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Testimony of University Settlement before the New York City Council

Joint Oversight Hearing: "Doors, Locks and Lights: the Infrastructure of Resident Safety at NYCHA"

Committee on Public Housing, Chair Alexa Avilés,
Committee on Aging, Chair Crystal Hudson

Submitted by Rohan Lalla,
Case Manager, University Settlement

November 30, 2023

Chair Avilés and Chair Hudson, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

My name is Rohan Lalla, and I am a case manager with University Settlement Project Home, a non-profit organization that offers anti-eviction, and homelessness prevention services, and housing counseling to low-income residents.

My organization works with countless NYCHA residents living in Manhattan and Brooklyn who are struggling with housing issues, such as rental disputes and arrears; lack of repairs; and safety and infrastructure problems. NYCHA needs to take urgent action to improve its physical conditions which threaten its residents' safety daily.

We work primarily in the Lower East Side, Fort Greene, and East New York. NYCHA residents across these neighborhoods are concerned with the state and upkeep of their buildings: the lights in the hallways flicker, the elevators are often broken down, entrance doors don't lock to keep trespassers out. These conditions gravely imperil tenants, especially those who are elderly and disabled. NYCHA, unfortunately, has proven to be unresponsive and understaffed with regard to repairs and tenant complaints, a situation that should be blamed on both underfunding and mismanagement.

Not only do the state of public and shared spaces in NYCHA developments make tenants unsafe, so do the conditions in NYCHA's individual units. My colleagues and I have seen NYCHA drag its feet on repairs that threaten health and safety.

I have personally interacted with NYCHA residents who live with severe health hazards in their apartments daily. One of my clients, a disabled amputee residing with her two daughters who are both disabled as well, lives in Breukelen Houses in East New York. She has been living in a unit that tested

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