

**TESTIMONY FROM NYCHA'S EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
DAVID PRISTIN  
SENIOR SERVICES AND CENTERS IN NYCHA  
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON AGING  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2018 – 10:00 AM  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, NEW YORK, NY**

Chairs Alicka Ampry-Samuel and Margaret Chin, members of the Committees on Public Housing and Aging, and other distinguished members of the City Council: good morning. I am David Pristin, NYCHA's Executive Vice President for External Affairs. Joining me today are Deborah Goddard, Executive Vice President for Capital Projects; Ukah Busgith, Senior Director of the Family Partnerships Department; Carolyn Jasper, Vice President for Operations; as well as our partners from the City's Department for the Aging (DFTA).

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the Authority's work to provide the more than 80,000 seniors living in our developments across the city with safe, supportive communities and access to quality services. We provided testimony on this topic to the Council in October 2017 and are happy to provide you with an update today on senior services and centers at NYCHA.

While NYCHA faces significant challenges – a loss of \$3 billion in federal operating and capital funding over the last 17 years and a \$32 billion capital need – we are firmly committed to our seniors and believe that all New Yorkers deserve to age in place with dignity in their homes. In recent years, we have reconsidered how we work, focusing on our core responsibility to be a better landlord. This has led to creative, new approaches to serving residents – particularly our seniors who are aging in place. As part of that focus, we've moved away from directly providing social services to connecting residents to best-in-class services from the vast network of social service providers throughout the city.

## **A Supportive Environment for Seniors**

NYCHA helps our seniors thrive in a number of ways, with initiatives that positively impact seniors living in our developments as well as programs that serve only our most vulnerable. If you're a senior at NYCHA, you can benefit from physical improvements to our buildings, access to on-site and nearby services, connections to services, and age-friendly reasonable accommodation policies.

### *Building Improvements*

As a landlord, NYCHA continues to focus on improving our buildings to enhance residents' quality of life. As mentioned last year, we updated the architectural design guidelines for the rehabilitation of our buildings, taking into account age-friendly and accessible designs, as well as DFTA's *Age-Friendly NYC* report and HPD's guidelines for senior housing. Whenever the funding is available to upgrade our buildings, these standards will better support the safety, health, and comfort of residents, including their ability to age in place gracefully.

Guided by the new architectural standards, in 2017 and 2018 we invested over \$8 million to make accessibility and age-friendly improvements at 66 developments, such as more comfortable seating areas on the grounds for seniors. The new LED exterior lighting that we're installing across the city makes it easier for everyone, including our seniors, to see. We are eager to get the funding necessary to complete more of these projects in the future.

### *NYCHA Senior Centers*

The 110 senior centers at NYCHA, including the 96 senior centers and senior social clubs sponsored by DFTA, provide a range of recreational, health, and cultural activities, services, and resources that enhance the lives of NYCHA residents and other seniors in the community. On any given day, seniors participate in free exercise classes, discussion groups, or blood pressure

screenings. At DFTA-funded senior centers, older New Yorkers can get free meals, counseling on social services, or assistance with benefits. Regardless of where they live, most NYCHA seniors have access to a program on-site or within their community.

The 14 senior centers that are not run by DFTA are still operated by NYCHA through funding from the Mayor's Office. The funding we have received, \$3 million a year, allows us to fully or partially operate senior center programming and meal services. Since 2015, attendance has increased by 42 percent at these centers. This demonstrates how important they are for our aging population.

While we are committed to our senior centers, NYCHA's capital needs total \$32 billion, including the significant repair needs at our senior centers. Discussions with our partners at OMB and DFTA about how best to improve our centers are ongoing. We will continue to work with them to lay out clear roles and responsibilities for each party and determine the best strategy for financing existing repair needs within the context of NYCHA's larger capital need. These centers are valuable assets to our communities that deserve to be preserved. But given NYCHA's dire financial position and more than \$30 billion in capital needs, it is difficult to accommodate both the repairs needed to secure our residents' homes as well as the fixes for our centers.

We are in discussions with our partners at OMB and DFTA on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to improve how we repair our centers. This MOU, once finalized, will lay out clear roles and responsibilities for each party, making senior center management more straightforward. Although this MOU was expected to be completed earlier this year, thoughtful discussions are ongoing.

### *Services and Programs for Seniors*

NYCHA's Community Engagement and Partnerships department fulfills NYCHA's goal of engaging residents and connecting them to best-in-class

services. By engaging key populations, including seniors, and connecting them to critical health and social services from community-based organizations and other City agencies, seniors are supported as they age in place at NYCHA. We know we cannot do this alone – which is why we streamlined how we partner with local providers, through our “Zone Model.”

Partnership is key to serving our seniors. NYCHA works with dedicated providers across the city to meet their needs. Here are some examples of the services our partners provide:

- The HUD-funded **Senior Resident Advisor Program** provides on-site assistance to seniors in need at six sites, helping them live safely and independently in their homes through home visits, connections to services, and regular visits by volunteer “floor captain” neighbors.
- Another HUD-funded initiative, the **Elderly Safe-At-Home** program, provides crime prevention and social service assistance and educational workshops to seniors at four sites in the South Bronx.
- Socially isolated or homebound seniors in all five boroughs receive regular home visits through Henry Street Settlement’s **Senior Companion Program**. Senior Companions are healthy, older adults who help their fellow seniors live independently, by helping them go shopping and go to doctors’ appointments, do errands, and by simply providing companionship.

Currently, our partners Presbyterian Senior Services, Hudson Guild, Union Settlement, and Project FIND are serving residents at specific developments in their service areas. NYCHA is finalizing partnerships with 16 additional providers that will also assist seniors directly. And 11 partners will be located at NYCHA’s Family Partnership Department offices to provide helpful services to seniors.

At our 74 seniors-only buildings and 11 NORCs (retirement communities that are naturally occurring), seniors and their caregivers are supported with on-site and

nearby assistance. This includes one-on-one counseling as well as recreational and cultural opportunities from DFTA and many other providers. At 9 NORC sites, homebound and non-homebound seniors are connected to services and get help with accessing public benefits and improving their health. NYCHA is applying for six more NYCHA buildings to be designated as NORCs, and we expect to hear back about their eligibility next year.

And just this last Friday, we activated 82 new Senior Champions across our developments. These NYCHA leaders participated in workshops on creating health, safety, and educational activities for seniors in NYCHA communities. We appreciate Council Member Diana Ayala's participation in this valuable initiative.

### **Conclusion**

NYCHA provides vital support to seniors in many ways – from senior center programming to the dedicated services available at our seniors-only buildings; from the new housing we're creating exclusively for seniors to our reasonable accommodation policies that facilitate assistance from caregivers. We are eager to continue engaging with the Council and our other partners across the city as we work to transform NYCHA and enhance the level of services offered to our seniors.

Thank you for the opportunity to continue the dialogue on this important topic. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.



**TESTIMONY**

Presented by

**Caryn Resnick**  
**Acting Commissioner & Deputy Commissioner, External Affairs**

on

**Oversight: Senior Services and Centers in NYCHA**

before the

**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Aging & Committee on Public Housing**

on

**Wednesday, December 5, 2018**  
**10:00 A.M.**

at

**Council Chambers, City Hall**  
**New York, NY 10007**

Good morning, Chairpersons Chin, Ampry-Samuel and members of the Aging and Public Housing Committees. I am Caryn Resnick, Acting Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of External Affairs for the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA). I am joined by Karen Taylor, Assistant Commissioner for the Bureau of Community Services at DFTA, as well as partners from the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify on the topic of senior services and centers in NYCHA.

### **DFTA FUNDED SENIOR PROGRAMS IN NYCHA DEVELOPMENTS**

DFTA funds a number of senior programs located in NYCHA developments. These programs include senior centers and other affiliated sites. In addition, DFTA sponsors nine Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs at NYCHA locations. Also, under the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP), DFTA's Grandparent Resource Center (GRC) works with residents at 15 NYCHA developments that are part of the initiative.

#### Senior Centers and Other Affiliated Sites

DFTA's senior center portfolio includes 71 NYCHA sites. In addition to the senior center network, DFTA funds other affiliated sites in NYCHA developments, which include social clubs and satellites. Senior centers provide meals at no cost to participants, though modest voluntary contributions are accepted. At senior centers, older New Yorkers can participate in a variety of recreational, health promotional and cultural activities, as well as receive counseling on social services and obtain assistance with benefits. The social clubs comprise the 17 senior centers formerly operated by NYCHA, which transitioned to DFTA sponsorship in FY '16. The satellite programs encompass senior centers that were formerly funded through Council discretionary allocations, as well as the initial four senior centers that transferred from NYCHA to DFTA. The other affiliated sites provide educational and recreational programming, but are smaller in scope and may not include the range of services available at a senior center. In FY '18, more than 7,500 older New Yorkers participated daily in DFTA funded senior centers and affiliated sites at NYCHA locations. These programs also served nearly 2.1 million congregate meals in FY '18.

Additionally, the Technology Education and Municipal Facilities initiative by the Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer seeks to increase older adult access to broadband services in

NYCHA developments. Technology classes and events are held at Mott Haven Houses in the Bronx and Jefferson Houses in Manhattan in Council Member Ayala's district; Red Hook Houses in Brooklyn in Council Member Menchaca's district; Queensbridge Houses in Queens in Council Member Van Bramer's district; and Stapleton Houses in Staten Island in Council Member Rose's district.

#### Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities

The City has defined Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities as residential locations – single buildings, housing developments or clusters of buildings within a neighborhood – that are neither age restricted nor built specifically for seniors. Over time, as residents have aged in place, these housing locations have become home to significant concentrations of older adults. There are five primary objectives for DFTA funded NORC programs. All NORC programs should: 1) provide supportive environments that allow seniors independence as they age in place; 2) engage residents and facilitate linkages within the community; 3) assess the needs of senior residents; 4) offer supportive services based on assessments; and 5) build strong and meaningful communities that cultivate new roles for community members.

Nine NYCHA developments are served by DFTA funded NORC programs, including Smith Houses in Manhattan in Chair Chin's district, Coney Island I (Site 8) in Brooklyn in Council Member Treyger's district, Ravenswood Houses in Queens in Council Member Van Bramer's district, and Pelham Parkway Houses in the Bronx in Council Member Gjonaj's district. The NORC programs provide services such as case management for homebound and non-homebound seniors, assistance with accessing public benefits and an increased emphasis on wellness, chronic disease risk assessments and healthcare management.

#### Grandparent Resource Center

The Grandparent Resource Center – the first of its kind in the nation – was established by DFTA in 1994. The GRC provides a number of supportive services to those older adults who are raising grandchildren and other young relatives. Resource specialists at the GRC offer advocacy and case assistance, as well as referrals to appropriate community based organizations (CBOs). These CBOs

provide services such as preventive services, legal services, financial assistance, advocacy, educational services, tutoring services for children, family counseling, and support groups.

In order to serve some of the neediest kinship caregiver families, the GRC program expanded under the Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety. As part of the MAP initiative, GRC Community Advocates work with residents at 15 NYCHA developments, and provide resources and services to grandparent caregivers. Through the initiative, grandparent and relative caregivers have received grandparenting education, community safety trainings, intergenerational programming, and peer support on raising children.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony on senior services and centers in NYCHA. My colleagues and I are pleased to answer any questions you may have.

**New York City Council  
Joint Hearing  
Committee on Aging and the Committee on Public Housing  
Oversight - Senior Services and Centers in NYCHA  
December 5, 2018**

LiveOn NY would like to first and foremost thank Chairs Chin and Ampry-Samuel for holding today's hearing on Senior Services and Centers in NYCHA.

In New York City, NYCHA represents one of the greatest suppliers of affordable housing for low-income seniors. Currently, 38% of NYCHA households are headed by an individual age 62 and over, and an estimated 7,700 units are designated specifically for older adults. Just as the buildings are aging, so are the tenants that occupy them, making the need for quality, safe services in NYCHA paramount to the success of the community at-large. Unfortunately, however, providers of services such as Senior Centers and NORCs that operate in NYCHA community spaces face daily challenges just to keep the doors open. With over 90 members citywide, LiveOn NY represents the vast majority of these operators of the roughly 100 senior centers and NORCs located in a NYCHA complex.

Much emphasis has been accurately placed on the need to improve the living conditions in units within NYCHA developments, an emphasis that LiveOn NY wholly supports, however, it is imperative to recognize that senior service providers have not been immune to these capital and operational challenges. A recent Wall Street Journal article noted that an estimated \$500 million in capital funding is needed for NYCHA community spaces, which include senior centers, child care centers, cornerstones and other critical programs that support the wellbeing of NYCHAs residents and its surrounding community members.

Faulty HVACs, leaking roofs, broken boilers, and the occasional rodent are just a few of the challenges to which providers have limited control over mitigating. Adding salt to the wound, providers are often subject to an onslaught of fines and violations for these conditions from the City's well-intentioned regulatory agencies, including the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the Fire Department of New York (FDNY). The fines and repair needs are exacerbated by the fact that NYCHA's approval processes leaves providers waiting weeks, months or even years before being able to move forward with critical repairs for which capital funds have been made available – whether through City Council or other sources.

The impacts of these fines and conditions are not only monetary: instead of spending critical time providing life-sustaining services for NYCHA tenants and the surrounding community, providers are forced to become experts in the nuances of repair systems wholly outside of their job description in order to simply stay afloat. This impact cannot be understated as these non-profit providers work tirelessly to provide high quality services to those who need it most and, through these suboptimal systems, are being consistently hamstrung from meeting their city-mandated and personally-motivated aims.

Additionally, senior centers and services operating in NYCHA should be seen as resources in relaying critical information around NYCHA repairs at-large and updates on the status of NYCHA NextGen and RAD conversions, as these providers are on the front lines in serving clients and are often seen as a trusted source of information for the residents they serve. Clear and consistent communication from NYCHA, as well as fully funded service contracts are critical to enabling nonprofits to best fulfill this role.

LiveOn NY recognizes that these challenges are not specific to senior services, but run the gamut of community

spaces in NYCHA facilities, which is why we are proud to have begun collaborating with the Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) and United Neighborhood Houses (UNH) to recommend reforms across community spaces.

Acknowledging the difficult financial position of NYCHA, we respectfully submit the following process-oriented recommendations, each having the potential to improve the day-to-day business and viability of providers operating within NYCHA – without adding additional stress to NYCHA’s current financial situation:

- **Re-direct Fines** – Nonprofit human service providers, who lack site control and rely on NYCHA to make repairs, should not be subject to citations and fines from DOHMH or FDNY due to NYCHA’s failure to make those repairs. When violations are found during inspections, and if these violations have already been reported to NYCHA by the provider, the provider should not be penalized;
- **Dedicate Staff:** As is the practice in other governmental agencies, there must be an individual within the Department for the Aging (DFTA) whose sole focus is to liaise with NYCHA and to support and streamline processes for DFTA funded services located in NYCHA developments;
- **Increase Transparency:** Providers must be given easy access to an up to date NYCHA approved vendor list in order to expedite procurement processes;
- **Mandate Inter-Agency Cooperation** – NYCHA and the agencies that leverage their space, including DFTA, need a clear division of responsibilities for the maintenance and upkeep of NYCHA sites. In order to provide stability to providers, this division of responsibility, once established and agreed upon, should be standardized as appropriate across all agencies that fund providers operating out of NYCHA properties; and
- **Design an Approval Process for Repairs** – NYCHA must work internally and with providers to accelerate approval for repairs and renovations and must expedite processes with the residential repair division when floods, leaks, or other issues originate in apartments and require a two-pronged repair to fully address.

We appreciate your consideration of the above recommendations and thank you for your time.

*LiveOn NY’s members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, NORCs and NY Connects. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.*

*LiveOn NY administers a citywide outreach program that supports seniors in communities where benefits are most underutilized. This program educates thousands of older adults, including those who are homebound, about food assistance options, as well as screens and enrolls those who are eligible for SNAP and SCRIE/DRIE.*



**Testimony of  
Alexander H. Ryley, Director of Elder Law, The Legal Aid Society Civil Practice  
Before the New York City Council**

We appreciate the opportunity to testify before the City Council's Committees on these important issues and thank the Committees for their commitment to public housing residents and to older New Yorkers.

The Legal Aid Society is the oldest and largest not-for-profit public interest law firm in the United States, working on more than 300,000 individual legal matters annually for low-income New Yorkers with civil, criminal, and juvenile rights problems in addition to law reform representation that benefits all two million low-income children and adults in New York City. The Society delivers a full range of comprehensive legal services to low-income families and individuals in the City. Our Civil Practice has local neighborhood offices in all five boroughs, along with centralized city-wide law reform, employment law, immigration law, health law, and homeless rights practices.

For decades, the mission of The Legal Aid Society's Brooklyn Office for the Aging, where I am based as the Director of Elder Law for the Civil Practice of The Legal Aid Society, has been to move older adults from crisis to stability, with the goal of allowing them to live with dignity in their homes with a good quality of life. To achieve this, we use a staff of lawyers, social workers, and paralegals who work together to stabilize a client's situation and develop a plan for the future.

Our multidisciplinary team members visit and interview homebound clients; provide legal advice and representation to seniors and their advocates; conduct community education sessions at senior centers and other locations; and handle litigation on behalf of groups of seniors when systemic problems are identified.

Legal representation is only one component of providing legal services to older, vulnerable adults, who often have specific needs that require the specialized support of social workers. In addition to this legal advocacy, social workers implement pragmatic and creative solutions, such as automatic bill payment, income maximization through applications for all

available government benefits and private stipend programs; short-term heavy-duty cleaning; and long-term home care services.

### **Seniors living in public housing face particular challenges**

As we have seen from our unique vantage point at The Legal Aid Society's Brooklyn Office for the Aging, many older adults residing in NYCHA apartments have lived in their homes for decades, having moved in with their families when their children were born, and remained long after their family composition shifted. They've experienced the loss of spouses and the departure of children, who've perhaps returning with grandchildren, or they have met a new partner in their later years and, maybe electing not to remarry, they nevertheless enjoy the support and companionship that a long-term relationship can offer.

Many of our clients cannot read or write in English – or at all – or have limited education. Yet they have managed, despite the odds, to create and maintain a home for themselves and their families – in what is often termed “housing of last resort”. These homes provide the stability and continuity critical to our clients' lives, and prevent them from entering the shelter system.

But to live in NYCHA housing requires understanding and following a number of complicated rules and regulations, and the failure to follow these rules to the letter can result in the eviction of seniors who did nothing worse than to misunderstand their rights and obligations as tenants.

### **Example: An illiterate senior narrowly avoids eviction**

We have seen myriad examples of this, one of which is particularly salient. Our client, Mr. D, an elderly man with many physical impairments, who also struggled with depression, came to us after his partner, a NYCHA tenant, died. He was devastated by the loss of his girlfriend of 35 years, into whose apartment he had moved some years prior. They lived together as a married couple, though they were never legally married. The tenant eventually became very ill, and our client cared for her throughout her illness.

Prior to the tenant's death, she tried to add our client to her household composition, as is required by NYCHA rules when a person joins a household. However, the tenant filled out the request paperwork improperly, and NYCHA denied the request on that basis but without informing the tenant of its decision, which NYCHA is permitted to do. Neither the tenant nor our client, who cannot read or write, was aware that he was not added to the household, and no one from the local management office provided the tenant or our client with any information or assistance after the denial.

We met Mr. D after his partner died, when he came to us after having been served with court papers informing him that NYCHA was now seeking his eviction because he was not a member of the household within the narrow definition of NYCHA's rules. We appealed this determination and eventually won. Notably, the Hearing Officer in her decision emphasized that NYCHA should have been done more to assist the family when they came to NYCHA's management offices requesting assistance to have the household composition properly accounted for. The Hearing Officer suggested that NYCHA should, at a minimum, have made a referral to family services.

**Increased services for NYCHA seniors would help preserve vulnerable seniors' tenancies**

The example of Mr. D suggests how a comparatively small shift in practice at management offices could result in significant gains for NYCHA tenants, who have no intention of "breaking the rules" but who nevertheless fail to fully comprehend the system and thus risk eviction and homelessness.

Our clients – often NYCHA's longest inhabitants – need additional services from NYCHA. They need help understanding and filling out paperwork including annual re-certification documents, requests to add (or remove) family members to their households, and other matters. They also need education, with occasional refreshers, on the rules and requirements of the complicated NYCHA system. Without enhanced services from NYCHA, clients will continue to come to us when it's too late, when we cannot turn back the clock or persuade NYCHA's attorneys to make an exception to policy.

**Conclusion**

We appreciate the opportunity to testify before the City Council's Committee on Public Housing and Aging on these important issues.

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**Testimony of United Neighborhood Houses  
Before the New York City Council  
Committees on Aging and Public Housing  
Council Member Margaret Chin, Chair, Aging  
Council Member Alicka Ampry-Samuel, Chair, Public Housing**

**Oversight: Senior Services and Centers in NYCHA**

**Presented by Tara Klein, Policy Analyst  
December 5, 2018**

Thank you for convening today's hearing. My name is Tara Klein, and I am a Policy Analyst at United Neighborhood Houses (UNH). UNH is New York's association of settlement houses whose membership includes 40 New York City settlement houses and two upstate affiliate members who collectively reach more than 765,000 people across all ages at over 680 sites throughout the city.

UNH members provide a wide variety of services to support older adults, including 19 members who operate 39 senior centers which serve nearly 40,000 New Yorkers annually. Many of the centers are integrated into New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) sites, helping to build community and providing vital services to enhance the health and well-being of older residents. These senior centers serve as essential gathering spaces for older adults of varying ages and abilities, offering daily meals, a wide range of activities, and a natural antidote for social isolation.

**The Need for Repairs and Renovations**

Unfortunately, many of the City's senior centers located within NYCHA facilities and operated by the Department for the Aging (DFTA) are in need of serious repairs. Reports of leaking roofs, dilapidated kitchen appliances, and broken air conditioners – many also designated as official NYC cooling centers – are all too common. Internal heating, plumbing, and electrical systems often need major overhauls. Many of these centers are located in decades-old buildings, which tends to make these challenges more frequent and extreme. It was recently reported that NYCHA needs \$500 million for repairs to its senior and community centers.<sup>1</sup> In the context of NYCHA's broader repair needs – reportedly at \$32 billion – the upkeep of senior centers in NYCHA facilities run by community-based organizations has become a back-burner priority, leaving many centers in need of basic facilities and maintenance resources. Distressingly, conditions continue to deteriorate with no clear plan for remediation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://therealdeal.com/2018/09/28/add-it-to-the-list-nycha-needs-500m-for-senior-housing-community-center-repairs/>

Unsurprisingly, poor building conditions have a direct negative impact on attendance at senior centers. Older adults prefer not to spend their time in a building that is in disrepair. If the City is serious about building a robust network of senior services that supports its public housing residents, it must turn its attention to the infrastructure needs of its buildings.

### **Funding Challenges**

Given NYCHA's capital repair backlog for its overall building stock, providers, who used to rely on the agency to make repairs, have been forced to look for other solutions to their pressing repair needs. Because funding for repairs and renovations are generally not included in DFTA senior center contracts, programs must secure funding outside of the regular contract process. This can be time-consuming and confusing, especially as many projects arise as emergencies. There is not a clear amount of money in DFTA's expense budget for repairs, as was reported during the October 2018 Aging Committee hearing on senior center repairs, so it difficult to assert whether this funding level is sufficient. As a result, in practice, many programs cover costs through their own limited budgets or private philanthropic sources, or put off repairs until the City can produce funding, which can affect a center's overall programming. DFTA can be inconsistent with their criteria for reimbursing providers for repairs they pay for out of pocket, if DFTA is willing to reimburse at all, while other agencies like DYCD have procedures for reimbursing for emergency repairs.

### **Approval Process**

Even when the senior center providers are able to procure the necessary funding to make needed repairs, NYCHA's approval protocol can prevent them from moving forward with projects for weeks, months, or in some cases, years. Requests wind through NYCHA's approval process while capital dollars sit unused and conditions worsen. To make matters worse, there is a lack of internal coordination in NYCHA between the residential repair department and those who are responsible for repairs at senior centers. Consequently, when a leak originates from a residential apartment, UNH members spend thousands of dollars—often their own, privately-raised funds—replacing ceilings, floors, and walls only to have the same area flood again because the leak in the toilet or shower upstairs was never actually repaired.

Ultimately, programs are faced with an impossible choice: Work with the beleaguered housing authority, find the money somewhere in their own budgets, or, far too often, put off critical repairs. Providers have been known to wait more than a year for severe issues such as leaking pipes and cracked ceilings to be addressed. For example, the senior center located at Hernandez Houses, operated by University Settlement, experienced a leak that effectively caused a small waterfall to develop on a wall. While NYCHA representatives were responsive and came out to investigate the problem, and DFTA was supportive in ensuring the appropriate communication was occurring, NYCHA was very slow to provide skilled laborers to repair the problem. The program – and older adults – waited many months until plumbers arrived to break the wall and do asbestos abatement. However, the leak soon returned and the process had to begin again.

### **The City Fining Itself**

In addition to interrupting services for older adults, waiting for repairs exposes providers to possible fines from the City's oversight authorities. A common experience is a senior center requesting a repair from NYCHA, and while awaiting the work to commence, receiving a citation or fine from a different City agency such as the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

(DOHMH) or Fire Department of New York (FDNY). For example, the E. Roberts Moore Senior Center, operated by BronxWorks and located in a NYCHA building, submitted a ticket to NYCHA to repair a crack in the wall. While waiting for NYCHA to respond and make the repair, the DFTA program officer issued a citation for the crack, despite seeing the repair ticket. In these types of cases, the City is in effect fining itself.

### **Recommendations**

UNH is here today with our colleagues from the Day Care Council of New York (DCCNY) and LiveOn NY to recommend reforms—including re-directing fines, improved inter-agency cooperation, and a streamlined process for repair approval—that would provide relief to the community-based organizations that operate senior centers, as well as other community facilities that face similar challenges like day care centers. We acknowledge the difficult financial position NYCHA faces after years of government divestment, and we have assembled the following recommendations that could be implemented without adding stress to NYCHA’s current financial situation:

- **Re-direct Fines** – Nonprofit human service providers, who lack site control and rely on NYCHA to make repairs, should not be subject to citations and fines from DOHMH, FDNY, or other City agencies due to NYCHA’s failure to make those repairs. When violations are found during inspections—if these violations have already been reported to NYCHA by the provider—the provider should not be penalized, a citation should be directed to NYCHA instead.
- **Mandate Inter-agency Cooperation** – NYCHA and the agencies that leverage their space, including DFTA, ACS, DYCD, and DOE, need a clear division of responsibilities for the maintenance and upkeep of NYCHA sites. In order to provide stability to providers, this division of responsibility, once established and agreed upon, should be standardized as appropriate across all agencies that fund providers operating out of NYCHA properties. One key strategy that should be standardized is a NYCHA liaison staff member at each agency, which DFTA has had in the past but no longer maintains.
- **Design an Approval Process for Repairs** – NYCHA must work internally and with providers to accelerate approval for repairs and renovations and must expedite processes with the residential repair division when floods, leaks, or other issues originate in apartments and require a two-pronged repair to fully address.

In addition, UNH recommends increasing the amount of money the City makes available for senior center repairs and upgrades. Senior centers should be eligible whether or not they are located in NYCHA buildings. This should happen in two key ways:

- First, DFTA should establish a dedicated fund for major capital projects at senior centers to support large-scale repairs and renovations.
- City rules for capital funding require that a project have a minimum value of \$35,000 and a period of usefulness of at least five years. While this is beneficial for major projects at senior centers, many repairs and upgrades cost less than \$35,000, and funds must be made available. To fund repairs for this large array of smaller-scale projects, the City Council should establish a separate, flexible discretionary fund for senior center repairs.

Thank you for your time. For questions, I can be contacted at 917-484-9326 or [tklein@unhny.org](mailto:tklein@unhny.org).



## **GNCJ Testimony for Oversight Hearing: Senior Services and Centers in NYCHA**

Formed in association with the Fifth Avenue Committee, a long-standing not-for-profit Community Development Corporation in Brooklyn, the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ) represents a concerted effort by local residents and stakeholders to specifically elevate the priorities of low- and moderate-income residents - a majority of whom are public housing residents - and the neighborhood-based organizations and small businesses that serve them in Gowanus, Brooklyn. We have come together to elevate the voices and concerns of our community that have not been addressed in the City's planning process for the Gowanus neighborhood, and to build support for our community priorities to address the needs of local public housing based on principles of social, economic, and environmental justice for a just, inclusive, and resilient Gowanus neighborhood.

Our platform asks the New York Department of City Planning (DCP) to address the following concerns in their neighborhood rezoning plan:

- I. ADVANCE RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE**
- II. CREATE REAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING and PROTECT TENANTS FROM DISPLACEMENT**
- III. PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TO RECOGNIZE BURDENS ON LONG TIME RESIDENTS**
- IV. RESPECT, PROTECT AND CONNECT PUBLIC HOUSING AND ITS RESIDENTS TO ALL COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND DECISION MAKING RELATED TO GOWANUS REZONING**
- V. RECOGNIZE & CELEBRATE THE CULTURE & COMMUNITY OF LONGTIME GOWANUS RESIDENTS**
- VI. PROTECT LOCAL BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRY TO PRESERVE WHERE WE SHOP AND WORK**

As massive public and private investments in the Gowanus neighborhood are underway the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice (GNCJ) is calling on the City of New York to honor their promise to reopen the Gowanus Houses Community Center. Currently the space is being used as a senior center on weekdays by The Spanish Speaking Elderly Council - RAICES. In October 2017 at a public town hall hosted by Councilmember Stephen Levin, Mayor de Blasio promise to reopen the Gowanus Houses Community Center. One year later GNCJ hasn't received any follow up actions from his office in keeping this promise while the price tag for repairs grows ever steeper, now at an estimated \$4 million.

The Gowanus Houses Community Center has been closed for over a decade, depriving the residents of one of New York's larger public housing developments a place to come together for artistic, educational, and vocational activities. Before its closing, the center was a positive force in the neighborhood, providing engaging and productive programming. The center even played a vital role during Superstorm Sandy relief efforts, when it was temporarily reopened to provide goods and services for Gowanus Houses residents impacted by the Superstorm. In the 2013 - 2014 Participatory Budgeting cycle, the community rallied together to advocate for funding to fix the physical building which had fallen into disrepair and successfully won \$475,000 that year in first place, yet the funded repairs have still not been contracted.

Collectively as GNCJ, we have worked together on an explicit set of demands for the center. First, to complete repairs to the space and restore programming that is led by the input and priorities of local residents. Second, to plan its development as a local hub for emergency preparedness planning and resiliency engagement that stands to benefit both residents within and outside of the campus. Community centers in NYCHA hold a disproportionate amount of value as both a physical meeting space and place for community building as the development finds itself increasingly at the intersection of local real estate investments, environmental remediation as a part of the Gowanus Canal Superfund process, and workforce training opportunities in anticipation of a neighborhood wide rezoning being led by the Department of City Planning.

We ask for the assistance of City Council in our endeavors to hold the mayor to his promise of reopening this community center and building community space local residents have demanded and deserve.

**Sincerely yours,**

**Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice**

**Please direct all responses to this letter to the:**

**GNCJ c/o Sabine Aronowsky**

**South Brooklyn Accountable Development Initiative (SBADI)**

**Fifth Avenue Committee**

**621 Degraw Street**

**Brooklyn, NY 11217**

**(718) 237-2017, ext. 117**

**saronowsky@fifthave.org**



**We refuse to be invisible**

**Testimony to the New York City Council Aging Committee and New York City Council Public Housing Committee's Oversight Hearing on Senior Services and Centers in NYCHA**

**Delivered in person on December 5, 2018**

**by Latisha Millard-Bethea, Director of Resident Services, NYC Housing Initiative**

Councilmembers, on behalf of SAGE, thank you for holding this hearing on senior services in NYCHA developments. My name is Latisha Millard-Bethea and I am SAGE's Director of Resident Services.

SAGE is the country's first and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT older adults. Founded in NYC in 1978, we have provided comprehensive social services and programs to LGBT older people for 40 years, including the nation's first full-time Senior Center, the Edie Windsor SAGE Center, located in Chelsea and launched with generous support from the Council. Building on the positive strides that SAGE Center made in reducing isolation faced by LGBT older adults, in June of 2014, the New York City Council awarded SAGE funding to open SAGE Center stand-alone sites in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Staten Island and to expand our SAGE Harlem program into a full-service SAGE Center site – and for that we are enormously grateful.

LGBT older people are a significant part of our City's rapidly growing elder population and are often severely isolated and disconnected from services. Extreme isolation and experienced discrimination are a lethal combination for LGBT elders. A recent study found that the impact that isolation has on one's physical health is equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day – more needs to be done to ensure our city's most isolated elders can find meaningful connection.

In fact, LGBT elders are severely isolated. They are twice as likely to live alone; half as likely to be partnered; and four times less likely to have kids. Many LGBT elders were shunned by their families and, as a result, are half as likely to have close relatives to call for help. Roughly one quarter of LGBT elders have no one to call in case of an emergency.

Because of their thin support networks, LGBT older people often need to turn to service providers for care as they age. Yet, they're often distrustful of mainstream providers – and for good reason. LGBT older people are more likely to face discrimination around their sexual orientation and gender identity when accessing health care, social services or other programs.

Discrimination has lasting effects on LGBT older people's financial security. More than four in ten – 42%, in fact – of LGBT Americans over the age of 65 cite financial problems as a major concern. Further, 47% report having less than \$10,000 in savings and assets; and 30% are concerned about their housing stability.<sup>1</sup> Fifty-one percent of LGBT older people report

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<sup>1</sup> Movement Advancement Project and SAGE (2010). *Improving the Lives of LGBT Older Adults*.

that they are very or extremely concerned about having enough money to live on, compared to 36% of straight couples.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that so many LGBT elders are low income and struggle with financial security coupled with our city's rapidly rising older LGBT demographic will mean that more senior centers will likely need to be located on or near NYCHA housing campuses.

Recognizing the acute need among our City's LGBT older people for LGBT-welcoming elder housing, SAGE and our partners, HELP USA and BFC Partners, are developing New York City's first LGBT-welcoming senior housing in Brooklyn and the Bronx. The marquee of each development will be a full-service ground-floor SAGE Center, built on our successful, which will support building residents and elder in the larger communities in which each building is located. Both of these buildings are 100% affordable and each have a set-aside for formerly homeless elders.

The largest of these two buildings, Ingersoll Senior Residences, is part of the NextGen NYCHA initiative and is being built on the NYCHA's Ingersoll public housing campus. The services and programming offered through the co-located ground floor SAGE Center will draw from our 40 years of experience of service provision to LGBT elders. Ingersoll Senior Residences and its co-located SAGE Center will serve low-income building tenants, as well as elders in the Fort Greene and surrounding neighborhoods, and provide an essential platform for SAGE to deliver life-saving housing and services to LGBT elders where they live, leading to their improved health and stability.

Given the population of older low income people living in and around this building, SAGE will need to provide more intensive services to ensure that these residents can maintain their housing and remain stably housed. In addition, SAGE expects to serve many more older people through the co-located SAGE Centers, which will require more investment from the City.

In addition, in our experience, operating a network of five senior centers across the city, also means that providers assume much of the responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of these sites, further stretches SAGE's budget. Our Harlem SAGE Center is located in the Drew Hamilton Community Center, which SAGE leases from NYCHA.

SAGE experienced challenges this past summer when the ceiling at this site partially collapsed directly above the serving table from which we serve our daily meals. It took a week for NYCHA to address this issue, which was likely due to SAGE's outreach to the Mayor's Office. For over a week, there was wet ceiling debris on the floor of our largest program space.

Unfortunately, this isn't an isolated incident. So many of the City's senior centers are in disrepair, especially those located in NYCHA developments. And, with a rapidly growing increase in our City's older population, the City will need to improve the current conditions in these centers, invest in infrastructure and support more culturally competent aging services to reflect the diverse identities and needs of our city's older population. Your support continues to be greatly valued and appreciated. Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> SAGE (2014). *Out and Visible: The Experiences and Attitudes of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Older Adults, Ages 45-75*.



## Testimony of Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center

**Gregory J. Morris, Executive Director**  
**Oversight Hearing – Senior Services and Centers in NYCHA**  
**December 5, 2018**

I'd like to thank Chairs Chin and Ampry-Samuel for organizing this important hearing and the opportunity to provide testimony. I'm Greg Morris, President and Executive Director of the Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center, a multi-service non-profit organization physically embedded within two public housing developments in upper Manhattan.

The Isaacs Center provides access to critical programs and social services to public housing residents year-round, through our Senior Center, Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC), and Meals on Wheels program, operating at the Isaacs/Holmes NYCHA Developments in Upper Manhattan. As a provider of services to older adults for nearly 60 years, we have a unique understanding of the growing challenges and changing needs of this population, and recognize that older adults living in public housing experience these challenges much more acutely. Those we serve are more vulnerable to falls/accidents, experience ongoing food and financial insecurity, suffer from higher rates of chronic illnesses, and often have difficulty navigating NYCHA's bureaucratic maze, to report emergency repairs for their apartments. To further compound these challenges, the residents of the Holmes Towers and Isaacs Houses developments are bracing for a long period of construction during the planned building of a 47-story mixed-use residential building on site, an infill project which is part of NYCHA's NextGen plan.

It is no secret that the infrastructure in public housing apartments and the service sites of community based organizations embedded within NYCHA developments, like the Isaacs Center, is crumbling. Medically fragile and even homebound seniors often languish in substandard living conditions including mold, lead, asbestos, and lack of heat, with little recourse. Organizations like ours are forced to make difficult decisions between waiting for the Housing Authority to make critical repairs that directly impact programming and our ability to provide necessary services, and directing dollars toward repairs/maintenance that negatively impact our overall fiscal health and sustainability.

And yet – we continue to serve those most in need. Here's what we know works and helps vulnerable older adults live longer, healthier lives.

1. Quality living conditions that provide older adults with safety, security, and nearby access to critical resources.
2. Tailored social services, including comprehensive case management, that support the financial, health, and social/emotional needs of older adults.
3. Healthy, culturally competent, and timely hot meals for those who are homebound and medically fragile.

Based on these markers, here is what we recommend.

### **Living Conditions for Older Adults in Public Housing**

According to NYCHA's most recent Physical Needs Assessment (PNA), it is estimated that Holmes Towers has over \$36 million in current capital needs. Additionally, according to the same PNA, the neighboring development – Isaacs – has over \$65 million in current capital needs. In exchange for the use of public land for the NYCHA NextGen project in this development, Fetner Properties will provide \$25 million to the general operating budget for NYCHA, with only \$12.5 million going directly to capital improvements within the Holmes development. Given that the sum total of capital need between the Isaacs and Holmes developments exceeds \$100 million, and is also the site for an infill project, **we recommend that the City require additional investments from the private developer, to mitigate the considerable resource gap in this Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC).**

### **Social Services for Older Adults**

An essential component of healthy aging is having access to competent and comprehensive case management services. Through our work, we have learned that quality case management requires the training and expertise of Master of Social Work (MSW) level staff, as they are crucial in establishing effective relationships and interventions early. Good case management requires thorough bio-psycho-social-environmental assessment, administered by skilled workers with more credentials than what the

standard is today. At the Isaacs Center, through our Senior Center/NORC hybrid, we can see case management clients without a waiting list through our Walk-In Clinic Model, and shared caseloads. Last year alone, we provided services to over 800 older adults, connecting them with access to benefits/entitlements, healthcare management, case assistance mental health interventions, and much more. Implementing a similar model to homebound members would be possible but would require additional investment and collaboration between providers and the City. **We recommend a citywide analysis to determine the true cost of providing comprehensive case management, with the intention of using the analysis to fully fund these services in the upcoming fiscal year's budget for DFTA.**

#### **Nutrition and Healthy Meal Delivery to Older Adults**

The Isaacs Center is a pioneer for the Meals on Wheels (MOW) program that provides nutritious meals to over 1,000 homebound seniors every day - many of whom reside in public housing - and is an essential component of assuring food security and health for our most vulnerable. It is significant to note that costs for these programs are not simply for the preparation of the meal itself. MOW programs rely on drivers and deliverers, who are rarely compensated at higher than minimum wage to serve as a lifeline for our homebound elderly. Additional costs include trainings and personnel to conduct recruitment and outreach, ensuring that programs are not underutilized by eligible older adults. **Given the upcoming release of the Department for the Aging's 2019 Home Delivered Meals RFP, we recommend that the inclusion of additional points for those organizations which partner strategically with others to create cost efficiencies in the system, be part of the design.**

We look forward to working with Members of both Committees, as well as leadership at DFTA, to create a more "age friendly" NYCHA, with better access to safe, quality living conditions, comprehensive case management services without waiting lists and thoughtful meal provisions tailored to the unique needs of our aging community members. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.



Selfhelp Community Services, Inc.  
520 Eighth Avenue  
New York, New York 10018  
212.971.7600  
www.selfhelp.net

**Testimony from Selfhelp Community Services  
New York City Council Aging Committee  
Oversight – Senior Services and Centers in NYCHA  
December 5, 2018**

My name is Mayer Waxman and I am the Managing Director of Senior Centers at Selfhelp Community Services.

Thank you to the Aging Committee Chair Margaret Chin and the Public Housing Chair Alicka Ampry-Samuel and the members of the committees for the opportunity to testify on senior services and senior centers in NYCHA.

Selfhelp was founded in 1936 to help those fleeing Nazi Germany maintain their independence and dignity as they struggled to forge new lives in America. Today, Selfhelp has grown into one of the largest and most respected not-for-profit human service agencies in the New York metropolitan area, with 46 program locations throughout Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Nassau County. We provides a broad set of services to more than 20,000 elderly, frail, and vulnerable New Yorkers each year, while remaining the largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors in North America. Selfhelp offers a complete network of community-based home care, social service, and senior housing programs with the overarching goal of helping clients to live with dignity and independence and avoid institutional care.

Our services are extensive and include: specialized programs for Holocaust Survivors; eleven affordable senior housing complexes; four Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs; three intensive case management programs; five senior centers including one of New York City's first Innovative Senior Centers; home health care; client centered technology programs including the Virtual Senior Center; court-appointed guardianship; the Selfhelp Alzheimer's Resource Program (SHARP); and New York Connects, which provides seniors and people with disabilities with the information and support they need to remain living independently in their own homes.

Selfhelp operates five senior centers throughout Queens, including one located in the community center of NYCHA's Latimer Gardens complex in Flushing. There are unique needs within our Latimer Gardens senior center, which serves more than 1,700 people each year. Together, our centers have over 10,000 members and we serve over 200,000 meals each year. We strongly believe in the role that senior centers play in providing high quality nutritious meals, engaging activities, and health and wellness programming. In order to provide valuable services to the residents and to the community, NYCHA's Latimer Gardens has partnered with DFTA, as well as with the Department of Youth and Community



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The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

Development and their not-for-profit contractors to offer senior services and youth programs to the community. This partnership provides immense benefits to the local community.

We are grateful for the Council's long standing and ongoing support for senior centers and for always emphasizing the needs of older adults in policy decisions and budget allocations. In today's testimony, I will focus on our experience operating a senior center in NYCHA's Latimer Gardens complex.

### **Infrastructure Repair and Maintenance**

We are fortunate to have a collaborative relationship with the local NYCHA office. Our senior center staff has regularly scheduled meetings with NYCHA and has found the local office to be responsive and responsible. This partnership provides immense benefits to the community, although it does not always provide support for necessary repairs and upgrades.

When a repair is needed, the senior and youth programs need to report the repair and obtain a ticket number through NYCHA's standard tenant repair structure. The response to such repair requests is often slow. This slow response is troubling for the individuals and families who live in NYCHA housing and is exacerbated when there are hundreds of individuals relying on community centers. Recently, our team needed to file three NYCHA repair tickets for a bathroom stall door that fell off the hinges. Our team needed to file three tickets because the repair system closed the first two tickets without notice or resolution. We understand that the ticketing system is meant to ensure accountability and transparency, but the system needs to be updated so tickets are not closed arbitrarily and repairs are able to be resolved within a timely manner. We also advocate for the local NYCHA offices to be empowered to resolve small issues in a timely manner, such as bathroom stall doors or broken locks. A challenge for our team is maintaining our high standards of service while working within the NYCHA repair and maintenance system and waiting for each ticket to be resolved. We are responsible for the care of the community room during our hours of operation and we continue to be held accountable for issues that are in the NYCHA ticketing system and have not yet been repaired, such as the bathroom stall door or air ventilation.

Latimer Gardens Community Center operated without functional AC, heat, or air ventilation from late August through November 2018. We are deeply grateful for the assistance from Councilmember Koo's office and DFTA to resolve this issue this week. Unfortunately, we had to operate through hot summer days and cold winter weather without adequate temperature control in the senior center. Recently, 20 members of our Chinese opera group and ping-pong group had relocated to another space within the center or stopped coming because of lack of heat. We were concerned that if we continued to have cold rooms we would be unable to meet the needs of the seniors in the Latimer Gardens community. We are grateful that the issue has been resolved and our center can continue to provide high-quality programming with adequate heat.

We suggest that there be some channel created between DFTA, NYCHA, DYCD, and other partner City agencies to more quickly address the communal repair needs within NYCHA buildings.



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### Custodial Care

The community space is shared among the senior center, DYCD's contracted after-school program, and the Residents Association. Given the regular use of this space, we have found that the level of custodial care provided by NYCHA is not sufficient. Recently, the community center was used as a voting site for Election Day so the senior center was closed. The following day, our senior center staff and program maintenance staff were responsible for cleaning the community center so our programs could function properly. We advocate for additional funding to accommodate custodial needs within the community center.

### Security

In New York City, security is an important issue, especially at programs serving vulnerable populations. Our senior center is open to all older community members and we strive to create a safe and welcoming environment for all. Currently, there is very limited access to funding for additional cameras or security guards which would allow our Director to have oversight of who is coming and going. Recently there was an attempted break-in at our office door and within our kitchen. Our team works closely with local police to report issues as they arise. We are grateful for Councilmember Koo's past investment in security in the residential areas of Latimer Gardens and advocate for additional funding to make cameras and security systems available for the community center.

### Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. On behalf of the 20,000 clients we serve, I am grateful for the Council's support on so many important programs.



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The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

## **FOR THE RECORD**

Good Morning

Hello, my name is Emily Bautista I reside at the Throggs Neck houses for seniors since 2016. I knew of the Family Partnership at NYCHA yet I never utilized the services. That all changed when I met Mrs. Pons, she made me feel comfortable, showed concerned regarding the issues that I faced.

Mrs. Pons goes above and beyond and is responsible and devoted to the senior community. Also, a big plus is that Mrs. Pons is bilingual in Spanish as well. Mrs. Pons is always there to listen even if it's just a conversation about the weather.

So, her being there had an impact not only on me but as well as the other seniors when discussing our concerns and issues. For example, my mother came down from Puertorico because of Hurricane Maria and Mrs. Pons assisted me with obtaining services for my mom such as Medicaid, Healthcare, Food stamps etc. You can see her devotion and commitment to the Family Partnership program to ensure it works for the seniors.

## FOR THE RECORD

11/30/18

Family Partnerships has benefitted me with services I wasn't aware of. For example: reduced fare, food stamp for the elderly, access-a-ride, etc.

I'm more knowledgeable now than I was before I retired.

Ernestine Mitchell  
Throggs Neck Houses  
2794 Dewey Avenue #4C  
Bronx, NY 10465  
(917) 554-7495

11/30/18

I am new to area and I feel like Ms. Pons have assisted me with all my pending issues regarding health, benefits. She is very polite and always willing to help. I'm grateful she is here.

Cristina Martinez  
Randall-Balcom Houses  
2705 Schley Avenue, #6J  
Bronx, NY 10465  
(718) 414-0800

Minerva Flores

85 Palmetto St. Apt# 3J

Brooklyn, N.Y.11221

To Whom It May Concern:

I Minerva Flores am writing on behalf of the outstanding service that the Temporary NYCHA Consultant (Barbara Rodriguez) has exemplified during both my husbands and I Home Care Referral Process. Ms. Rodriguez assisted me in filling out all the required forms and faxed over the documents to the appropriate parties involved. My husband and I did not have to go to the doctors to have it filled out. Ms. Rodriguez went out her way and contacted the doctor's office and spoke to the office manager and faxed over the medical portion so that my husband and I would not have to make the trip to the doctor's office. This was great sigh of relief of not having to go back and forth to the doctor. Ms. Rodriguez has been diligent every step of the way even sacrificing her lunch to get things done in a timely manner. I am so grateful to Ms. Rodriguez because my husband and I got approved in less than a month. The service that Ms. Rodriguez provided has changed our lives in such a big way. We now have help from someone that comes in to assist us with grocery shopping, escorting us to the appointments, cleaning our home, washing and helping with the cooking. This is a great help that we needed, and we are able to have because of Ms. Rodriguez. We can't thank Ms. Rodriguez enough for what she has done. She really truly cares for her seniors.

Thank You

Minerva Flores

## FOR THE RECORD

11/30/18

Good Afternoon,

I have been very happy with the services from NYCHA. Natasha is always helpful, coming to check on me and willing to assist with paperwork. When I need help she is always there. Natasha assisted me with contacting Social Security, Chase Bank and IRS when I received a scam phone call from an unknown caller. She had me go to the Chase Bank to change my account number, go to Social Security Office of the Inspector General to place a fraud alert on my account. She also contacted my son to update him on this matter.

Gladys E. Valle  
1350 Manor Avenue, Apt. #12H  
Bronx, NY 10472  
(917) 232-0248

11/30/18

Greetings,

Family Partnerships is helpful because someone looks after you to make sure that you are alive and assist you with things that you need. Mrs. Jackson is a very kind person, she's patient, very helpful easy to talk to, give great advice. She has assisted me with renewing my Medicaid form, assist with reading documents from Health plus and any others that I don't understand. When I was locked out of my apartment she contacted maintenance and the management office to change the doorknob.

Rachel Benjamin  
1350 Manor Avenue, Apt 6G  
Bronx, NY 10472  
(347) 889-0078

11/30/18

To All Concerned,

I think that it is necessary that NYCHA has Family Partnerships so that someone can check on the seniors.

When I had a leak in the tub, the tub faucet handle was broken, the bath tiles were missing and there was a leak under the sink Family Partnership ensured that maintenance followed up on repair request.

Alberto R. Guaman  
Bronx River Houses  
1350 Manor Avenue, Apt #10E  
Bronx, NY 10472  
(646) 346-3169

11/30/18

To Whom It May Concern,

Family Partnerships has been helpful because we need someone to look out for the seniors in the building. Mrs. Jackson has been there for us when we need repairs, paper work and just to talk to.

Natasha has helped complete my annual recertification booklet online. She contacts the super and walks with him to the apt. when my repairs are not completed. She also assists with completing any documents that need to be explained. Many residents would like to keep these services that are offered, if they are taken away there will be no voice for the seniors.

Sarah Claudio  
Bronx River Houses  
1350 Manor Avenue, Apt #6M  
Bronx, NY 10473  
(718) 842-0675

11/30/18

To Whom It May concern,

Mrs. Jackson has been a big help to me. When my old refrigerator started making noises she assisted me in getting a new one from management, she ensured that my repairs were completed, and she even contacted Verizon for me when my channels were not coming through. After my surgery, she followed up with me to make sure I didn't need anything and was alright.

Having her in the building is good not only for me but also to the rest of the seniors here. This service is beneficial to all and we are lucky to have it.

Hortencia Chalaisant  
Bronx River Houses  
1350 Manor Avenue, Apt #6A  
Bronx, NY 10473  
(718) 378-9898



2095 Broadway, Suite 409, New York, NY 10023 • Phone: 212-874-6633 • [www.pssusa.org](http://www.pssusa.org)

### **NYC City Council Testimony – December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

Established in 1962, PSS is a multiservice nonprofit that has built the capacity of older adults, their families and communities to thrive. PSS operates 9 senior centers, 2 senior residences (including the Grandparent Family Apartments), the Circle of Care program helping families care for someone with dementia or advanced age. Of the 9 PSS senior centers throughout the Bronx and Upper Manhattan, 6 are located in NYCHA Centers.

**Needs/issues:** Working within NYCHA centers has been very beneficial in many ways to PSS by allowing us a free space to operate programs and to serve otherwise underserved and underrepresented communities which is at the heart of PSS' original mission. While we are very grateful for the opportunity to have these spaces, there are a number of critical issues which our NYCHA senior centers encounter. The two main factors contributing to these issues are:

- the lack of a formal lease agreement of MOU between NYCHA and DFTA (leaving sponsors like PSS in the middle with different rules for each site), and
- the ineffective communication between NYCHA and the senior centers.

Many of the issues that the NYCHA-based senior centers face involve violations (i.e. FDNY violations re HVAC or fire alarms) that are not the responsibility of the centers. When these occur, it impedes the programs' ability to serve clients because it takes the focus of staff off programming and funds which otherwise would go towards direct service. In addition to the violations, senior centers face regular leaks, repairs that go without correction, lack of heat in the winter or air conditioning in the summer, and no water or power occurring often without notice. One center had the power shut off at least 10 times this summer alone due to working off a generator (which has been an issue for years) while another center located on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor of a NYCHA building constantly has elevator issues.

On top of the "band aids" constantly used for these issues (which only hold up for so long), the inconsistent or total lack of communication is the most frustrating part of these partnerships. What may be covered by NYCHA's management in one development may be very different from another. Even getting a response sometimes is impossible - forcing us to notify TA presidents and elected officials to help encourage some response.

It is important to remember that PSS and other sponsors are intended to be social service providers and the programs and staff are often unequipped financially and do not have the proper knowledge to deal with facilities issues. DFTA and NYCHA need to work through these issues to assure that there is effective communication that will address violations, repairs and other emergency situations proactively. Programs can then focus on what they are intended to do, which is to provide services to underserved older adult New Yorkers and not be consumed with correcting violations and using program funding for repairs.

We thank the Council for your time and attention to this matter and ongoing support of PSS and our clients.

For more information, contact:

Anya Herasme, Senior Director of Older Adult Services  
917-734-4661 or [aherasme@pssusa.org](mailto:aherasme@pssusa.org)  
**Visit [www.pssusa.org](http://www.pssusa.org) for more information**



PRESBYTERIAN SENIOR SERVICES

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deborah Goodland

Address: EVP for Capital

I represent: NYCHA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/05/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michael Higgins Jr

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Brown's Neighborhood Coalition for Justice

Address: 621 Degraw Street Brooklyn, NY 11217

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/5/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mayer Waxman

Address: 4525 Kissena Blvd.

I represent: Selfhelp community services

Address: 520 8th Ave. 5th fl. NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/5/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ~~Brianne Swyn~~ Emily Bautista

Address: 90 Church St / 10th Fl

I represent: Senior Programs / Ukah Busgith

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ukah Busgith

Address: Director, Family Partnerships

I represent: NYCHA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Pristin

Address: EVP for External Affairs

I represent: NYCHA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Katelyn Hosey

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Live On NY

Address: 49 W. 45<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> floor

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12.5.18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Caryn Resnick

Address: Acting Commissioner + Deputy Commissioner,

I represent: External Affairs

Address: DIT A

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[ ]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12.5.18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Karen Taylor

Address: Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of

I represent: Community Services

Address: DIT A

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12-5-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: BEATRICE Haley

Address: 159-14 Harlem River Dr.

I represent: Ukiah Busgith/Senior Programs/Kinshasha

Address: ctr

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/5/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lillian Wu (Hamilton Madison House)

Address: 50 Madison Street, New York, NY, 10038

I represent: Hamilton Madison House - Smith NORC

Address: 50 Madison Street, New York, NY 10038

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/5/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Loris Green

Address: 557 Rockaway Ave

I represent: Ukiah Busgith/Senior Programs/Brownsville

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12-5-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Betty man

Address: 159-26 Harlem River Dr.

I represent: UKah Busgith / Senior Programs

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/5/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexander Ryley

Address: 111 Livingston St., 9th Floor, Bklyn 11207

I represent: The Legal Aid Society, Elder Law Practice

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carolyn Jasper

Address: VP for operations

I represent: NYCHA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/5/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tara Klein

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: United Neighborhood Houses

Address: 45 Broadway

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gregory J. Morris

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Stanley M. Isaacs Neighborhood Center

Address: 415 East 93rd St.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 12/5/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Katisha M. Hallid - Bethea

Address: 305 7th Ave

I represent: SAGE - Senior Housing

Address: \_\_\_\_\_