



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams on using Small Area Fair Market Rents in Housing Choice Voucher Program for the United States
Department of Housing and Urban Development
August 9, 2016

Good morning,

On behalf of the more than 2.6 million residents I represent as Brooklyn borough president, I would like to thank the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for allowing us to submit comments regarding the Small Area Fair Market Rent (SAFMR) for the Housing Choice Vouchers Program.

According to the Housing and Vacancy Survey of 2014, New York City's vacancy rate was 3.45 percent and over 50 percent of renter households pay more than 30 percent of their income towards their rent and almost 30 percent of renter households pay more than 50 percent of their income towards rent. This is a crisis in our city, particularly in Brooklyn. New York University's Furman Center recently

released a report that examined the state of New York City neighborhoods, identifying which ones are gentrifying. Of the neighborhoods in their report, five are located in Brooklyn: Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brownsville/Ocean Hill, Bushwick, Crown Heights South, and Sunset Park.

While these neighborhoods face the greatest risk of becoming unaffordable, the issue of high rent burden neighborhoods is ubiquitous throughout Brooklyn, resulting in increased pressure on long-term residents to leave and relocate from where they have resided for generations. As Brooklyn borough president, I support the recommendations from the Community Service Society, the Legal Aid Society of Brooklyn, and the New York Housing Conference on establishing a more effective fair market rent system by using the SAFMR in the Housing Choice Voucher Program, while also exempting all areas with vacancy rates below five percent. In addition, I support the recommendation of the revision of SAFMR be revised to reflect current market conditions in New York City's rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods. By incorporating these changes to the program, we can move toward an equitable and just housing market that will be beneficial to all citizens.

I thank you again for your time on this matter and look forward to working jointly with the Community Service Society, the Legal Aid Society of Brooklyn, the New York Housing Conference, and HUD to help residents of Brooklyn and New York City obtain equitable and fair housing.