

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

of the

NEW YORK CITY ADVISORY COMMISSION
ON PROPERTY TAX REFORM

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May 27, 2021
Start: 6:04 p.m.
Recess: 7:38 p.m.

HELD AT: Remote Hearing, Virtual Room 2

B E F O R E: Mark V. Shaw
Chair

COMMISSION MEMBERS: Mark V. Shaw
Allen P. Cappelli
Carol O'Cleireacain
Kenneth J. Knuckles
James Parrott
Gary Rodney
Elizabeth Velez

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS: Jacques Jiha
Commissioner of the Department
of Finance

Melanie Hartzog
Director of the Office of
Management and Budget

Latonia McKinney
Director of the City Council
Finance Division

Raymond Majewski
Deputy Director and Chief
Economist, Council Finance
Division

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

Senator Andrew Gounardes

Assembly Member Michael Tannousis

Council Member Justin Brannan

Council Member Darma Diaz

Council Member Brad Lander

Council Member Alan Maisel

Council Member Farah Louis, represented
by Deputy Chief of Staff Matthew Pitt

Fay Pallen

Rachel Hakim

Leticia Remauro

Mary Ann Rothman

Jacquelyn Griffin

Theresa Scotto

Lara Birnback

Ralph Yozzo

Sandye Renz

Marvin Ciporen

Esther Blount

A. Gravery

Robert Camacho

Marcia Hillis

Jeff Golkin

Jennifer Gaboury

Felicia Wharton

Audrey Browne

Richard DeCesare

Sante Micelli

Jane Clarke

Priscilla Ghaznavi

Rosario Sinisi

Omar Walker

Carlos Lebron

2 CHAIR SHAW: OK, um...

3 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Backup is rolling.

4 Give me a second, ah, Chair Shaw.

5 CHAIR SHAW: Yep.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Good evening. Welcome
7 to the remote hearing of the New York City Advisory
8 Commission on Property Tax Reform. Everyone please
9 turn on your videos at this time. Silence all
10 electronic devices. All written testimony can be
11 submitted by going to nyc.gov/propertytaxreform.
12 Again, that is nyc.gov/propertytaxreform. Thank you.
13 Chair Shaw, we are ready to start, sir.

14 CHAIR SHAW: All right. Thank you,
15 Sergeant. Um, good afternoon, everybody. I'm Mark
16 Shaw, the chair of the New York City Advisory
17 Commission on Property Tax Reform and a senior
18 advisor at the CUNY Institute for State and Local
19 Governance. Today's Zoom hearing is the second of
20 five borough-based hearings on the preliminary report
21 of the Advisory Commission. Virtual hearings are
22 scheduled for Queens on June 9, the Bronx on June 14,
23 and Manhattan on June 16. All hearings will begin at
24 6:00 p.m. A Staten Island hearing already occurred
25 on May 11. If you are unable to attend your

2 borough's hearing, please know that members of the
3 public may attend hearing, regardless of their home
4 borough. As a reminder, all people wishing to
5 testify must register on the Advisory Commission's
6 website at least 24 hours prior to the start of the
7 hearings. Also, for members of the public who are
8 listening who would like to submit written testimony
9 you may do so at any time at
10 nyc.gov/propertytaxreform/testimony. Sixty people
11 are signed up to testify tonight and 49 Brooklyn
12 residents, um, have submitted written testimony.
13 Before we begin with the public testimony, I want to
14 say thank you to all the members of the public who
15 submitted written testimony, as well as those here
16 tonight who are taking the time out of their
17 schedules to testify on the Advisory Commission'
18 preliminary report. We value what each of you has to
19 say, so please know that even if we don't directly
20 respond to your testimony today, we do hear you and
21 your testimony will be part of our deliberations.
22 There's over 60 people registered to testify tonight,
23 so in the interest of time that we cannot respond
24 individually. I'm just now going to, um, review
25 where we are right now. In January 2020 the

2 commission released 10 preliminary recommendations to
3 reform the property tax system. Hearings were
4 initially planned to begin on March 2020, but delayed
5 due to COVID. We request that public testimony
6 specifically respond to the commission's 10
7 recommendations. I will now read the commission's 10
8 preliminary recommendations. One - the commission
9 recommendations moving co-ops, condos, and rental
10 buildings with up to 10 units into a new residential
11 class along with one- to three-family homes. The
12 property tax system would continue to consist of four
13 classes of property - residential, large rentals,
14 utilities, and commercial. Two - the commission
15 recommends using a sales-based methodology to value
16 all properties in the residential class. Three - the
17 commission recommends assessing every property in the
18 residential class at its full market value. Four -
19 the commission recommends that annual market value
20 changes in the new residential class be phased in
21 over five years at the rate of 20% per year and that
22 assessed value growth cap should be eliminated. Five
23 - the commission recommends creating a partial
24 homestead exemption for primary resident owners with
25 income below a certain threshold. The exemption

2 would be available to all eligible primary resident
3 owners in the residential class and would replace the
4 current condo, condo, the co-op/condo tax abatement.

5 Six - the commission recommends creating a circuit
6 breaker within the property tax system to lower the
7 property tax burden on low-income, primary resident
8 owners based on the ratio of property taxes paid to
9 income. Seven - the commission recommends replacing
10 the current class share system with a system that
11 prioritizes predictable and transparent tax rates for
12 property owners. The new system would freeze the
13 relationship of tax rates among the tax classes for
14 five-year periods, after which time the city would
15 conducted a mandated study to analyze if adjustments
16 need to be made to maintain consistency in the share
17 of taxes relative to fair market value borne by each
18 tax class. Eight - the commission recommends that
19 current valuation methods should be maintained for
20 properties not in the new residential class, which
21 includes rental buildings with more than 10 units,
22 utilities, and commercial. Nine - the commission
23 recommends a gradual transition to the new system for
24 current owners with an immediate transition into the
25 new system whenever property in the new residential

2 class is sold. Finally, ten - the commission
3 recommends instituting comprehensive reviews of the
4 property tax system every 10 years. Before we begin,
5 I would like to now introduce the public to the other
6 members of the commission. Um, we will go in
7 alphabetical order, as last time, even though it
8 still lets Allen Cappelli from Staten Island to speak
9 for us. Allen?

10 ALLEN CAPPELLI: Oh, ah, I'm Allen
11 Cappelli. I'm a homeowner, ah, um, and also I have a
12 co-op, so I'm kind of familiar with both, ah, the
13 implications of the, ah, city's tax on both classes
14 of property. Ah, I've been employed in public
15 service for, oh, almost 40 years. Um, I've worked in
16 the Bronx, I've worked in Queens, I've worked in
17 Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Staten Island, and I'm
18 anxious to hear what you have to say about these
19 proposals. Thank you.

20 CHAIR SHAW: Next up we have Carol
21 O'Cleireacain.

22 CAROL O'CLEIREACAIN: Oh, I thank you.
23 Good evening. Um, I'm Carol O'Cleireacain. I'm a
24 former New York City finance commissioner and budget
25 director. I'm currently teaching at, up at Columbia

2 University. Ah, I want to assure all of you, since
3 there is a large number of people testifying and you
4 won't have very much time, I wanted to assure that
5 whatever you have submitted in writing will be read.
6 I read all of the submissions so far this afternoon.
7 So I want you to rest assured that whatever time you
8 think you have tonight will not be wasted. Thank
9 you.

10 CHAIR SHAW: Next up we have Kenneth
11 Knuckles.

12 KENNETH KNUCKLES: Good evening. Ah, my
13 name is Kenneth Knuckles. I am vice chair of the New
14 York City Planning Commission. Ah, my background is
15 in public service. Ah, I have served as a
16 commissioner of a large city agency. I have, ah,
17 served as a deputy borough president of Bronx County.
18 Ah, I'm still a resident of Bronx County. Ah, I
19 reside in a two-family home that I have owned since
20 1984, and I am looking forward, ah, to hearing from
21 you this evening, and I thank you for your
22 participate.

23 CHAIR SHAW: Thank you. Um, so next up
24 we have James Parrott.

2 JAMES PARROTT: Good evening. James
3 Parrott, director of economic and fiscal policies at
4 the Center for New York City Affairs at the New
5 School. Um, I'm a long-time, ah, observer of the New
6 York City economy and the city and state budget and
7 tax situations. I'm very concerned about the, um,
8 inequities, ah, in the city's property tax system. I
9 believe we have, um, ah, the right moment to try and
10 address those inequities. We have worked very hard
11 for the past two, two-and-a-half years in putting
12 together what we think is a, um, a very, appropriate
13 set of recommendations. We look forward to getting y
14 our feedback on those this evening. Ah, we look
15 forward to engaging, ah, our elected officials in
16 Albany and it's good to see that we have some with
17 us, ah, this evening. We will need to educate Albany
18 on why it's important for New York City to, um, drive
19 its own path to property tax reform and not let it be
20 dictated by, ah, far and wide interests elsewhere in
21 the state. Um, so I look forward to the testimony
22 this evening. Thank you.

23 CHAIR SHAW: Thank you, James. Um, our,
24 our final commissioner, Elizabeth Velez is in transit
25 from an airport and she will hopefully be joining us

2 during the course of the evening tonight. Um, in
3 addition to that we have with us the ex-officio
4 members of the commission, representing both the
5 Mayor's Office and the City Council. Um, I would
6 like to now turn things over to Emre, our moderator,
7 for this evening's testimony.

8 MODERATOR: Ah, thank you, Chair Shaw.
9 My name is Emre Edev. I work at the New York City
10 Council's finance division and I will be helping to
11 moderate tonight's hearing. Before we begin I want
12 to advise everyone that you will be on mute until you
13 are recognized to speak, at which time you will be
14 unmuted by the Zoom host. Please note that if your
15 mute, if mute yourself after you have been unmuted
16 you will need to be unmuted again by the host. Also,
17 please be aware that there could be delay in muting
18 and unmuting, so please be patient. I will be
19 calling on panelists to testify one by one, so please
20 listen for your name to be called. Commission
21 members, you have the ability to unmute yourself
22 during the hearing, so if you have a question for a
23 panelist you may unmute yourself at the appropriate
24 time, but please remember to go back on mute once you
25 have completed your question. We will now start with

2 testimony from elected officials, followed by the
3 general public. Panelists, once your name is called
4 a member of our staff will unmute you and the
5 Sergeant at Arms will give you the go-ahead to begin.
6 Please wait for the sergeant to announce that you may
7 begin before delivering your testimony. You will
8 then have two minutes to present your testimony. The
9 sergeant will let you know when your time has
10 expired. Ah, the first, ah, panelist will be State
11 Senator Andrew Gouardes, followed by Assembly Member
12 Michael Tannousis.

13 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

14 SENATOR ANDREW GOUNARDES: Right, can I
15 begin?

16 CHAIR SHAW: Yes, you may begin.

17 SENATOR ANDREW GOUNARDES: Great. Thank
18 you very much. Ah, good evening, everyone. I'm
19 Senator Andrew Gouardes, ah, from the 22nd District
20 in southern Brooklyn. Ah, I want to thank Chairman
21 Shaw and all the members of the property tax reform
22 commission for the opportunity to testify this
23 evening. Ah, I'll start out by saying that any
24 reforms through our convoluted and outdated property
25 tax system must first and foremost address the issue

2 of equity between neighborhoods. Ah, middle-class
3 residents of my district pay an effective tax rate
4 more than double that of gentrifying neighborhoods
5 across the city, in large part due to artificial 6%
6 assessment cap, which winds up benefitting really
7 wealthy homeowners at the expense of those struggling
8 to make ends met. I'm talking about middle-class
9 families, civil servants here in our city. Ah, and
10 while I applaud the commission's recommendation to
11 eliminate these caps, ah, I worry that a wholesale
12 repeal would lead to huge across-the-board spikes and
13 tax bills, which is why, ah, I've independently
14 proposed legislation to repeal the caps only for
15 high-income homeowners with high-value property that
16 I hope the commission will consider as part of their
17 final recommendations. Along the same vein, any
18 reforms to the property tax system must protect those
19 whose home values have appreciated rapidly over the
20 last few decades, despite no significant change in
21 their income. These properties who are property rich
22 but cash poor will be negatively impacted by the
23 proposal to do away with fractional assessments.
24 Since class 1 homes are currently assessed at only 6%
25 of their market value, this reform would devastate

2 property owners without sufficient supports, such as
3 a circuit breaker tax credit, another one of the
4 commission's ideas. We don't need to reinvent the
5 wheel when deciding what this should look like. New
6 York City had a modest circuit breaker, ah, as part
7 of the property tax system from 2014 until recently,
8 ah, which aimed to limit, or link tax burdens with
9 ability to pay. That tax credit should be looked to
10 be expanded, ah, as part of the commission's
11 recommendations. Furthermore, we have to move away
12 from the fixation on tax rates if we're gonna have a
13 true discussion about lessening the property tax
14 burden. Every year our city government says that
15 there has been no property tax rate increase.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 SENATOR ANDREW GOUNARDES: But, as we
18 know, the tax levy has increased, ah, tripled over
19 the last 20 years. Ah, we need to really address
20 that conversation, and I think it's important that
21 commission proposes a solution for a truth in
22 budgeting requirement so that homeowners and property
23 owners have a real sense as to, ah, exactly how much
24 their effective tax rate is increasing year over year
25 and what the property tax levy is. I have a few, ah,

2 things to say, but I want to be respectful of
3 everyone's time. I will also submit my written
4 testimony to the full commission. And I thank you
5 again for, ah, allowing me to, ah, speak with you
6 this evening.

7 MODERATOR: Ah, thank you, State Senator.

8 Um, we will now hear from Assembly Member Michael
9 Tannousis, followed by Council Member Justin Brannan.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 ASSEMBLY MEMBER MICHAEL TANNOUSIS: Thank
12 you so much, members of the commission, for having me
13 here today. Ah, as many of you know, I testified
14 about two weeks ago, ah, at the Staten Island
15 hearing, and the same goes, ah, for my constituents
16 in Brooklyn. Ah, obviously you know the inequities
17 that are occurring, ah, in certain areas, especially,
18 specifically my district in Staten Island and in Bay
19 Ridge, Brooklyn, compared to other parts of the city.
20 Ah, so I'm happy, ah, that finally, ah, the hearings
21 are going forward so we can have that much-needed,
22 ah, reform. Ah, back in February, ah, as when Mayor
23 de Blasio testified before the joint Assembly and
24 Senate, ah, I actually asked, ah, Mayor de Blasio the
25 specific question in regards to the commission, and I

2 believe so did, ah, Senator Andrew Gounardes. Ah,
3 and I'm happy that finally we're going forward on
4 this hearing. We do need property tax reform in the
5 state, as so many of residents continue to flee to
6 other states for better opportunities, for a lower
7 cost of living. Ah, we need this now more than ever.
8 So with that being said, ah, I'm confident, I'm
9 hopeful, ah, that you will bring much-needed property
10 tax reform, ah, and Chairman Shaw, it is very nice to
11 see you outside the CUNY Fellowship virtual classroom
12 [laughs]. Thank you very much.

13 MODERATOR: Thank you, Assembly Member.

14 Ah, we will now hear from Council Member Justin
15 Brannan, followed by Council Member Darma Diaz.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: Thank you.

18 Thank you, Chair Shaw, and, ah, all the other
19 commissioners here. After being delayed by delays
20 and then shelved for a year due to the pandemic, the
21 good news is the commission is back. The bad news is
22 that our current mayor will no longer be in office to
23 live up to his commitment by the time the commission,
24 ah, publishes its final report. We've now missed an
25 entire year of making progress on reforming this

2 badly busted property tax system and now the dire
3 need for this commission and the urgency for it to
4 complete its work has never been more clear. Maybe
5 it's not the case in Manhattan, but out here in the
6 exotic outer boroughs homeowners are not the super-
7 rich. They are seniors on fixed incomes, retired
8 city workers and working families that are the second
9 or third generation of their family to live in their
10 childhood home, and they need relief just like
11 everyone else. We've heard time and time again how
12 the mayor's own properties in tony Park Slope are
13 taxed at a far lower rate than most of the homes
14 owned by middle-class New Yorkers in the outer
15 reaches of the five boroughs. Enough talk. The
16 unfairness is indisputable. It's blindly stark and
17 it's gotta be changed once and for all. Property tax
18 relief, not in it form of gimmicks or give backs, but
19 a true reform of the system is one way that we can
20 fight to keep our city truly affordable. New Yorkers
21 are squeezed. Google any metric, from income taxes
22 to your electric bill, and you'll find New York at
23 near or at the top of the list. No one is immune to
24 the climbing costs of housing and health care,
25 transportation, and other necessities. We waited

2 nearly two years for this commission to release a
3 port, a report, that told us what we already knew -
4 our property tax system is broken and unfair because
5 it benefits the wealthiest 1% and crushes the rest of
6 us. The long-awaited report included 10 no-brainer
7 recommendations to address the savage inequities in
8 the system with the goal of creating simpler,
9 clearer, and fairer property taxes. That's fine.
10 But it's not enough to simply aim for a clearer and
11 fairer system. I believe we also must offer real...

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER BRANNAN: ...we must also
14 offer real, tangible relief in the form of a discount
15 to those who have been paying unfairly for far too
16 long. Um, I will submit the rest of my testimony,
17 ah, in writing. But I do believe that, that folks
18 out in the outer boroughs, um, need relief. It's not
19 enough to just have some neighborhoods start paying
20 their fair share. For the folks who have been paying
21 too much for the past 30 years, they need a relief in
22 the form of a discount. Thank you.

23 MODERATOR: Thank you, Council Member.

24 We will now hear from Council Member Darma Diaz,
25 followed by Council Member Brad Lander.

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

3 COUNCIL MEMBER D. DIAZ: Good evening.

4 Darma Diaz, the 37th Councilmanic District, and I
5 also have an honor of sitting the Finance Committee
6 for New York City, a homeowner who has prior to
7 coming onto the council advocated for the injustice
8 [inaudible] classes that we have here in East New
9 York. It's insane for me to believe that because
10 developers have come into our communities, they
11 flipped homes, we're taxed at a higher bracket than
12 individuals who purchased and live in Park Slope. I,
13 I want to thank Justin, who also, very politely, said
14 the same thing. I'll be sure and I'll be brief,
15 bottom line is enough is enough. We have to share
16 the burden. Darma Diaz, the 37th Councilmanic
17 District. I will also be sending in a formal
18 testimony. We have not received it as of yet. Thank
19 you.

20 MODERATOR: Thank you, Council Member.

21 Ah, we will now hear from Council Member Brad Lander,
22 followed by Council Member Alan Maisel.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: Thank you very
25 much for this opportunity to testify. Ah, we cannot

2 continue with this system that on average undertaxes
3 homeowners like me in Park Slope, where I live and
4 own a home, and overtaxes homeowners in Bay Ridge or
5 Staten Island or eastern Queens. We must have the
6 courage to move towards a more equitable system that
7 taxes property fairly based on their real value, even
8 if that means higher property tax bills over time for
9 me and many of my neighbors. And I'm here tonight to
10 tell you that we see it. It's not easy in a system
11 that feels very zero sum, ah, but we have to have
12 courage together. At the same time, it is critical
13 to be very thoughtful about how we get from here to
14 there. As your preliminary report rightly says, any
15 property tax system should be fair, predictable, and
16 transparent, and should not induce displacement among
17 long-term homeowners and renters from the
18 neighborhoods they've called home. Even in wealthier
19 neighborhoods like Park Slope there are of course
20 many seniors and families on fixed incomes, people
21 who bought their homes decades ago and the values
22 have gone up significantly, but their incomes have
23 not. Um, as the commission's preliminary report
24 rightly identifies, there are a number of ways to
25 prevent those people from losing their homes. Ah, as

2 you know, there could be a circuit breaker or
3 exemption which would protect low-income families,
4 although there will always be people just above the
5 line who will struggle greatly. So I'd urge you to
6 consider more broadly the possibility that in some
7 cases taxes could be reset on sale of the property.
8 Ah, that makes sense since you're proposing a sales-
9 based methodology for valuation, or at least the
10 taxes could be in some cases deferred until sale, um,
11 for some families, at least for low- and moderate-
12 income ones. Let's remember this won't only be a
13 one-time issue. Today this feels like an inequity
14 and it is an inequity between, say, Park Slope and
15 Bay Ridge. But in the years to come new
16 neighborhoods will see rapid increases in property
17 values and seniors and fixed-income families in those
18 neighborhoods will also need protections. Um, I'd
19 also like to see more clearly how changes will
20 benefit tenants and not simply owners of rental
21 properties. That's a big part of why we're doing
22 this change.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER LANDER: We need to make
25 sure that it comes to tenants themselves and not just

2 rental property owners. To conclude, I just want to
3 say these are hard issues and they can feel very zero
4 sum. Our challenge is to bring equity to an
5 inequitable system and to set us up collectively on a
6 stronger course for our city's long-term future.
7 Thank you for this opportunity. We must indeed move
8 forward.

9 MODERATOR: Thank you, Council Member.

10 Ah, we will now hear from Council Member Alan Maisel,
11 followed by Council Member Kalman Yeger.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 MODERATOR: Council Member, you're...

14 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Ah, good evening,
15 everyone. Ah, thank you for giving me the
16 opportunity to speak about this extremely important
17 issue. Ah, for as long as I've been involved in, ah,
18 government service, ah, going back 16 years as
19 elective service and before that in other capacities,
20 the issue of property tax unbalance, ah, has been a
21 very, very significant problem for my constituents.
22 Ah, everybody knows about the, ah, Park Slope, ah,
23 problem. Ah, but it's not just Park Slope. As, ah,
24 Council Member Lander pointed out, there are other
25 neighborhoods that in the future may start becoming

2 gentrified and property values will go up.

3 Inequities will no doubt continue. So we have to

4 find some reasonable ways to make things fair. Um,

5 now more than ever, ah, this is extraordinarily

6 important for the future of our city. I'm not going

7 to repeat what everybody else has said, except to say

8 I'm looking forward to seeing a productive hearing

9 and the report that will come out, ah, sooner than

10 later to address these extraordinarily important

11 issues. Thank you.

12 MODERATOR: Thank you, Council Member.

13 Um, we'll now hear from Council Member Kalman Yeger,

14 followed by Council Member Farah Louis.

15 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

16 MODERATOR: Ah, apparently Council Member

17 Yeger isn't on just now, um, so we will go to Council

18 Member Farah Louis.

19 MATTHEW PITT: Hi, everyone. This is,

20 ah, Matthew Pitt, representing, I'm sorry, Deputy

21 Chief of Staff Matthew Pitt, representing, ah,

22 Council Member Farah Louis. I want to thank you for

23 the opportunity to allow me to testify on the

24 recommendations proposed by the commission and just

25 to let you guys know, I am reading this statement on

2 her behalf. For the past two years, in the past two
3 years I've represented and served Council District 45
4 in Brooklyn, which is home to [inaudible] who have
5 worked hard to build generational wealth and promote
6 stability through homeowners. In the past year we
7 have seen [inaudible] levels of economic and housing
8 insecurity that disproportionately impact the black
9 and brown communities. As we move towards recovery
10 from the COVID-19 pandemic it is important for us to
11 engage in public discourse on what the city can do to
12 help New Yorkers age in place. After reviewing the
13 commission's report I want to commend the members for
14 working diligently to create a more equitable tax
15 system to ensure fairness while expanding
16 transparency for homeowners. Our collective goal is
17 to support homeowners and considering the
18 affordability of housing so that New York City
19 remains inclusive and diverse for all. The period
20 for review of our property tax system [inaudible]
21 decade, which would likely coincide with the census,
22 [inaudible] keeping pace with the socioeconomic
23 changes in the communities across the five boroughs.
24 Thank you, and thank you for allowing me to
25 [inaudible] statement.

2 MODERATOR: Thank you. Um, we will now
3 go with, ah, go to members of the public, um,
4 starting with Fay Pallen, followed by Rachel Hakim.

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

6 FAY PALLEN: Hello. My name is Fay
7 Pallen. I am the president of my condominium, which
8 is in Oceania, ah, in Brighton Beach. And I am
9 speaking for 15 condominium buildings in this
10 complex. We want to thank the New York City Advisory
11 Commission on Property Tax Reform for addressing this
12 very complicated issue. However, it's not clear to
13 us that we're included in this. No where does it
14 mention condos. I'll give you an example. If you
15 look at the *New York Times* on May 9, the real estate,
16 you see a house sold for \$595, ah, sorry, \$1,595,000,
17 with taxes of \$1308. I personally pay \$11,000 in
18 real estate taxes. We are not the wealthy here. We
19 are the middle class. I am a retired civil service
20 worker. I'm not clear with, number one, we don't fit
21 into that, into the new residential class, and we're
22 not mentioned at all in number 8. Rentals are
23 mentioned. So it's not clear that our issues are
24 being addressed at all. That's a big concern for us,

2 and I hope you reconsider it. Thank you so much for
3 giving me this time to speak.

4 MODERATOR: Thank you for the testimony.
5 Um, we will now hear from Rachel Hakim, followed by
6 Leticia Remauro.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 RACHEL HAKIM: Hello, um, thank you for,
9 ah, calling on me. I'm [inaudible] homeowner
10 [inaudible] my husband [inaudible] and we both played
11 with the [inaudible] very prominent jazz musician.
12 We own two multi-families in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.
13 I'm now 58. My husband is 62. And this law will end
14 our careers, um, as landlords. Um, there's no
15 question. A four-family can't be classified with
16 anything other than a one through three, and we're
17 having this problem with the Local Law 152 as well,
18 where we're being subject to some kind of different
19 category of income. I'm not sure what you think
20 we're making, but we're not making much. And this
21 year we gave discounts to, um, our artist tenants,
22 our video artists, our store. They have been paying
23 half rent all year. I'm just not sure about this
24 proposal at all, because if you start, you know,
25 Williamsburg is a rapidly rising, values-oriented

2 neighborhood. They trade properties like they're,
3 you know, trading dolls. And, ah, the developers
4 have forced the, ah, values up, but that doesn't
5 reflect in rent, and it doesn't reflect in my cash.
6 In fact, I had to borrow \$99,000 from New York
7 Forward to make up for the \$96,000 I lost in rent,
8 not to mention we make 0.0007 cents per stream when
9 you listen to your favorite song and, um, so we're,
10 I'm getting squeezed as a landlord in every single
11 way and it's from, and we need the help of the City
12 Council. Um, you're pushing us into poverty. I
13 don't like anything that's being proposed here in
14 terms of raising our taxes one single penny. Yeah, I
15 have fancy-looking values on paper. But I can't
16 raise the rents because my, my tenants don't make the
17 money...

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 RACHEL HAKIM: ...to pay. Yeah, we just
20 have to ask you guys to please reconsider the owner,
21 yeah, you know, the artist-musician owners and the
22 older owners because you're going to steal our wealth
23 for our children if you put, we don't want a tax
24 credit, we don't want a circuit breaker, we don't
25 want our taxes to go up one penny, and we don't want

2 you to change the methodology to, um, you know, to,
3 so-called value. It doesn't put money in our pocket
4 and it steals our children's future. Thanks for
5 letting me talk, and love that you're working so hard
6 on this. Yeah, thank you.

7 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.

8 Ah, we'll now hear from, I apologize if I'm, ah,
9 mispronouncing anyone's names, um, but Leticia
10 Remauro, followed by Mary Ann Rothman.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

12 LETICIA REMAURO: Hi, I'm Leticia
13 Remauro. And I'm running for Staten Island borough
14 president, and I want to thank you for undertaking
15 this gargantuan task. Um, listen, governing by
16 mystery is never a good idea, and homeowners need a
17 degree from MIT to understand our tax system right
18 now. I think that your biggest problem comes on page
19 three in your summary. Your task, your goal is to
20 make the system simpler, fairer, and clearer without
21 reducing income to the city. So what does that mean?
22 It means that you are shifting the burden from
23 homeowners to, um, small business owners and for, to
24 people who have, um, multi-family residences that
25 they own that haven't collected taxes in a year.

2 That's a problem. Listen, we, in a post COVID world
3 we have learned to work remotely. When I go door to
4 door the number one complaint on people's minds is
5 Staten Island is property taxes. And the number one
6 statement that I hear from young homeowners in their
7 forties is I can't wait to get out of this city.

8 That is not what we want to hear. You have an
9 opportunity here to really fix a system that was
10 broken when you got it. So I, I understand that.

11 But we have to really think about it. The people of
12 New York City, the property owners, have been asked
13 to do more with less this last year. We need to have
14 you continue to work on this, because your solutions,
15 while they look good, as I said before, they just
16 shift the burden. We need you to really restructure
17 our property taxes. We need to make sure that people
18 are not only being treated equitable, but that you do
19 something to keep them here. Because if the middle
20 class leaves New York City, and it will, because in a
21 post COVID world, as I said before, when you can work
22 remotely from anywhere, we might not be the greatest
23 place on earth anymore. That red velvet rope, um,
24 of, you know, gotcha government and only the good,
25 ah, only the strongest survive...

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 LETICIA REMAURO: ...in New York City may
4 not continue on. So please, continue to look at
5 this. Work with the City Council. Work with the
6 state legislature. Fix this, and give us a 2% tax
7 cap, um, as we have around the State of New York.
8 Thank you again. My name is Leticia Remauro.

9 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
10 We will now hear from Mary Ann Rothman, followed by
11 Jacquelyn Griffin.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 MARY ANN ROTHMAN: Good evening. My name
14 is Mary Ann Rothman and I'm the executive director of
15 the Council of New York Cooperatives and
16 Condominiums. Ah, which represents hundreds of the
17 housing cooperatives and condominiums in all five
18 boroughs of New York City and beyond. Since 1990
19 when we found the Action Committee for Reasonable
20 Real Estate Taxes, we have advocated for fair,
21 equitable, and easily understood property taxes for
22 all New York City. Today I would like to comment on
23 proposal number six regarding circuit breakers. The
24 commission's first four recommendations create a
25 uniform, clearly understandable system of assessments

2 for all properties in the proposed residential class.

3 A homestead exemption should then mitigate the tax

4 burden on every New Yorker for whom their house,

5 condominium, or cooperative is their primary

6 residence. Circuit breakers move in now. They

7 provide a means of leveling the playing field for

8 long-term New Yorkers who are real estate rich but

9 subsisting on meager savings, or for individuals with

10 special needs or those providing special services.

11 The commission has suggested circuit breakers for

12 low-income resident owners and notes that it intends

13 to look more closely at circuit breakers before

14 issuing its final recommendations. We would suggest

15 adding the circuit breaker for individuals on fixed

16 incomes whose income may exceed low-income

17 definitions, but who still need help to be able to

18 remain in their homes. Additionally, the city

19 should, of course, maintain current consideration for

20 people with disabilities, for veterans, adding

21 veterans of cold wars was suggested in the, at the

22 Staten Island hearing, and for seniors with incomes

23 below a certain threshold. We could also consider

24 adding circuit breakers to help low- and moderate-

25 income...

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

3 MARY ANN ROTHMAN: ...[inaudible] small
4 children, and to otherwise promote social justice.
5 Thank you for the opportunity to express our views.

6 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
7 We will now hear from Jacquelyn Griffin, followed by
8 Theresa Scotto.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

10 JACQUELYN GRIFFIN: Good evening. My
11 name is Jacquelyn Griffin. I'm an attorney in the
12 Foreclosure Prevention Project at Brooklyn Legal
13 Services, which is a borough office of Legal Services
14 NYC. I'm a long-time Brooklyn resident and I
15 represent other long-time residents and homeowners in
16 this borough. One of the most glaring omissions of
17 the report is that it does not discuss the potential
18 racial impact of the reforms being recommended. New
19 York City's property tax system does not exist in a
20 vacuum. It is layered on top of a highly segregated
21 housing landscape that has been shaped by structural
22 racism in the form of redlining, reverse redlining,
23 discriminatory sales practices, and other forms of
24 housing discrimination against black and brown
25 residents. New York City has acknowledged this

2 history in the recent report on fair housing called
3 Where We Live. Among the stated goals of the report
4 is to preserve affordable housing and prevent
5 displacement of long-standing residents and to make
6 equitable investments to address the neighborhood-
7 based legacy of discriminatory, segregation, and
8 concentrated poverty. It is well known that black
9 and brown homeowners are paying more in property
10 taxes than white homeowners in similar contexts.
11 Additionally, homeowners in majority minority
12 neighborhoods are more likely to be on the lean sell
13 list. All of these forces contribute to
14 gentrification of historically black and brown
15 neighborhoods that drives up home prices. And one of
16 the reasons that they have been able to maintain home
17 ownership is because of this 6% cap on assessed
18 value. The commission proposes to replace this cap
19 with a means-tested program to prevent displacement
20 of long-time homeowners. The problem with this
21 recommendation is that the Department of Finance has
22 a long history of failures in implementing means-
23 tested programs. So much of my work and my
24 colleagues' work is with homeowners who are unaware
25 of the exemptions and abatements available to them,

2 or who are wrongfully denied access to these
3 programs. The most glaring example of this failure
4 is the Property Tax and Interest Deferral Program,
5 which was designed to permit homeowners below a
6 certain income level to pay taxes as a percentage of
7 their income. It was passed almost two-and-a-half
8 years ago and as of December had...

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 JACQUELYN GRIFFIN: ...only 187 homeowners
11 enrolled. Any reform that ignores the impact on
12 neighborhoods of color and homeowners of color will
13 only serve to exacerbate existing racial inequities.
14 I'd like to refer the commission to my written
15 testimony for further details. Thank you.

16 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
17 Ah, we will now hear from Theresa Scotto, followed by
18 Lara Birnback.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

20 THERESA SCOTTO: I have no statement.
21 I'm sorry.

22 MODERATOR: OK, all right, thank you very
23 much, then. Um, we will then hear from Lara
24 Birnback, followed by Ralph Yozzo.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

2 LARA BIRNBACK: Hello, members of the
3 property tax reform commission and the public. My
4 name is Lara Birnback. I am the executive director
5 of the Brooklyn Heights Association. Thank you for
6 hearing our testimony this evening. Property tax
7 reform is an important and positive step towards
8 resolving the imbalance of tax burden on residential
9 properties. We hope that this reform will also
10 address the thousands of mixed use buildings in our
11 neighborhood commercial corridors, where landlords
12 accommodate residential, some rent regulated,
13 commercial, and retail uses together. Given the
14 impact taxes have on the ability of landlords to
15 support our small businesses, mixed use taxation must
16 be viewed just as urgently as residential-only
17 policy. Designed correctly, property taxes can both
18 replenish city coffers and ensure that our small
19 businesses and landlords are able to help each other
20 survive and thrive. Our organization and membership
21 strongly recommends that this body consider property
22 tax changes that can spur the creation and
23 sustainability of small businesses while ensuring
24 that storefronts don't sit empty lighting our local
25 streets. One local landlord put it succinctly. Do

2 the math. I have almost 150K in real estate taxes
3 and eight small residential units. More than half
4 are rent regulated. The only way to make up the
5 difference is with a ground floor commercial rent.
6 As the city recovers, we cannot simply return to the
7 old days of ever-rising rents, ever-more burdened
8 small business owners, and ever-present national
9 chains. We must build stronger foundations to
10 protect our small business and landlord communities
11 and by extension our neighborhoods and quality of
12 life. Our organization is advocating for three
13 things. Number one, implement a property tax
14 exemption for landlords who rent to small business
15 owners. This simple action will favor local
16 entrepreneurs as they compete for tenancy against
17 deep-pocketed national chains. Number two, apply the
18 same exemption for vacant properties if the landlord
19 creates and properly maintains the space for a
20 community use. This could run the gamut from bike
21 parking...

22 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

23 LARA BIRNBACK: ... [inaudible] space to a
24 local artist showcase. And number three, tax or levy
25 other fees on landlords who leave vacant spaces

2 unkempt, unclean, or boarded up. We understand that
3 the discussion tonight is focused on residents, but
4 we hope that this commission will also examine how it
5 can create a bright and sustainable future for New
6 York City's world-renowned small businesses and
7 owners. Thank you very much.

8 MODERATOR: Thank you. Um, we will now
9 hear from Ralph Yozzo, followed by Sandye Renz.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

11 RALPH YOZZO: Hello. Thank you very
12 much. I want to thank everyone. I want to say to
13 our friends in Williamsburg, they request this 2% or
14 the rate of inflation should be the cap. Of course,
15 once we reset everything to a correct value. We
16 can't have [inaudible] I think it's just completely
17 unfair. But my main question is this, and I hope
18 someone can [inaudible] yes or no. Is there a real
19 example in all the many pages of, of Advisory
20 Commission reports that shows the phase-in, a real
21 example with real numbers, assessed value with this.
22 Just like the Department of Finance, I have to thank,
23 ah, ah, Commissioner Soliman, ah, for [inaudible].
24 They have some documents that have real examples. So
25 how in the world can you give a phase-in and not give

2 real examples, because nobody understands what you
3 mean by phase in over five years. No one understands
4 that that I know of. So can someone answer yes or
5 no? Is there an example somewhere in all the
6 documents? Can anyone? No? Nothing, yeah. So, ah,
7 it would be helpful if there was real examples in the
8 documents, just like the Department of Finance has,
9 the, ah, class 1 and class 2 documents that show very
10 simple examples. The other one is we also have to
11 consider the crazy way cost affidavits are, are
12 implemented in the Department of Finance.

13 [inaudible] can do a half a million dollar renovation
14 and put the, ah, the \$300,000 on the demolition line,
15 right? And then you get no effect of your property
16 tax. It doesn't change too much, right? Who is
17 reviewing the cost affidavits? Because if you put an
18 honest one in you get a 200% tax increase. If you
19 put a dishonest one in, nobody even checks it and you
20 get, ah, no tax increase. So this is...

21 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

22 RALPH YOZZO: ...crazy. So I would
23 appreciate some input in your report about cost
24 affidavits. Thank you.

25 COMMISSIONER CAPPELLI: Mr. Yozzo?

2 RALPH YOZZO: Yes? Oh, thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER CAPPELLI: I, I would just
4 like to say that I agree with you about examples had,
5 ah, I will, ah, bring that up. So thank you for
6 that, your, your comments.

7 RALPH YOZZO: Um, Commissioner Ray, yeah,
8 thank you.

9 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
10 We will now hear from Sandye Renz, followed by
11 Council Member Kalman Yeger.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

13 SANDYE RENZ: Hi. You can hear, um, I
14 appreciate this complicated issue and I know that's
15 really hard to figure out a way to do this. But I am
16 one of the homeowners that my finances do not reflect
17 the real estate bubble that I live in. I don't live
18 in Park Slope, but my, the real estate values around
19 me are astronomical. I am not selling my home. I
20 live in my home, but, and my property taxes have gone
21 up and up. So I find that the way that the houses
22 are assessed and that if you go by market value it is
23 not realistic for my, for me. And also I have some
24 rentals and I, there is a housing crisis and I want
25 to keep my rentals affordable and having all of these

2 charges, so many charges going up and up and up makes
3 it very difficult to get by, with keeping the
4 apartments affordable and also for myself. If indeed
5 this is gonna stay the way that the houses are
6 assessed and the taxes are, hopefully it will be a
7 easy way to apply for exemptions based on your
8 income, as well as knowing about what these
9 exemptions and circuit breakers, or whatever they are
10 would be so that you can have an equitable way to pay
11 your property taxes when you are still living in a
12 home that, and you are not getting millions of
13 dollars for that home. And I think what everyone
14 else has been saying is very valuable as well.
15 That's it. Thank you.

16 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
17 We will now hear from Council Member Kalman Yeger,
18 ah, followed by, ah, Marvin Ciporen.

19 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

20 MODERATOR: We may be having some
21 troubles with the council member right now so we will
22 come back to him, ah, when we get that sorted out,
23 and move on Marvin Ciporen, followed by Esther
24 Blount.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

2 MARVIN CIPOREN: Thank you. Can you hear
3 me [inaudible]? So my name is Marvin. I'm not
4 appearing on the screen. My name is Marvin Ciporen.
5 And I'm a 77-year-old retired owner of a small two-
6 family home, and also a progressive and lifelong New
7 Yorker, and I'm deeply concerned about the impact of
8 extreme economic inequality on poor New Yorkers'
9 lives in our city and as a nation as a whole. But I
10 strongly oppose Recommendation 3, because taxing
11 homes at their fair market value will not address
12 economic inequality or racial inequality, and it's
13 like to have unintended consequences. Lower- and
14 middle-income homeowners and retirees living on fixed
15 incomes, such as an 84-year-old person that was cited
16 in a *New York Times* article on this issue, would face
17 significantly higher taxes just because the values of
18 their homes have increased. And it's not just, ah,
19 wealthier neighborhoods that would be affected. For
20 example, *Street Easy* reports that between 2012 and
21 2017 the average prices for homes increased by 140%
22 in Hamilton Heights, 125% in Bed-Stuy, and an 87% of
23 the Concourse in the Bronx. *Brooklyn*, on February 1,
24 2020, reported that in the past decades the prices of
25 homes in Williamsburg, Greenpoint, and parts of

2 Bushwick increased by an average of almost \$250,000.

3 Because the real estate values have increased much

4 more than incomes for all but the richest New

5 Yorkers, higher property taxes will make it harder

6 for many homeowners to remain in their houses.

7 Increased property taxes, coupled with the loss of

8 federal income tax deductions for local taxes will

9 put added pressure on small landlords to raise rents.

10 And since New York City has a higher income and

11 [inaudible] taxes...

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

13 MARVIN CIPOREN: ...[inaudible] will fuel

14 a great exodus to the suburbs. A much better

15 approach will include increases on the assessed

16 values of homes when they are resold and

17 significantly higher taxes on ultra-luxury homes that

18 are not the owners' primary residences, not on long-

19 time residents who have no more money just because

20 the value of our houses have increased. Many of the

21 people living in homes that are, as values increased

22 much higher, like myself and my neighborhood, are

23 retired senior servants, people who have worked for

24 nonprofit organizations, teachers...

2 CHAIR SHAW: If you could conclude your
3 remarks, Marvin.

4 MARVIN CIPOREN: I'm concluding by saying
5 think about the unintended consequences and thank you
6 for your work and for listening to my testimony.

7 CHAIR SHAW: Thank you.

8 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
9 Ah, we will now hear from Esther Blount, followed by
10 A. Gravery.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 ESTHER BLOUNT: Hello. My name is Esther
13 Blount. I live in Fort Greene, um, in a house that
14 inherited from my aunt. My uncle bought this house
15 in 1936. It always has remained in the family. I
16 worry, I'm a civil servant. I'm Community Board 2,
17 the land use committee. I see developers coming in
18 these neighborhoods trying to take over everything.
19 I'm afraid that when people can't afford the taxes on
20 their houses they'll probably knock it down and build
21 a big building. I'm very concerned about the circuit
22 breakers and how that would work. I heard that, um,
23 it's gonna be based on your income, plus your income
24 and your assets. I would like to know what that
25 means. Does that mean my retirement assets? Does

2 it, I don't know what that means. And when I die, if
3 I leave the house to my kids how would the circuit
4 breaker work with them? Will it go by their income
5 or some other formula that we don't know exists? So
6 there's so many unanswered questions that's it hard
7 to really know what's going on. So I think, um, this
8 should be done a little better. Thank you.

9 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony.

10 Ah, we will now hear from A. Gravery, followed by
11 Robert Camacho.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 A. GRAVERY: Um, can you hear me? Oh,
14 sorry. Can you hear me? Um, hello. My name, ah,
15 excuse me. Good evening, everyone. Let me start by
16 saying that I have lived in Bed-Stuy all of my life.
17 I have been, I have seen firsthand the changes in my
18 community, the gentrification, the real estate
19 investors pushing my friends and family out, the
20 local stores closing down because of increased
21 commercial rent. As a lifelong resident, part of a
22 multiple generation of Brooklynites, it was
23 completely frustrating to read this 72-page proposal
24 that essentially increases property taxes for
25 residential houses. The influx of new residents has

2 inevitably caused shifts in demographics. This
3 proposed policy change should reflect the nuances of
4 that shift and not treat residents who have been here
5 for decades with the same broad stroke. It appears
6 that there is a lack of understanding in the
7 communities you're representing. I had never
8 received a survey asking me if lived in my
9 brownstone, nor how I would manage with an increase
10 in my property taxes that is unsustainable. There
11 seems to be an assumption that residents that have
12 occupied Brooklyn for generations no longer live here
13 due to gentrification or that the property we own is
14 for income generation and not a home that we have
15 created for ourselves and family. No one interviewed
16 my neighbors and I to see if actual long-time
17 residents, ah, were still living in central Brooklyn,
18 which they are. Let me say that emailing a 72-page
19 document that you need a tax consultant to decipher
20 feels intentional to make sure it falls through the
21 cracks. There should be more support in place with a
22 roll-out of this magnitude with newly proposed policy
23 changes. A one-page summary using common terms and
24 examples would have been helpful. We are still in a
25 pandemic, so making information digestible and

2 understandable should have been a priority.
3 [inaudible] hear my concerns, right? A person
4 living, ah, in a co-op is not the same as a person,
5 is not the same as a family, sometimes
6 multigenerational, living in a house, so why would
7 they have the same tax code? The commission says
8 that y'all are trying to simplify the tax code, but
9 for whom? Applying a blanket 20% as you lump
10 everyone together, that seems unfair. All right?
11 And when you add that every 10 years you're gonna
12 increase it, that's very troubling. Finally, have
13 you thought about racial and economic equity while
14 creating the tax code? It's 2021 and not creating
15 this...

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

17 A. GRAVERY: ... [inaudible] OK, well just
18 not creating it with that lens, it's a smack in the
19 face to every black and brown family that made
20 Brooklyn what it is. What do you think the long-term
21 effects will be for this property tax increase for
22 black and brown residents? I love Bed-Stuy. I'm
23 thankful the legacy my grandmother left me. However,
24 even if you are left a home through inheritance, if
25 you can't afford the taxes on it it's a moot point

2 because you'll put a tax lien on it and you lose
3 generational wealth. Um, I will be providing the
4 rest of my testimony. I'll email it. Thank you so
5 much for hearing me out. Please stay safe. Have a
6 good, ah, day. Thank you.

7 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
8 We will now hear from Robert Camacho, followed by
9 Marcia Hillis.

10 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

11 ROBERT CAMACHO: Hello? Hello?

12 MODERATOR: We can hear you.

13 ROBERT CAMACHO: OK, OK, thank you. Ah,
14 my name is Robert Camacho. I have lived in Bushwick,
15 ah, all my life, ah, 60 years. Ah, my grandmother
16 was 103 when, ah, Bushwick was burning and nobody
17 want it. And there was no tax assessment there. And
18 the city was giving the land away for a dollar.
19 Everyone that [inaudible] remembers and, ah, they
20 took a year to build, and still now all of a sudden
21 with gentrification they build a 60, 70 unit and the
22 people that have a one-family home, there's not a
23 family-oriented place anymore. My kids can't be
24 raised in the place where they were born or purchase
25 something where they were born because of taxes, the

2 insurance, the water, and they were born and raised
3 here when nobody wanted to be here. All right? When
4 no one wanted to be here. Not gentrifiers and the,
5 the cost of living. We really need to assess this
6 for the people and the people that have been here
7 that are really dying. Every time something happens
8 poor communities like mine in Bushwick suffer. AIDS,
9 COVID, ah, ah, [inaudible]. Every time fires burns,
10 what's going on with this? If you a true advisory,
11 advise for the poor people that are barely, barely
12 making it, starving and dying now. 103. I'm in my
13 father's home for 40 years. I bought this from my
14 father 'cause he wanted me to stay with it. I bought
15 it from him. He just charged me the bare minimum
16 that he paid. He paid \$35,000 for this house, and
17 look how much it's worth now. I'm not going
18 anywhere. I'm not selling my property. How is this
19 even possible that we pay more taxes than anything
20 in, there's no way. We can't keep living like this,
21 and I'm, I'm retired from the City of New York, New
22 York City Housing Authority. I'm on a broke income.
23 And you keep killing us and burning us and burning us
24 and burning us. And all these people do is paying a
25 \$3000 rent, \$4000 rent. That's the same thing we pay

2 in taxes. We really need, something needs to be
3 done, and we really need to do something now. The
4 poor people are suffering and we really need to...

5 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

6 ROBERT CAMACHO: Thank you, and God bless
7 you all. Thank you for listening to me.

8 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
9 We will now hear from Marcia Hillis, followed by Jeff
10 Golkin.

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

12 MARCIA HILLIS: I'm reading my testimony.
13 Dear Commissioners, I'm submitting my testimony in
14 response to the new property tax recommendations.
15 This new proposal could significantly and adversely
16 affect my ability to keep my home, which I've worked
17 so hard to afford since we purchased in 1998. This
18 issue not only impacts us, but many New Yorkers like
19 us who've been able to hold onto their properties as
20 their communities gentrify around them. I've lived
21 in Brooklyn since 1989. I'm a teacher, single mom,
22 and community volunteer. Over the years I've
23 volunteered service for the Brooklyn community,
24 including serving on Brooklyn Bridge Park
25 development, LDC Community Board 2 land use

2 committee, founding president of our neighborhood
3 association, landmarking, planting our first trees,
4 getting our first garbage removal, and, and parking
5 plan with DOT. In the 32 years that I've been a
6 teacher here in a local school I've taught over 4000
7 New York City students. Yet, if the new tax plan
8 moves forward as plan I will lose my home. My
9 neighbors and I, we are six residential and one
10 factory, formed an LLC in order to purchase our
11 property, a small five-story building in Brooklyn,
12 when our landlady told us she wanted to sell the
13 building. We're all artists and first generation
14 brush factory. It took all that we could to afford
15 our places, but we managed. Over the years we've
16 been making necessary improves that we can to raise
17 the money to do such things as repointing our brick
18 façade, replacing our roof, upgrading our elevator,
19 it's a slow process but we're getting there. We are
20 truly the little engine that could. My concern for
21 the new proposals, how our property will be valued
22 under it. After we bought our humble property the
23 neighborhood has gentrified around us. Our
24 particular neighborhood has mushroomed with luxury
25 condos valued at and sold at multiple millions of

2 dollars. This reality does not reflect our reality
3 by any means. Our scrappy...

4 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

5 MARCIA HILLIS: Um, we will lose our homes
6 if we are valued according to our neighborhood. We,
7 we are not typical of our neighborhood. There needs
8 to be provisions for long-time, low-income people who
9 are in gentrified neighborhoods. We're talking about
10 teachers, we're talking about older people, and, and,
11 and there, there's no, there's no plan for those
12 people.

13 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.

14 We will now hear from Jeff Golkin, followed by
15 Jennifer Gaboury.

16 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

17 JEFF GOLKIN: Ah, OK. Sorry for that
18 delay. My name is Jeff Golkin. I'm an attorney,
19 been practicing for 40 years. My practice has been
20 representing property owners. I thought I was a lone
21 voice on May 11 when I spoke to the commission, but
22 I'm now hearing from the real people who have
23 basically corroborated the fact that although these
24 recommendations and work with the commission is well
25 intended, the unforeseen consequences are enormous.

2 These recommendations are going to precipitate higher
3 taxes, displacement, and disinvestment in New York
4 City. You cannot have comprehensive tax reform if
5 you don't deal with all of the tax classes. You've
6 heard tonight from a lot of the people who are going
7 to be left behind. Frankly, you can't take away
8 protections that people have had for 40 years and
9 suddenly turn the system upside down by making it
10 worse than it is. And frankly these, ah, homestead
11 exemptions and, ah, circuit breakers are very short
12 on detail. And, ah, there haven't been any examples
13 as, as Mr. Yozzo had indicated. But what disturbs me
14 is the fact that there are so many people are gonna
15 be left behind. You're gonna hurt the very people
16 that you want to help. So there has to be
17 comprehensive reform, including all of the taxes.
18 That includes, ah, Ms. Pallen's Oceania condominium
19 complex, the mixed use properties in Brooklyn
20 Heights, the mom and pop stores, the real people. I
21 want to close 'cause I only have a limited amount of
22 time, by saying we should start at the beginning,
23 where it happens, at the Department of Finance, that
24 is charged with almost an impossible task to assess
25 more than a million parcels a year. They simply

2 don't have the time to do it proposal. It results in
3 many properties being underassessed, many being over-
4 assessed, and repeating the same problem year in and
5 year out. So my recommendation is to not only reject
6 these recommendations one to four and these circuit
7 breakers and homestead exemptions short on detail,
8 but go back to the very beginning.

9 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

10 JEFF GOLKIN: Give the Department of
11 Finance sufficient time, resources, training,
12 personnel, tools to do the job properly, and don't do
13 it every single year because you can't do it in a
14 year, and that's why you repeat the work papers each
15 year incorrectly. So I appreciate your consideration
16 of these concerns that have been raised. I'm very
17 proud of my fellow Brooklynites and also the
18 suggestions about looking at the source at the
19 Department of Finance for, ah, reform. Thank you.

20 MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Um,
21 we'll now hear from Jennifer Gaboury, followed by
22 Felicia Wharton.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 JENNIFER GABOURY: Can you hear me now?
25 OK. Hi, I'm Jenny Gaboury. Thank you so much for

2 the chance to offer, ah, ah, testimony. I want to
3 thank you for your hard work. I live in southern
4 Brooklyn here in Bay Ridge, ah, and I know how
5 important this issue is, how property tax fairness to
6 my neighbors. But I'm here to speak, ah, on behalf
7 the PSA CUNY. I teach at Hunter College and, um, I'm
8 here on behalf to speak of not only for the 30,000
9 members, ah, and faculty and staff that we represent,
10 um, but also on behalf the hundreds of thousands of
11 CUNY students and alumni, um, who, ah, are connected
12 to CUNY. If you think about all of the people that
13 have a connection to CUNY in New York City it is, um,
14 more than one in eight New Yorkers. A recent report
15 by City Comptroller, ah, Scott Stringer, highlighted
16 the importance of investment to CUNY to the economic
17 health of the city, and given our significant unmet
18 needs we would like to strongly urge you to recommend
19 the fashioning of a pilot, a payment in lieu of
20 taxes, but we would like see [inaudible] University
21 and Columbia University make and this bill supports
22 some testimony you've heard previously from my
23 colleagues at other hearings, as well as what you're
24 going to hear, um, from Dr. Felicia Wharton in just a
25 moment. We don't believe that the people who

2 designed the exemption for private universities ever
3 would have foreseen the vast land holding and
4 resources, including endowments, that NYU and
5 Columbia currently hold. As you know from past
6 testimony in 2018, we estimated that property, that
7 property taxes on the land that Columbia and NYU hold
8 would be, would be more than 460 million. And we
9 believe they should be paying a share of that, um, in
10 the form of a pilot. It's not that we don't believe
11 that NYU and Columbia don't make a contribution, but
12 that we believe they should be doing what in fact
13 other elite universities do across the Ivy system.
14 This wasn't something that I knew prior to looking at
15 learning about this issue, that, that Columbia,
16 Harvard, Princeton University, Yale University, all
17 make pilots in order pay for the public services that
18 their institutions depend upon and that elite
19 universities should be paying a private share and
20 making that contribution. We believe that
21 contribution should be earmarked then to help make a
22 contribution to the City University of New York, um,
23 in the interest of equity and fairness in higher
24 education, um, in New York State. One last...

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

2 JENNIFER GABOURY: One thing I would tell
3 you, I would just say as a parent, ah, I really
4 appreciate that these hearings are on Zoom and when
5 post pandemic I, while I would appreciate being back
6 together with people, I also hope you will consider
7 continuing to have forums like this online. Thanks
8 so much.

9 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
10 Ah, we will now hear from Felicia Wharton, followed
11 by Audrey Browne.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 FELICIA WHARTON: Good evening. Um,
14 thank you for the opportunity to testify. Um, my
15 name is Felicia Wharton. I'm a member of
16 Professional Staff Congress. Um, it's a union that
17 represent, ah, 30,000 faculty and staff of the City
18 University of New York. I'm a doctoral lecturer at
19 the Brooklyn Educational Opportunity Center,
20 administered by New York City Technical College,
21 which is located in downtown Brooklyn. I'm also a
22 resident of Crown Heights. Now, tonight I want to
23 bring to your attention the issue of property tax
24 exemptions and want you to [inaudible] if it's
25 appropriate that private universities in New York

2 City are exempted from almost nearly all property
3 taxes. Now, the two privilege universities, NYU and
4 Columbia, they have massively expanded their real
5 estate footprint in recent decades, and they have
6 prospered from their real estate investments. Now,
7 when you look at the potential property tax
8 responsibility of NYU, that's like somewhere around
9 \$188.5 million dollars and Columbia comes in like
10 around \$274, um, million dollars. And this is
11 according to the Department of Finance, um, formula.
12 Now, these figures are low. Um, in 2018 Barbara
13 Boeing actually testified and presented these
14 figures. But it presents an important starting point
15 that this is a significant source of untapped
16 revenue. Um, I don't think the State Commission for
17 Property Tax Exemptions for private universities, um,
18 envisioned that NYU and Columbia would have
19 accumulated like this vast and valuable estate
20 holdings, real estate holdings, in addition to their
21 multi-billion dollar, um, endowments. Now, this is
22 not an attack on NYU and Columbia. Um, we value our
23 colleagues in academia. Um, they bring this
24 intellectual community that have generated resources
25 for New York City. But collecting a fair share of

2 property taxes from these two heavily endowed private
3 universities and redirect that to relieve the
4 underfunding of CUNY would be appropriate and a
5 significant...

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

7 FELICIA WHARTON: ...[inaudible] in
8 reducing educational, um, inequality. So in the
9 spirit of equity, um, we propose that commission
10 reconsider the tax exemption of NYU and Columbia and
11 collect an appropriate tax revenue. Invest that
12 revenue in CUNY, New York's public university, where
13 the majority of New York City college students
14 attend. I attended a CUNY colleague, Hunter College,
15 um, where my colleague works, and I also attended the
16 Graduate Center. And my family members also attended
17 a CUNY college as well. Um, thank you for, um,
18 allowing me to testify.

19 UNIDENTIFIED: Thank you.

20 MODERATOR: Thank you for your testimony.
21 Ah, we will now hear from Audrey Browne, followed by
22 Richard DeCesare.

23 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

24 AUDREY BROWNE: Good evening. I'm Audrey
25 Browne. I'm president of the 245 Henry Street

2 Cooperative in Brooklyn Heights. Our co-op is
3 comprised of 56 small units of studio and one-
4 bedroom, ah, units. Our shareholders are primarily
5 city workers, middle-class folks, artists, self-
6 employed folks, and a lot of retirees on fixed
7 incomes. A majority of our shareholders would, would
8 not qualify, we don't think, of the circuit breaker
9 relief available to low-income residents. This issue
10 is extremely important to us because, ah, for the
11 last six-plus years our co-op property taxes have
12 increased 15% a year. Ah, and why? Because our
13 property taxes were, were levied based on the rental
14 market in our neighborhood, which had extraordinarily
15 high rental values, um, which really didn't reflect
16 value of our building. Nonetheless, we had to pay
17 those taxes. Your recommendation to cure this
18 inequality doesn't really, um, address our issue. In
19 fact, it does just the opposite in our ZIP code,
20 which is 11201, where single- to three-family
21 brownstones sell in the millions of dollars, the
22 movie stars, ah, hedge funders, and international
23 investors. So your proposed initial recommendation
24 may work in other ZIP codes, but it clearly would
25 only hurt the working and middle-class, ah, co-op

2 residents in our ZIP code. The tax abatements we've
3 been receiving over the years, um, don't begin to
4 make up for the huge financial hardship that the
5 city's, ah, 15% annual property tax increases have
6 imposed on our shareholders. In fact, for some
7 reason, some mysterious reason, our 2020 tax
8 abatement was reduced by \$12,000. We were never told
9 why. So due to the ever-increasing tax burdens, um,
10 we've not been able to improve our building in the
11 way we want. We've had to cut staff. We've had to
12 put off needed improvements and raise maintenance
13 almost every year.

14 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

15 AUDREY BROWNE: Ah, just me say. A more
16 equitable way and sensible way for assessing property
17 taxes on co-ops, which not real property, would be to
18 base those taxes on the sales of comparable co-ops,
19 not single-family homes, in our particular area. I
20 hope you take that under consideration. I'll submit
21 my, testimony in writing. Thank you for your time.

22 MODERATOR: Thank you. Um, we will now
23 hear from Richard DeCesare, followed by Sante
24 Micelli.

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

2 COMMISSIONER RAYMOND MAJEWSKI: I'm
3 sorry, Ms. Brown, ah, I just want say I'm Raymond
4 Majewski and, ah, I'm a co-op owner in, ah, Brooklyn
5 Heights also, on the corner from [inaudible], um, and
6 the idea would be to compare the value of co-ops with
7 similar co-ops, rather than with single-family homes.
8 So, ah, we are trying in our recommendations to
9 address that issue. OK? Thank you.

10 MODERATOR: Thank you. Um, Richard
11 DeCesare, followed by Sante Micelli.

12 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time starts now.

13 RICHARD DECESARE: Good evening. My name
14 is Richard DeCesare. I'm the treasurer of a
15 residential co-op in Cobble Hill. Ah, as with the
16 last speaker, we have a similar problem with regard
17 to, um, taxes per square feet. Where our neighbors
18 across the street live in palatial brownstones and we
19 have 700 square foot apartments, and we pay more per
20 square foot than our neighbors across the street. I
21 have, ah, two questions regarding recommendation one
22 of the commission. Ah, the first is whether this new
23 residential category includes all, ah, cooperative
24 residences and condominiums, ah, and not just those
25 having, ah, 10 or fewer units. I'm assuming it's

2 all, but if I'm mistaken please let me know. Ah, the
3 second question is, ah, what do we do about the
4 luxury condominium, luxury rental, ah, hybrid. Ah,
5 the condominiums have become a large source of the
6 citywide rental inventory and at the higher end they
7 do not behave like simple owner-occupied residences
8 but more like income-generating investments. The
9 luxury rental condo concept has driven new
10 construction to a substantial degree, funded in part
11 by the 421-A abatements, where we have abatements and
12 credits passed on to owners of condominium units,
13 many of whom rent out their units for profit. The
14 other question is in regard to recommendation number
15 five, the partial homestead exemption. What are we
16 going to do about the Star senior citizen and
17 veterans' credits? Ah, will we be running systems in
18 parallel to determine whether everyone is a little
19 better off without being worse off? Ah, I thank you
20 very much for this opportunity to speak to the
21 commission. Thank you very much.

22 MODERATOR: Thank you. Um, we will now
23 hear from Sante Micelli, followed by Jane Clarke.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.
25

2 SANTE MICELLI: Ah, good evening, ah,
3 Commissioner, and participants. I'm Sante Micelli.
4 Ah, I'm an immigrant. I'm a naturalized American.
5 I'm a member of Community Board 1. I'm the chair of
6 the outreach committee, ah the outreach committee of
7 CB1. I'm a community activist and I'm also a home
8 owner, together with, ah, my wife. Ah, she's a
9 teacher, and, ah, with a friend. So this three-
10 family building in Greenpoint, which has been an area
11 devastated already by, ah, development of the entire
12 waterfront, the developer has been getting 30 years
13 tax abatement. My neighbors next door, they've owned
14 their house for three, four generations literally,
15 both the house next to mine for 100 years. Ah, they
16 don't even have, ah, probably a very large pension,
17 you know, and thanks to these houses been passed
18 generation after generation. My case and the one of
19 my wife as an artist and designer, as myself, I
20 literally don't have a retirement, you know. Ah, ah,
21 the retirement is this home. Even the possibility
22 of, ah, ah, making some gain with increased market
23 value and selling the house at a certain point when,
24 that will be impossible to be in New York, is the
25 only things I personally I got. Ah, any increase in

2 taxes, more than what it is today, it will be
3 devastating to us, extremely devastating. You know,
4 it's kind of, ah, unacceptable, and the same it will
5 be for many of our neighbors here in Greenpoint.
6 This is an historic district. We are getting the
7 burden of, ah, having a house which is, ah, it's an
8 added responsibility, you know, and out of the costs
9 and, and I'm very handy myself as an artist, so I've
10 been doing a lot of work myself, things that you can
11 even deduct at the time that's been spending to this
12 home and, and any increase in taxes we definitely, it
13 will not allow us to be here and, ah, and even the
14 moment we will have to sell the house, ah, for sure
15 we'll have to sell it below the market value because
16 some developer will make some plan to buy this house,
17 so will be always a loss.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

19 SANTE MICELLI: The middle class that is
20 the backbone of all our neighbors, really, and, and I
21 arrived here with \$200, you know, and very shortly I
22 realized that I have to be creative and I have to be
23 an entrepreneur. And, but this will be very, very
24 damaging and you have not done outreach, and I'm a
25 member of the, I'm the chair of outreach committee.

2 I invite you before anything is put in place, the
3 proper, proper outreach is done, ah, and not during
4 the pandemic, ah. Thank you very much.

5 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
6 We will now hear from Jane Clarke, followed by
7 Priscilla Ghaznavi.

8 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

9 JANE CLARKE: Hello, everybody. Um,
10 thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.
11 Ah, I, I feel that I've been very moved by some of,
12 ah, the speakers tonight. It's obvious to me that,
13 um, you've inherited, ah, ah, a really complicated
14 problem to try and solve. And I'm grateful for the
15 time and effort that seems to have been put in to try
16 and unravel this. At the same time, ah, I want to
17 echo what my husband has said. Ah, I, I'm a teacher.
18 I'm also an immigrant. Ah, I am reaching retirement
19 age myself, ah, and to suddenly find that some of the
20 hopes and plans that we've had to enjoy, um, the
21 latter part of our lives in this wonderful, um, part
22 of New York City in Brooklyn, ah, is, is really quite
23 a shock for us. Um, we may not be in, in, as bad a
24 situation as many of the people who have spoken, and,
25 ah, but at the same time it does seem that, ah, there

2 are no simple solutions to this. But we urge those
3 of you who are continuing to work on this that you,
4 you continue to keep people in mind who have worked
5 all of their lives, um, in, in ways that have
6 hopefully, ah, improved the state of the city. We
7 moved to Brooklyn out of chance. Um, we, we looked
8 to buy a house for, for a long, long time and
9 eventually we bought somewhere we could afford in the
10 neighborhood that we feel very fortunate to have been
11 able to move into. Ah, we didn't ask for the
12 developers to move in. We didn't anticipate that,
13 ah, the changes that happened in our neighborhood
14 would happen, and happen so quickly. Ah, what we
15 chose to do was put what little money we had into
16 having a comfortable home with a garden, ah, and we
17 would like to be able to stay here and enjoy, um, the
18 senior part of our lives in this same neighborhood,
19 and some of the...

20 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

21 JANE CLARKE: [inaudible] um, that are,
22 that are, ah, being considered now will make that
23 impossible for us. So, um, we look forward to
24 hearing more about this can be unraveled to
25 everybody's advantage, and make it a more equitable,

2 um, situation. Thank you for your time and thank you
3 for the work that you are doing.

4 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
5 Ah, we will now hear from Priscilla Ghaznavi,
6 followed by Omar Walker.

7 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

8 PRISCILLA GHAZNAVI: Hi. My name is
9 Priscilla Ghaznavi. I live in the south side of
10 Williamsburg. I am also the president of our South
11 Side Homeowners Association. Our community is in 20,
12 excuse me, 82, ah, two-family homes. The homes were
13 built by HPD to ensure that the people in the
14 community would not be displaced by the biggest
15 rezoning that has taken place in decades. The very
16 tax increases that are proposed in your proposal are
17 going to drive more than 80% of the homeowners out,
18 because they're still blue collar workers. Many of
19 the people that own homes and that live in their
20 homes actually have their family members living below
21 them, so they're not making an income from their
22 homes. They're barely getting by. I'm pleading with
23 you guys to please consider the very programs that
24 you put in place within other offices in New York
25 City, like HPD, so that we could actually afford

2 being owners, not be pushed out because taxes are
3 being elevated because of the entire regentrification
4 that has taken place and made the value of our home,
5 which we purchased, the value, the price point of our
6 home when we purchased it in 2001 was \$298,000. We
7 received a grant for around \$80,000, give or take,
8 depending on where your home was located. So we
9 actually spent around \$200,000 to purchase these
10 homes. They're now valued at almost 2 million
11 dollars and the taxes that are associated with that
12 are pushing the people out. Please make sure that
13 while you're looking at these tax, ah, programs that
14 you consider programs such as HPD and do some type of
15 survey to evaluate are the original homeowners still
16 there. Out of 82 homes there's maybe four or five
17 buildings in our community that were sold for
18 millions of dollars, and tax them on their way out,
19 but not tax them while they want to stay here, while
20 they have families. We can't afford it. I will
21 submit the rest of my testimony in writing. Thank
22 you for listening.

23 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.

24 Ah, we will now hear from Omar Walker, followed by
25 Rosario Sinisi.

2 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

3 MODERATOR: Ah, it looks like Omar Walker
4 did leave. We'll go to Rosario Sinisi, followed by
5 Lorraine Doyle.

6 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

7 ROSARIO SINISI: Hello? Can you hear me?

8 MODERATOR: We can hear you.

9 ROSARIO SINISI: OK. Um, I've lived in
10 my in Clinton Hill, Brooklyn, for the past 33 years.
11 I work as a [inaudible] supervisor for stage
12 productions and I'm a member of the New York State
13 bar. My concern is that there is no data to quantify
14 the impact of the report's recommendations,
15 particularly on owners of one- to three-family homes
16 currently in class 1. The report doesn't provide the
17 new market value of properties moved from class 2 to
18 class 1, and without the information and specifics on
19 circuit breakers plus the requirement that the new
20 classes 1 and 2 be revenue neutral, that impact can't
21 be calculated. And adoption of the recommendations
22 absent that information could wind up displacing
23 thousands of homeowners and their tenants, with
24 communities of color and rapidly appreciating areas
25 hit the hardest. Absent missing data, I calculated a

2 hypothetical tax rate for the new class 1 using 2020
3 market value, as shown on the Finance Department
4 website, and then applying the revenue neutral
5 mandate on the theory that class 2 would not be, um,
6 hit with a lot of increases in tax because there was
7 no, ah, indication in the, ah, report to that effect.
8 What I came out with comparing two houses. The
9 property tax on a Brooklyn house, it's a two-story
10 Brooklyn house in an appreciating area would rise
11 from about \$6500 to \$30,780 over the five-year phase-
12 in, and property tax on a two-story Staten Island
13 house would rise from \$4700 to about \$6400. Ah, this
14 is due in part to the, um, the requirement for
15 revenue neutrality. And how the circuit breakers for
16 undefined low-income homeowners would work nobody
17 knows. Tenants are considered rent burdened if
18 they're paying over 30% of their income on housing,
19 but what about homeowners? If the Brooklyn homeowner
20 above were bought years ago or inherited a house and
21 whose property now has a 2020 market value of
22 \$2,250,000, has an income of \$100,000, her new
23 property tax would be \$30,780 a year prior to circuit
24 breakers, if any. And if you add in...

25 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

2 ROSARIO SINISI: ...[inaudible] utility
3 costs you get the total cost of close to 60% of
4 income spent on housing alone. Depending on the
5 missing variables, many home owners might be forced
6 to sell and their homes would be devalued due to the
7 increase tax burden and the fact that many would be
8 sold simultaneously. Cash buyers already dominate
9 much of the small residential market so developers
10 and investors such as those apparently supporting the
11 [inaudible] litigation might be likely buyers of
12 those homes. So I therefore respectfully urge the
13 commission and politicians supporting the report's
14 recommends to, one, provide the public with actual
15 numbers for all the missing variables before
16 suggesting that these recommendations provide a path
17 to equity, and, two, then provide all stakeholders
18 with an opportunity for feedback with more than two
19 minutes for all testimony. Thank you.

20 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.

21 CHAIR SHAW: Ah, Ms. Doyle, I just wanted
22 to make sure, ah, is that Ms. Doyle? Is that her
23 name? I'm sorry.

24 MODERATOR: It's Rosario Sinisi.
25

2 CHAIR SHAW: Oh, I'm sorry. Ms. Sinisi,
3 ah, if you would please submit your testimony in
4 writing.

5 ROSARIO SINISI: I have already. It's 17
6 pages. I sent it in.

7 CHAIR SHAW: Thank you.

8 ROSARIO SINISI: All documented from
9 Finance Department and, um, city, um, the Center for
10 the City...

11 COMMISSIONER O'CLEIREACAIN: Yes, you,
12 you, you did and it's very useful, and I wanted to
13 thank you.

14 ROSARIO SINISI: Thank you.

15 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.
16 Ah, we will hear from Lorraine Doyle and then go to
17 Omar Walker again.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 LORRAINE DOYLE: On the south side of
20 Williamsburg. I'm one of the homeowners that
21 Priscilla Ghaznavi has spoken about, and 80% of our
22 homeowners are blue collar workers. And the property
23 taxes are affordable at the moment. My husband and I
24 occupy one of the apartments. My mother lives in the
25 other apartment. And we would not be able to afford

2 a tax increase as we getting older and preparing to
3 retire. We were part of the original homeowners that
4 moved here to help provide a stable foundation for
5 the neighborhood two decades ago. At that time not
6 many people wanted to invest or move here. We made
7 new acquaintances that have grown with the
8 neighborhood. There are great small businesses that
9 have opened, which we frequent. With a tax increase
10 that would limit mine and other homeowners from being
11 able to stay for it would price us out. Even though
12 the property values have gone up significantly, most
13 home owner salaries have not. Due to the pandemic
14 many have lost tenants or had to carry them to keep
15 their homes. This does not factor in inflation.
16 Also, the public services in the neighborhood have
17 not improved but declined. For the reasons I ask the
18 Advisory Commission to keep the property taxes low
19 for the south side homeowners in Williamsburg. Thank
20 you for your time.

21 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.

22 Ah, we will now hear from Omar Walker, followed by
23 Carlos Lebron.

24 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

2 OMAR WALKER: Hi. I am not Omar Walker.
3 My name is Claudette Brady and I am in filling for
4 Omar because he had a work engagement he has to, ah,
5 he had to attend. Um, we are residents of Bedford
6 Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, Community Board 3. Ah, this
7 tax, and, and I, I had not written, I had not, I had
8 not written a small statement. I'm actually
9 composing a fairly long, um, written statement on
10 this, so I'm kind of winging, you know. So the tax,
11 the property tax burden for, specifically for people
12 in Bed-Stuy and neighborhoods that have been
13 disenfranchised for years will be significant.
14 Currently across, um, Community Board 3 taxes for
15 homeowners are somewhere between, um, \$5000 to \$8000
16 a year. If we change the tax code to market value
17 we're looking at property taxes going between \$18,000
18 to \$32,000 a year, based on the market value of
19 between 1.5 million to 3.5 million. What this does
20 is actually punish people who have been
21 disadvantaged. A lot of Bed-Stuy homeowners are
22 multigenerational homeowners, people who bought their
23 homes when, when those areas were redlining, people
24 whose homes they paid, they had to save money for to
25 pay for, or if they didn't do that, the previous

2 owner held the mortgage and the faced foreclosure for
3 missing one payment. I know people who bought their
4 houses for \$30,000 in 1973 with a \$25,000 down
5 payment and had a \$15,000 mortgage, a \$15,000
6 interest rate and the, um, the bank held, held the
7 note until they paid it off. So changing this tax
8 code right now will, again, punish people who have
9 been marginalized by the system and who had not had
10 the opportunity, given other, other...

11 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Time expired.

12 OMAR WALKER: ...[inaudible] homeowners.
13 One more time.

14 MODERATOR: Thank you for the testimony.
15 Um, we will now hear from Carlos Lebron and then we
16 will see if, ah, Council Member Yeger is available to
17 speak.

18 SERGEANT AT ARMS: Starting time.

19 CARLOS LEBRON: My message here is
20 basically, one, I'm raised in Williamsburg and it's
21 not fair that we stood in the neighborhood when it
22 was at its worst, and now it seems like we may have
23 to leave after so many years being here through the
24 bad times and now it's good, and it's truly not fair.
25 Thank you.

2 MODERATOR: Thank you for that testimony.

3 Ah, Council Member Kalman Yeger, ah, if you're
4 available we will hear your testimony. All right,
5 well, this concludes the public testimony. If we
6 have inadvertently forgotten to call on someone to
7 testify, if that person could raise their hand using
8 the Zoom raise hand function we will try to hear from
9 you now. Again, if you wish to testify and did not
10 have a chance to do so, please use the raise hand
11 function in the Zoom and we will try to hear from you
12 now.

13 COMMISSIONER CAPPELLI: Ah, I'd like to
14 say something before, ah, we get to that. Ah, I'll
15 use some of Council Member Yeger's time. Ah, first
16 of all, I agree with most of what our public
17 officials have said. Ah, the issue I have is that,
18 ah, particularly when they talk about how the mayoral
19 term is almost halfway over and we have six months to
20 go and there's a lot of work to be done, and we will,
21 ah, as a commission, ah, dedicate ourselves to
22 putting recommendations into place that hopefully
23 will serve as a blueprint to make the system fairer.
24 What we need from our public officials and I don't
25 think there's a lot of disagreement on, on many of

2 the inequities. There may be some, ah, problems in
3 the details. But they need to put pressure on their
4 colleagues, on the people who are running for
5 citywide office, there are candidates running for
6 mayor in both parties right now [inaudible] the City
7 Council. Ah, next year it will be time running for
8 the state legislature to support and [inaudible] tax
9 program, and they need to hold the feet to the fire
10 of the people who want to serve the city, ah, at
11 large. Ah, you know, we, we can provide, ah, a
12 blueprint, but we're not going to exist unless the
13 next mayor wants us to exist beyond this and we need
14 the public officials, ah, who have testified and who
15 realize that this is a problem to, ah, drive the
16 point home. So, ah, so those are my comments. Thank
17 you.

18 MODERATOR: Um, all right. Chair Shaw,
19 it appears no other members of the public would like
20 to testify. So we are done with the public portion,
21 public testimony portion of this hearing.

22 CHAIR SHAW: All right. So thank you
23 very much, Emre. Um, to start it, I'd like to thank
24 all the members of the public and elected officials
25 who joined us tonight to give feedback on the

2 commission's preliminary report. The comments are
3 important as the commission develops its final
4 recommendations. In the interest of time, you know,
5 we've tried to limit any individual responses to some
6 of the questions, but we have been [inaudible] and,
7 you know, can leave, Ralph and others raised, you
8 know, the simple fact that we need to have examples
9 of individual properties and we will obviously take
10 that into access and, um, you know, we still need to
11 do a lot of work on both the circuit breakers and the
12 residential abatement programs. Um, so we, we are
13 listening and hearing your concerns, and it's really
14 important as we continue to do our deliberations. As
15 a reminder, the commission will be holding virtual
16 hearings in Queens on June 9, in the Bronx on June
17 14, and Manhattan on June 16. The Staten Island
18 virtual hearing has already occurred on May 11, as we
19 mentioned. Members of the public may attend any
20 hearing, regardless of their home borough. If you
21 wish to testify you must register on the Advisory
22 Commission's website at least 24 hours prior to the
23 start of the hearings. Also, for members of the
24 public who are listening who would like to submit
25 written testimony you may do so at any time. To

2 register to testify or submit written testimony
3 please send it to the commission's website at
4 nyc.gov/propertytaxreform, one word. Finally, I
5 would like to thank the commission members who are
6 putting in their time, um, and I especially, um, and
7 especially the staffs of the City Council and the
8 Mayor's Office for making this hearing possible
9 because we couldn't have done it without you, and I
10 thank everybody that's been involved, and, um, I, I'd
11 like to just open it up for any other commissioners
12 that want to say any concluding remarks before we,
13 um, end the hearing tonight. Hearing none, we will
14 see you at our next hearing on June 9, in Queens.
15 Thank you very much, everybody.

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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 July 14, 2021