



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

Testimony

Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams

Tuesday, October 16, 2018

New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings

I want to thank the City Council, Chair Robert E. Cornegy, Jr, of the Committee on Housing and Buildings as well as Council Members Ritchie Torres, Jumaane Williams, and Rafael Espinal for advancing legislation, which was introduced on my behalf, to allow for the deployment of heat sensors in certain buildings in New York City, in this Committee. I also would like to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to provide comments at this public hearing.

I am submitting testimony in support of Intro. 0948-2018 that would require the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to identify multiple dwelling units with the highest ratios of temperature violations. It is time that we allow HPD to tackle 21st century problems with 21st century solutions.

On December 1, 2016, I was joined by tenants and housing lawyers in announcing a lawsuit based on data from an expanding technology partnership to monitor heating-related harassment in Brooklyn apartment buildings. The building where we announced this lawsuit, 178 Rockaway Parkway in Brownsville, was a property that has had 104 heat complaints through 311. My message to landlords across Brooklyn was that we're watching; don't harm your tenants' quality of life all because of greed.

Heating harassment is an issue that affects our quality of life. Nobody in the borough of Brooklyn, let alone in the city of New York, should have to suffer during very cold winters with no or intermittent heat. Bad-acting landlords who continue to violate our communities' trust by cutting off heat to drive out rent-stabilized and rent-controlled tenants deserve hefty fines if the condition isn't corrected. During the past two years, my office in collaboration with locally-based non-profit Heat Seek NYC, a New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) Big Apps Winner, have been working with our housing court judges and local

elected officials to help codify the City's ability to use remote temperature monitors to enforce heat standards.

During the heating season, my office receives complaints about heat and hot water regularly. According to data from HPD, there were 117,767 heat-related inspections last heat season alone, yet the same HPD inspectors only wrote 7,548 heat-related violations, a less than 6.5 percent enforcement rate that is clearly impacted by how HPD currently investigates heating complaints. Currently, complaints are received by HPD who in turn alert landlords to the complaint and inform them that inspectors will be visiting the location to check heating levels. In essence, HPD is giving a 'heads-up' to landlords who then bring heating levels up to legal limits in advance of the inspection. This situation is an unnecessary game of "cat and mouse" where the only losers are the tenants.

The deployment of these temperature monitoring devices would help us end this game for good by monitoring heat levels in real-time and move New York City government towards a more dynamic future.

I want to thank all the hard-working advocates like Heat Seek NYC, Legal Aid Society, and tenant organizers across New York City who have been at the forefront of this fight for improved quality of life of our rent-stabilized and rent-controlled tenants. We as policymakers need to empower them with the tools to partner with HPD and make their jobs just a little easier.

I look forward to working with HPD to refine this legislation to ensure we can gather the best metrics to measure and plan for targeted deployment of these temperature monitoring devices.

Thank you

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