

## **Testimony for Housing Joint Legislative Budget Hearing 2.5.20**

Witness: Boris Santos (Housing Justice for All Member)

### **Context/Introduction:**

Hello, my name is Boris Santos and I am a Bushwick resident and proud member of the *Democratic Socialists of America*, an organizational member of the Housing Justice for All Coalition. I want to preface my testimony by disclosing that the policy conclusions and recommendations that I will advocate for here are grounded on the context of the 54<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, the current assembly district in which I reside. It is also important to note that this district overlaps considerably with Senate District 18. All but nine election districts that fall within Assembly District 54 do not fall within Senate District 18.

### **Good Cause Eviction:**

Recently, an electoral campaign conducted a report on the state of the rent stabilized housing stock in Assembly District 54 (the report is attached to this testimony). The report made it known that since 2007 approximately 1,800 units of rent-stabilized units have been deregulated in AD54. In other words, almost thirty percent of the rent stabilized units that once existed in AD54 since 2007 have been deregulated. That's 1,800 less families that no longer have the right to a renewal lease, the right to minimal rent increases, and succession rights.

At a time when it's becoming harder and harder for New Yorkers to put food on the table these families, and thousands more that live in less than 6-unit buildings in AD54 (which the report did not study) could benefit from having more expansive tenants rights that can consequently preserve them in their communities. It is my belief that the Good Cause Eviction bill (S2892A/A5030) is the only legislative proposal that can give back those rights to our tenants. The state of renters and the dwindling of their rights that has occurred in AD54 is emblematic of the housing situation across the state, and it therefore should not be viewed in silo. For this reason, I demand that Good Cause eviction be placed in both house's legislative budget proposals.

### **Funding for Public Housing:**

Currently, our public housing stocking in NYC is facing a capital budget deficit of \$32B. In Assembly District 54, the developments of BedStuy Rehab Houses, 303 Vernon, and Roosevelt Houses face a collective capital deficit of \$223M. Since Governor Cuomo was first elected in 2010, our state government has only supported the allocation of roughly \$550M for the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). That amounts to an annual allocation of only \$50M from the state government for a 400K-unit authority that is bigger than the size of some countries. The Governor's Executive Budget proposal does not mention any additional funding

for NYCHA. This is a reality that public housing residents cannot and should not accept especially at a time when the one of the only options on the table to bring additional revenue to these developments has been to privatize the management side of NYCHA.

I demand that this state government allocate funding to NYCHA to the fullest extent possible this fiscal year. Several progressive budget generators could be implemented to help fund the authority if the case is that this government believes there is not enough funds in our roughly \$175B state budget. These revenue generators include: an ultra millionaires tax (which has been supported in recent years by the NYS Assembly), a stock transfer tax (which our state used to have in the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century), including mezzanine debt in the mortgage recording tax (S7231/A9041), eliminating our 421a tax abatement program for developers which has cut billions of dollars in revenue to our local municipalities, removing tax brakes for high-end condos and coops (S5267), implementing a pied-a-terre tax (S44/A4540), and ensuring that unclaimed lottery prizes be paid into the state treasury (S2711/A1346)

### **Homelessness:**

Based on federal data from the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), we know that upwards of close to 80K people are living homeless in the state of NY. It is time for this government to take the big bold action of helping to combat homelessness. For this reason, the Home Stability Support Act, which would allow for a new statewide rent supplement for families and individuals who are eligible for public assistance benefits and who are facing eviction, homelessness, or loss of housing due to domestic violence or hazardous living conditions, should be placed in this fiscal budget.

### **Small Home Anti-Speculation Act:**

From the years of 2013 to 2017, roughly 1800-2000 1-4-unit homes in NYC were flipped. Flipping is when small homes are purchased by investors only to be immediately resold for substantial profits. This behavior has disproportionately affected some communities more than others. Flipping is a prevalent phenomena in the communities of Southeast Queens and in eastern Brooklyn. Flipping makes it more difficult for prospective buyers to be able to purchase affordable small homes as housing prices become increasingly inflated due to investor flipping. Our state government should prioritize including the Small Home Anti-Speculation Act (S3060E/A5375) in the budget in order to curb the disastrous affects of flipping.

### **Conclusion**

Our Governor has defined progressivism as taking action, it's not "about what you say, it's about what you do." Well, today and throughout this budget process, he and this legislature could take action by supporting these already highly discussed

demands that I've outlined. I thank you for your time and for granting me the opportunity to testify.