

NYCHA CHAIRMAN JOHN B. RHEA  
NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE GRANT TO ALLEVIATE ASTHMA  
MONDAY, MAY 9, 2011 – 3:00 – 4:00 AM  
JEFFERSON HOUSES SENIOR CENTER, 2205 FIRST AVENUE, NYC

Good afternoon, everyone. And Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers who are with us today.

Thank you, Administrator Carrión, for that gracious introduction and for your partnership in supporting New York City's most precious resource: our youth.

To NYCHA's residents who are with us this morning, to our colleagues, to our elected leaders, and to our many partners throughout government and in the public sector who believe as we do that NYCHA is vital to New York, and that supporting the families of public housing is central to ensuring New York City's prosperity—thank you. It is truly a pleasure to be with you today as we stand together in support of our children and their families.

You only need to look at the statistics to know that for far too long, far too many of our children have spent their lives fighting to do something most of us take for granted; something so natural, we do it nearly 20-thousand times a day. But for a child with

asthma, each of those 20-thousand breaths can be excruciating.

Each breath takes concentration that a young boy could otherwise spend learning his Alphabet. Each breath takes focus that a young girl would rather spend learning how to operate a microscope.

Moments of their childhood—learning, playing, and growing—are seized from our children with each painful breath.

But today, together, we are saying that our communities are greater than asthma. And we affirm that we are committed to combat the conditions that cause asthma and make it worse—both indoors and out.

I'm proud to have my colleague, Commissioner Margarita López, with me today. As many of you know, Commissioner López is NYCHA's Environmental Coordinator. But that title doesn't begin to tell the full story of her passion and her tireless advocacy to make NYCHA's communities more livable and more sustainable for our children and for their children.

I want to thank two of New York's finest legislators—our champion in Washington, Congressman Charles Rangel—and

East Harlem's trailblazer, Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito. Whenever NYCHA needs you, you never fail to answer the call, so thank you.

To Regional Administrator Adolfo Carrión and Director John Gant—your energy and your resolve are inspiring and invaluable. Thank you for helping us to take this big step on behalf of our children.

And let me thank two friends of public housing—New York Academy of Medicine President Jo Ivy Boufford and LSA Family Health Service's Director of Environmental Health Ray Lopez. The New York Academy of Medicine is truly a national treasure, leading the charge to eliminate health disparities, prevent disease, and promote the public's health. And Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Services has been a pillar of the East Harlem community for more than 50 years, and so much of our work to promote our residents' health and well-being is due in large part to the work of LSA and other non-profit organizations.

On behalf of NYCHA's families, in East Harlem and across New York City—thank you.

Supporting our children and saving them from this debilitating disease will take our collective resolve. Our youth are not only our most precious resource, but they are indeed our future and the future health and prosperity of New York City rests on how well we support them today.

On our children's behalf, and on their families' behalf—thank you very much.