

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3215

October 15, 2025

The Honorable Eric Adams
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Lisa Bova-Hiatt
New York City Housing Authority
Chief Executive Officer
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Adams and Ms. Bova-Hiatt:

The recent building collapse at Mitchel Houses, caused by a gas explosion in the building's chimney and boiler system, underscores the urgent need to replace highly flammable fossil-fuel systems with fire-proof, all-electric alternatives.

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) should prioritize Mitchel Houses for full electrification—and for heat pump installation in particular—as a matter of public safety and public health. Heat pumps offer a far safer alternative to aging boilers that rely on combustible fuels. Electrification is not only a strategy for combating catastrophic climate change; it is a strategy for preventing catastrophic fires and building collapses. The fire hazards of legacy heating systems have been ignored for far too long.

It is only by fortune—not foresight—that no lives were lost in the chimney collapse. The safety of NYCHA residents, however, should never be left to chance. Electrifying public housing means defusing the ticking time bomb of flammable fossil-fuel systems that threaten both life and property.

Even though the collapse resulted in no fatalities or physical injuries, the tenants of Mitchel Houses are victims of trauma. Many were terrified by the explosion, by the experience of fleeing their homes in panic, and by the sight of bricks raining down from the top of their building. Many no longer feel safe in their own homes. And all will be deprived of cooking gas for a painfully long period—hardship compounded by hardship.

Imagine if Mitchel Houses had heat pumps instead of an obsolete boiler connected to a chimney: the tenants would have been spared both the trauma of a building collapse and the pain of a prolonged gas outage.

I therefore urge NYCHA to:

1. Prioritize Mitchel Houses for immediate inclusion in the next round of NYCHA's electrification and decarbonization program;

2. Replace the failed boiler system with electric heat pumps for space heating and hot water;
3. Phase out gas reliance entirely, including conversion to induction stoves where feasible; and
4. Coordinate with Con Edison, NYSERDA, and HUD's Green and Resilient Retrofit Program to fund and accelerate these improvements.

The explosion at Mitchel Houses should be a turning point—a clear warning that we cannot continue housing New Yorkers in aging buildings held hostage by ticking time bombs. The residents of Mitchel Houses deserve far more than luck. They deserve safe, decent, and affordable homes—housing that protects rather than endangers, and housing that builds trust rather than collapses it.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ritchie Torres", followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line.

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress