



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Daniel L. Squadron

Joint Testimony of New York State Senator Daniel Squadron and New York State Assemblymember Brian Kavanaugh Before the City Council Housing Committee Regarding Proposed Resolution No. 1329-A

DANIEL L. SQUADRON May 21, 2012

May 21, 2012

We are Daniel Squadron, the State Senator representing the 25th Senate District including parts of Brooklyn and Manhattan, and Brian Kavanaugh, the Assemblymember representing the 74th Assembly District on the East Side of Manhattan.

We want to thank Speaker Christine Quinn, Chair Erik Dilan, the members of the Housing Committee, and the entire Council for their advocacy on many important housing issues, including reform of the Rent Guidelines Board. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for considering bill S741B / A6394B as part of Resolution 1329-A.

The New York City Rent Guidelines Board establishes rent adjustments for the approximately one million units subject to the Rent Stabilization Law in the City. As such, its decisions dramatically impact the lives of millions of New Yorkers and the future of our city.

Yet the RGB currently lacks the checks and balances that should go hand-in-hand with such serious responsibility.

Our legislation, S741B / A6394B, would require City Council confirmation of the Mayor's appointees to the Rent Guidelines Board and expand qualifications for membership on the board.

By requiring Council approval of the Mayor's appointees, S741B / A6394B would bring necessary checks and balances to the system while making the appointment process more open and democratic.

Requiring advice and consent of a legislative body is an important way of ensuring that those appointed to key government positions by the executive are vetted by representatives of the people and that there is an opportunity for public discussion of appointees' qualifications and vision for their role. The Rent Guidelines Board directly impacts the lives of millions of New Yorkers and plays an important role in the future of the entire City. Appointees should undergo the same scrutiny and public process required of many other executive appointments.

S741B / A6394B would also make more New Yorkers eligible to serve as public members. Current qualifications considered for public member appointments are five years of experience in finance, economics or housing. This bill would expand the list of qualifications to serve as a public member by adding five years of experience in public service, social services, urban planning, or social sciences.

Expanded qualifications, when combined with a public advice and consent process, would lead to a greater diversity of views on the Rent Guidelines Board than currently exists.

By requiring Council approval of appointments to the Rent Guidelines Board and broadening qualification for membership, we can create necessary accountability, ensure a broader variety of voices are represented on the board, and better protect the affordability

that has made New York the vibrant and diverse city it is today.

Thank you again for considering our legislation, and for putting forward your resolution. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue here and in Albany.