Thank you for letting me testify. I'm Alex Yong, a constituent of Assembly District 75 and Senate District 27.

As a tenant who personally lives in a 421-a 'income-restricted' unit, you'd think I'd be "for" the 421-a program to continue. I'm going to shock you: the opposite is true: I'd like to see a total end to 421-a for several reasons but mostly because landlords take advantage of it in non-obvious ways as well as obvious ways.

- A nefarious trend was noticed some years ago (and is still going on) where 421-a landlords were giving lease riders meant for 421-a *market rate* tenants to *all* tenants, no matter the type of unit they were in. These riders say rent regulations end when the tax abatement ends. While this deregulation warning is accurate info for market rate units in my building, it is false for the income-restricted tenants colloquially called the "low income" apartments. By not parsing the lease riders with care (in other words, by giving the rider to *everyone*, regardless of unit type) landlords were (and still are) trying to conflate the 2 types of units (meaning market-rate 421a and income-restricted 421a), willfully and in bad faith, hoping the rider will cause the "low-income" tenants to be frightened and move out on their own accord, fearing the spectre of a huge rent hike. In my building, egregious rent hikes to "low-income" leases aren't allowed per our regulatory agreement with NY State's HFA.

The trend of giving the inaccurate lease riders to all tenants is still going on and disgusting. As such, *actual legislation had to be proposed* in order to fight the trend: the bills in the New York State Legislature are S. 76 (in the NY State Senate), and its "same-as" bill A. 641 (in the NY State Assembly).

- In large sized 421-a buildings, the larger the building, the more opportunities for a landlord to partner with high-tech apps to outfox NYC and NY State by saying the app itself is the "tenant." **An app can't be a tenant.** Saying that an app is a "tenant" is Orwellian doublespeak and insulting to anyone with a brain, because an app can't be a tenant. The specific nomenclature used by my landlord cohort for this type of app is: "furnished housing tenants" and I have audio proof of my landlord cohort using this exact nomenclature. These types of app outfoxes NYC and NY State by facilitating:
    - apartment warehousing,
    - extremely LOUD, non-essential renovations and beautifications done with deceptive DOB permits in order to shield the *actual* landlord by creating 'shell company' paper trails which don't contain the landlord's name nor the app's name, and are meant to impede any investigation, legal discovery process, audit process, research, etc. In other words the apps apply for construction permits through a subcontractor, initiating the hard-to-audit construction evidence trail. These apps even tout this unethical ability as a value: See an example here: CloudUp.com/c-XHXQLn58j ,
    - third-party (or possibly even fourth-party) absentee "property management" done in bad faith similar to (though not exactly the same as) the MetroButler app/Makomi app
    - elitist and borderline racist exclusion: CloudUp.com/c-XHXQLn58j , and more jaw-dropping slick tactics **all while saying every apartment is Rent Stabilized, even the empty ones.**

These high-tech apps belong to a sector that's difficult to research, but to any legislator or anybody who wants to research, begin by being aware of the sector's loose name "proptech",

then type in any specific proptech app's brand name. You can see **a *partial* list** of proptech brands in this graphic: CloudUp.com/csq8ZgloTMd I must stress: there are more apps than what's shown in the graphic. (Minor note: When you're doing the research, you can try to google "furnished housing tenants" or "furnished housing operators", though I doubt much info will come up. As stated earlier, "furnished housing tenants" is the phrase used by *my* landlord cohort when attempting to convince you that these apps are "tenants" (and let's be real, apps aren't tenants); and I have my landlord cohort on audio saying this. My landlord cohort and their counsel knew they were being recorded the entire time we met with them on Zoom (January 13, 2021) and they claimed the apps here are legal (because they're not short-term rentals), although one page in our State regulatory agreement says otherwise, which we discovered later: see screenshot here which says even 31 days, or 2 months, or 3 months, etc. are a violation. The minimum for compliance is 12 months. Note: As there's no standard nomenclature for these apps, the nomenclature will vary depending on which landlord and/or manager you speak with. But these "furnished housing tenants" apps definitely belong to the "proptech" sector. The "proptech" sector is very big, so not every proptech app is a "furnished housing tenants" app. "Proptech" is short for 'property technology'.)

- If 421-a gets revamped into something very different from what it is now, or even if it stays relatively the same with a new name, I hope there can be ==some type of scoring system== where tenants can rate their landlords (maybe quarterly) and then the ratings are reviewed by the state. The results might have great potential to help reveal non-obvious loopholes and foul schemes before they become trends (example: "apps-as-tenants"), as well as provide a tangible record that anyone can research for example JustFix.nyc, or the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, etc. To be clear, a scoring system can be implemented whether 421-a is renewed or dismantled or revamped etc.
    - True now and in the future: **If a landlord bullies tenants, and, overall they act in foul, intimidating and hard-to-prove ways to make tenants' lives miserable, etc., giving a tax break to *that* type of landlord makes even less sense**. Keep in mind that not every tenant is willing to complain to DHCR. Many tenants are unaware they even can!
        - Therefore, a smartly-designed scoring system can reveal trends in the way we're affected by our landlords' behaviors, both positive *and* negative. For example, here, I have proof that my new landlord tried to make me a month-to-month tenant (a violation of Section 4.4 in my building's regulatory agreement with NY State's HFA) and was evading my emails when I asked for transparency, forcing me to eventually file a DHCR RA-90 complaint form, which finally resolved the issue after the property manager and his team ignored me for 106 days (with no physical office I could visit at the time (summer of 2020)). In December 2021, one former on-site employee even sent me an email saying "Your feedback is not welcome." He was removed from here a few days later, and no, I did not get him fired, but some other tenant might've; you don't talk to people in that rude manner. These types of landlords are in great abundance in NYC and getting the 421-a tax breaks, and

there's essentially no monitoring on how they treat us! Considering the size of the tax breaks they're getting, it would be wise to have a scoring system so New York City and State know tenants are being treated with dignity: **Maybe a system inspired by HUD's REAC scoring system,** I mean, not exactly the same, but **it's a base to get ideas from.** As of right now I'm thinking a non-anonymous system would be best, but I welcome all ideas. Example, here in this

building, there's LIHTC annual recertification of income; a survey could piggyback on that. But the main purpose/premise of the survey/scoring system is: Before you give rewards to landlords, no matter what the program, it's logical for the city/state to make sure landlords are not bullying us and/or behaving with fraudulent intent towards the city/state.   Strangely enough, this "scoring" idea was inspired by my friend Caroline who told me that just like an Uber passenger can rate an Uber driver, that same driver has the right to rate you too. This can **and should** be applied to housing. I can be reached via email at heuyjohn@gmail.com Thanks for letting me give written testimony.