



March 9, 2026

Dear Council Member Sanchez, members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings and staff,

Thank you so much for accepting our comments on the [SAFER Homes Act](#).

We are thrilled that we share a priority for using municipal debt collection as a strategy for tenant protection, increasing cooperative homeownership opportunities and the preservation and development of homes and other community assets. We also continue to share the Council’s urgency to bring a city foreclosure program for distressed properties back online as a tenant protection measure--the longer we don’t have such a program, the more tenants make their homes in buildings that are not safe for their occupancy while landlords shirk their obligations to maintain safe housing.

We are pleased to see that vacant lots and unoccupied buildings are included in the categories of property that will be eligible for city foreclosure and excluded from any future lien sales, regardless of tax class. As some of those properties are likely candidates for uses beyond housing--such as new community green spaces, and affordable cultural and community uses--we recommend having a mechanism for agencies beyond Housing Preservation and Development to influence the selection of properties for foreclosure from those eligible.

**Maximizing Impact**

The proposed legislation allows the Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development to determine the number of properties subject to foreclosure action for the first year of the program, as long as they are within the twentieth percentile or higher of the bill’s

indexed distress score. In subsequent years, the Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development will select properties within the twentieth percentile or higher without discretion. These properties are the “worst of the worst” in the City and we support the proposed legislation as it will provide a pathway to ensure tenants no longer live in dangerous conditions.

Since this is a companion program to the lien sale and the criteria for inclusion in this revamped program will be expanded, the bill should be amended to require that properties with outstanding liens sold in past lien sale rounds—those currently held by 1998-2, 2021 and 2025 trusts—be examined for potential inclusion in City Foreclosure based on indications of physical distress. The tax lien trust managers have no accountability to tenants in buildings with liens and neighborhoods with deteriorating buildings. Where such buildings can be routed to more responsible ownership, existing liens should be defecked to give the City the opportunity to foreclose instead of the privately managed tax lien trust (which will auction to the highest bidder should it succeed in foreclosure, instead of transferring to HPD-vetted landlords). Such review should happen at every round of City Foreclosure to identify properties that should be routed to the program that might have been previously included in a lien sale.

### **Harnessing the Preservation Powers of Community Land Trusts (CLTs)**

The bill as drafted requires HPD to “consider whether” a third party applying for property disposition is a “responsible legal tenant, not-for-profit organization, neighborhood-based-for-profit individual or organization, or community land trust.” We think this language should be strengthened to prohibit awarding property to a for-profit entity unless no legal tenant, not-for-profit organization, or community land trust has expressed a willingness to partner with HPD on redevelopment.<sup>1</sup>

A further improvement would be to require priority to be given to legal tenants, not-for-profit organizations and neighborhood-based-for-profit individuals or organizations **that are partnering with community land trusts** for permanent preservation of affordability over all other potential redevelopment partners HPD considers.

Thank you so much for all you do,

The Abolish the Tax Lien Sale Coalition

Members:

Community Service Society of New York  
East New York Community Land Trust  
New Economy Project  
TakeRoot Justice

Endorsers:

NYC Communities for Change  
New York Civil Liberties Union  
The Center for NYC Neighborhoods

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<sup>1</sup> Similar to the language of Public Land for Public Good, [Int. No. 650-2026](#).

Western Queens Community Land Trust  
Brooklyn Level Up  
Bronx CLT  
Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition  
Coalition for Community Advancement  
NYCCLI  
MHANY Management Inc.