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Statement of Council Member Daniel R. Garodnick
New York State Assembly
Committee on Housing
January 16, 2008

My name is Dan Garodnick, and I represent City Council District 4 on the east side of Manhattan, which includes Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper Village, Waterside Plaza, Tudor City, Turtle Bay and parts of the Upper East Side. Many of my constituents benefit from the protection and stability of the rent-stabilization and Mitchell-Lama programs. However, our current system is riddled with loopholes and oversights that pose a grave danger to our dwindling stock of affordable housing.

I strongly support the intent of the legislation presented today: to tighten the rules preserving affordable housing and to make the stability of living in rent stabilized, rent controlled, Section 8 and Mitchell Lama housing more widely available. Hundreds of thousands of residents would be positively affected by this legislation.

As we all know, New Yorkers are struggling. We have lost staggering numbers of jobs in the past year and there is a 3.6 billion dollar budget gap projected for next year. An already precarious housing situation will only be made worse by our current economic situation. It has become more and more challenging for families of low or middle income to balance the expense of food, shelter, healthcare and other necessary living costs.

In my own district, especially in Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village, we have experienced the devastating loss of financially-attainable housing. In 2001, the property began to deregulate units through both vacancy and high rent-high income decontrol. The consequence is that the community once revered as the bastion of middle class housing is losing affordable units at an alarming rate.

We need laws that close loopholes in the system, including legislation that addresses the "unique and peculiar clause" for Mitchell Lama tenants. We need laws that give our residents the right to adjust their own housing rules, including allowing New York City legislators to strengthen rent regulation laws through the passage of local laws. The comprehensive legislation before us today addresses these weaknesses in our housing regulations and many more.

I thank the Assembly and this committee for their continued focus on the issues facing New Yorkers of all incomes and for the opportunity to testify today.