



**Testimony submitted by Elise Goldin
At the 2022 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing**

January 31, 2022

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Elise Goldin, and I am the Community Land Trust Campaign Organizer at New Economy Project. New Economy Project's mission is to build an economy that works for all, rooted in racial and social justice, cooperation, neighborhood equity, and ecological sustainability. Since 1995, our organization has worked with community groups throughout New York City and State to fight discriminatory economic practices and to support cooperative and community-led development. We co-founded and co-convene the NYC Community Land Initiative, a coalition advocating for community land trusts (CLTs) to preserve and create deeply-affordable housing, combat displacement, and stabilize neighborhoods.

Legislative Budget Requests

New Economy Project and NYCCLI coalition partners are optimistic about the Governor's announced \$50 million pilot program to support CLTs and community-controlled, permanently-affordable housing. The pilot should support projects identified and led by communities, including those that create and preserve HDFC co-ops, mutual housing, multifamily rentals, and the like.

We join with CLTs across the state to additionally urge NYSto develop CLT acquisition fund with a minimum initial appropriation of \$50 million. Strong public support is needed for CLTs to realize their potential as preservation of affordability and neighborhood stability

We urge the legislature to further support CLTs and social housing by passing the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA), sponsored by Senator Myrie and Assemblymember Mitaynes S.3157/A.5971), to give tenants a first right to purchase when properties are put up for sale. The bill would provide stability for tenants, generate equity, particularly for tenants of color, and curb speculation. Under TOPA, tenants would be able to work with third parties, such as CLTs, to acquire and convert properties to resident-owned and -controlled housing. With allies in NYCCLI and Housing Justice for All, we are requesting a budget line of \$1 billion per year for five years to make this right a reality. With this funding, we believe it would be possible to

convert 20,000 units across the state into community-controlled and permanently-affordable housing.

Finally, low-income New Yorkers and communities face heightened risk of eviction and displacement due to the pandemic and the lifting of the eviction moratorium. We call on the State legislature to create a statewide Right to Counsel (May, S.6678A/ Joyner, A.7570A) to guard against illegal evictions and to pass Good Cause eviction protections (Salazar, S.2892B/ Hunter, A.5030B) to stop no-fault evictions.

Background on Community Land Trusts

A CLT is a nonprofit that owns and stewards land in the community's interest, and leases use of the land for affordable housing development and other community needs. CLTs typically issue renewable 99-year ground leases that establish resale and rental restrictions and ensure that properties remain affordable over generations. In this way, CLTs protect public investment in affordable housing from being lost to the market over time—a key advantage that CLTs have over conventional affordability terms of 15 or 30 years. The longstanding Cooper Square CLT, on Manhattan's Lower East Side, for example, has developed and preserved more than 300 units of housing on the Lower East Side for very low-income households earning 26.5% - 36% of Area Median Income (AMI).

CLTs facilitate broad community engagement and participation in land use and planning decisions. CLT boards of directors are typically composed of equal parts CLT leaseholders, community members, and public stakeholders. Both Cooper Square CLT and the East Harlem/El Barrio CLT, for example, grew out of sustained community-led planning and visioning processes, and continue to have strong relationships with their community boards and other local partners. Many CLTs partner with nonprofit housing developers to identify development opportunities and engage residents in the planning and management of properties.

While providing deeply- and permanently-affordable housing is a key focus for many CLTs, the flexibility of the CLT model can support any land use. CLTs in New York State and around the country also support commercial, community and cultural spaces, community gardens, resilient infrastructure, and open space. The Mott Haven-Port Morris Community Land Stewards, for example, has engaged in extensive community visioning and planning processes as it works to acquire an abandoned hospital to convert to a community, health, and arts center (H.E.ARTS). The South Bronx Land and Community Resource Trust—a partnership between We Stay/Nos Quedamos, the South Bronx River Watershed Alliance, the NYC Community Gardens Coalition, and the South Bronx Culture Collective—seeks to steward affordable housing as well as community gardens, community-owned utilities, micro grids, and storm water mitigation.

The CLT model has sparked a movement that has achieved tremendous gains in recent years. In New York City, more than 15 CLTs are taking root across the five boroughs, developing strong local leadership, deepening community partnerships, organizing tenants and homeowners, and identifying properties suitable for their CLTs. This work is gaining momentum, as you will hear from other groups, across the state.

NYC Community Land Trust Initiatives



Map of many of the CLTs across New York City

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. For more information or questions, please contact me at elise@neweconominyc.org.