

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING JOINTLY
WITH COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND
BUILDINGS

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June 29, 2020
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HELD AT: Remote Hearing

B E F O R E: Alicka Ampry-Samuel
CHAIRPERSON

Robert Cornegy, Jr.
CHAIRPERSON

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Diana Ayala
Mark Gjonaj
Ritchie J. Torres
Vanessa L. Gibson
Rafael Salamanca Jr.
Ruben Diaz, Sr.
Jimmy Van Bramer
Donovan J. Richards
Laurie A. Cumbo
Carlos Menchaca
Mark Treyger
Margaret S. Chin
Carlina Rivera
Helen Rosenthal

Bill Perkins
Fernando Cabrera
Barry Grodenchik
Farah N. Louis

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

Danny Barber, President
Andrew Jackson Houses

Latisha McNeill, Holmes Towers Resident

Karen Blondel, Organizer
Fifth Avenue Committee

Maria Forbes
Clay Avenue Tenant Association

Gregory Russ, Chairperson and Chief Executive
Officer
New York City Housing Authority

Vito Mustaciuolo, General Manager
New York City Housing Authority

Daniel Greene, Chief Compliance Officer
New York City Housing Authority

Baaba Halm, Executive Deputy Commissioner of
Operations
Housing Preservation and Development

Sideya Sherman, Executive Vice President for
Community Engagement
New York City Housing Authority

Lyric Thompson, New York Resident

Malika Conner, New York Resident

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2 UNIDENTIFIED: Mr. Lugo, I pass it over
3 to you. Thank you.

4 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon,
5 everyone, and welcome to today's remote New York City
6 Council hearing of the Committee on Public Housing
7 joint with Housing and Buildings. At this time,
8 would all panelists please turn on their video? To
9 minimize disruption, please place electronic devices
10 to vibrate or silent. If you wish to submit
11 testimony, you may do so at
12 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Again, that's
13 testimony@council.nyc.gov. Thank you for your
14 cooperation. We are ready to begin.

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Good
16 afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today's hearing
17 held by the Committee on Public Housing, Chaired by
18 myself and the Committee on Housing and Building,
19 Chaired by Council member Robert Cornegy.
20 Unfortunately, Chair Cornegy has a conflict this
21 afternoon as many members continue to work hard to
22 ensure we pass a budget speaking to the needs of
23 everyday New Yorkers and also speaking to the needs
24 of our most vulnerable. So my colleague, Council
25

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2 member Farah Louis, will be co-chairing in his place.

3 Thank you, Council member Louis.

4 Thank you for joining us today. I am
5 Council member Alicka Ampry-Samuel and I Chair the
6 Committee on Public Housing. We are here today to
7 hold a joint hearing with the Committee on Housing
8 and Buildings to explore the effects of COVID-19 on
9 the residents of New York City and to learn about the
10 steps NYCHA and the Department of Housing
11 Preservation and Development are taking to keep
12 residents safe and to ensure that residential
13 buildings are being properly cleaned, disinfected, and
14 sanitized to reduce the spread of the virus. It's no
15 secret that this pandemic has taken the serious toll
16 on our city and our country. It has affected all of
17 us, but it's also no secret that COVID-19 has
18 disproportionately affected black and brown
19 communities and low income households. Race and
20 income play a big role in who gets infected and who
21 ultimately ends up dying from the virus. New York
22 City neighborhoods with the highest concentration of
23 black and brown residents have been hit with the
24 highest rates of COVID related deaths. This is no
25 less true in public housing. Recent data shows that

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the rate of COVID-19 related deaths among NYCHA residents is nearly double the citywide average. Likewise, COVID related hospitalizations in neighborhoods with NYCHA properties is 30 percent higher than the citywide average. And this is unacceptable. At the onset of the pandemic, and the governor's stay at home orders, there are reports about NYCHA staff coming to buildings without proper personal protective equipment and about how NYCHA was underprepared to handle the pandemic. Although NYCHA has since taken steps to reduce the spread of the virus in these building, I believe more can and should be done. NYCHA should be adopting measures to address long-standing issues that may worsen the effects of the virus. For instance, frequent elevator outages have m-- the residents, especially seniors, people who use wheelchairs, and other higher risk individuals have struggled to properly social distance. As evidenced by the federal agreement and federal monetary in place, elevators were an issue in NYCHA buildings even before the pandemic. And it is even more important than ever that we get them all repaired. Another persistent problem is mold. The presence of mold inside the building is especially

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2 problematic because they can create respiratory
3 problems that could potentially put residents at
4 greater risk if they get infected with the disease
5 that can affect someone's ability to breathe. This
6 committee hopes that, during this hearing, we will
7 learn more about what NYCHA is doing to address these
8 problems, especially as they relate to managing the
9 spread of COVID-19. There was some protocols and
10 guidance implemented and lesson learned over the
11 course of three months. The city has come a long way
12 in managing the spread of coronavirus. It is
13 important that we don't back at all and that we
14 continue to take measures to make sure our numbers
15 stay low. Many infections happen indoors, so it's
16 important for us to remain vigilant about
17 disinfecting our buildings and properly practicing
18 healthy spacing. Because we already know that this
19 virus disproportionately affects communities of
20 color, seniors, and low income individuals, the city
21 must target its response and resources to protect its
22 most vulnerable populations. I would like to thank
23 my fellow committee members present today and I also
24 want to acknowledge the members of the Council, my
25 colleagues who are here. Council member Rivera,

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2 Council member Diaz, Council member Perkins, Council
3 member Van Bramer, Council member Grodenchik, Council
4 member Cabrera, and Council member Richards. And I'm
5 sure there will be more, but these are the names and
6 I have in front of me. And I will acknowledge the
7 others after. So, I will now hear from Chair Farah
8 Louis.

9 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Good afternoon,
10 everyone. And thank you all for coming today. I am
11 Council member Farah Louis, member of the Council
12 Committee on Housing and Buildings, which is Chaired
13 by Council member Robert Cornegy who is currently
14 taking care of his fiduciary responsibilities right
15 now. COVID-19 has unleashed previously unimaginable
16 death and economic destruction across the city.
17 While every New Yorker has been effected, as stated
18 by Chair Ampry-Samuel, this virus has had a
19 disproportionate impact on black and brown
20 communities and low income households. Of the 10 ZIP
21 Codes with the highest death rates, eight are
22 predominately black or Hispanic and reports have
23 suggested that, with more testing data, it would
24 indicate that death rates are even higher. According
25 to the CDC, the most likely mode of COVID-19

transmission is person-to-person spread with
respiratory droplets from unaffected persons are
inhaled by someone else. It is also possible that a
person can be infected by touching the surface with
the virus on it and then touching their mouth, nose,
or ears. Given the density of our city and the
occurrence of close contact and high touch services
in residential buildings, cleaning and maintenance
are critical to keep people safe. The Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene has released guidance on
how to slow the spread of the virus in residential
buildings. Applicable measures include, among
others, promoting social distancing, disinfecting
high touch services, maintaining ventilation systems,
and providing tenants with relevant information.
Today, we hope to learn what the city has done to
encourage buildings to follow the guidance and other
steps taken to protect our tenants. While we have
seen great progress in our fight against COVID-19, we
must stay vigilant to ensure that all New Yorkers,
and especially our most vulnerable, are safe and
healthy. I'm going to send it back now to Chair
Ampry-Samuel.

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2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you,
3 Chair Louis. And we have also been joined by Council
4 member Gjonaj. And now I am going to turn it over to
5 our Committee counsel to go over some procedural
6 items. Ms. Audrey Sun. And I would also like to
7 walk Ms. Audrey Sun to the Public Housing Committee.
8 And I think this is your first hearing with us. So,
9 welcome. I will forward to working with you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you, Chair.
11 I am Audrey Sun, counsel to the City Council's
12 Committees on Housing and Buildings and The Housing.
13 Before we begin, I want to remind everyone that you
14 will be on mute until you are called on to testify,
15 at which point you will be un-muted by the host. I
16 will call on panelists to testify. Please listen for
17 your name to be called, as I will periodically
18 announce the next panelists will be. During the
19 hearing, is Council members would like to ask a
20 question, please use the Zoom raise hand function and
21 I will call on you in order. When called upon, be
22 sure to let us know to whom your questions are
23 directed so that they can be un-muted. We will be
24 limiting Council member questions to three minutes,
25 including responses. We will be hearing from members

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2 of the public first before we hear from the
3 administration. Our first panelist will be Danny
4 Barber, Leticia McNeil, Karen Bondel, and Maria
5 Forbes. I will call each of you when it is your turn
6 to speak. Your testimony will be limited to two
7 minutes. A Sergeant-at-arms will keep a timer and
8 let you know when your time is up. Please remain in
9 the meeting after you conclude your testimony, as we
10 will follow the panel questions from Councilmembers.
11 After the first panel, we will hear testimony from
12 the administration, which will be followed by Council
13 member questions. Finally, we will hear additional
14 public testimony. We will now start with our first
15 panelist, Danny Barber, whose testimony will be read
16 by Chair Ampy-Samuel. After that, we will hear from
17 Leticia McNeil.

18 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you. I
19 am going to read Danny Barber's testimony. He wanted
20 to be with us this afternoon, but he is actually
21 dealing with a tragedy in the Bronx. And so, he
22 asked if I could read his testimony.

23 Hello. My name is Daniel Barber and I am
24 the president of the Andrew Jackson Houses, as well
25 as those citywide Council of Presidents Chairman and

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2 I am submitting this as my testimony for the
3 committee. COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak affected
4 the residents of public housing in a whole different
5 perspective than the rest of the world. With a
6 pandemic already affecting NYCHA and then to have
7 this virus come full steam ahead, it is become
8 dangerous. With NYCHA not responding and no real
9 plan of attack, it became out of control and limited
10 information provided by NYCHA to its residents as a
11 landlord. With the employee who's calling out in
12 fear and very minimal staff working, there was only
13 the bare minimum that was done and made residents
14 even more scared. With the cleaning companies that
15 were hired to clean the touch points and to see them
16 doing their job wrong, spraying the touch points and
17 wiping off when it was supposed to sit for 10 to 15
18 minutes before wiping and have since been corrected.
19 The CCOP will be having a meeting with Alliance
20 Cleaning Company to bring issues directly to the
21 owners. They were very limited resources at the time
22 and information being given and only the lobbies were
23 being posted, but you were telling the people to stay
24 home, which prevented them from seeing notifications
25 posted where it was actually posted. And in some

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2 places, residents weren't notified by NYCHA at all
3 and we found out, in the beginning, this was the
4 service issue and not to know what plans of actions
5 were being taken where you live. I will end with
6 this. NYCHA has since done a little better by
7 assisting with food drop offs and distributing meals
8 along with NYPD. NYCHA has assisted with PPE
9 distribution. And this was all done by volunteer
10 employees. And I save you for all you have done for
11 the residents. I conclude my testimony and have a
12 blessed day. And that will also be submitted for
13 the record.

14 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now here
15 from Latisha McNeill who will be followed by Karen
16 Blondel.

17 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

18 LATISHA MCNEILL: Hi. Good afternoon.
19 Can you hear me?

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

21 LATISHA MCNEILL: Hello? Okay. So, I
22 have a few concerns. My development is Holmes
23 Towers. We are currently in an HP action against
24 NYCHA right now in reference to the elevators, the
25 rodents, the unsanitary conditions, the things of

that nature. And I just want to understand what--
within this HP action-- we filed it before the
pandemic and it doesn't seem like anything is being
really done to rectify it. And also, I want to know
what where going to do about the illegal fireworks in
our development, because now they are becoming unsafe
and there is just like ridiculous for residents and
people just can't get any rest. The elderly is
unnerved. The veterans are going through PTSD. It's
just really getting ridiculous. So, those are my
concerns with things that are going on in my
development right now. I don't really know how
much-- do I still have time left? I can't really
see.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Yes. 30 seconds.

LATISHA MCNEILL: Oh, okay. Yeah. So I
just really want to know. We are going to file a
contempt against motion right now and we just want to
know like what is NYCHA going to do to try to rectify
these issues? Because we just feel like NYCHA is not
trying to make any effort to do anything to try to
fix-- you know, just trying to move forward with,
you know, rectifying any of the issues that we have

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brought up in our HP action. It's just excuse after
excuse.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

LATISHA MCNEILL: Okay. Thank you.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear
from Karen Blondel followed by Maria Forbes.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

KAREN BLONDEL: Hi, everybody. This is
Karen Blondel. I work with the Fifth Avenue
Committee as an organizer for public housing
residents. I also live in Redhook Houses and I want
to say that back in March, I felt pretty much
abandoned, me and the residents of public housing
when this pause sent us home from work and told us to
sit down in public housing. I didn't see any signage
other than rent sign inch up in the hallway. A
different way is to pay the rent. Even to this day,
there is not enough signage around public housing,
especially in Redhook where the whole campus is a
construction staging site. There is more than enough
fencing for you guys to put up signs similar to why
the Parks Department uses, which is an actual six
feet sign show people what six feet is. That's
number one. Number two, and the buildings may be

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2 having a reminder, that a family should only ride an
3 elevator with their own family instead of just having
4 people crowding in these elevators. I did take the
5 COVID tracer exam-- excuse me. Course with John
6 Hopkins and I do have civil engineering background
7 and leads me to believe that a lot of this cross-
8 contamination will be going on in your bigger
9 buildings, NYCHA, where you have the issue of the
10 ventilation systems that were never cleaned from the
11 beginning of the building's creation. It might be
12 even worse now if you clean it being because you
13 might actually be spreading Corona, but I am not that
14 well versed with that. I also want to say that when
15 the vendors first started cleaning, I was observing
16 them. They were wiping out doors, which are not
17 common areas. The areas that we told them were
18 common weren't getting wiped and they weren't
19 spraying enough. If you are going to wait for 10
20 minutes for something to dry, then you have to
21 saturate it. The way that they are opening up the
22 nozzle, it is a stream spray instead of a spray
23 spray, so they're just dreaming one little--

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time's expired.

25

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2 KAREN BLONDEL: portion of the
3 bannister. I hope I can come back to you guys
4 because I have more.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We will now hear
6 from Maria Forbes followed by Council member
7 questions.

8 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

9 MARIA FORBES: Hello. Did you hear me
10 at all?

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: [inaudible
12 00:18:33]

13 MARIA FORBES: Did you hear me at all?
14 Hello?

15 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: We didn't hear the
16 beginning part of your testimony, Maria. Sergeant,
17 can you please reset the clock and you can--

18 MARIA FORBES: Yes. My name--

19 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: begin again.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

21 MARIA FORBES: Maria Forbes from
22 Claremont Consolidated. I represent Clay Avenue
23 Tenant Association. 152 units. However, I picked up
24 a total of 490 units picking up the senior citizens
25 in which I started out feeding first. No one

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assisted me from NYCHA in obtaining the-- and I
didn't need the emergency contact per say. I felt
that it was NYCHA's responsibility to gather that
information to keep track of emergency contact
because seniors would probably expire, in which they
did in their apartments and I feel humiliated that
NYCHA did not address that. My second thing was that
the workers who were paid and who did stay on did not
address their janitorial issues fully to what they
were being paid to do. The employees need to be
tested or temperature as they come into work because
they didn't want to go into tenants apartments, but
now you are sending them into tenant's apartments.
But we don't know if they've had a temperature check.
Then I asked NYCHA to pay residents to do a safety
check, do intercoms survey, as well as the front door
were totally unlocked. Now, we're under mandatory
masking. You use the rioting that's going on our
[inaudible 00:20:13]. My other thing concerning the
intercoms, the doors, and the locks, there's not a
safety issue here and the cleaning was not done
properly. Two [inaudible 00:20:25] who were
distributing food seven days a week. I asked those
cleaner to come in here to wipe down stuff. They

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2 told me I had to write a whole big email. But
3 nobody-- nobody from the Chairman's office to the
4 General Manager's office to nobody's office has
5 responded to any of my emails. And I am very, very--
6 just destroyed.

7 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

8 MARIA FORBES: Go ahead.

9 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
10 now open for questions from Chairs Ampry-Samuel and
11 Louis and if any other Council members have questions
12 for this panel, please use the Zoom raise hand
13 function and I will call on you in turn. Chair
14 Ampry-Samuel?

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Hi. So this
16 question is for any of the panelists, but in
17 particular, Ms. Blondel. Dave you ever complain
18 about the vendor and what they were not doing and, if
19 so, what was the response? Because I know that there
20 was some type of complaint number or email address.

21 MARIA FORBES: I'm sorry. I don't see
22 this piece because I am operating from my phone to
23 raise my hand. When I did make mention to NYCHA
24 regarding that, Alicka, they told me that I need to
25 go on the NYCHA website to find some complaint form

as if I was doing an investigation. An IG investigation. They said look for this form. I didn't know nothing about the form. Never heard anything about a form in complaining about a contractor. So, I don't know where to obtain the form to make a formal complaint for a legitimate legal complaint against the contractor. And I don't have this in raising thing. I'm sorry. I can't. I'm on the phone.

CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

KAREN BLONDEL: So, this is Karen. So, the vendors, the original lenders who came through, they did share with me and document which described the areas that they were supposed to clean, although they weren't cleaning them. They are original vendors also-- I was taking a walk in the park behind my buildings and I saw them putting water-- using a funnel into a ready to use this in fact a bottle. So that made me mad enough to contact the federal monitor and the Chair, Greg Russ. They did explained to me that there were other issues with the vendors not going to each building three times a week. Since that time, looks like the vendor has changed. Not the vendor, but its operation. And I

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2 am still on the first floor. I am still looking and
3 it has improved a lot. It has improved very, very
4 much. The only thing I could say is them not
5 really-- like a banister is a cylinder or round in
6 shape, so, if it is saturated and waited 10 minutes
7 to wipe, then you've got to use a little more spray.
8 You cannot just use one stream of spray and think
9 that that is going to cover the whole circumference
10 of the banisters. Other than that, they have done
11 better. I'm not sure if I actually see that three
12 times a week, to be honest. Back when they come,
13 they are being more aggressive in doing like the
14 garbage handles for the incinerators or the garbage
15 shoots and the other areas that are high touch.

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.
17 That's it for me, Ms. Sun.

18 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Chair Louis?

19 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: I have a real quick
20 question for Karen. You [inaudible 00:24:04] and
21 that it may be exacerbated at a certain point. Can
22 you elaborate more? Because your timing cut off.
23 Thank you. Karen, you are on mute.

24 KAREN BLONDEL: Sorry about that. So,
25 you know, you may hear them hinting at why they don't

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2 want to open up restaurants and things like that.

3 From the beginning of the COVID event, they've been

4 talking about how HVAC systems can exasperate a

5 situation like COVID. So, what I'm saying is that

6 like a lot of buildings-- not in Redhook, but the

7 taller buildings like in Harlem, they have vents in

8 their bathrooms as opposed to bathroom windows and so

9 those are some of the areas you would look for. Even

10 if it's one family. If it's a family of three or

11 four people in the house and someone is sick and

12 you're using air conditioning, then you're actually

13 circulating air in that same space and it can be

14 harmful to the other people in the unit. So, I was

15 bringing up the HVAC because we know that there's

16 where mold is at which is another exasperate-- or

17 precondition to having a hard time with COVID-19 is

18 that you already have problems with respiratory

19 breathing and things like that. So, I was bringing

20 those issues up.

21 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you for that,

22 Karen. I'm going to yield back to Chair Ampry-

23 Samuel.

24

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Hi, Audrey.

3 I'm done with my questions, so we can open it up to
4 Committee members.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Well, again, if any
6 of the committee members have questions for this
7 panel, please use the Zoom raise hand function. So
8 far, it appears that none of the other Council
9 members have questions for this panel, so we will
10 move on to testimony from the administration. Today,
11 we will be hearing testimony from Gregory Ross, Chair
12 of the New York City Housing Authority. Vito
13 Mustaciuolo, General Manager and Chief Operations
14 Officer, and Daniel Greene, Chief Compliance Officer,
15 will be available for questions. Baaba Halm,
16 Executive Deputy Commissioner of Operations at the
17 Department of Housing Preservation and Development,
18 will also be available for questions. I will now
19 administer the oath to members of the administration
20 who will be testifying and answering questions. I
21 will call each of you individually to ensure your
22 affirmation is recorded. Are the members of the
23 administration unmuted? Great. Please raise your
24 right hands. Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
25 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this

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2 committee and to respond honestly to Council member
3 questions? Chair Russ?

4 GREGORY RUSS: Aye.

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Vito Mustaciuolo?

6 VITO MUSTACIUOLO: I do.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Daniel Greene?

8 Baaba Halm?

9 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: I

10 do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Chair

12 Russ, you may begin your testimony when you are
13 ready.

14 GREGORY RUSS: I just want to say that
15 I am mixed. Sing a lot of echo and feedback, so I am
16 not sure where that is coming from. It is really
17 been hard to live. Chairs Alicka Ampry-Samuel and
18 Robert Cornegy, members of the Committee on Housing
19 and Buildings and other distinguished members of the
20 city Council, NYCHA residents, and members of the
21 public, good afternoon. My name is Greg Russ. I am
22 chair and CEO enjoyed virtually via general manager
23 Vito Mustaciuolo, Chief Compliance Officer Daniel
24 Greene, and also Vice President for Community
25 Engagement and Partnerships, Cynthia Sherman. Thank

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you for the opportunity to discuss NYCHA's efforts
for the health and safety of our residents. First, I
would like to take a moment to acknowledge all the
hard-working staff who are serving the residents
during this crisis and the teams that are fixing the
hot water and the elevators and the caretakers that
are keeping the buildings clean and the staff behind
the scenes who are reaching out to residents,
procuring and distributing essential supplies and
materials and also processing rent reductions. I
would also like to thank the resident leadership in
community-based partners who are helping to
distribute food and face coverings and providing
other kinds of comfort to the community. This is
truly a challenging time in our history and we are
all engaged in the critically important work of
taking care of our community. The virus has affected
all of us. It has impacted our way of life, brought
into sharp relief issues and inequities across the
globe, especially those related to health and
economics. As a nation in the city, here at NYCHA,
we have been presented with an extraordinary
challenge that we must overcome. The COVID-19 crisis
underscores the importance of timely and accurate

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communication. We began in the very start of this to
make sure that residents understand what we were up
against. We began communicating early, even before
we fully understood the impacts of the virus. We
worked with the city's Department of Health to inform
residents and employees of safety and health
practices that they should follow as they were known
at the time. As of June 25th, NYCHA has delivered
2.3 million COVID related communications via phone
calls, robo calls, emails to residents and resident
leaders, section 8 residents, employees, elected
officials and advocates. We have posted 100 times on
social media between March 1st and [inaudible
00:30:48]. We have a dedicated page on our website
to COVID resources and we have posted important
information and updates on the NYCHA journal, our
digital newspaper for residents. COVID safety
posters were placed in all 2200 buildings in five
languages and other informational notices are
distributed in up to 13 other languages. The staff
from our community engagement partnership department
has made over 100,000 phone calls, resulting in
60,000 personal conversations of our most valuable
residents, including seniors, making sure that they

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2 understand how they can stay safe, determine whether
3 they have any special needs, and connect them to the
4 resources from our partners. We have recently
5 partnered with New York Cares volunteer organization
6 to provide a senior's buddy who will make routine
7 calls to those requesting ongoing checks by phone.
8 We're sending a newsletter to more than 230 tenant
9 association leaders three to five days a week
10 informing them about COVID-19 and key NYCHA and city
11 resources. We speak with the Chair of the Citywide
12 Council Presidents almost daily and we speak with
13 other resident leaders two to three times a week,
14 representing approximately 9500 calls since the start
15 of the pandemic. We provide elected officials with
16 regular updates. We have had 29 external meetings to
17 brief elected officials and other community partners.
18 We've cohosted 11 tele town halls and provided
19 updates and guidance to thousands of participants.
20 We will continue to keep all of our stakeholders,
21 including residents, informed as the guidance from
22 experts like CDC and New York City health department
23 evolves. We began taking precautions early and we
24 hired fenders and developed schedules to sanitize
25 buildings. We started this process on March 11 and

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March 13th for the senior and family services,
sanitizing senior buildings five times a week and
family buildings three times a week with a focus on
high touch high-traffic areas such as lobbies, common
area doors, mailboxes, handles, stairway doors,
handrails, elevator panels, trash chutes, and other
common touch points. The disinfectant products that
the vendors he uses are listed on EPA's list of
disinfectants for use against COVID. Our staff from
the compliance and quality assurance, environmental
health and safety have worked to monitor the work
that the vendors are doing in the field. They have
conducted, to date, 4100 on site field inspections,
4700 remote surveys of our own staff to determine if
the vendors reported were there. That's nearly 300
developments. Resident complaints can be submitted
through our website by calling the customer contact
center and were also [inaudible 00:33:52]. In
preparing and working with the vendors, we have made
183 section three hires for both the disinfectant
work and the ancillary project, the installation of
air conditioners. And that is about 150 NYCHA
residents that [inaudible 00:34:09]. To supplement
the caretakers staff, we have hired of 1000 per diem

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[inaudible 00:34:19]. More than half of those are
NYCHA residents. Additionally, we are providing
protective covering, face coverings, to all employees
that work at our development and employees that may
come in contact with others during the course of
their working. As the guidance from CDC and health
department became more stringent, we adapted our
policies on face coverings [inaudible 00:34:36]. We
are also looking for ways to relieve the financial
burden for households that are impacted by COVID and
experience a loss of income. NYCHA suspended
resident evictions very, very early along with the
city's declaration as a state of emergency and
others. Also, as part of the HUDS CARES Act. In
addition, we closed our hearing offices and adjourned
all cases before housing court. We simplified the
rent hardship policy using waivers permitted by the
Department of Housing and Urban Development. In a
few weeks, we set up an amended process that,
admittedly, was burdensome, but now, with just a few
questions and clicks, you can file for a rent
adjustment. There is no waiting period. Residents
can self-certify their loss of income and, since
NYCHA rent is always 30 percent of income, if the

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income is zero, the rent is zero. Since March 12th,
we have received over 15,000 rent hardship requests
and processed the bulk of those. We are working with
city agencies and community partners to connect
residents to food, medication, and essential health
and social services. We are working to enroll
eligible residents in Get Food NYC. We have also
instituted bulk food deliveries at many of our senior
buildings and have hired residents to assist in this
process. To date more than 5 million meals have been
delivered to over 80,000 NYCHA households since mid-
April. NYCHA has also worked with a variety of
partners including food banks for New York City,
[inaudible 00:36:09] and City Harvest and others to
organize popup food distributions. We are promoting
the opportunity for grab and go meals at the 400
schools citywide and, especially, we would like to
thank all the partners and members of Council for
your assistance with these efforts and to the tenant
associations who really helped with this, as well.
For the summer, to help seniors stay cool, the Mayor
committed more than 6 million dollars and NYCHA
committed 10 million to provide air conditioners to
22,000 households. The city has also provided free

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tablets and internet service to 10,000 NYCHA seniors
to help them stay connected. During this
extraordinary experience, we have gained some lessons
learned that will strengthen our work going forward.
For instance, we want to incorporate some of the
practices applied during the pandemic such as
enhanced cleaning, a cleaning schedule which is
posted, and related quality assurance inspections
into our regular maintenance programs. We also want
to increase our level of communication with residents
and external partners which makes for a productive
relationship. And I would also say that we intend to
vigorously pursue the extraordinary amounts of
capital that are needed for the NYCHA buildings, its
properties, its units, its grounds, the commons
spaces. If we do not modernize, if we do not invest
the billions in dollars in capital, then we will not
be doing justice to the families that live there now.
We will vigorously pursue that investment and intend,
we hope, in the next few months to roll out plans on
how we think we can raise the kind of capital that is
needed to protect our families and stabilize the
properties. The virus has changed all our lives, but
it missed the challenges of this changing situation

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and we remain guided by the top priority which is health and safety and improving the quality of life for residents. On behalf of my colleagues, I'd like to thank the Council, the Mayor, the Governor, for their support which is enabling us to address the pandemic and helping us to transform the house. In addition to supporting the fundamentals of our work as a landlord, our partnership is providing residents with access to testing and other vital resources. Most of all, I want to thank the many resident leaders who put themselves on the front line of this pandemic. They organized food drives, protective gear distribution, and conducted their own wellness checks. Time and again, NYCHA residents show the world that they are a strong and resilient community. Even though this is a time of uncertainty, the one thing we do know is that we must support each other and work together to help our fellow New Yorkers. Thank you. We are happy to answer any questions you may have and I look forward to continued collaboration in service to this great city.

COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. Before we move to Council member questions, I will have to re-administer the oath to Daniel Greene as we were

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2 experiencing some technical difficulties earlier. I
3 will also administer the oath to an additional member
4 of the administration, Sideya Sherman, Executive Vice
5 President for community engagement and partnerships
6 at NYCHA. Please raise your right hands. Do you
7 affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth, and
8 nothing but the truth before this committee and to
9 respond honestly to Council member questions?

10 DANIEL GREENE: I do.

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Daniel Greene?

12 DANIEL GREENE: I do.

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sideya Sherman?

14 EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT SHERMAN: I
15 do.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
17 now open for questions from Chairs Ampry-Samuel
18 followed by Chair Louis.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So, I just
20 wanted to let everyone know, too, to the public and
21 the residents, that we did attempt to have this
22 hearing a little over a month ago. We requested a
23 hearing with NYCHA related to COVID cleaning and we
24 were not able to have it because we were in the
25 middle of the pandemic and it wasn't prioritized on

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the schedule in the middle of the budget and the
actual pandemic and [inaudible 00:40:24] from the
health organizations and agencies like Health and
Hospitals and Department of Health. And so, I just
wanted to let everyone know that we were attempting
to have this hearing. And so, now that we are here,
I want to make sure that we get an understanding of
what happened in the beginning and what has happened
during the course of this time and we keep hearing
people talk about the possibility of a next wave of--
the possibility of a second wave and so we want to
also make sure that NYCHA and the city, overall, is
prepared and we will talk about lessons learned. So
I just wanted to let everybody know that we weren't
neglecting anyone at all. You all were at the front
of our minds and we really tried. So, with that
being said, how has COVID-19 impacted NYCHA's
building operations? We have heard from the
residents talk about when they went to the management
offices, there would be skeletal staff and there were
so many workers who were not able to work. So can
you talk a little bit about how COVID-19 impacted
your building operations?

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2 GREGORY RUSS: So, we did curtail
3 certain activities-- Let me-- I'm not sure what is
4 going on with the feedback.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: The background
6 was under control before.

7 GREGORY RUSS: Let me try again. I
8 don't have anything on. I'm sorry. I'm not sure
9 what the problem is. So--

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: That's going
11 to kill me. That's going to kill me.

12 GREGORY RUSS: All right. Hold one.

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Try lowering the volume
14 and speaking closer to the device.

15 GREGORY RUSS: Is that any better? I'm
16 using the computer audio, but I don't know where the
17 feedback is coming from. Any rate, so we did--
18 Geez. Council member, I'm sorry.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: You know what?
20 I can move onto another question.

21 GREGORY RUSS: Yeah. I don't know
22 where that is coming from and maybe if I try to call
23 in on my phone it might work better, but-- if you
24 give me a minute or two I can try to call in.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [inaudible
3 00:43:54] the volume thing. I heard the volume turn
4 down as you were talking the last time. I'm not sure
5 who turned down the volume, but there was a clear
6 difference.

7 VITO MUSTACIUOLO: Well, while the Chair is
8 trying to adjust his audio, if you'd like, I can
9 start. So, as the Chair was indicating, we adjusted
10 our work practices based on the best information that
11 we were receiving from the health experts of both at
12 the national level as well as the state and local
13 levels. So it is true that we did start to curtail
14 certain repair work in apartments for the safety of
15 both our staff, but more importantly for our
16 residents. And while there was an impact during the
17 height of the pandemic affecting our workforce. It's
18 important to note that at no time were we not
19 staffing each of our developments with staff both at
20 the management offices, as well as staff to perform
21 maintenance repairs for immediately hazardous
22 conditions as well as caretakers to assist with trash
23 removal and cleaning. And as the Chair indicated in
24 his testimony, very early on in the pandemic, we
25 moved quickly to bring on contractors to provide the

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2 disinfecting of the high touch point areas. So, like
3 every owner in the city and, perhaps, every owner in
4 the country, we were impacted by COVID-19. There's
5 no question about it. We did have to adjust. We
6 kept, again, on top of the guidance that was being
7 issued on a daily basis and we adjusted our work
8 practices based on the guidance that was issued.

9 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you. I
10 see that the Chair is now with Mr. Greene with a mask
11 on. So, we might want to unmute Mr. Greene. Unmute
12 his mic. There we go.

13 GREGORY RUSS: Okay. Is that better?

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Much better.

15 GREGORY RUSS: Okay. I just thought
16 I'd do some endorsement of Vito's answer, but I would
17 say that, if there's a few things that happened in
18 the beginning, we did pull back from our daily work
19 routine, no question. We also contracted for the
20 sanitizing that we talked about in the testimony and,
21 like everyone else at the very beginning, it took us
22 a while to get into the supply chain to begin to get
23 the kind of gear and protective material that we
24 needed for our employees. I want to say that we were
25 able to successfully do the five and three cleaning

schedule that there was significant quality assurance. We just did not put these vendors out into the properties on their own. When we brought to them the problems that we were seeing and also, at times, the problems that the residents flagged for us, we communicated directly to the vendor. In fact, at times, the vendor changed crews or changed supervision based on the feedback that we provided to them. And like any large undertaking, it took some time to get its legs, but we are confident that we sampled, investigated, checked, made sure that the-- everything down to the labels on the bottles and every, as Karen mentioned in her testimony, that they began to clean the way that they had to clean in order to ensure the proper disinfectant. So, that's one thing. The other thing we had to do is we had to change the way we operated the site offices. We weren't going to do face to face. We weren't going to be able to do that and we didn't. We suspended in unit work except for certain emergency and certain lead and mold activities. We had to do that because it was just simply impossible to have that kind of exchange during the peak of the virus. So, yes, there were impacts. There were impacts on the

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2 culture of NYCHA to its root, both at the site level
3 and the fact that we have over 2000 people
4 telecommuting. So it was pretty significant, like I
5 would think many others in this city have
6 experienced, as well.

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: With that
8 being said and-- it was reported on the news that
9 there was an increase in sick calls because NYCHA's
10 frontline staff between April 5th and April 18th pay
11 period. Can you describe the type of PPE that was
12 used by NYCHA staff and how is NYCHA monitoring
13 what's happening with the staff levels now and also--
14 it ties in-- I also has a question about at this
15 point, is NYCHA at all able to receive or share data
16 with DOHMH related to COVID-19 positive tests? If
17 not your residents, but your staff [inaudible
18 00:50:07]. We're talking about the staffers right
19 now and building operations. Can you speak a little
20 to the type of information that you get from the city
21 as [inaudible 00:50:17]--

22 GREGORY RUSS: [interposing] Sure.
23 Let me go back to the first question about attendance
24 because-- and then I may ask Vito to step in, as
25 well. I would say that we did see a decline in

attendance in the beginning weeks. We did experience a period where we thought we had fewer people. I wouldn't know without going back and looking at the specific week that you cited, in fact, of what our percentages are, but we could provide those. I would say that, over time, those percentages got steady and increased and actually increased to relatively acceptable levels for us given that folks were able to take leave and do other things on a liberal basis if they had a COVID impact in their family. The other thing I would say is that the health information for our employees is their information. So, if they self-identify to us or they go home with what is what we might think is symptoms. They're not required to share that information on the backside. We do have some folks who have shared it with us and we record it and keep track of it. So we can tell you the number of individuals who shared with us that they tested positive. We can also estimate some suspected and we did track that information when it was shared with us. But they're not compelled to tell us. They could have gone home for other reasons. They could've gone home for something else and gotten sick at home and that may not be something

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2 we would know. With respect to the residents, HUD
3 has very strict federal privacy guidelines on
4 information that we can share and we did talk to HUD
5 in the month of May about a waiver. They did present
6 a long list of requirements before they would either
7 consider a waiver and they pointed out to us that
8 this is really the Federal Privacy Act which is a
9 little bit outside their domain. Sharing information
10 has very, very specific requirements and we have a
11 laundry list of those that we can provide to you and
12 we have been considering, after this exchange with
13 HUD, coming up maybe with an opt-in option. So if
14 you want your information shared to the extent we're
15 allowed to do so, because it's both the affirmed
16 consent as well as the type of information that is
17 controlled by the Federal Privacy Act. So, we came
18 out of that exchange with HUD at the end of May and,
19 frankly, in order to share data, we would have to
20 come up with the appropriate data-sharing agreement
21 that meet the requirements that HUD laid out to us.
22 So, in terms of giving information to others, that's
23 really up to the individual and, at the present time,
24 we are limited in our ability to even aggregate or
25 know about. Many folks said, well, we think so and

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2 so passed because of COVID, but we would not
3 necessarily know that that was the reason that that
4 person did not survive. That it was COVID related.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Just as a
6 quick-- what was the purpose of the waiver to HUD?
7 Can you just explain what you were--

8 GREGORY RUSS: Well, we did think it
9 would be value-- Yes. We did think it would be
10 valuable to see if there's some information we could
11 share because we're in an unprecedented condition.
12 And we thought it would be useful to see if we could
13 understand the limits of the Federal Privacy Act and
14 its implications for us. And understand if there
15 were ways to this that would pass muster from our
16 funder. We came out of that with a lot of
17 information, but it's clear that it's a lot more
18 complicated than we even envision. So, we did think
19 sharing the data would be helpful and we may still
20 pursue something in the long run where residents are
21 comfortable doing that and they would sign a release
22 for certain things. But we're not there yet.

23 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And when you
24 mentioned that you-- and I wrote it down. We track
25 this information in regards to your employees that

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2 self-reported, what was the purpose of you tracking
3 the information of the employees of NYCHA that tested
4 positive and what did you do with that information or
5 how did it help you having that information--

6 GREGORY RUSS: Sure.

7 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: and tracking?

8 GREGORY RUSS: If someone self-
9 reported, we would then take steps depending on where
10 that person worked to do the kind of cleaning
11 protocols that, at the time, were considered
12 essential for the workspace. So we would use it for
13 that. And it also allowed us to think about
14 everything from leave for that person to impact on
15 other employees and that kind of thing. I don't know
16 if the general manager wanted to add anything beyond
17 that, if you would.

18 VITO MUSTACIUOLO: Sure. Thank you, Chair.
19 I just want to be clear that we were not just
20 tracking our staff with respect to COVID positive.
21 The numbers that the Chair is referring to, we were
22 tracking staff that were absent due to COVID related
23 instances. So, for instance, if they were exposed to
24 someone with COVID or they felt that they were
25 experiencing symptoms. Those are the types of

absenteeism that we were tracking. And like every other employer in the city, and then, again, in the country, we had staff that were, unfortunately-- that had to take off because of unrelated to the exposure to COVID, but due to COVID related issues such as their children were home from school. A majority of our caretakers are single parents and a lot of them needed to take care of their children and family members. We did have contingency plans in place. If we started to see absenteeism at high rates and, fortunately, we did not get to the point where we had to implement those emergency contingency plans. And, as we saw staffing reductions at a particular development, we would move staff from one location to another, sometimes within the borrower and sometimes citywide. So, we did make a lot of adjustments. We did a lot of tracking and, again, I just want to be clear that the tracking was not just for employees who were COVID positive, but were absent due to a COVID related incident.

CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. That's very helpful. So, since-- and as we're talking about what's happening now-- Since the N95 or the N100 masks are now widely available, can you talk

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2 about NYCHA's plan to provide face coverings to every
3 single staff member in the NYCHA developments, as
4 well as every single resident in the NYCHA
5 developments.

6 GREGORY RUSS: Well, with respect to
7 employees, both of those masks are used for very
8 specific reasons in NYCHA and both of those masks
9 tend to be more for medical reasons. We do use the
10 N100s to perform certain lead and mold work and we
11 also have been providing other kinds of masks in
12 addition to that. As evidenced in the way that
13 guidance has changed, the level of protection
14 provided by both masks is very specific, as I
15 mentioned, either to the kind of work I noted or to
16 medical use. So we have no distributed over 100,000
17 face masks to essential staff and we'll continue to
18 provide personal protective gear as we receive it.
19 We have another 450,000 masks in stock that came in
20 at the end of April and we're also looking into other
21 kinds of gear as that becomes available in the case
22 that we [inaudible 00:59:12]. NYCHA has collaborated
23 and cooperated with those who are either making
24 contributions to residents. We work with the city to
25 distribute an initial allotment of masks and we would

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2 continue to do so if there are other that want to
3 make masks available to our families.

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. So,
5 before I kick it off to my colleagues-- because I
6 know a lot of them are in B&T and I want to be
7 respectful of their time, as well. Something so
8 important. So, does every single-- And I know you
9 mentioned the different types of masks. So, can we
10 say that every single NYCHA employee received a mask,
11 any kind of masks--

12 GREGORY RUSS: That they need.

13 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: [inaudible
14 01:00:02]

15 GREGORY RUSS: Yes. Now, I'll say
16 something else that's very important, we also do a
17 quality assurance check on both the wearing of masks
18 and the social distancing. So we sample a random
19 sample of properties each day with the quality
20 assurance department to check for both of those.
21 Now, I can't represent to you, Councilman, that every
22 person who gets a mask is going to have it on 100
23 percent of the time. That is the instruction when
24 they are around folks. If I am cleaning in a common
25 area or an elevator, I should put the darn thing on.

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2 But we do quality assurance both on distancing for
3 employee work and also related to how the employees
4 are functioning at the site. So, we do have access
5 to the gear. It is in the stock rooms now. I think
6 Vito made a significant change early on. Originally,
7 much of this material-- things like hand sanitizer,
8 for example, was ordered at the property level and we
9 decided to centralize that and make sure that we
10 could track it more effectively. So, the materials
11 are there and anyone who needs it or wants or needs
12 that for their work can gather.

13 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Thank
14 you. I do have a lot more questions. Obviously.

15 GREGORY RUSS: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: I'm going to
17 stop there. I also want to recognize Council member
18 Helen Rosenthal joined us. And I know she, too, has
19 to jump off to B&T. So, I'm going to now kick it off
20 to Chair Farah Louis for questions of NYCHA.

21 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: All right. I'm
22 going to be quick because I know folks have to leave.
23 First question. I wanted to know how can the city
24 and the property owners monitor the cleaning and
25 disinfecting of high touch areas and common spaces

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2 better? We heard from the advocates today and some
3 of their concerns were that it wasn't effective. So,
4 what can your agencies do to ensure that we could do
5 this more effectively?

6 GREGORY RUSS: Well, we did stand up a
7 very vigorous quality control program. I am going to
8 ask Dan Greene, is director of compliance, just to
9 give you-- whose computer I am using because of the
10 feedback-- to give you a quick summary of what we
11 did to confirm and address the kinds of things that
12 go to your reference.

13 DANIEL GREENE: Hi. Good afternoon. My
14 name is Dan Greene. I'm NYCHA's chief compliance
15 officer. So, immediately-- almost immediately when
16 we started the disinfection program, the Chair and
17 nine GM expressed to the need for the compliance
18 department, the quality assurance department, and the
19 environmental health and safety department to do a
20 rigorous oversight program of these vendors. And
21 what we do is a three prong approach. First is field
22 inspections. So we have over 20 field inspectors and
23 it's very-- well, it's really around 20 that we have
24 done to do onsite inspections to actually follow
25 behind the vendor to make sure that they are spraying

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and disinfecting the appropriate areas, that they are waiting the 10 minutes which we heard about on this call, that they are using clean towels to do their wipe down process, that they are using labeled bottles and appropriate equipment, that there is no funny business going on like putting water in bottles, like Ms. Blondel had mentioned. And every day we make sure that we get that data and we review it. And, if there are deficiencies that our field team identifies, we immediately go to the vendor and require them to take corrective action. That could include terminating staff, issuing directives to staff, changing protocols. And, through that process, I think we have seen-- and I think folks have spoke to it. An improvement over the course of time from March to where we are today. And I think a lot of that improvement happened in April and May. Secondly, we can't go to every development every day. We have a huge system. We have 2000 buildings. So, compliance department instituted a remote survey every single day to contact development senior staff. Because the vendor, under NYCHA protocols, have to check in with the development every day to make sure that they are there. And the people who know most

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about if the vendor is doing well or not doing well
is the staff on the ground. Superintendent, property
manager, the Assistant property manager, the
supervisor, caretakers. They are going to see what
is happening on the ground. They are going to know
if the supervisor of the vendor is doing a good job.
And we get that feedback on a daily basis. And, like
the field inspections, we take feedback on a daily
basis. And, like the field inspections, we take that
information and we go to the vendor and say, this is
what we are hearing is happening at X development
every single day. And that process has led to a lot
of improvement and the continuous chain of feedback
that has improved this operation. The third line of
defense that we really stress is our residence. I
spoke to Ms. Blondel about the issues that she spoke
about today. And she raised legitimate issues that
needed to be addressed. Absolutely. And through our
complaint forum, which has been operable for about a
year, but it's starting to get a little bit more
recognition now. We are able to take complaints in
two ways. Yes, you can file a complaint online. You
can go on NYCHA's website under "submit a concern".
It's an easy forum. It takes just a few minutes. We

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get COVID complaints. I review all the COVID
complaints personally every single day to see what is
coming in about the vendors, what is coming in about
other COVID concerns. But you can also-- just to
give a plug to our forum, you can file complaints
about any issue. And we are going to look into it
through the appropriate department to make sure the
issue gets followed up and addressed, if necessary.
You can also call the CCC, choose menu option number
seven. We have representatives that are available
Monday through Friday 9 to 5 who can help you,
basically, get that same information that you would
have put into the complaint. And that also gets put
into the portal, reviewed, and then assigned to the
appropriate team to investigate. So, that line of
defense, as the general manager reminded me, we have
400,000 of the best monitors out there, which is our
residence who are seeing every day if the vendors
skip the floor, if the vendor didn't spray
appropriately, is the staff was not, you know,
behaving appropriately on site. And we are able to
address that as soon as it comes in. So, that
complete 40, I think, is the key to overall
improvement at NYCHA in terms of across-the-board

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2 surveillance of NYCHA activities by our residents and
3 then nonresponse. So, that is how we have been
4 setting it up. This has been, I think, a big
5 learning process for us and we hope to apply this to
6 other vendors in the future.

7 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: So, if NYCHA
8 residents are not aware of-- you gave a very
9 thorough three prong approach, but, for the last one,
10 if they are not aware of it, can they find out more
11 information about it?

12 DANIEL GREENE: So, a very timely
13 question. So, the July rent insert will include
14 information about how to get in contact with the
15 compliance department. I can also be mailed
16 directly. You know, I have tried to work with the TA
17 president throughout this to come to the developments
18 myself to observe operations. I've done a number of
19 inspections myself. If there are concerns, but
20 please try those forums for all those who are
21 listening and the way think those who have tried it
22 have had good results. And so, we are going to try
23 to get the word out in July to really get the word--
24 the con sour portal is fully operational right now.

25

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2 So, we are ready to take your concerns and address
3 them.

4 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Earlier, Chair Russ
5 describe different forms of ways you communicated
6 about different things that are happening through
7 phone calls, Robo calls, elected officials social
8 media. How are you communicating information about
9 the moratorium?

10 DANIEL GREENE: The moratorium, is on
11 rents?

12 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Yes.

13 DANIEL GREENE: I'm going to turn it
14 over to somebody else. This is out of my purview, so
15 I'm going to turn the computer around to the Chair.

16 GREGORY RUSS: So, we did a rent
17 hardship policy, both the process and the
18 notification, so that families would be aware that
19 they could file in inner recertification. Most
20 families are aware of that anyway when their
21 situation changes. So, we emphasize very strongly as
22 part of that overall communication process that you
23 have this choice. And we have a significant
24 percentage of households with employment income, many
25 of whom are in jobs that we think would be impacted

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2 by COVID, obviously, and so we did let them know that
3 they have the ability to comment and get their rent
4 adjusted. And then, to do it easier-- because of a
5 heard complaints about the process-- it takes too
6 long. It's too cumbersome. So, we use the HUD
7 waivers. You self-certify. If you have the
8 documents, you can take a picture. If you don't, you
9 don't have to take a picture. And then, you can call
10 into the call center and you will go through the
11 menu, the menu option for rent hardship, and they
12 will ask you six questions. So, you can also file
13 online and, if you want the old-fashioned way, you
14 can get a form that the management office. But we
15 did announce this and we did put that out as part of
16 the communications effort that I described earlier.

17 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: And this is my last
18 question before I handed it--

19 GREGORY RUSS: Sure.

20 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: back to Chair
21 Ampry-Samuel. The 30,000 that you mentioned earlier
22 that submitted hardship requests, is that going to be
23 fast tracked?

24 GREGORY RUSS: Well, we've had a number
25 of people request. We validate whether the request

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2 fits the reduction and, as of right now-- as of
3 yesterday or Friday, I guess-- we have completed
4 9388 rent reductions. There are 962 pending. So,
5 10,350 are complete or pending. And the balance on
6 some of the others were not eligible for rent
7 reduction and had to cancel it out. But, yes. They
8 are being fast tracked because those are the numbers
9 just since March 12th. So, we have more work load
10 that has come in since the beginning of the year, but
11 since March 12th, we will be completing over 10,000
12 of those requests.

13 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Already. Thank
14 you. I am going to yield back to Chair Ampry-Samuel.

15 GREGORY RUSS: Sure.

16 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Hi. So, I
17 know that Council member Gjonaj is next up for
18 questions, but I just want to also let you know that
19 Council member Rivera is on B&T and she also has
20 questions, so can we work out the timing? Because I
21 know that you also have to leave it 2:30. So, I just
22 want to let you know, Council member Gjonaj, that
23 you're next, but Council member Rivera also has to
24 leave. So I just wanted to make sure that I state
25 that before-- Council member Gjonaj. You're good.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Thank you, Chair

3 Ampy-Samuel and Chair Louis. And I think Chairwoman
4 Rivera was indicating that she didn't have to rush,
5 but I will make a quick anyhow. I just want to begin
6 first by extending my sincerest condolences to all of
7 the NYCHA family use that have lost loved ones during
8 this pandemic, including the NYCHA personnel. We
9 know that we have lost some of our workers at NYCHA,
10 as well as at our headquarters. My prayers are with
11 all of the families that have lost loved ones and I
12 will keep them in my prayers as they continued to
13 battle this pandemic. I want to get straight to it.
14 Chair Russ, I heard you mention the numbers, but I'm
15 not sure about the backlog of repairs. Secondly,
16 what are you doing or what are we doing to ensure
17 that the NYCHA residents all have the proper PPE?
18 These are the residents that are still in need of
19 masks and may need hand sanitizer. Safety begins at
20 home, as well as when they leave their apartments.
21 Thirdly, I want to thank all of the tenant presidents
22 that are on this Zoom that have submitted testimony
23 and Danny who is not with us. I hope everything is
24 okay with the emergency. But, I want to thank them
25 for the work that they did during this pandemic. I

mean, it is incredible to see them, out to feed the poor, to doing wellness checks. It was just heartwarming to see so many make certain that our most vulnerable are getting through this and, with that, I am forever grateful. Those families are forever grateful to you. Some of the questions that came up from HVAC units, as well as high impact of touch surfaces-- has this administration or your department lumped into the antimicrobial products that are available versus just the standard solutions and products that are being used now to clean? I've seen around the country and around the work they're using these products that work anywhere from six months up to nine months on surfaces. That would reduce the amount of labor that's needed. That would reduce the amount of infections and the specifics towards COVID. So, I encourage you to look into this, with 30 seconds left, Chair Russ, as well as the temperature checks and the assurances that the workers that are entering the apartments attested daily before they begin work. Do we have assurances that that is ongoing and is standard practice? And that also means, not only the NYCHA employees, but those other outsourced companies. Thank you.

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2 GREGORY RUSS: So I listed at least six
3 things and all of them very important. Let me start.
4 We are piloting temperature chart [inaudible
5 01:14:42] our environmental health and safety group
6 is testing that out, so we are testing that at the
7 moment. We are not doing work in the units unless
8 it's an emergency are very specific to certain lead
9 and mold cases. So, we are not quite to the level
10 yet where we have sort of a full work force and the
11 full work order meeting. Four quarter demand
12 meeting. With respect to the surface material you
13 described, the bio protection, we didn't start with a
14 product like very early on and we wound up-- in
15 fact, thanks to some resident and Dan Greene, you
16 heard earlier, we determined, based on the EPA's
17 recommendations not to continue using at the present
18 time. It's not that the vendor couldn't-- they have
19 to go through a process to certify that they can
20 actually protect with COVID and we didn't feel
21 comfortable that they had done all that they could
22 do. So, we ceased using that particular product, but
23 we still love the idea. With respect to HVAC, most
24 of our apartments do not have a traditional or what
25 you might call an HVAC. I think Karen mentioned

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earlier they have a fan. Sometimes they have one and
only one in the bathroom, maybe. They might have one
in the kitchen. Those are part of the [inaudible
01:16:13] consent decree. We're going to have to
address the duct work that those fans take to the
roof if they just suck the air out and the size of
the fans on the roof. So we're working with the
[inaudible 01:16:26] plaintiffs on looking at that,
on cleaning, but also we're experimenting with the
idea of oversized fans on the roof to draw more
suction through there so you get some more air
circulation. But we don't really have systems in the
units that circulate the air like you might in an
office or something like that where you have the
filter that's being drawn out. We have installed, in
all the senior buildings, a lot of the hand
sanitizers and that [inaudible 01:17:01]. We've also
begun to analyze and assess the backlog of work that
we'll have in the fall or whenever we reach a point
where we can go back and [inaudible 01:17:11]. And I
wanted to ask the general manager if I missed
anything that he wanted to add with respect to your
questions.

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2 VITO MUSTACIUOLO: No, Chair. I think you
3 covered all the questions from the Council member.

4 GREGORY RUSS: Council member, you're
5 on mute here. There you go.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: except for the
7 overall backlog of repairs that you are not
8 considering emergencies at this time, I don't know
9 what that number is. That's still important that we
10 get into [inaudible 01:17:48]--

11 GREGORY RUSS: Yeah. It's quite large.

12 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: What is the backlog
13 now?

14 GREGORY RUSS: Well, it will be in the
15 hundreds of thousands of work orders.

16 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Okay. I don't have
17 to elaborate any further. If it's in the hundreds of
18 thousands, we've got a real problem here and I know
19 that we're looking at safety, but there's ways to do
20 this and it's going to take a little creativity and--

21 GREGORY RUSS: Yeah.

22 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: making sure that
23 those employees are safe to enter the apartments and
24 conduct this work. The wellbeing of our residents is
25 also in question. Living in the conditions that

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2 could be all sorts of problems. It's not healthy.

3 Multiple--

4 GREGORY RUSS: No.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Water leaks, vermin
6 and roaches and mice and-- you name it. These are
7 all major issues. So it's just not COVID.

8 GREGORY RUSS: No. Some of those we
9 are actually doing. We're continuing to doing
10 certain work orders. If there's a running water
11 leak, we're going to do it. If a stove-- we're
12 going to replace the stove. So we have critical and
13 emergency work is still being done. The backlog we
14 have to face is for more routine work, not to
15 diminish that in any way. And I'll be very candid.
16 I think we're going to have to create and find the
17 resources for a major initiative. When we reach the
18 place-- and this is very important to us-- we have
19 to understand this new social environment that is
20 created by this virus and we are seeking ways to
21 engage the residents and-- when are you comfortable
22 with us coming back in the unit? What do we need to
23 do to make you-- you know? That's the process we
24 are starting. I talked to Danny about it just last
25 week as one of the things I wanted to engage the CCOP

2 on because I would like to understand what the
3 resident thresholds are. We will continue to do the
4 emergency and critical work, but when it comes to
5 some of the more routine work, what are we going to
6 have to do and how do we manage that? That's on our
7 radar and something we have to attack.

8 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Chair Russ, thank
9 you for that explanation, but I think we missed the
10 point again. If tenants are putting in for repair
11 orders, that means they want somebody there. And not
12 to ask, well, we're not sure if they want us to enter
13 or not. You can always follow up with the repair,
14 but to take the position now back, well, we're not
15 sure they want us in their apartments, I think, is
16 ludicrous. They put in the repair ticket. If they
17 didn't want you in their apartment, they wouldn't
18 have put in for a repair ticket.

19 GREGORY RUSS: Well, I can tell you
20 that, since the beginning of the crisis, we have
21 instructed employees to validate when they arrive
22 with the person on the other side of the door, if
23 they still want the work done. Just as a matter of
24 protocol and--

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: That's fine. I
3 approve of that. But for you to say that we are not
4 sure when they want to allow us in as [inaudible
5 01:21:03]--

6 GREGORY RUSS: Well, I didn't say that
7 exactly, Council member. What I want to have is an
8 understanding with the resident leadership that when
9 we begin this initiative to address some of these
10 backlog orders, I want to have a clear understanding
11 with the resident leadership. In other words, how do
12 we make this process as comfortable and safe for both
13 parties? The resident and the employees. That is
14 going to take some navigation and discussion. So, I
15 don't want to say that we have a whole set of plans
16 for me to go because, I think, we need to understand
17 if we are coming in for four hours, that's a lot
18 different than being there for 10 minutes. And in
19 our apartments, that is a long time. Do we provide
20 hospitality apartments for those people while we do
21 the backlog work? That is the kinds of questions I
22 think we have to ask and make sure the residents feel
23 safe.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: Chair. Chairman.
25 I'm sorry, Chair. There are millions of apartments

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2 in New York City that are having repairs done by
3 private landlords. We're not reinventing the wheel.
4 Let's not make this more complicated. If so work or
5 doesn't have the temperature, has not tested
6 positive, doesn't have any symptoms, he is cleared to
7 go in, he has so wear proper-- he or she-- proper
8 PPE, gloves, and masks, and suits, let them do the
9 work. This is not that difficult of a job. Whether
10 it be four minutes or four hours or four days.
11 There's protocols in place that the rest of the
12 world--

13 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

14 COUNCIL MEMBER GJONAJ: are adhering to.

15 So thank you very much.

16 COMMITTEE COUNCIL: Thank you. We will
17 now take questions from Council member Rivera
18 followed by Council member Grodenchik.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

20 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you so much
21 to the Chairs. This is such an important hearing and
22 I realize I have been bouncing back and for that I
23 appreciate the acknowledgment, Chair Ampry-Samuel.
24 So, forgive me if I repeat a little bit of a couple
25 questions that you have asked, but I just want a

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2 little bit of clarity, especially some things that
3 pertain to my district, specifically. Think you'd
4 said the administration for being here and for their
5 testimony. So, in my district which has over a dozen
6 NYCHA developments, I've received multiple reports of
7 buildings going without cleaning, specifically I want
8 to mention Lillian Wald Houses on Avenue D in my
9 district. Why aren't buildings being cleaned
10 regularly or how are you responding to these
11 incidents?

12 GREGORY RUSS: If they are referring to
13 the sanitizing cleaning, if they let us know that
14 they feel that they haven't seen the vendor or that
15 the vendor hasn't done it properly, we have a
16 compliance line and the compliance department will
17 respond to those complaints. They can call into the
18 call center. I think it is menu options seven and
19 then leave the address and concern and we will
20 respond to that. So, there is a mechanism now.
21 Right before you came on, Council member, we talked a
22 little bit about it because, if you recall, we had to
23 set these departments up as part of the monitor ship
24 agreement. And now they are starting to flex their
25 muscles a little bit. And, actually, do like we

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2 hoped that they would do, which is get to these kinds
3 of questions. So, there is a-- So, we're doing that
4 and we're also taking some of the lessons that we
5 learned from trying to manage the vendors for the
6 high touch cleaning. Then, later on, I hope this
7 year, as we roll out our transformation plan under
8 the monitor ship agreement, we're going to apply some
9 of those lessons learned to our standard cleaning
10 practice, as well. So, both we hope to improve and
11 get to that point where you can call and say, hey,
12 where is the janitor here or where was my surface
13 touched? Did they show up? The schedule for the
14 cleaners is online on the website so people can check
15 it and if they don't see someone at the right time,
16 they can let us know and then we can validate them.

17 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: And we are. We are
18 trying our best to let you know.

19 GREGORY RUSS: I think you for the
20 because we can do-- we have 20 inspectors. We have
21 done 4100 inspections, but, as Dan said earlier, the
22 best observers are the families that live there and
23 that is why the complaint forum exists.

24 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Who conducts the
25 field monitoring and the daily check ins?

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2 GREGORY RUSS: Let me give you to Dan
3 Greene who is our compliance director and he can tell
4 you.

5 DANIEL GREENE: Hi. Good afternoon.
6 We're sharing a computer. Sorry. So, the oversight
7 in the field is done by our quality assurance
8 department. They were assisted in this effort with
9 the inspectors from--

10 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time expired.

11 DANIEL GREENE: from our environmental
12 health and safety department. Can you still hear me?

13 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Yes.

14 DANIEL GREENE: Okay. And we also has
15 some assistance from the NYCHA IG, as well, to add
16 field inspectors during the really critical time.
17 And the staff doing the surveys is all my staff.
18 Compliance department monitoring staff and other
19 departments that we brought on to do the number of
20 phone calls that we need to do each day to cover the
21 whole portfolio. And then that information all comes
22 to me and I make sure I share it with the Chair and
23 the GM so they are aware of what is going on with the
24 vendor in terms of their compliance with their
25 requirements.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Paul, just if you
3 could add to that description and, Chairwomen, I'm
4 done. I'm wrapping up. How do you communicate that
5 to the cleaners and residents and how are the
6 cleaners held accountable if they don't follow some
7 of those guidelines? And I would just ask is a
8 weekly summary of the daily reports be made
9 accessible to us and to NYCHA tenants.

10 DANIEL GREENE: How we do it like every
11 day, you know, we makes sure that we review the
12 issues and, as necessary, we go directly to the
13 vendor. Those can be phone calls. We also have a
14 contract management team that deals with them. I'll
15 have to check back in terms of like the availability
16 of those reports. You know, about what we are
17 working on right now is to improve it. You know, we
18 also communicate directly with our TA presidents.
19 I've met-- as I've said before, if anybody wants to
20 schedule an inspection with myself and, I'm sure,
21 other directors would be happy to go, as well,
22 because they are seeing something that they feel is
23 not being done. I've done it many times. I am happy
24 to do it again to go over the vendors protocols.
25 What they are seeing, what the complaints are. And

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2 it would be my pleasure to do it, actually, because I
3 have learned a lot from it, as well. So, that have
4 been really effective and terms of making sure that
5 everybody knows what the vendor should be doing, what
6 they are not required to do, so we are all on the
7 same page. So, I'm happy to do that on the ground.
8 A joint inspection with the TA presidents or anybody
9 who would like to do that.

10 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: Thank you so much.
11 Thank you to those chairwomen.

12 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Before you go,
13 Council member Rivera, I just want to make it known,
14 just a point of clarification, that HPD will not be
15 doing an opening statement. And so, if you do have
16 questions for HPD-- I know you have to go, you are
17 able to ask those questions, as well, now.

18 COUNCIL MEMBER RIVERA: No. I'll come
19 back, if anything.

20 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay.

21 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
22 now move on to questions from Council member
23 Grodenchick.

24 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

25

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

3 Thank you, Chair Ampry-Samuel, and thank you, Chair
4 Louis. Thank you to the Chair of NYCHA and I don't
5 serve on the public housing committee, but it is
6 certainly an interest of mine having grown up in
7 NYCHA and I want to thank Chair Ampry-Samuel for her
8 great work. I am concerned about the air-
9 conditioning that has been promised to the residents,
10 senior residents of NYCHA. Curiously enough, today
11 in Curb, there is a story about the 74,000 air-
12 conditioners that were promised by Mayor de Blasio to
13 residents not just of NYCHA, but also to seniors
14 living in the city with a certain income and a
15 certain age. And the story said that 18,000 of the
16 74,000 have been installed, which is progress, I
17 guess, for those 18,000 families. But I wonder if
18 the Chair would care to comment or veto somebody on
19 what steps are being taken. You know, summer began
20 about 10-- eight-- nine days ago. I think today is
21 the 29th and I am concerned that summer will be gone
22 and people will be roasting inside their apartments.

23 GREGORY RUSS: So, Council member, I'm
24 going to start and then I'm going to ask Vito to step
25 up. So the AC part that is going to impact NYCHA is

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2 22,000 households. Qualified households receive a

3 Robo call with details on how to sign up and there

4 are residents who are age 60 years or older.

5 Residents with a mobility impairment, residents that

6 are on life-sustaining equipment. And, in those

7 three categories, do not already have an air

8 conditioner. Units are being installed by a vendor

9 and we also have a resident component and that, that

10 I want to ask Vito if he could give us an update on

11 the progress in terms of the installations pertaining

12 to NYCHA.

13 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you.

14 GREGORY RUSS: Sure.

15 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Vito may have

16 gone out to get some air conditioning.

17 GREGORY RUSS: Is he there? Maybe we

18 lost him.

19 VITO MUSTACIUOLO: Okay. Thank you. No.

20 I was waiting for--

21 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: There he is.

22 VITO MUSTACIUOLO: to unmute. Thank you,

23 Council member. And this is extremely important to

24 us and to the city. And, honestly, we really want to

25 thank the mayor for starting this initiative. The

goal that we had said internally was 22,000 and, based on data that we had in our system, as the Chair mentioned, we looked at age. We looked at physical conditions of residents, we also looked at the information that we had which was self-reported as to which residents had or did not have air-conditioners. I guess, the good news is that we are finding out that more of our residents that annoying initially believed actually have air-conditioners. So, we reached out to over 32,000 public housing residents. We initially started with the Robo call, but we also realize, too, that, especially for seniors, a Robo calls saying that you are eligible for a free air conditioner seemed a little suspect.

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Yeah. I would think.

VITO MUSTACIUOLO: So, what we did is we dedicated 45 of our operators at CCC to embark on a campaign to start to call each of those residents and we have made up to four calls per resident. We have, to date, installed about 7500 air-conditioners and we are installing about 750-- 500 to 750 air conditioners per day. We will continue. We're reaching out to TA leaders to see if residents have

gone to them asking for an air conditioner. We're reaching out to elected officials. Over the weekend, I've reached out to a number of elected officials in areas where we had seen low requests-- a low number of requests for air conditioners. We've also started door to door knocking. So where we have a list of a resident who appears to qualify for a free air conditioner and we have been unable to reach them by phone, we're actually sending staff and we're knocking on doors. We're at the development. We have the air conditioners. We're bringing extra air conditioners to each development. We're knocking on the doors. If a resident qualifies and says, yes, I would like one, we're installing it the same day.

COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: And let me just ask this final question because I'm sure my time is just about up. Have you had any instances at any of the developments where you had to do electrical work to facilitate air-conditioning?

GREGORY RUSS: So, we worked on-- with Con Edison prior to upgrade services to buildings where we, both we and Con Edison, felt the services were either inadequate or potentially would have been jeopardized by additional loads. So, that work was

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2 all done in advance with Con Edison. I want to thank
3 them for their cooperation and collaboration on that.
4 It was a great effort.

5 COUNCIL MEMBER GRODENCHIK: Thank you,
6 Vito. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Chair Ampry-
7 Samuel and thank you, Chair Louis.

8 GREGORY RUSS: Thank you, Council
9 member.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. It
11 looks like there are no further questions from
12 Council members, so we will move on to testimony from
13 members of the public. Oh. It looks like we have
14 something from the Chair.

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: We still have
16 questions. I wanted to make sure that my colleagues
17 that were on B&T were able to ask questions before
18 they left. So, there is concern that the COVID-19
19 crisis has slowed down NYCHA's progress towards
20 meeting the deadline set forth in the NYCHA-HUD
21 agreement. The purpose of the agreement was to
22 remedy NYCHA's physical conditions, and ensure that
23 NYCHA complies with its obligations under federal
24 law, reform NYCHA's management structure, and
25 facilitate cooperation and coordination between HUD,

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2 NYCHA, and the city. Have there been any talks to
3 renegotiate benchmarks and deadlines and, if so, can
4 you just explain to us what is happening now? And I
5 know you spoke a little bit about the bias case and
6 what is happening around ventilation and mold.

7 GREGORY RUSS: Right.

8 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: What are the
9 other parts of the agreement?

10 GREGORY RUSS: Well, we continue to do
11 what I would call two kinds of work. Work with the
12 monitor that is related to the deadlines that were
13 originally established in the agreement that, because
14 of limitations on in the unit work or just the
15 limitations related to COVID that we've had to defer.
16 We have presented the monitor with a number of
17 correspondents related to the force majeure clause in
18 the agreement that we have invoked it. We've talked
19 to the monitor about our best efforts and are
20 providing the monitor with materials for their review
21 which they'll share with the southern district. I
22 would say we're-- that we are facing the practical
23 reality, that we're going to have to renegotiate some
24 of the timeframes and deadlines. But I also want to
25 say that there's been some things that we've just

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doing. A number of the things related to lead, for example, has significant IT projects. Even mold. And we've continued to work on those and roll those out so that when we do start up, we will have the systems adapted to the things that the agreement wants us to do. So that's continued. We have done a lot of work in common areas, especially figuring out how to remove lead from the common areas where it's a problem including pilot programs that Gwanas where it was particularly difficult to deal with lead on the hand rails. And between our staff and the vendor, we have come up with an idea that may not only work there, but work elsewhere. That has been ongoing. We've addressed issues with the community buildings where we have had to do either remediation or-- I don't know if we did abatement, but we did remediation at some of those sites. So, some of the elements in the agreement are still in place. Other portions of that we are going to have to get new deadlines. So, that one level is there is continuing work. There are changes to the term and deadlines and dates, but there are couple of other things that are happening, Council member, that are important. We have continued, as I mentioned in my introduction,

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2 to push the capital planning ideas. We shared some
3 of those ideas with you. We have now share them with
4 HUD. HUD is interested in discussions around those
5 ideas. We are very encouraged. We don't have
6 anything in hand, but that they would be open to
7 talking about that was very, very favorable as far as
8 we were concerned. The second thing is the
9 transformation plan. The document that, in some
10 ways, is the cultural structure or restructuring of
11 NYCHA. We are continuing to work on them. We are
12 continuing to work with the groups of experts that we
13 brought in. And this is the beginning of things that
14 relate to how do you change the way NYCHA operates?
15 For example, during this time period, we've had
16 trainings on how to do a property based budget as a
17 preference to eventually doing property based
18 management. We are taking some interim steps, Vito
19 and I, to do an interim restructuring around-- in
20 order to prepare for the larger to follow. The
21 timing on the transformation plan will be different
22 because it's going to take us longer to do, but I'd
23 say, mostly, were going to have to sit down with HUD,
24 the southern district, and the monitor. We're going
25 to come up with some new dates, I don't want to tag

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2 can the impression that everything has been
3 compromised by this. We have moved forward with some
4 significant work.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. That's
6 good to know because there is a public meeting with
7 the federal monitor and the CDC in about two-- three
8 weeks. In mid-July. And so--

9 GREGORY RUSS: Right.

10 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: I know that
11 that is clearly a topic of discussion for the
12 residents. I wanted to make sure that we ask that
13 question now, as well. And I just have one last line
14 of questions and I know that Commissioner Baaba has
15 been waiting very patiently. So, my next question is
16 related to our seniors and food distribution and
17 just, you know, how we're working overall [inaudible
18 01:40:36]. So, first, we're talking about
19 communicating with the residents during this
20 pandemic. What percentage of NYCHA households use
21 the My NYCHA app?

22 GREGORY RUSS: So, I'm going to ask
23 Sideya Sherman. Sideya has been our point person on
24 resident contact food background and ask her if she

25

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2 could give you a feel for what's been accomplished
3 and where we're headed.

4 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Can everyone here me?

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Yes.

6 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Okay. Great. Thank
7 you, Council member. So, to your direct question
8 around the My NYCHA app, we actually-- I don't have
9 that data, so we can certainly look to see the number
10 of folks who are using the My NYCHA app at this time
11 and receiving push notifications. So, we can follow
12 up on that. We may even be able to get that
13 information while we are on today's hearing. But,
14 overall, and to the Chairs point and through the
15 testimony, NYCHA has had over 2 1/2 million different
16 forms of communication throughout this crisis.
17 Everything from email blasts to Robo calls to signage
18 in our common areas using social media and other
19 communication channels to really make sure that we
20 are getting the word out to NYCHA residents, and
21 seniors in particular. We've had some targeted robo
22 calls to seniors and we've had some targeted robo
23 calls and partners like the Department of Health who
24 has specifically had a call from Commissioner Barbot
25 to residents in English and Spanish. You know,

2 sharing the important information about the
3 coronavirus and the precautions that folks should
4 take. With respect to seniors, as the Chair shared
5 in the testimony, we took an additional measure of
6 implementing individual calls for seniors. We've
7 made over 100,000 of those calls at this point. We
8 have had over 60,000-- nearly 60,000 direct
9 conversations with seniors. And so, these are really
10 one and one assessments identifying whether folks
11 have support systems in place at this time, if there
12 are any specific needs such as food or other
13 resources and also making sure that seniors are
14 connected to city services based on whatever their
15 specific needs are. I would say the good news is
16 that the vast majority of seniors that we talked to
17 through these one-on-one calls have indicated having
18 support systems in place which is really great. I
19 think food has been the number one need and,
20 fortunately, we've been able to have a direct process
21 for the city's Get Food Program where our staff are
22 trained as facilitative enrollers. So when they're on
23 the phone with a resident, they don't have to
24 transfer them to 311 or send them to a website.
25 We're able to directly assist with enrollment at that

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time. So at this point, we have over 80,000 households who are-- have been enrolled in the Get Food Program and over 5 million deliveries. And in our senior buildings, in particular, we have our staff who are managing using part time staff who are all resident hires who are assisting with [inaudible 01:43:53] delivery on a regular basis. I would just add that we've, additionally, with the TAs and the number of our community partners and other types of food distribution efforts, we've had pop up events, a food bank, we have the City Harvest distribution event. We've had some of our CBO's who've assisted with meal delivery and a number of NYCHA developments and, obviously, our tenant associations who have had a tremendous effort in meal distribution across the city. So there's been a really wonderful collaboration between NYCHA, tenant leaders, community-based organizations, elected officials, as well. But the checks on seniors have really been robust and they have also been done in coordination with the Department of the Aging so that both NYCHA and DIFTA are using the same script when we reach out to seniors. So, there is no wrong door whether you

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2 speak to NYCHA or DIFTA. You're being connected to
3 the same resources.

4 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. I know
5 that-- And so you mentioned food. And I know that
6 there were also issues with seniors being able to get
7 access to their medication and access to other social
8 service programs. Can you speak a little to the work
9 that you're doing in partnership with [inaudible
10 01:45:03] to be able to provide support to the
11 seniors for other things besides food?

12 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Absolutely. So, as I
13 mentioned before, NYCHA and DIFTA are using the same
14 script when they speak with seniors. That script
15 also includes very specific referral resources for
16 medications, as well as medical equipment. So we're
17 able to facilitate that referral for seniors. They
18 can do it independently. We can assist them with
19 that. We also have a network of partners that we
20 already work with pre-COVID. So, we've had our staff
21 speak to seniors who have been-- and we've been able
22 to work with them to have a home care agency delivers
23 something that is needed the same day or the next
24 day. We have had our staff personally go out and
25 deliver materials and supplies to seniors after

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2 having a call with them, as well. And then there's
3 some real dedicated resources within the city that
4 we've been able to connect residents to on a
5 consistent basis. I would also add that we recently
6 had partnered New York Care is to additionally
7 support NYCHA residents through ongoing phone calls
8 for those seniors who are looking for socialization
9 and regular check ins beyond the initial wellness
10 checks. So those calls have started and we also are
11 connecting residents to health insurance and health
12 coverage if they have that need, as well.

13 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And is that--
14 So that's seniors. Can you speak to residents who
15 have disability challenges?

16 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So our calls have
17 included seniors, residents on life sustaining
18 equipment, and those that are disabled. The script
19 that I mentioned with-- that we have in partnership
20 with DIFTA is specifically designed for seniors.
21 We've customized that for when we reach out to folks
22 who are not seniors and so most of the resources are
23 the same.

24 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And you
25 mentioned a figure of 80,000 residents that you have

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2 been able to touch base with. Are you able to give
3 us like a percentage of seniors that have been-- you
4 know, you've been able to connect with?

5 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. It was 60,000
6 where we had direct-- 60,000 direct conversations.
7 100,000 calls. And that the majority of those calls
8 were to seniors, but that also includes some of non
9 seniors, disabled, and life sustaining equipment. I
10 can try to get back to you on the balance, but just
11 to give a sense of [inaudible 01:47:11] population,
12 we have a little over 100,000 residents who are
13 either seniors, disabled, life sustaining equipment,
14 and there's some overlap, obviously, because there
15 may be a senior who is all three. But it's about
16 100,000-- 110,000 folks who fit into those
17 categories. We prioritize those seniors who are
18 known to us because of prior social service referrals
19 who are at developments that are not connected on
20 site with the senior center. So there's a certain
21 level of prioritization within those calls and that
22 really is what's captured in that 100,000. We can
23 certainly get back to you on what the balance of that
24 is. I would also add that, as we move into phase 2
25 and phase 3 of reopening-- I think, to your point,

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2 we are still keeping this level of engagement
3 happening even as the city starts to reopen. So we
4 recently raised started or call campaign with all
5 seniors to check in on where they are now. That
6 initiated with the Robo call that also gave seniors
7 the ability to opt out of calls and future calls
8 because some are getting inundated with the outrage
9 from NYCHA. And then, allowed us to prioritize those
10 who want an additional call on those who may not have
11 responded, that we haven't talked to Bo for so that
12 we can also begin to triage additional roundabout
13 [inaudible 01:48:27].

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. And my
15 final question is related to seniors with the lack of
16 Internet. And I know that the Chair and your
17 remarks, you mentioned the tablets that were
18 distributed to the seniors. Can you speak a little
19 bit about what's happening with that process and have
20 you been able to onboard their contract with the
21 community based organization that's supposed to be
22 providing the training [inaudible 01:48:54] with the
23 seniors. Can you just let us know what's happening
24 with that?

25

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2 SIDEYA SHERMAN: Sure. So all 10,000
3 tablets have been distributed at this point and they
4 went to seniors. Of course, 288 developments. Those
5 seniors, in addition to having services, the tablets
6 came preloaded with, you know, links to useful city
7 information. They came preloaded with the My NYCHA
8 app, for instance. We worked with some of the
9 libraries systems to also preload and connect
10 information. Oh. It's under contract with the
11 city's technology office to provide remote services
12 for those seniors. They also are working with DIFTA
13 contracted providers to support that effort. And so,
14 that work is underway and I know that many seniors
15 have started to engage with the instructors and
16 counselors [inaudible 01:49:38] helping them get
17 comfortable with the technology and take advantage of
18 classes and other resources.

19 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Thank
20 you. Thank you so much. And if they have any
21 questions related to that, they would reach out to
22 your office or would they have to [inaudible
23 01:49:53]?

24 SIDEYA SHERMAN: So, they have direct
25 contact with OATES when they get the device. So

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2 that's where they would go. Many seniors who were
3 referred either by the TA or came through our calls
4 also have contact information for the people they
5 spoke to on our team. But, at this point, they
6 should be connected to OATES and they are equipped to
7 provide them without remote support.

8 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Thank
9 you. Thank you so much. And, Ms. Sun, I am going to
10 kick it back to you and I know that Council member
11 Louis has some additional questions for HPD.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Sure. We will turn
13 it back to Chair Louis.

14 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: One quick question.
15 This is for the representative from HPD. I just
16 wanted to know what efforts are you coordinating with
17 NYCHA regarding the eviction moratoriums? Are you
18 working in tandem?

19 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM:
20 We've been working closely with our partners from
21 the Mayor's Office to protect tenants and our
22 partners at HRA on the eviction moratoriums. NYCHA
23 has its own private landlord. It's separate and
24 apart from the work that we've been doing on the
25 eviction-related issues.

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2 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Thank you.

3 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Back to Chair

4 Ampry-Samuel?

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, Deputy
6 Commissioner. We've talked a lot about what
7 [inaudible 01:51:27] is doing for the residents of
8 their buildings. Can you speak a little bit about
9 the guidance that HPD has put out for the buildings
10 that are within your portfolio?

11 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: So,
12 for us, we have a bit of a different relationship to
13 the buildings that I've received financing or that we
14 have some oversight capacity over as we're not
15 directly the landlords. And so, what we've been
16 doing is distributing the information that we have
17 been given from the Department of Health and, as that
18 guidance gets updated, we circulate that to the
19 property owners for which we have contact information
20 via our monthly rates to property owners. We have
21 been distributing that guidance and asking them to
22 distribute it and post it throughout their buildings.

23 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And have you
24 at all helped with contracting with vendors?

25

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2 Cleaning vendors at all for any of the buildings that
3 may have reached out to you at all?

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: That
5 hasn't been our director all in that we are not a
6 part of the supply chain or have vendors directly
7 work with us or have said that they have the service.
8 For some of the buildings and wage we may have a more
9 direct role, those city managed buildings, we put
10 them in touch with a nonprofit to help on those
11 supply chain related issues. Again, HPD doesn't have
12 a list of vendors or a direct relationship with
13 vendors that do that work, but how to, you know,
14 connect them to nonprofits or other organizations
15 that could help them contract out for those related
16 services.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Can you
18 explain the process? So a building management
19 company would reach out to HPD and ask for a list of
20 community-based organizations to assist? Like what
21 is that process like?

22 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: So--

23 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And the reason
24 why I am asking these questions to-- Awe. I know

25

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2 exactly what you're going through right now. We're
3 almost--

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: Two
5 hours. Two hours. She say, I need a break. Sorry.

6 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: As soon as you
7 start talking. That's hilarious.

8 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: Here
9 you go. I'm here. I'm here. So, we have a few
10 buildings that HPD works with and those are buildings
11 primarily in our TIL [sp?] Program in those
12 buildings are buildings that are transitioning into
13 more private ownership. So, for those buildings,
14 where the tenant association has asked for assistance
15 in getting that sanitizing help, or we have done is
16 connect to them with the neighborhood housing
17 services of New York City and that is a training and
18 technical assistance provider. And they are also
19 helping those TA's to identify vendors and suppliers
20 to help with any sanitation needs that they may have.

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: The reason why
22 ask those questions is because I know that, you know,
23 we have families that are-- may have been in the
24 shelter system and have applied for-- or families
25 have applied for the lotteries to go into a lot of

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these buildings and you always see HPD, you know,
being like a parent, if you will, with a lot of these
buildings and management companies. And then, when
you speak with the management companies, they, too,
are looking for guidance and most of our guidance are
coming clearly from this city and Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene and the CDC. And so I
would just hope that, as a city agency that is so
involved with these particular developments that, you
know, there would be a level of just like guidance
and information and communication intentional the
cars, you know, we are reaching out to NYCHA to do
all of these different things and, you know, we need
to have partnerships and strong relationships with
private buildings and developments through HPD's
portfolio. Right? And so, I think that there would
just be something intentional. And then, also, too,
especially when we are looking for ways to make sure
that every person in New York City is tested and we
know that there is a whole initiative around contact
tracing and conversations around herd immunity to
make sure that people are safe. And so, I would just
hope that all of our buildings have some level of
intentional guidance and discussions and

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2 communications. So, that's why I was asking these
3 questions. You're on mute. Don't talk right now.

4 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: So,
5 we agree with you about that intentionality and the
6 need to connect and to provide as much information as
7 possible. Again, our relationship is a little
8 different than the relationship NYCHA has with its
9 tenants because we are not directly engaged with them
10 on a day in and day out basis, but we do have a
11 mechanism to connect with the property owners who we
12 think are in the seat to, you know, clean their
13 buildings and into direct outreach. So, in addition,
14 we have been providing them with those cleanly
15 guidelines, updates, and information from the
16 Department of Health and other agency partners as we
17 get them.

18 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And what else?
19 On your website and--

20 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: Yes.
21 So, we have it on our website and we have been doing
22 direct emails to those property owners and, through
23 that outrage, we are able to connect with almost 1
24 million different properties. So, beyond that, we
25 have also been being helpful in communicating the

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2 city's resources that may be available. So, working
3 with those property owners to get residents who may
4 need access to food to participate in the Get Food
5 initiative. We are also participating in the city's
6 cool program, again, connecting those property owners
7 to those programs so that they can connect to
8 residents who may need it. We've also distributed an
9 all-inclusive flyer that the city created identifying
10 all of the resources, COVID related resources that
11 are available and distributing that, again, to the
12 property owners so that they can distribute that to
13 their tenants and post it up in their buildings.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. And
15 what about Robo calls? And, you know, of course, I'm
16 asking that question because I know that when this
17 office will work with the city on doing Robo calls to
18 certain buildings to make residents aware of like
19 their [inaudible 01:52:12] applications or even
20 private homes if families are about to lose their
21 home because they're on a lien list or something,
22 we're able to do direct Robo calls to those
23 individuals. So, you have that capability. Is that
24 something that you have thought about doing that all
25 across your--

2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM:

3 We've use Robo calls where we have direct tenant
4 information. That is only for a limited subset and
5 through-- so, for example, through our section 8
6 program where we have direct tenant information, we
7 use the Robo calls. We reached out to tenants to let
8 them know about the Get Food initiative. The Get
9 Cool initiative. And so we need to use Robo calls to
10 the the extent that to have direct information and
11 that those tenants can enroll directly in those
12 programs. When we were participating in the Get Food
13 program, that was a bulk delivery program, and so
14 that program required a building to be able to say
15 that there were a number of residents within the
16 property who would need that assistance and it
17 wasn't-- tenants couldn't sign up directly to
18 participate in that program. So, where we are able
19 to connect tenants directly and where we are able to
20 use Robo calls as a feature, we certainly need to
21 optimize that.

22 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Now, as
23 far as building sanitation, how many complaints has
24 the city received related to the building sanitation
25 since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and are

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2 those complaints routed to HPD or can you just
3 explain like where else they may be routed and what
4 other agencies you may be working with?

5 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: For
6 COVID related building sanitation calls, those calls
7 are routed to DOHMH and we received that they may
8 have gotten a few complaints on those issues and
9 complaints related to strong chemical owners from
10 cleaning. HPD gets housing maintenance code related
11 complaints related to also unsanitary conditions on
12 common-- in common areas and we do have the figures
13 from March to June if you would like those figures.

14 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Yes. So, what
15 is those complaints?

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: So,
17 from March to June, we got 316 complaints and they
18 would be for issues such as vermin or mold or--
19 again, those issues that are really outlined under
20 the housing maintenance code.

21 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: And do you
22 issue like fines related to it or do you go out and
23 do like cleaning up after some level of investigation
24 and then charge the building owner? Like what
25 happens with that?

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2 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: So,
3 for investigations-- for complaints on these types
4 of issues during COVID, we've also been prioritizing
5 the complaints that we are responding to and so we
6 would always investigate and follow up to see if the
7 condition exists for we would write a violation and
8 then give the owners some time. To correct both for
9 the city would determine if it is a type of violation
10 for which we want to hire our emergency contractors
11 to go in and correct the issues.

12 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. What
13 action showed a property owner take and they become
14 aware that someone is sick or quarantined due to
15 COVID-19?

16 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: So,
17 under the Department of Health guidelines that the
18 property owners should undertake cleaning of the
19 common areas is they believe that that person may
20 have, you know, been in those, and areas or have been
21 throughout the building, but, other than that, we are
22 unaware of any particular obligations on the property
23 owner to take about someone being in their building
24 who is under quarantine or who has been ill.

25

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2 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Okay.

3 Okay. And are you in any kind of conversations at
4 all like in the event a building owner was to contact
5 the city and say that they have a certain amount of
6 residents who may have COVID-19 and they want to be
7 able to have access to reusable accommodations? Is
8 there any kind of conversation happening around
9 reasonable accommodations?

10 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM: We
11 have not been involved in any conversations around
12 that. We do not ask property owners or require that
13 they report to us about the health or safety of
14 tenants within their property.

15 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Okay.
16 Just trying to go through the HPD questions. Okay.
17 All right. So, back, pretty much, covers it. You
18 know, the goal was to just make sure that, in
19 addition to NYCHA, but make sure that the city is
20 being responsible and accountable even within the
21 building that we have partnerships with. And we also
22 have families that, you know-- like [inaudible
23 02:03:04] mentioned, as well, with the section 8
24 voucher holders, we want to make sure that they have
25 all the information that they need in order to

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2 continue to be safe and bring down the spread of
3 COVID-19. So, thank you so much. Is that it, Ms.
4 Sun?

5 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I believe so. If
6 there aren't further questions from Chair Louis, but
7 I believe there are no other Council members that
8 have questions remaining. Chair Louis, did you have
9 further questions?

10 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: I think that was
11 everything. Forgive me if I'm repeating the same
12 thing. I just wanted to know does HPD have a
13 breakdown on the numbers of HPD violations issued
14 between March 1st and June 1st? I'm not sure if you
15 answer the question, yet. Is [inaudible 02:03:57] by
16 Council District?

17 EXECUTIVE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HALM:
18 We're happy to follow up and provide that
19 information a.m. We don't have that information
20 today.

21 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: That's all I have.
22 You've covered most of it. Thank you. I'll yield
23 back to Chair Ampry-Samuel.

24 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay. Thank
25 you. So, that is all I have for both NYCHA and HPD.

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2 I really do think you so much for your testimony
3 today and being able to answer our questions and, as
4 we continue to, you know, work with our residents, we
5 hope that we can continue to call on you even if it
6 is Sunday at 10 o'clock at night. I really do
7 appreciate it. Only to have some of the follow-ups
8 that we will be able to send to you via the committee
9 counsel, as well. And, Ms. Sun, before we close out
10 with the panel, I would like to allow Ms. Blondel to
11 be able to say some final words.

12 KAREN BLONDEL: So, I just wanted to
13 point out that, as an organizer, I have had a couple
14 of one-on-one stirring the pandemic with residents
15 who got the tablet. A lot of them are like 60-- 70,
16 80 years old and so, in order for them to use the tab
17 leg, they really need someone to kind of like sit
18 down with them originally and to show them how the
19 buttons work, where they go. And it does work. So,
20 I have had some progress with them, but I did know it
21 is like when you talked about the My NYCHA app, not
22 only my own account, but several of the accounts,
23 when we try to upgrade the mistakes even with the
24 birthday is, socials, and etc., it is never updated.
25 I even put through a court order to have my

information updated through court order and it is
still not updated. So I have to put in of phony
birthday in order to access My NYCHA. And the other
thing is there is a lot of people meeting in these
groups and nonprofits and I see my name on a lot of
meetings because someone wants me at the meeting, but
I'm not able to attend. So, I think that is false
when you have groups that are working with New York
City Housing Authority and they have TA or resident
Council president's names listed and the presidents
never show up at those meetings. Some of them are
not even presidents anymore. So, I'm asking that you
clean up your data so that we actually do know who is
attending and if there is any actual representation
from a resident, from a nonprofit. Because some of
those names go back 10 years ago and I am still
seeing them on emails and I am still getting emails,
though I've never attended a meeting in two years.
And so, that makes for false advertising as to who is
actually in those rooms making those decisions. So,
those are my two comments on that. And my final
comment is on the sanitizer. I know it wasn't
NYCHA's idea to put sanitizers in a big industrial
sized container, but when I saw that delivered to my

development and I saw people, literally, picking up
soda bottles out of the garbage to try to sell it, I
thought that was a disaster. It has said the labeled
and a bottle so that the family knows it is
sanitizer. Even today they were still giving out
these bottles of sanitizer with no labels on them and
that runs a health hazard. And I want to know also
from Vito and from Greg Russ what is the health and
safety standards for NYCHA's vendors just like with
EPA or anybody else now that coronavirus is a part of
the equation. That is it.

CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: So, I want to
say-- I mean, if they would like to answer, that
would be helpful and I know that we will close out
with Maria forms. I see that your hand is literally
raised. But I do want to say that we normally calm
in the chamber, will have testimony from the
residents and then we will have testimony from the
agencies and they will close out, but we are in
unprecedented times or it now. It is no longer
business as usual. And so, just to be able to take a
little Chair discretion right now, I would like to be
able to adjust close out with the two voices from the
residents that spoke in the being gaining just to

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2 close them out before we go to public testimony from
3 everyone else. Okay. So, Ms. Forbes, if you can
4 unmute Ms. Forbes? And then that will be it. Then
5 we will open it up to public testimony after we close
6 out this first panel.

7 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: I believe we are
8 having some technical difficulties with unmute in
9 Ms. Forbes.

10 MARIA FORBES: Hello. Can you hear me?

11 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: There we go.

12 MARIA FORBES: Can you hear me know?

13 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Yes.

14 MARIA FORBES: Okay. So, my two
15 concerns that is, Chairman, can you help me
16 understand that protective services for adults are
17 not assisting residents who have problems because I
18 have made several referrals concerning hoarding.
19 When I went to senior's apartments and even some
20 regular tenants apartments and I called back and I
21 wanted to tell you that Yuko and Rodney did a lot. A
22 hell of a lot in assisting me with some cases. But,
23 however they said, that protective services is not
24 available to go in and do cleaning. If we were at
25 this height of the pandemic and things needed to be

sanitized and cleaned all the time-- we had a rat infestation in Claremont Consolidated and those were one of the tenants in that particular area that needed their apartment fully cleaned again, but protective services, from what I understand, wasn't able to come out. However, if it's hazmat suits and everything else that everybody else said that they have been using here, then I didn't understand why. The other concern I had was the first day of delivery of the senior meals. I've been distributing meals since day one and it was very hard for me to understand how they switched over to those boxed foods where we were given something nutrition all daily. We were able to check on the seniors daily. I even came up with a sheet that I sent to Yuko, and other staff in NYCHA to say this is the follow up sheet that I had. So I didn't see why caretakers could, out and staff and resident engagement can only stay home and have telephone calls with you. However, the food that I opened up on the first day was sugar, diabetes, and high blood pressure meals being served to the seniors. It was just unbelievable. Then, my next encounter with the box was the food started here at Claremont consolidated

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on May 28. While, the following Monday, which was
June 1, the box was clearly dated-- and I understand
expiration on food, but it said it was-- the
packaging was done May 27. To be distributed on June
1st. Well, what happened to May 28th that they
didn't get that first packaging of food opposed to a
later date and packaging of food that I just clearly
do not understand what is going to be addressed in
regards to our seniors and checking on them. Robo
calls. It's called the Robo calls throughout, but
the telephone calls that are being done, nobody's
still never answered what happened to the emergency
contacts that, when residents fill out their
recertification, that the emergency contact paper is
there to know how to get in touch with someone in the
event you don't even hear from a senior or even just
the regular tenant period. But I don't know if that
she was ever brought up to date. So, I understand
clearly what my counterpart down there was talking
about like seeds aren't updated or nothing. That
they just stay where they are. So, I hope that we
can do better. I told Vito from 1818 I'm not here to
throw you under the bus, that when you don't answer
me, then you make me want to throw you under the bus.

I stopped contacting the monitor. I stopped contacting the news just because I thought I had a relationship with Vito. And if he didn't have nobody-- if he couldn't contact me, he should have found somebody else to contact me with the 10,000 emails I was sending to your assistant, Mr. Russ. Evelyn. I was sending them to Evelyn and to Vito. I make a 45 cc email and Alicka can testify that that because everybody that is that everybody that is everybody needs to understand what it is that I am trying to get across. Not just from Claremont consolidation. We were talking about when we had our first video call, Vito, and you know it. It was several people on that call March 13th and we asked for masks before he even masks became a whole issue. And we asked for hand sanitizer. Then, later, April I got a response from Yuko said that there was no masks going to be given to tenant Association president's because, if he had to give it to Juan, he had to give it to everybody. I just didn't see that, especially for the tenant associations who were first responders. I am insulted. My heart is crushed that I was treated like a first responder because I had my own children, my own grandchildren and my family that

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was at risk that I came out with my vice president
and other volunteers. Seven days a week strong and
still move being interrogated about masks, to give
out food, meals daily. I was running to four
development-- not one, four-- within Claremont
Consolidated and I couldn't get a mask or hand
sanitizer. No absolutely no assistance from NYCHA to
assist me in what I was doing. But I want to commend
several workers at the development who did risk their
life. They climbed over walls and terraces to check
on other senior to make sure that they were okay. So
I'm not going to throw everybody under the bus, but I
feel insulted that I never got any response, Mr.
Russ, directly back to say the repairs are something
that need to be addressed. The repairs got to be
addressed. That we're moving forward. That we are
moving forward and that they've got to be addressed.
It's just I'm feeling [inaudible 02:16:23]. So I
hope that Vito will be contacting me. I hope that
the gentleman said that he is going to be coming out
to the developments for a visit. I hope he gets in
touch with me and I thank Alicka always for holding
these hearings to keep you all on your feet because--
shew-- I feel real, real, real bad that this happens

1 in the world, but NYCHA wasn't on point. The
2 emergency management team wasn't on point and I could
3 have gave them a few pointers, but nobody seems to
4 want to listen. To listen to other people. You all
5 leave us as presidents-- we don't ever get to see
6 that [inaudible 02:17:06] to be discussed. And I
7 said that to Vito from 2000-- I said, brings certain
8 presidents to have a seat at the table to discuss
9 important situations. And we never got that call,
10 Mr. Russ, right after you got hired. We never got
11 that call to have that seat at the table. Because
12 when you've got 10 people on the phone talking about
13 a dog, cat, tree would we need to be talking about
14 the major repairs for you ask city Council to address
15 and funding continued-- we still need our roofs
16 done. We still need the roof, the elevators, and
17 heating addressed before we even get back to heating.
18 And it still is going to be-- the man just gave up 1
19 billion dollars. For one, I don't know, because it
20 is going to be the wild wild West and the National
21 Guard is going to be here soon. But I don't know
22 what to say. I'm finished, Alicka. Thank you for
23 always doing this.

25 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

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2 MARIA FORBES: I hope I get some calls
3 from the Housing Authority and I hope they work on
4 them seniors. I really do.

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
6 much, everyone. And I am going to go ahead and say I
7 know that, Ms. Forbes, you are going to get a call or
8 two or three or four because we already know. But,
9 thank you so much for your voice and everything.
10 Then thank you to Ms. Blondel for always, you know,
11 being there. Being a leader, a true leader. So,
12 thank you. Then I just want to make sure that NYCHA
13 wasn't going to-- everyone is okay, right? We can
14 do a head nod. Okay. Thank you so much, everyone,
15 and I'm going to kick it back to committee counsel.

16 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. We will
17 now turn to testimony from members of the public.
18 Just a few housekeeping items. I would like to
19 remind everyone that, unlike our typical hearings, we
20 will be calling individuals one by one, rather than
21 on panels. Once your name is called, a member of our
22 staff will unmute you and the Sergeant-at-arms will
23 set a timer and announce that you may begin. Your
24 testimony will be limited to two minutes. First, we
25 will hear from Lyric Thompson followed by Malika

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2 Conner. I would like to now welcome Lyric Thompson
3 to testify.

4 LYRIC THOMPSON: Hi. Thank you. Can you
5 hear me?

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

7 LYRIC THOMPSON: Hi. My name is Lyric
8 Thompson and I have absolutely no problem throwing
9 Vito Mustaciuolo under the bus. Before I do that,
10 though, I would like to address mold and rents. Two
11 problems in our city. Problems that Housing
12 Preservation and Development do not take seriously
13 enough. I had black mold-- about two and a half
14 feet of black mold-- on the ceiling in my living
15 room. HPD thought it was perfectly acceptable for
16 the landlord just so wipe at it with a rag. That was
17 after licensed mold remediators told them it was
18 black mold and needed to be properly remediated. I
19 was sick for about a month and I ended up having to
20 go to housing court because HPD removed the violation
21 and then tells me to let it grow back through the
22 ceiling. That is not happening. The second problem
23 is rats. Our city is infested with rats, yet, we do
24 not enforce any sort of standard with regard to
25 extermination. A citizen is supposed to leave mouse

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2 feces on their floor as evidence for HPD. Now, I
3 don't mean to be rude, but that is both disgusting
4 and it is hazardous to someone's health. So, from my
5 perspective, we would be very well served if we had
6 landlords exterminate their buildings once a month
7 and, with regard to mold, a licensed mold remediator
8 will take care of the problem the first time, rather
9 than making this an issue that drags out years. Now,
10 our city is facing financial difficulties I now, so,
11 again, I would like to bring up HPD and 421 A and J
12 51 fraud. Vito Mustaciuolo told me in 2016 that he
13 was going to do a dossier on my landlord, Allen Pac
14 Neusch [sp?] and Frank Terahani. These two guys--
15 yes, Vito. Hi. These two guys were getting about a
16 half a million dollars in tax exemptions, yet they
17 were not in compliance in any buildings. Council
18 member Perkins, you have two buildings in your
19 district. Chair Ampry-Samuel, you have two buildings
20 in your district. You have 1660 Broadway which HPD
21 just finally revoked their [inaudible 02:21:26]--

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time's expired.

23 LYRIC THOMPSON: exemption. They were at
24 the 13 year mark, yet, over 120,000 dollars in
25 exemptions and they only have to pay back 20,000

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2 dollars. As the other 100 grand like a present? Why
3 is HPD leaving millions of dollars on the table in
4 the hands of the developers? I think we could use
5 that money. The other building you have in your
6 district is 2106 Fulton. Am I still on or via been
7 kicked off? My minute is up? Two minutes up? 2106
8 Fulton. That is a J51 building. They're claiming a
9 tax exemption on emergency repairs and illegally
10 ripping out the boiler to install individual meters.
11 HPD, Vito Mustaciuolo, Louise Carroll, they all know
12 about it. They just don't care. So, I would
13 actually like to see some of that money re-cooped. I
14 mean, it is billions of dollars if you look at it
15 collectively, as well as 1.5 billion dollars in
16 unpaid ECD fines, which we would be very well served
17 by just sending that to finance. I guess my
18 testimony is, pretty much it. That's it for me. My
19 time is up.

20 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. I would
21 now like to welcome Malika Conner to testify.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time starts now.

23 MALIKA CONNER: Good afternoon and thank
24 you, Chair Ampry-Samuel and Chair Louis and members
25 of the Committee on Public Housing and Housing and

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2 Buildings for the opportunity to testify today. My
3 name is Malika Conner and I am the senior organizer
4 for anti-displacement at the Association for
5 Neighborhood and Housing Development. NHD is a
6 nonprofit organization whose mission is to build
7 community power to win affordable housing in
8 thriving, equitable neighborhoods for all New
9 Yorkers. Our members include more than 80
10 neighborhood-based affordable housing in equitable
11 economic development organizations across New York
12 City and we use capacity building, organizing, and
13 policy advocacy to advance our mission. Under the
14 warrant of habitability, tenants throughout New York
15 City have a right to a safe, sanitary, and livable
16 apartment. This standard also applies to the public
17 areas of residential buildings. However, we know
18 both through data and anecdotally, that many
19 landlords have used the COVID-19 pandemic as an
20 excuse to let buildings slipped into disrepair at a
21 time when making sure buildings are clean and secure
22 and that tenants are protected from hazardous
23 conditions is more important than ever before.
24 Landlords have long subjected tenants across the city
25 to unsanitary and unsafe conditions. This is

inhumane and has always been unacceptable. And when we add the public health crisis caused by these COVID-19 pandemic to the equation, the risk that these conditions posed to tenants' health and safety is only heightened. As we highlight in NHD's 2020 risk chart how is affordable housing threatened in your neighborhood, since the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City, decades of systemic inequalities have only intensified. The pandemic immediately began to ravage communities of color, resulting in a death rate due to COVID-19 that is twice as high for Latin X and black New Yorkers compared to whites. Communities of color also make up the majority of our--

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Time's expired.

MALIKA CONNER: essential workers-- Am I still on? Okay. Who have had to continue to take subways and buses, exposing themselves to the virus at its peak, while simultaneously facing economic precariously and overcrowding in and exacerbating the disease's spread. New Yorkers, especially essential workers on the front line of the pandemic who put their lives at risk to keep New York City running, should not have to face unclean man unsafe conditions

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2 that every corner. During their commute, while at
3 work, and in their home. The health risks they face
4 every day could be mitigated by making sure their
5 building, the place where they go to rest,
6 rejuvenate, and take care of their family, eyes safe,
7 sanitary, and livable. They deserve more. Thank you
8 again for the opportunity to testify and for your
9 work on this important issue. Thank you.

10 COMMITTEE COUNSEL: Thank you. This
11 concludes the public testimony. If we had
12 inadvertently forgotten to call on anyone to testify,
13 please use the Zoom raise hand function and we will
14 try to hear from you now. All right. I will now
15 turn it back over to the Chair Ampry-Samuel to close
16 the hearing.

17 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Before I give
18 my closing remarks, I want to make sure that Chair
19 Louis-- do you have any closing remarks first?

20 CHAIRPERSON LOUIS: Can you guys hear
21 me? I want to thank the advocates for being on
22 today. I'm going to thank you all for the public
23 testimony. I hope that information resonates to HPD,
24 as well as NYCHA today and came to take your concerns
25 seriously. I know that Chair Ampry-Samuel is a

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2 staunch advocate to NYCHA and she will continue to
3 work with you all, but ensure that the administration
4 is doing right by you also. So, thank you so much.
5 Thank you, Chair Ampry-Samuel, for the opportunity to
6 Chair this week. Today and I want to thank the
7 committee counsel and everyone for your support today
8 and your hard work. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you so
10 much, Chair Louis, for all that you do in your
11 advocacy, as well. And I do want to, again,
12 recognize our new committee counsel Audrey son for
13 being an amazing woman today and even in preparation
14 leading up to today's hearing. Again, I look forward
15 to working with you on the committee, as well. And
16 thank you to all the NYCHA residents and advocacy
17 groups. While we have been rocked as a nation and as
18 the city by different pandemics, one being the COVID-
19 pandemic, but also being rocked by a racial and
20 police brutality pandemic, we are going through so
21 much as a city. But I just want everyone to know
22 that we, as a Counsel body are doing everything that
23 we possibly can to be your voice in the city. And I
24 do want to make it known that I felt was so many have
25 said about being the voice at the table because even

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the Council members during this whole crisis and
pandemic have struggled and argued and fought to be a
strong voice at the table with this administration.
And so, we feel you. Like I feel every word that you
said, moves forms. And so, we are going to continue
to fight. And so, as we move into the summer months,
I just want to continue to encourage everyone to be
safe. Wear your mask. Do as much as you can. I
don't like to say social distancing. I like to say
healthy spacing because we are a social people. And
even to say that we are social and distanced, it has
turned a lot of our seniors into a different space
mentally. We have a lot of depression, a lot of
anxiety happening. And so, I am thankful that we are
back in the warmer months and people can go outside,
but we need to make sure that we are protecting
ourselves then we are going to hold the city
accountable and making sure that everyone has the
resources that they need in order to be safe and
healthy as we move forward. So, again, thank you so
much for being here and, with that being said, this
will conclude the New York City Council Committee on
Public Housing joint with the Housing in Buildings

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2 hearing related to COVID sanitizing and cleaning on
3 June 29th, 2020.

4 [gavel]

5 CHAIRPERSON AMPRY-SAMUEL: Thank you.

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 8, 2020