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**Contact:** Catherine McBride, [Catherine@rhicenter.org](mailto:Catherine@rhicenter.org), (718) 858-6782 or Jill Eisenhard, [jill@rhicenter.org](mailto:jill@rhicenter.org), (917) 488-1883

## **On Hurricane Sandy Anniversary, New Report Highlights Impact of Mold on Red Hook NYCHA Tenants**

*Data Compiled by Red Hook Initiative Shows Rampant Mold Problem in Brooklyn's Largest Public Housing Development, Linked to Lasting Health Problems for Residents*

**Brooklyn, NY (October 27, 2016)** – [Red Hook Initiative](#) (RHI), a non-profit organization serving Brooklyn's Red Hook community, today released a report showing that the Red Hook Houses of the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) continues to grapple with an ongoing mold crisis four years after Hurricane Sandy. The organization's findings highlight that Hurricane Sandy exacerbated the development's existing mold problem, and this long-term exposure to mold adversely impacts the health of NYCHA residents.

"Mold has been a health threat to NYCHA residents for years, and our findings demonstrate the full extent of this dangerous situation," said **Jill Eisenhard, executive director of Red Hook Initiative**. "It is unconscionable that thousands of our neighbors have been living in conditions that put them at risk for asthma, bronchitis and other preventable ailments. It's time our leaders address this public health problem, and make the development safer for the 6,000 residents who call it home."

RHI's assessment found that of those surveyed, 81 Red Hook Housing residents had mold in their apartments following Hurricane Sandy, compared with 51 people prior. In other words, people were more likely to have mold damage after the Hurricane. Furthermore, there are disproportionate rates of asthma in public housing compared to private homes in the 11231 (Red Hook and Carroll Gardens) zip code.

RHI's assessment of Red Hook Houses' ongoing mold problem was born out of an urgent community call to action. From March 2016 through August 2016, the organization conducted a community health survey of 280 NYCHA tenants using participatory action research methods.

The results show the pervasiveness of mold in Red Hook Houses' units. Nearly all (91% percent) of the 280 respondents have had leaks and/or mold in the past. 43 percent of respondents currently have mold in their unit.

Moreover, the findings underscore the correlation between mold and health issues. Of the residents surveyed, 54 percent said mold and leaks have adversely impacted their health or household members. 45 percent of respondents had at least one family member suffering from a respiratory illness. Studies have shown that mold exposure can cause headaches, sinus congestion, shortness of breath, skin irritation, permanent respiratory problems and other devastating conditions.

"Red Hook has suffered Sandy's devastating impact for over four years," said **Assembly Member Felix W. Ortiz**. "I applaud the Red Hook Initiative for its superb report drawing attention to the ongoing mold problem and providing recommendations for action. Our NYCHA residents have been neglected. They needn't live with health hazards that should have been already addressed."

"The Impact of Mold report produced by Red Hook Initiative and their partners describes unacceptable conditions in the Red Hook Houses," said **New York City Council Member Carlos Menchaca**. "NYCHA's failure to address mold conditions and their unresponsiveness when residents seek help are alarming. Remember, mold was an urgent issue on NYCHA properties long before Hurricane Sandy. Since then, mold's adverse impact on residents' health has grown. This report provides ample evidence of neglect and is a call to hold NYCHA publicly accountable. I pledge my full support to residents as we work to end mold and other chronic maintenance issues in Red Hook's public housing."

"It is unacceptable that residents of Red Hook Houses are still suffering from mold exposure and its harmful effects years after Superstorm Sandy, said **New York Council Member Ritchie Torres, Chair of the Council's Committee on Public Housing**. "Currently, there are no standards in place to fix mold issues in public housing and that's why I introduced legislation that would require licensing and guidelines for mold remediation work done in NYCHA developments. Still, more must be done to ensure that mold is removed quickly and tenants are protected. Together, we must continue to hold NYCHA accountable and push for lasting change."

"Poor indoor air quality due to mold is a serious problem for public housing residents in Red Hook and beyond that must be effectively addressed in an urgent manner," said **Michelle de la Uz, Executive Director of Fifth Avenue Committee**. "RHI's important work brings light to the extent of the problem four years after Sandy. As NYCHA implements its Post Sandy Resilience, NextGeneration and Sustainability Plans, FAC and our Turning the Tide partners including RHI, will work to ensure that the needs of families living in public housing inform the priorities and investments that are made to solve this problem."

RHI's study also showed that NYCHA has been unresponsive to requests to abate mold in residents' apartments. Over the past year, more than half of those surveyed reported mold to NYCHA authorities. Of those who reported their mold condition to NYCHA, only 59 percent received a response, and less than 16 percent of those yielded a positive outcome and relief from mold through NYCHA assistance.

RHI believes that multiple stakeholders, including NYCHA, NYC Department of Health, Comptroller Stringer, and Red Hook's elected officials should commit to finding a long-term solution to this ongoing problem.

Among its recommendations, RHI is calling for NYCHA to immediately improve the process for residents seeking mold-related repairs. This process should include a system of oversight and a transparent process for residents to track progress and provide feedback.

Additionally, RHI is urging NYCHA to strengthen protection for its residents according to the guidelines set forth by *Baez vs. NYCHA*. These guidelines reaffirm that NYCHA residents have the right to effective, safe abatement of mold and excess moisture, have NYCHA complete simple repairs in designated, reasonable timeframes and have the agency fulfill accommodation requests if they have asthma or other health-related conditions.

**ABOUT RED HOOK INITIATIVE:**

The Red Hook Initiative (RHI) is a community center in Red Hook, Brooklyn that serves over 5,000 Red Hook residents annually. Founded in 2002, RHI believes that social change to overcome systemic inequities begins with empowered youth. Over 90 percent of RHI's employees are Red Hook residents. In 2012, RHI won the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee and New York Magazine Excellence in Nonprofit Management Award. In 2013, the organization was recognized as a finalist in the Brooke Mahoney Excellence in Board Governance Award. For more information go to [www.rhicenter.org](http://www.rhicenter.org)

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