

May 31, 2026

Dear 2026 Quadrennial Advisory Commission,

My testimony focuses on advocating for a reasonable increase in the cost of living for New York City's elected officials given the significant inflationary pressures we've faced over the last decade.

When the 2015 Quadrennial Advisory Commission convened, it was understood that periodic reviews would occur every four years. Now, as we enter the tenth year since this ruling was enacted, the cost of living in one of the world's most expensive cities has become increasingly unsustainable.

I want to be clear that my testimony is not motivated by personal financial gain, but by what I believe is sound public policy. This issue is about retaining New Yorkers—particularly working- and middle-class residents whose contributions to our economy and tax base help fund the services, programs, and investments that benefit all New Yorkers. A strong and stable tax base enables the City Council to continue supporting essential services, especially for our most financially vulnerable residents. Policies that help people stay, work, and invest in New York are ultimately investments in the city's long-term fiscal health and shared prosperity.

Since the last review, living costs have surged by **35.9%**. To put this into perspective:

- Rent that was once **\$1,600** per month in 2016 has skyrocketed to nearly **\$2,200**.
- A weekly grocery bill that used to be **\$100** in 2016 has climbed to **\$135**.
- The cost of an unlimited subway pass has increased from **\$116.50** to **\$136**.

The impact of these changes is significant. I want to express my gratitude to the commission for your diligent efforts during this process and strongly encourage you to consider this cost of living increase.

Respectfully,

Councilmember Shanel Thomas-Henry