



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Jumaane D. Williams

October 29, 2020

Gregory P. Russ
Chair & Chief Executive Officer
New York City Housing Authority
90 Church Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair Russ:

I write to you today regarding the recent and very concerning news that there has been an unacceptable substantial undercount in the number of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) apartments where there is lead contamination, and also where children under the age of six may reside.

According to the announcement, the number of children exposed may reach tens of thousands, in triple the number of apartments previously certified. This situation is a dire emergency for children across the city, and I would like an answer to the following questions as soon as possible on behalf of the residents of NYCHA:

1. In 2018, the number of apartments certified to have had lead contamination was 3,000. Since that time, how many of those units have been remediated?
2. The current number of units noted in the announcement is said to be 9,000. Is that number certain, and of those units, how many, if any have been remediated?
3. Please provide a list of all NYCHA developments, the units in those developments that contain lead, and the number and ages of children who reside or spend time (daycare, grandparents) in those apartments.
4. What is the schedule for emergency remediation for all of the units? If no such plan exists, why not, and when will one be designed and implemented?
5. What is the plan for health screenings of all children, their parents, and all seniors who are or have been exposed to lead poisoning in their homes? If no such plan exists, why not, and when will one be designed and implemented?
6. What is the plan and schedule for assessing all of the units that need a lead inspection? If no such plan or schedule exists, why not, and when will they be designed and implemented?
7. What were the initial metrics used that allowed for such a wide miscalculation as we see here?

I also request an emergency meeting with your office, NYCHA resident leaders, staff, health professionals, and elected officials to review an emergency plan of action to fix this situation immediately.

Finally, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines](#), there is no safe blood lead level, and anything above level 5 is considered blood poisoning. The presence of lead in these apartments presents a clear and present danger to the children and families living in them. I propose, with the thousands of empty hotel rooms and suites across the city, that these rooms immediately be used to house these families until the units are safe for the return of children. Residents of those units should not be required to pay rent on those apartments until they are once again habitable.

I look forward to receiving your response within seven business days of receiving this letter. For further discussion, please contact First Deputy Public Advocate Nick E. Smith at nsmith@advocate.nyc.gov and Delsenia Glover, Deputy Public Advocate of Housing Equity at dglover@advocate.nyc.gov. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jumaane D. Williams
Public Advocate for the City of New York

cc:
Mayor Bill de Blasio
New York City Housing Authority Federal Monitor Bart M. Schwartz