Testimony of Paula Z. Segal
Before the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Paula Segal; I am a senior staff attorney at the Community Development Project (CDP), a non-profit legal services organization that works with grassroots and community-based groups in New York City to dismantle racial, economic and social oppression. My practice, Equitable Neighborhoods, works with directly impacted communities to respond to City planning processes and private developers, helping to make sure that people of color, immigrants, and other low-income residents who have built our city are not pushed out in the name of “progress.”

I am here today to commend the Council and support Intros 226 and 835, which together will shine a light on the warehousing of properties by private landlords. Without a registry that private landlords are required to enter when their properties have no social purpose, there is no way for elected officials to identify opportunities to expand affordable housing or community space in their districts. Current law does not penalize vacancy - it doesn’t even consider it a problem as long as property taxes are paid! Intro 226 would change that. It would align our regulatory system with the lived experience of residents who realize that a vacant property is both a missed opportunity and a liability for its neighbors.

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