

Comments on Intros. 104, 105 and 106

The Rent Stabilization Association of New York City represents 25,000 diverse owners and managers who collectively manage more than one million apartments in every neighborhood and community throughout the city. We thank the Committees for giving us the opportunity to submit these comments on Intros. 104, 105 and 106, all of which are at least in-part related to fire safety matters and improving tenant safety. Over the past few years, there have been a significant number of measures adopted to enhance safety and these proposals attempt to advance these aims.

Int. 104

Int. 104 modifies the housing maintenance code to include a definition of self-closing doors. It requires that the door be fireproof and equipped with a device that will ensure closing after having been opened. It includes an additional proviso that the door not require a key to open it from inside a dwelling. However, it is worth noting that double cylinder locks already are prohibited by the Housing Maintenance Code. §27-2043 requires that locks in dwelling unit doors be equipped “with a heavy-duty dead bolt operable by a key from the outside and a thumb turn from the inside.” When these types of locks are installed, it is generally done by the tenant with the belief it will provide added security. As tenants generally lack awareness of the danger of such locks, tenant education on this issue may be a better approach. This could be a topic included in the next Fire and Emergency Preparedness Annual Bulletin or the NYC Apartment Building Emergency Preparedness Guide. Int. 104 should be amended to delete the reference to double cylinder locks.

Int. 105

In addressing the time to cure a violation for the failing to keep and maintain self-closing doors, Int. 105 establishes that the correction must be completed in 10 days, rather than 21, and requires the department of housing preservation and development to conduct an inspection within 14 days of the 10-day correction period, even when the violation is certified as corrected. The issue with the bill is that it goes well beyond fire safety and rewrites the monetary penalty provisions for all immediately hazardous violations of the housing maintenance code with increases up to ten times the original amount. We oppose this wide-scale modification that is being inserted into a fire safety bill. Imposing higher penalties across the board for buildings already in financial difficulty only means there is less money available to correct critical safety issues.

Int. 106

RSA supports Int. 106, which would ban the sale of space heaters that lack a thermostat or an automatic shut-off or are not certified by an approved testing and certification body.

In conclusion, RSA supports Int. 106 and urges the council to amend Int. 104 and 105.