Testimony of
Sara Enright, Senior Director of Safety & Sustainability
on Behalf of Consumer Reports

Regarding: Joint - Public Hearing:
Cost and Availability of Insurance for Residential Property

November 18, 2025

Dear Chairs Bailey, Skoufis, and Kavanagh, and Members of the Joint Committees,

My name is Sara Enright, and I serve as Senior Director of Safety and Sustainability at Consumer Reports,[1] an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan organization with more than five million members, that has worked side by side with consumers for nearly 90 years to create a fair and just marketplace for all.

Consumer Reports is proud to be headquartered right here in the state of New York. Since the day we started, we have always been based in Yonkers, and today we employ hundreds of people who test products, report on our findings, and advocate for consumer rights.

As part of our safety, sustainability, and financial-fairness advocacy, we represent consumers navigating the homeowners insurance system—a system that has become increasingly unstable as climate-related disasters intensify and premium costs rise.

We commend this legislature's joint investigation into the residential insurance market and urge you to pursue reforms that not only safeguard affordability but also advance transparency and fairness for all policyholders. Further, we hope to see insurers partner more closely with the communities they serve to strengthen household preparedness and resilience to extreme weather: steps that can reduce risks, stabilizing both the market and consumer costs over time.

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[1] Founded in 1936, Consumer Reports (CR) is an independent, nonprofit and nonpartisan organization that works with consumers to create a fair and just marketplace. Known for its rigorous testing and ratings of products, CR advocates for laws and company practices that put consumers first. CR is dedicated to amplifying the voices of consumers to promote safety, digital rights, financial fairness, and sustainability. The organization surveys millions of Americans every year, reports extensively on the challenges and opportunities for today's consumers, and provides ad-free content and tools to 5 million members across the U.S.

In 2024, following Tropical Storm Helene's devastation in Western North Carolina and a wave of consumer complaints about rising insurance costs, Consumer Reports collected nearly 600 detailed consumer stories nationwide about premium hikes, cancellations, and coverage denials. This summer, more than 750 homeowners joined our webinars to share their experiences, and over 50,000 consumers have joined with us to petition the insurance industry to do better.

Consumer Reports heard from hundreds of New Yorkers confronting an insurance crisis: they are facing skyrocketing premiums, shrinking coverage, and cancellations with little or no warning. In New York, homeowners have dealt with average increases of over $1,000 in their premiums since 2020, much higher than the average increase across the U.S. Additionally, nearly a half million New York homeowners are completely uninsured.

This is not just a problem for homeowners, it's a problem for every household: renters are seeing higher housing costs as property owners pass along rising insurance expenses, and aspiring homeowners are being priced out of the mortgage market as insurers retreat from areas they deem "too risky" due to flooding, wildfires, and other extreme-weather hazards.

Here are just a few examples from your constituents in New York:

- **Linda**, a Manhattan co-op owner, saw her premium jump from $4,906 to $7,826 in two years despite no claims — an increase of 60 percent in a building with no recent disasters.
- **Helene**, who lives in a flood-zone community, believes she cannot shop for a better insurance rate for fear that she will lose coverage permanently. She writes, "Since NY law allows insurance companies 30 days to cancel a policy, and since NY law also does not allow homeowners to maintain an existing policy during that same 30 day period, there is an unacceptable risk that I may wind up uninsured altogether. As such, I am forced to pay whatever my company wants to charge."
- **Robert** from upstate NY reports he hasn't filed any claims in the last 10 years he's owned his home, but has had his premiums rise 300%.
- **Beth**, a new homeowner from Endwell, NY, discovered she is "locked in" with her insurer because the age of her roof makes her ineligible to switch without a full roof replacement, even after paying for repairs that extend the current roof's life. She writes, "As a new homeowner, I had no idea the age of my roof could mean I lost the ability to change insurance companies."

Our investigative reporting and public engagement show that these are not isolated cases. These stories reflect a pattern seen across New York and nationwide: steep, unexplained rate increases; opaque underwriting decisions; inadequate notice; and fear of losing affordable coverage even among responsible homeowners.

Many of these harms can be addressed through stronger state-level regulations for transparency, fairness, and accountability in how insurers set rates, renew policies, and process claims, while supporting community resilience in the face of escalating pressures from extreme weather events.

These principles are embedded in Consumer Reports' Homeowners Insurance Bill of Rights, developed this year with input from insurance experts, academics, and homeowners nationwide. The Bill of Rights outlines nine basic protections in addition to affordability that we believe every policyholder should be guaranteed, regardless of where they live, including the rights to:

1. A clear, plain-language explanation of what is and isn't covered—before purchase or renewal.
2. Know which risk factors are used to determine eligibility and set rates.
3. Fair access to coverage based on property risk, not your finances.
4. Adequate notice before cancellations, nonrenewals, or steep premium hikes.
5. Meaningful incentives for homeowners who take steps to harden their homes.
6. Protections against cancellations or non-renewals in the aftermath of declared States of Emergency.
7. Freedom from penalties for inquiries or claims that result in no payout.
8. Prompt, full, and fair claim payments, with accountability for delays.
9. Immediate financial assistance for emergency housing and essential needs after a disaster, with limited paperwork.

Since its release in October, more than 43,000 consumers have signed our petition urging major insurers to adopt these protections and restore fairness to the marketplace.

New York State has long led the nation in consumer protection. By advancing the proposals embodied in the Homeowners Insurance Bill of Rights, this legislature can set a national precedent for fairness and resilience. With greater transparency and accountability from the home insurance market, residents will be able to make more informed decisions about where they live, understand how best to protect their most valuable assets, and hold insurance companies accountable to their promises.

We are eager to work with this legislature and other stakeholders to translate these rights into enforceable law, positioning New York as a model of resilience and equity in a climate-stressed, inflationary market.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

For more information, contact:
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