

My name is LT Tierney. I live in the 25<sup>th</sup> Senate District and the 56<sup>th</sup> Assembly District with my spouse and our 8-month-old baby. I'm relatively new to the campaign for Good Cause Eviction, because up until a few months ago, I didn't think it affected me much. I'm here today despite the fact that if you don't pass this bill, my presence here could result in me losing my home the next time my lease comes up for renewal.

My partner and I moved into our apartment in a six-unit building in the Fall of 2020, when we were expecting our baby, and we thought we'd lucked out by finding a home that could accommodate the three of us, in roughly the same neighborhood that we've been in for the past eight years. The rent was beyond what was affordable to us, but we figured it was the best we could do.

But then, over the summer, our building was acquired by Greenbrook Partners. Greenbrook is a private equity-funded firm that, per their website, has spent close to three quarters of a BILLION dollars over the past couple of years buying up properties in neighborhoods like mine across the NY area. They've acquired about 100 properties in Brooklyn and Queens in just the past two years.

We didn't think much of the acquisition at first. But then, one of our neighbors' leases came up for renewal. Greenbrook didn't offer her a new lease at first. They did, however, suggest to her that a rent increase of about 50% would be appropriate, given market conditions. This would take her rent from a barely-affordable-for-her \$2500 to a whopping \$3800. She explained that, while she very much wanted to remain in the apartment, the most she could possibly afford would be a 3% increase.

Thus began a back-and-forth series of emails and phone calls that have left her without a lease and facing extreme precarity, which is taking an immense emotional toll on her.

The rest of us in the building, all of whom moved in during the pandemic, see the writing on the wall. It's just a matter of time before our leases expire and we face the same unconscionable increases.

A couple of months ago, my neighbors and I learned about the Greenbrook Tenants Association. This is a group of folks from all over Brooklyn, who are dealing with the devastating consequences of having a landlord that is essentially a faceless private-equity fund.

My fellow tenants' stories are harrowing.

Low-income families whose heads of household have lived in their apartments for their entire lives, who have had their buildings acquired by Greenbrook and have been served notices to vacate.

They've acquired buildings with unregulated units or units that have been illegally destabilized, then they've served notices to vacate on current tenants, done some renovations, and jacked the rents up to \$8,000/month for a three bedroom apartment.

Those tenants who remain in their homes are subject to intrusive construction harassment, with their buildings turning into dusty, loud construction sites. As of October, the Tenant Harassment Prevention Task Force found over 800 safety violations in just 33 of Greenbrooks properties

They've repeated this pattern over and over across Brooklyn and Queens.

The more I've learned about Greenbrook's business practices, the more infuriated and afraid I've become. So, I'm here testifying on behalf of my neighbors who are in much more precarious situations

than I am, despite the fact that by standing in solidarity with my neighbors, I run the risk of Greenbrook declining to renew my lease, or demanding an unaffordable rent increase to drive us out.

Because let's be clear: if tenants like me organize with our neighbors to demand safe, clean building conditions, or to oppose unreasonable rent hikes, there's nothing to prevent the landlord from saying "I'm going to get rid of this tenant because they're a thorn in my side." And then raising the rent or serving a notice to vacate.

If my partner and I lose our lease, and have to find a new home, we'll land on our feet, though we will likely have to leave our beloved neighborhood. But for plenty of my fellow tenants, in the Greenbrook Tenants association and across the city, if they don't get offered a lease renewal, or if their rents are increased by more than 3%, they could very easily end up experiencing homelessness.

Housing law as it's currently written doesn't account for the logic of greedy machines like Greenbrook Partners. We need you, our representatives, to take this important step toward ensuring that tenants in market-rate units have some form of protections, to push back against these inhumane market forces. Otherwise, we tenants have no leverage to push back against the displacement of our neighbors, double digit rent hikes, and unsafe building conditions.

Thank you to Senator Brisport, and of course to Senator Salazar and all of the bill's cosponsors. Thank you to all of my coalition partners with Housing Justice for All for leading the fight for Good Cause Eviction.