

**Testimony from NYCHA’s Executive Vice President of Strategy & Innovation  
Arvind Sohoni  
*Transparency at NYCHA*  
Committee on Public Housing  
Wednesday, February 26, 2025 – 10 a.m.  
New York City Hall Committee Room**

Chair Banks, members of the Committee on Public Housing, residents, community advocates, and members of the public: good morning. My name is Arvind Sohoni, and I am the Executive Vice President of Strategy and Innovation at the New York City Housing Authority. I’m pleased to be joined by Jonathan Gouveia, Executive Vice President for Real Estate Development; Laura Bellrose, Chief of the Landlord and Tenant Division; Brian Honan, Executive Vice President of Intergovernmental Affairs; and other members of the Authority’s leadership team.

In 2019, the Authority signed a regulatory agreement with the City, HUD, and the US Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York. The Agreement was an acknowledgement of the agency’s poor performance and mistakes — including its systemic lack of transparency. Over the past six years, we have executed on several reforms to open the doors to the agency. As stated in our Transformation Plan, the Authority is wholeheartedly committed to transparency and accountability — we believe that data about our performance and other matters helps our partners better understand our work while supporting our efforts to transform the Authority and better serve residents. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss how we are ensuring and expanding that transparency.

**Public Reports, from Section 9 Performance Metrics to PACT Partner Oversight**

Our website is the primary repository of our publicly available data and information. Service outages, individual work orders, and lead paint testing progress can all be tracked. Reports are available with extensive information about the capital needs at all our properties as well as our progress in meeting the various mandates of the HUD Agreement. The action plans we developed to address the HUD Agreement pillar areas are also available. Metrics on wide-ranging elements of our operations – from the productivity of maintenance workers and the skilled trades to the number of vacant apartments and rent collection rates – are updated monthly. Dashboards on PACT and our capital projects, including sustainability and Sandy recovery initiatives, include up-to-date progress on construction across the city. The Housing Authority also maintains data in the City’s Open Data portal and voluntarily participates in

Checkbook NYC. Board meetings can be viewed live in person and on YouTube, where we also keep videos and transcripts of all prior meetings. Our Community Engagement and Partnerships map enables residents to access workforce programs and other vital services and resources available from our partners. We also include background on the Authority's scope, developments, and population, along with detailed information and reports about our big-picture plans and policies, contracts, spending, and resident hiring. We even catalogue the public artwork at Housing Authority developments, which includes a Marion Greenwood mural at Red Hook East and Richmond Barthe's sculptures at Kingsborough and Johnson.

We have also used the MyNYCHA app to connect residents with a wealth of personalized information at their fingertips. In the app, residents can create new work orders, check the status of existing tickets, and find information on service outages. Our Self-Service Portal enables public housing residents to complete their annual recertifications, request transfers, and more. Section 8 participants and landlords also have access to a range of functions through their respective portals.

### **PACT: Partnering with Residents**

We also believe that transparency and resident engagement are fundamental to the success of our PACT program, which has improved the physical conditions and quality of life for thousands of residents. Residents are not only involved at every step of the PACT planning process but also help lead the selection of development teams, prioritize investments, and work closely with our PACT partners after conversion. During the planning process, we coordinate with resident leaders to share information, keep residents informed, and answer any questions about the process. With these leaders, we host regular meetings and conduct tabling, office hours, open houses, info sessions, and workshops. A PACT Resource Team also supports resident leaders by connecting them to trusted, third-party advisors and consultants. And free legal assistance is available to residents via a PACT hotline operated by the Legal Aid Society.

Resident committees have now selected 21 partner teams. This includes developers, general contractors, property managers, and social services providers who will elevate their quality of life and address priorities for their communities. In the past four years, resident leaders across 76 developments have selected PACT partner teams to provide their communities with tailored

investments through the program. Together, our partners and residents are creating detailed community plans to capture their decision-making during the pre-development process.

As mentioned, the PACT Dashboard provides an unprecedented level of insight into the PACT program. The dashboard, easily accessible on our website, tracks and displays performance metrics on maintenance and repairs, tenancy, construction, and resident hiring.

Since we know it is important to the committee, I would also like to provide some additional information and context on evictions at PACT sites. The PACT program, in accordance with federal rules and regulations, provides strong anti-displacement protections for residents. At the time of conversion to Project-Based Section 8, all authorized residents are offered a new lease – regardless of whether they owe back rent. We also require our PACT partners to work with on-site social service coordinators to conduct proactive outreach to help connect families with resources, such as accessing public benefits or setting up payment installment plans. PACT partners must make every effort to avoid bringing a lease issue to Housing Court, and the Housing Authority closely monitors those outreach efforts. Eviction is always a measure of last resort, after all other ways to resolve tenant issues have been exhausted.

Section 8 lease agreements under PACT automatically renew every year and cannot be terminated except for good cause, which includes criminal activity and nonpayment. Residents can continue to add people to their household, and permanent members will continue to have succession rights.

We believe in the power of affordable housing to stabilize and support communities and provide a pathway to opportunity – and our goal at the Housing Authority is to keep residents housed. As a result, eviction rates are very low across Housing Authority sites, including PACT developments – substantially lower than at other public housing authorities across the nation and substantially lower than the citywide eviction rate.

### **Partnering for Progress**

Transparency and accountability are core values that drive our work. Providing information to the public about our progress and our ongoing challenges are vital to our efforts to better serve residents. Transparency is also essential for effective collaboration with our partners, including

members of the Council. We look forward to our continuing partnership with you, in service to residents, and are happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.