

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 21, 2015

Shola Olatoye
Chair & Chief Executive Officer
New York City Housing Authority
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Dear Ms. Olatoye,

As the coldest of the winter months approach, we write to urge you to ensure that a dangerous practice concerning heating New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings is completely abandoned.

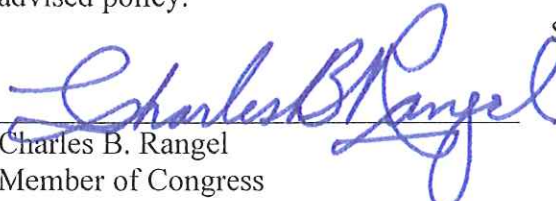
According to a lawsuit filed by Public Advocate Letitia James and Legal Services of NYC on December 16, 2015, NYCHA has shut down heat in its properties overnight unless outside temperatures are lower than 21 degrees Fahrenheit – 11 degrees below freezing. As you know, City law mandates that, should exterior temperatures dip below 40°F, interior temperatures must remain at or above 55°F.

More than 400,000 New Yorkers are NYCHA residents. More than half of these residents live below the poverty line. These New Yorkers pay rent and, in return, depend on NYCHA to fulfill a very reasonable need: a safe and decent shelter.

A practice that deprives tenants of heat during the coldest months of the year not only fails to meet that need – it is irresponsible and demeaning. Last February, the average temperature in New York City was approximately 24°F. Year after year, we hear of the tragedies that occur when such temperatures force tenants to use their ovens or space heaters to warm their apartments, which have caused fires and even deaths. In addition, nearly one in five NYCHA residents are age 62 or older, and more than one-quarter are under 18. Forcing NYCHA's oldest and youngest tenants to suffer with such cold temperatures is unconscionable.

Reducing costs is a valuable and understandable exercise. However, doing so should never come at the cost of our constituents' wellbeing. We urge you to immediately issue guidance condemning this practice and ensure that no NYCHA buildings continue to subscribe to this ill-advised policy.

Sincerely,


Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress


Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



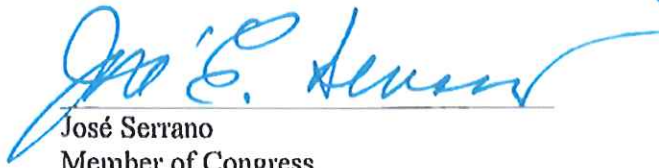
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress



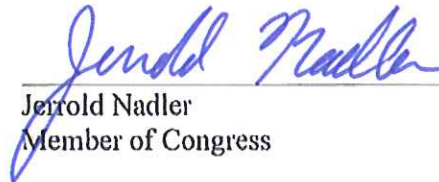
José Serrano
Member of Congress



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Hakeem S. Jeffries
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress