



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Manhattan Senators' Letter to Rent Guideline Board Chair on Lack of Public Hearings

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL May 26, 2023

| ISSUE: **RENT GUIDELINES BOARD**

Dear Chair Davidson:

As State Senators from Manhattan, we echo the disappointment of our City Council colleagues that the Rent Guidelines Board (RGB) will not be holding any Public Hearings in our borough. As of today there are only four Public Hearings scheduled—in Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and online. This denies Manhattan tenants the opportunity to engage the Rent Guidelines Board in person and provide testimony on consequential rent-increases prior to the Final Vote. Given the cost-of-living crisis confronting our constituents, it's especially important now to elevate the voices of Manhattan tenants.

Almost half of Manhattan's rental units are rent-regulated, the largest share of any borough behind the Bronx. In 2021, approximately a third of rent-stabilized apartments had one or more older adults—close to double the number for private, unregulated apartments. Accordingly, the number of rent-stabilized tenants in Manhattan makes the borough ideal for an in-person hearing. At the same time, the demographics of rent-stabilized tenants make them uniquely unable to participate in a virtual hearing. It is a truism of the past few years that virtual hearings are exclusionary of older and poorer stakeholders—exactly those

marginalized voices we would wish to elevate in this process.

In 2023, tenants are facing the largest proposed rent-hikes in almost a decade. More than a third of rent-stabilized tenants are already categorized as “severely rent-burdened” under federal guidelines, meaning they pay over 50% of their income on rent. While the median rent in Manhattan has surpassed \$4,100, the median income for rent-stabilized tenants has stagnated at \$47,000. As a result, Manhattan renters are some of the most vulnerable to soaring housing costs. Given the dire circumstances tenants face, public hearings provide an essential opportunity to add the color and depth of experience to the sterility of RGB statistics. When making decisions impacting the livelihood of over a million New Yorkers, we must ensure the process maximizes inclusion. For these reasons, it is critical that Manhattan tenants have access to an in-person Public Hearing before the RGB prior to the Final Vote.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Brad Hoylman-Sigal, NYS Senate 47th District

Cordell Cleare, NYS Senate 30th District

Liz Krueger, NYS Senate 28th District

José M. Serrano, NYS Senate 29th District

Robert Jackson, NYS Senate 31st District

Kristen Gonzalez, NYS Senate 59th District

Brian Kavanagh, NYS Senate 27th District