy into purposeful action that will save lives. Their courage has created a lasting legacy of protection for families across New York City and for their son, Binyomin.

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2 I urge my Colleagues on this Committee to
3 vote in favor of this legislation so that no family
4 ever has to endure the heartbreak that the Kuravskys
5 have suffered. Thank you, Chair.

6 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Thank you so much,
7 Council Member Louis, for your work on this bill and
8 for all of your advocacy.

9 With that, I want to ask the Clerk to
10 call the roll.

11 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
12 you. Good morning. William Martin, Committee Clerk.
13 Roll call vote, Committee on Housing and Buildings.
14 Items are coupled.

15 Chair Sanchez.

16 CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Aye.

17 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Dinowitz.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER DINOWITZ: Aye.

19 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Feliz.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER FELIZ: Aye on all.

21 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Thank
22 you. Abreu. Avilés.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AVILÉS: Aye.

24 COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Hudson.

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COUNCIL MEMBER HUDSON: Aye, and congratulations to Council Member Louis. Thank you for your advocacy and to the family. I know you sacrificed a lot, but this will be better for all New York families moving forward, so thank you.

COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: Restler.

COUNCIL MEMBER RESTLER: Aye, and same sentiment as Council Member Hudson, just an enormous credit to Council Member Louis for her committed advocacy over many years, and my condolences to the family.

COMMITTEE CLERK WILLIAM MARTIN: By a vote of six in the affirmative, zero of the negative, and no abstentions, both items have been adopted by the Committee.

CHAIRPERSON SANCHEZ: Is that a full Committee?

We'll hold it open for a moment.

With that, this hearing is adjourned.

[GAVEL]

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 October 16, 2025