



# CASA Community Action for Safe Apartments

A Project of New Settlement Apartments

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## **Official CASA Testimony on Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Housing Regarding DHCR, or the New York State Division of Homes and Community Renewal**

**Submitted by Anita Long, CASA Leader**

My name is Anita Long and I'm a volunteer leader with CASA, also known as Community Action for Safe Apartments, located in the Southwest Bronx and am also a Tenant Leader at 1212 Grand Concourse and I've been organizing for the better part of 3 years. I'm also a member of the Housing Justice for All Coalition under the banner of the #NYHomesGuarantee fighting in 2020 for:

- Good Cause Eviction
- Elimination of Major Capital Improvements
- Implementation of the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019
- Ending Homelessness
- Invest \$3 Billion in Public Housing and creating Social Housing
- Taxing the Rich, to House the Poor

I understand that all tenants in New York, no matter where they live, deserve basic protections. On June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019, WE won changes to an antiquated Rent Control system in the State of New York. No one gave us this win, it was our vision, our organizing, our fight, our determination and our advocacy that influenced the change of the rent laws. It was the tenants and their allies from across the state that made that happen under the united banner of Housing Justice for All! Now, we are back in Albany to finish the uncompleted agenda!

But WE, the tenant movement will not rest on its laurels. This is 2020 and we still have many fights. We are fighting so that all tenants get the benefits they deserve from the new rent laws and what was left off the table! We also are demanding that our state agency HCR holds

landlords accountable! Moving forward we will be aggressively fighting for new rights for all tenants.

HSTPA (Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019) made a tremendous, positive impact in our communities! But we also know that if we stop fighting, Governor Cuomo's HCR will undermine our wins. HCR is overwhelmed by the number of complaints and they are tremendously understaffed, untrained and are using outdated technology to handle this daunting task. The Governor proposed \$25 million to fix HCR, but to ensure the success of HSTPA, the Housing Justice for All coalition is advocating for an additional \$500 million dollars.

HCR has NOT published the reasonable cost schedule and the landlords are still submitting MCI application requests without the Reasonable Cost Schedule, which goes against the new rent laws. Currently, the 1% of landlords that are submitting these exuberant MCI application requests are from the corporate landlords. They are submitting over a thousand MCI applications every year – this is a well-known tool for the corporate landlords and this is an example of a loophole that has to be closed. We are demanding the elimination of MCIs!

Homelessness is on the rise in NYC and across the State and this country. I live in the Bronx, which has more evictions than any other NYC borough. Evictions destroy families and communities: when people move frequently, they don't form the social bonds and pride in place that encourage them to care for their block and look out for their neighbors. Eviction is a key contributor to homelessness. In 2019, the Good Cause and No More MCI bills did not pass, and both are major triggers that contributes to homelessness in our communities. We, Housing Justice for All will continue to aggressively fight to pass the Good Cause Eviction and the Elimination of MCIs.

It is unfortunate, that poverty is profitable, but the reality is that New York is one of the richest states in the richest country in the world. We can afford to make sure that no one is homeless. We are DEMANDING that our legislators take up this fight for a New York Homes Guarantee with us and invest in a budget for all.