



DANIEL SQUADRON
SENATOR, 25TH DISTRICT

THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK

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**TESTIMONY OF STATE SENATOR DANIEL SQUADRON REGARDING THE
DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2013 FOR THE NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY,
JULY 25, 2012.**

My name is Daniel Squadron and I represent the 25th Senate District in the New York State Senate. My district includes the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Greenpoint, Williamsburg, Vinegar Hill, Fulton Ferry, Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill, Carroll Gardens and Gowanus, and the Manhattan neighborhoods of Tribeca, Battery Park City, the Lower East Side, Chinatown, the Financial District, Little Italy, SoHo and the East Village. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this hearing.

Among the New Yorkers that I represent are the residents of 24 New York City Housing Authority Developments, spanning the Lower East Side, East Village, Williamsburg, and Chinatown. The Manhattan part of my district includes the Bernard Baruch Houses, Marianna Bracetti Houses, Pedro Albizu Campos, East 4th Street Rehab, First Houses, Samuel Gompers Houses, Rafael Hernandez Houses, Fiorello H. LaGuardia Houses, Lower East Side I, II, and III, Lower East Side Rehab, Max Meltzer Tower, Jacob Riis Houses, Henry Rutgers Houses, Seward Park Extension, Alfred E. Smith Houses, Two Bridges, Vladeck Houses, Lillian Wald Houses, and 45 Allen Street. In Brooklyn, I represent three developments: the Taylor Street-Wythe Avenue Houses, Williams Plaza, and Independence Towers.

My constituents experience firsthand the challenges described by the New York City Alliance to Preserve Public Housing, and that is why I generally support the recommendations listed in the Alliance's NYCHA FY 2013 Draft Annual Plan Position Statement.

Without adequate city, state and federal support, NYCHA remains chronically underfunded and unable to address many of the concerns that are enumerated by the Alliance and experienced by my constituents every day. Currently, the agency faces a \$61 million operating deficit, and \$6 to \$7 billion in much-needed capital improvements.

For years, I've been working with other city, state and federal officials and advocates to address the agency's funding issues. In 2010, I was proud to sponsor and pass legislation "federalizing" city- and state-owned developments, allowing NYCHA to draw nearly \$75 million a year in new federal operating funds, forever, as well as hundreds of millions of dollars for capital improvements.

Additionally, working with Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh, Councilmember Rosie Mendez, Good Old Lower East Side, and more than 100 other elected officials and community groups, we built the SOUND Housing Campaign, a broad-based coalition formed to support public housing and address NYCHA's long-term financial needs.

Both federalization and SOUND Housing are important examples of the ability to make real improvements and move NYCHA toward a stable and sustainable financial footing through broad-based collaboration.

However, as we work toward these solutions, and even with the current funding challenges, there are ways to improve the lives of NYCHA's hundreds of thousands of residents within the agency's current means.

Principal among this is resident safety. The impact of crimes, large and small, in NYCHA developments is pervasive, as it is in anyone's home, wherever they live. Safety concerns were reignited - and brought to the attention of the entire City - by the recent shooting of a police officer in Seward Park Houses in my district during a vertical security sweep.

Although I'm pleased by NYCHA's emphasis in this year's Draft Annual Plan on improving its CCTV camera systems following the recommendation of the Safety and Security Taskforce, I'm concerned by its plans for implementation. My colleagues and I have allocated millions of taxpayer dollars towards the installation of cameras in an additional 80 developments. Yet the vast majority of these funds have not been spent – and NYCHA's cost estimates for installation continue to rise. The lack of a clear timeline and the rising costs for implementing these cameras are especially problematic in a year in which NYCHA developments have seen a 28% increase in gun violence.

I am also greatly concerned by the fact that NYCHA is the only landlord in New York City that is required to pay for its own policing services, though NYCHA-assigned officers are often redeployed elsewhere. Since 1994, NYCHA has had to give at least \$58 million a year to the City of New York; due to inflation, NYCHA now pays over \$70 million a year for "special police services." Under this arrangement, residents are essentially charged twice for policing services – once through local taxes like all other New Yorkers, and once through the reimbursement required of their landlord.

In December 2011, I, along with my colleagues, sent a letter to Deputy Mayors Holloway and Steel explaining that, despite the \$70 million a year that NYCHA is charged for police services, Police Service Area officers are regularly redeployed to non-NYCHA related operations, such as the Occupy Wall Street protests. Since it is our understanding that NYCHA is not compensated when PSA officers are pulled from their home command, we requested an explanation for this arrangement.

To be clear, under no circumstances should force strength in NYCHA or citywide be reduced, nor should NYPD's flexibility in deployment be limited. Rather, the issue is that in being required to pay for NYPD services, NYCHA bears a unique burden -- a burden that is not borne by any other landlord or the vast majority of special events in the city. It is a burden that is unfair for residents and a major contributor to the authority's structural deficit; I urge the Board to join the many leaders across the city who have called for an end to this arrangement. (The letter and the reply received from Police Commissioner Kelly this month are attached.)

I remain committed to working with my colleagues in city, state, and federal government and advocates across the city to secure the funding, tools and support NYCHA needs to provide my

constituents, and all public housing residents with safe, affordable and well-maintained homes. And I remain committed to working with NYCHA to ensure that it uses the resources it does have to ensure residents' personal safety and security, provide high-quality responsive service, improve quality of life, and administer programs that serve the greatest number of individuals and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

