



Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Homeless Services

**Testimony of Steven Banks, Commissioner
New York City Department of Social Services**

**Before the New York City Council General Welfare Committee
Oversight: Post-90 Day Review
April 20, 2017**

Good morning Chairperson Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. Thank you for inviting me to appear before you today to discuss the status of the 46 reforms adopted by the Mayor last year following the 90-day comprehensive operational review of homeless services. My name is Steven Banks and I am the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, overseeing the Human Resources Administration and the Department of Homeless Services.

Over the past three years, this Administration has implemented and expanded many key initiatives in order to prevent and alleviate homelessness, including reinstating rental assistance programs and other permanent housing initiatives that have enabled 55,480 individuals in 20,183 households to avert entry into or move out of shelter.

During this same time period the Administration moved forward with the most aggressive affordable housing plan in decades. To date, under the *Housing New York Plan*, the City has financed 62,506 affordable homes, including enough affordable housing to serve more than 160,000 low-income New Yorkers.

This coincides with the historic tenfold increased investment of \$62 million in civil legal services; we have seen a 24% decline in evictions over the past three years, resulting in more than 40,000 New Yorkers being able to stay in their homes in 2015 and 2016. And the increased payment of rent arrears has enabled more than 161,000 households to keep a roof over their heads.

As you know, we did not wait until the completion of the 90-day review to begin to implement necessary reforms. For example, during the review period from December 2015 – April 2016 we took the following actions:

- Committed to the largest municipal program to build and expand supportive housing by funding 15,000 new units of supportive housing over the next 15 years, with the first 550 scatter-site units coming online this year.
- Provided additional Tier II and Emergency beds for the Domestic Violence shelter system, doubling the number of Domestic Violence survivor beds with the first increase since 2010. This includes 300 emergency beds and 400 Tier II units. To date, 150 of the emergency beds have already been brought online with an additional 67 in the pipeline pending State approval, plus an additional 83 beds beginning the approval process.
- Expanded the number of dedicated youth beds for runaway and homeless youth, operated by the Department of Youth and Community Development.
- And we implemented a plan to double the number of drop-in centers to provide services to help bring homeless individuals off the streets.

These initiatives and investments over the past several years and during the review period were necessary initiatives to stabilize the system and break the trajectory of homelessness that has built up over several decades, increasing 115% since 1994.

There were also specific reforms we undertook during the review period to directly address the conditions that clients were experiencing while residing in shelter. These specific reforms include:

- Creating the shelter repair scorecard to track shelter conditions.
- Implementing an enhanced shelter repair program.
- Increasing security at all commercial hotels that house homeless families and individuals.
- Providing 24/7 security coverage at mental health shelters.
- Overhauling reporting on critical incidents.
- Restoring a program for domestic violence services at shelters that was eliminated in 2010.
- Initiating a New York City Police Department (NYPD) shelter security review and retraining of Department of Homeless Services (DHS) Peace Officers.
- Announcing and beginning to implement a plan to end the 17-year-old cluster shelter program and the use of commercial hotels.

The comprehensive review process itself was guided by three principles: enhancing quality services for clients, efficient use of City resources, and cost effectiveness by avoiding duplication. The review of the 20-year old system included participation from a variety of stakeholders: individuals and families directly impacted, managers, staff and union leadership

at DHS, HRA and other City agencies, providers, homeless advocacy organizations, national experts and researchers, former DHS Commissioners, and elected officials.

The 46 reforms developed as a result of the review build on the significant initiatives from this Administration to prevent and alleviate homelessness, including comprehensive rental assistance programs, historic funding allocated for civil legal services for tenant anti-harassment and anti-eviction programs, and a commitment to the preservation and creation of 200,000 units of affordable housing. The 46 reforms can be categorized under four broad categories: prevention, addressing street homelessness, sheltering, and rehousing.

Management Reforms

As a result of the review and building on reforms announced during the 90-day period, the City has implemented an integrated management structure with both HRA and DHS reporting to a single Commissioner of Social Services. This allows the two agencies to provide more seamless and effective client services. We are leveraging the shared services functions across the two agencies, resulting in better day-to-day management and building a unified mission across agencies. Prevention and rehousing were moved out of DHS operations and integrated within current HRA operations.

Under this integrated management structure, under DSS, the following are now shared services across both HRA and DHS: Counsel and Contracts, IT, Program Accountability and Audits, Communications and External Affairs, Human Resources, Infoline, Finance, Performance Management, Research, and Policy and Planning as well as IDNYC.

The DSS Leadership team consists of the General Counsel and the Chief Contracting Officer; the Chief Program Planning and Financial Management Officer including Finance, Evaluation and Research and Planning, and Performance Management; the Chief External Affairs Officer including Community Engagement and Access, Constituent Services, Office of Advocacy, and Outreach, Communications, Marketing and Legislative Affairs, Public Private Partnerships, and Citywide Health Insurance Access; the Chief Operating Officer including Staff Resources, Management Information Systems, general Support Services, Police Operations and Business Process Innovation; and the Chief Program Accountability Officer including Investigation, Revenue and Enforcement Administration, and Audit and Quality Assurance Services.

As a result of the reforms, there were administrative and programmatic savings in the budget of \$38 million from eliminating duplicative operations and streamlining management.

Prevention

We implemented an aggressive prevention-first strategy reinstating tools the City had walked away from before this Administration and creating new rental assistance programs to increase the number of families and individuals leaving shelters. Preventing homelessness before it occurs is critical to reducing the number of families and individuals living in shelter, and is a cost-effective and common sense solution to address homelessness.

These “prevention first” reforms refocus the system to place greater emphasis on the role of prevention services, expanding the tools and resources available to those in need, and proactively identifying and serving those who are most at-risk of becoming homeless.

1. Move Homebase program management from DHS to HRA: The management of the Homebase program moved to HRA, which already runs a number of homeless prevention programs and services. Integrating all prevention services under one agency will reduce inefficiencies and allow for more seamless and effective client services. The integration was completed in January 2017.

2. Expand Homebase staffing and services: HRA staff at Homebase offices will provide expanded on-site processing and triage for HRA benefits, including public assistance and rental assistance. Homebase not-for-profit staff will also expand their case management services to include landlord and family mediation, educational advancement, employment, and financial literacy services. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued in February with contract awards to be announced in the coming weeks and the expanded services in place by this summer.

Since 2014, we expanded the Homebase program to 24 locations across the five boroughs and more than doubled the program’s funding. As a result of these increases Homebase reached 25,632 households in FY16, a 115% increase of households served compared to FY14.

3. Expand the scope of Homebase as the first point of entry for those at risk of homelessness: The City developed an intake model that builds on Homebase to focus greater attention on the role of communities in supporting families at risk of becoming homeless. Families seeking homeless prevention or shelter services will be able to obtain these services within their borough, rather than through the City’s centralized intake center in the Bronx. A Staten Island pilot launched in March 2017 for Staten Island families at risk of homelessness.

4. Use data analytics to proactively target prevention services for at-risk clients: HRA will use client data collected by the agencies to proactively identify and target prevention services for New Yorkers who are most at risk of becoming homeless, such as families who are at risk of having their public assistance case closed administratively or reapplying for shelter.

Eligibility research for families reapplying for shelter at the PATH intake office was revamped in April 2016 and in December 2016; this newly combined data was used to develop new strategies for intervention. These strategies were developed from our Neighborhood Homelessness Prevention Outreach (NHPO) Phase I – in which staff made calls and home visits to offer prevention services to a cohort of about 2,000 clients identified as high risk of becoming homeless.

Between October and December 2016, mailings were sent to 8,881 cash assistance clients with a known history of homelessness, encouraging them to call the NHPO hotline for assistance with housing related issues. To test the efficacy of behaviorally-informed communications, half of the target group received the mailer in a traditional agency format and half received a mailer designed in collaboration with ideas42, an organization that uses behavioral science to design scalable solutions to some of society's most difficult problems. The evaluation, which will occur this summer, will assess call-in rates, referral rates, service receipt, and, ultimately, shelter applications.

The research of PATH re-applications will inform development of additional interventions.

5. Target outreach to doubled-up families with school-aged children: HRA will work with the Department of Education (DOE) to identify and proactively target prevention services for students of families living in doubled-up situations who are reported as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. Outreach was conducted in June 2016 to doubled-up families with school-aged children who were offered homelessness prevention services. Planning is under way to implement this outreach annually beginning in June 2017, prior to the end of school when typically applications for family shelter increase.

6. Deploy additional HRA prevention staff to single adult and adult family intake sites: In May 2016, an intervention process was established at the Borden Shelter for veterans and at HRA's Veterans Services unit to help veterans avoid entering shelter. As of April 2017, data is being analyzed to identify other populations that would benefit most from additional prevention services at intake. A similar initiative is being implemented this month for adult families.

7. Target services and rental assistance for youth in DYCD shelters: Rental assistance programs will be expanded to include youth living in DYCD youth shelters at risk of entering DHS shelters. A workgroup between DHS and DYCD was formed to facilitate expansion of rental assistance programs. This expansion will occur with the streamlining of the City's rental assistance programs, which is expected to be finalized in the summer of 2017 following the recent FEPS settlement in The Legal Aid Society's litigation against the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

8. Target services and rental assistance for clients with mental health needs cycling between jail and homelessness: We are currently finalizing plans for the implementation of a 24-hour hotline to support at-risk clients, including clients being discharged from NYC Health and Hospitals. The City has also recently announced the provision of 97 units of supportive housing targeted for such clients.

9. Create City/State Task Forces to increase homelessness prevention: In connection with the recent FEPS settlement, the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and DSS worked together to enhance the rental assistance tools to prevent homelessness, including increasing the level of rental assistance provided through the State FEPS program and expanding assistance for survivors of domestic violence.

Addressing Street Homelessness

Implemented in March 2016, HOME-STAT is the nation's most comprehensive street outreach program that was built from our street homelessness prevention and response initiatives. Additionally, we enhanced funding for more safe haven beds, additional drop in centers, and the creation of 15,000 supportive housing units to ensure that those living on the streets have opportunities to come inside and connect to the services and supports they need.

10. Fully launch HOME-STAT to address street homelessness: HOME-STAT was fully launched by April 2016.

In 2016, 690 individuals came off of the street and remained off of the street as a result of the work of HOME-STAT.

11. Enhance tools for outreach teams to bring people in from the streets: The City will increase safe haven, faith-based and stabilization beds, increase the number of drop in centers, and develop 15,000 units of supportive housing to provide essential tools to address street homelessness.

DHS is adding safe haven, faith-based and stabilization for homeless individuals and funding to open drop in centers in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens was awarded at the end of 2016. These locations are community-based programs that are located in close proximity to where our clients are. These programs are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide homeless individuals access to services such as meals, showers, and clothing. They can also provide case management services. The new Queens drop in center at 100-32 Atlantic Avenue opened yesterday, the Manhattan drop in center at 14th Street and 7th Avenue will open before the end of the year, and the Brooklyn drop in center is in the development stage.

Safe Havens and stabilization beds are flexible transitional housing options exclusively for street homeless New Yorkers. They have lower thresholds for entry than a traditional shelter and are a key tool in building trust and relationships with street homeless clients, who are some of the most difficult to transition to permanent housing. The Stabilization beds typically provide a short-term spot for street homeless individuals prior to outreach workers moving them to a Safe Haven. The City has already opened 284 additional Safe Haven or Stabilization beds and plans to open at least 220 more Safe Haven beds in 2017.

The Administration's Supportive Housing Task Force, co-chaired by DSS and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and comprised of providers and other experts, issued comprehensive recommendations last year for the implementation of the Administration's unprecedented commitment to provide 15,000 units of supportive housing. A supportive housing residence for 108 households opened in June 2016; ground was broken in August 2016 on the construction site of Melrose Commons Supportive Housing, which will accommodate 58 homeless adults in the Bronx. In December 2016, HRA awarded contracts for 550 units of scatter site supportive housing that will open this year. Additional supportive housing is being procured through pending RFPs.

Sheltering

New York City experienced an exponential increase in the shelter population over the past two decades. However, we are committed to providing decent living conditions and high-quality social services to every family and individual seeking in shelter. These reforms address immediate concerns around shelter security and building conditions and include long-term strategies for sustaining these reforms into the future. These reforms also address pressing social service needs, targeting services to specific high-risk populations and giving clients opportunities to enhance their income-building capacity by developing a career pathway while in shelter.

12. Increase safety in shelters through an NYPD management review and retraining program: In March 2016, NYPD began retraining all DHS security staff and sent an NYPD management team to the Agency to develop an action plan for upgraded security and a related retraining curriculum at all shelter facilities. In January 2017, NYPD began to oversee security services in the DHS shelter system. The Administration has doubled the 2013 investment in DHS security, with a total annual security spending of \$217 million for fiscal year 2017.

13. Enhanced domestic violence services in DHS shelters: As of December 2016, trained staff from HRA go to designated Tier II shelters to provide access to domestic violence services. Existing social services staff in Tier II shelters participate in enhanced training to provide them with the tools to identify and refer families and individuals to the HRA NoVA team, a NYC Family

Justice Center, or other community-based domestic violence providers. By September 2016, DHS employees and contracted staff system-wide had undergone intimate partner violence training. Additional NoVa trainings are scheduled in April 2017.

14. Implement a more extensive reporting system for critical incidents that occur in shelters:

To ensure that problems are identified, violence is now defined much more broadly to include wide-ranging definitions of domestic violence, assault, and both child abuse and neglect. In October 2016, the new reporting categories were finalized. A plan was sent to OTDA for confirmation and DHS is awaiting a response in order to proceed. Staff training and implementation is planned for May 2017.

15. Expand Shelter Repair Squad 2.0 Operations: The inspection process has been enhanced and inspections are being conducted twice a year at all sites used to house homeless people. The Shelter Report Card is produced monthly to hold the City and providers publicly accountable, and it has been available online for every month since December 2015. To reduce the initial backlog, a report called the Building Compliance Unit Daily Update was developed to monitor the status of all activities to address violations. Shelter providers have also been engaged in a work group to discuss the best means of collaborating to improve shelter conditions.

In 2016, the City and nonprofit shelter providers cleared nearly 14,000 violations in non-cluster shelters. City agencies also conducted nearly 13,000 inspections—a 50 percent increase from 2015—and the number of outstanding violations in traditional shelters dropped by 83 percent in 2016.

16. Increase coordination among inspectors: By September 2016, the City had coordinated all City Agencies with inspection responsibilities so that there are now semi-annual multi-agency inspections. Coordination with OTDA and with the Coalition for the Homeless on Callahan inspections was completed as of January 2017.

17. Phasing out the use of cluster shelters: At the high point, there were 3,658 cluster units in this 17-year program. As part of the phase out, we have already stopped using more than 750 units, and we are continuing to identify units that we will stop using. In May 2016, the DHS open-ended Request for Proposals for new shelters was revised to include a model with both transitional and permanent housing. The City is also working with contracted providers to close out or convert cluster units to permanent housing. And last month DSS leadership briefed the Bronx Council delegation on our progress, and we look forward to more opportunities to speak directly with members and answer questions regarding the phase out.

18. Assessing the potential conversion of existing shelters to permanent housing: Where feasible, the City will partially convert current shelter sites into permanent housing using new

shelter models like Gateway Housing and Homestretch, which include affordable permanent housing, shelter units, and community space at the same location. Potential conversion sites are currently being assessed.

19. Phasing out use of commercial hotels: As the cluster takedown, the shelter conversion process, and the enhanced shelter move-out efforts proceed, the City will prioritize ending reliance on renting blocks of rooms in commercial hotels as shelter. The *Turning the Tide* plan set forth the roadmap to get out of 360 cluster and commercial hotel sites and replace them with a smaller number of 90 high quality borough-based shelters. The first five replacement shelters were announced in February and three are already open and operating.

20. Implement the domestic violence shelter expansion: In FY16, HRA conducted an emergency procurement for emergency shelter beds and Tier II units; and 150 emergency beds were opened. The second phase of contracting and opening the remaining 150 emergency beds this year is underway. One contract for 52 Tier II units was awarded in April 2017 and these units are expected to open in the summer of 2017; additional Tier II contracts are expected to begin to be awarded by September 2017.

21. Implementing a capital repair program: As of January 2017, the City has implemented a large scale, new needs, repair program for city-owned, capitally eligible shelter sites. A new needs process for provider owned, non-capitally eligible sites has also been implemented to provide funding for repairs in these buildings.

22. Rationalizing shelter provider rates: DSS, DHS, and HRA are evaluating shelter provider rates to ensure they are sufficient to fund maintenance and services. Funding was added in the Executive 17 budget. Focus groups were conducted with providers and the leadership of Homeless Services United as part of the process to develop model shelter budgets. Development of a rate template and parameters for inclusion in the Open-Ended RFP is being developed, and contract adjustments will be implemented during the coming fiscal year.

The Department also committed to addressing the contract registration backlog that built up over a number of years. Just over a year ago, when DSS began to reform the contract process there were outstanding contract issues dating back to FY14 and FY15. We have resolved those and we are completing the process of 947 contract transactions for FY16, FY17, and the associated amendments. Currently, 99 percent of FY16 and 96 percent of FY17 contracts are registered. The small number of unregistered contracts—three for FY16 and thirteen for FY17—consist of contracts with pending outstanding items from nine providers, three that are pending with the Comptroller for registration, and thirteen that are being prepared by DSS for submission to the Comptroller shortly. As of April 18, 87 percent of the FY16 and FY17 contract amendments were registered with seven pending submission of items by providers, sixteen

pending with the Comptroller for registration, and seventeen that are being prepared by DSS staff for submission to the Comptroller shortly. This data does not include amendments connected to new needs submitted to DHS after March 1 or the current COLA, as those actions are still in process in the normal course of business. For FY18, contracts are already in process so that they can be in place at the beginning of the fiscal year for the first time in years.

23. Address ADA compliance in shelters: The City will hire a consultant to evaluate ADA accessibility in the DHS shelter system. A consultant firm has been identified to conduct surveys of selected shelters and assist in the development of compliance plans. We are now proceeding to take the necessary steps to bring the firm on board. We are also concluding settlement of the *Butler* litigation to address long-standing accessibility issues.

24. Expanding the scope of HRA's ADA coordinator to cover the shelter system: The DSS Executive Director of Disability Affairs added a Director of Disability Affairs for Homeless Services (ADA Coordinator) to her team in February 2017. The Disability Affairs Unit has been assessing all aspects of access in the shelter system, and, since the fall of 2016, has been identified as the contact on the DHS website regarding disability discrimination complaints and questions regarding access. The Disability Affairs Unit is working with DHS teams and responsible DSS departments to assess and revise the Reasonable Accommodation Process for DHS. The Unit is providing technical assistance and support to DHS staff regarding serving people with disabilities; identifying areas where training is necessary; and working directly with advocates and people with disabilities on issues that arise regarding access within the shelter system.

25. Promote career pathways for shelter residents: The City will implement new programs to help shelter residents move forward on a career pathway towards self-sufficiency.

Shelter providers submitted proposals for career pathway training to DHS for approval, and shelters have been provided additional funding to run enhanced programming in employment, literacy, and wellness. City-operated single adult and adult family shelters have also enhanced their vocational and employment training.

Additionally, we are finalizing a program model to offer shelter residents training and employment in the landscaping field as part of the routine maintenance of the City's shelters. Contracting for landscaping training programs is planned to begin in October 2017.

Traditional literacy classes, including math, reading, and writing classes designed and taught by the Department of Education (DOE), are slated to begin in July 2017. DHS is partnering with CUNY to provide financial literacy services to shelter clients and the City will implement additional training and employment programs at select shelters in 2017.

26. Targeting services for emerging new trends in the single adult population (persons 50 or older and 18 to 24): In June 2016, the concept paper for 10,000 units of affordable senior housing was released and we expect to release a Request for Proposals this spring. In February of this year, in partnership with Councilman Torres, we opened an 81-bed shelter in the Bronx for LGBTQ young homeless adults (ages 21-30). And a shelter for seniors (age 62 and older) has been developed in Crown Heights for senior men from Brooklyn.

Additionally, in early 2017, HRA released a congregate and scatter site supportive housing concept paper targeting young adults, and the RFP for congregate supportive housing for young adults was released in April. An open ended RFP that includes scatter sites for single young adults is expected to be released within the month. Additional research is being done on the RFP for scatter site housing for young adult families following the review of responses to the concept paper.

A number of initiatives are underway to better serve youth in partnership with DYCD as part of these reforms, namely reforms 7 and 30.

27. Targeting services for families to move away from a one size fits all approach: We are working to develop initiatives that focus on the varying needs of homeless families. We are working with providers to develop shelter models in which placements may be differentiated based on the family's readiness to be rapidly rehoused; families who are assessed to likely have a shorter stay in shelter may be placed in different programs than families with higher needs and a likely longer stay.

So far, three initiatives are under way:

- improve DHS access to HRA documents to reduce the need for clients to bring documents that they have already provided to HRA;
- improve coordination with NoVA at family intake (with implementation expected by June 2017); and
- improve information on shelters available to staff at PATH and provided to clients (with implementation expected by April 2017).

28. Eliminate the requirement for school-age children to be present at PATH for multiple appointments: By the end of 2016, this requirement was eliminated for families who reapply within 30 days at PATH. A second phase eliminating this requirement for families reunifying with children in foster care was launched in March. An evaluation of these programs will occur during the summer.

29. Align access procedures for adult families with procedures for families with children: The City will modify the intake process and improve capacity planning to avoid long waits and/or

transporting clients in the middle of the night as a result of the delay in identifying available shelter placements. This month, we are dedicating additional shelter space to meet the needs of adult families and to enhance intake services for such families.

30. Streamline access to DYCD shelter for homeless youth: Liaison staff were identified for DHS intake centers, and fact sheets for distribution to staff and homeless youth have been developed. The first staff training session occurred in January and the second follow up training will take place this month.

31. Implement tripling of DYCD shelter capacity for Runaway and Homeless Youth: The City has opened 205 Runaway and Homeless Youth beds since 2014, and 295 additional beds are funded and planned to open by 2019. This will bring the total system capacity from 253 when Mayor de Blasio took office to 753 by FY19.

32. Provide increased notice prior to non-emergency transfers: In non-emergency situations, clients will be given more notice that they are being transferred to another shelter. DHS program areas are finalizing an updated procedure for this policy.

33. Increasing transportation resources to reduce placement waiting time. Currently, an analysis of data to determine new transportation models and needs is under way.

34. Deploy social workers to accompany families found ineligible who are returning to a community resource to provide on-the-spot assistance: Social workers are currently being brought on board. Social workers will follow up with families during the conditional status, and contact primary tenants to offer such on the spot assistance.

35. Expand the shelter conditions complaint process through HRA's Infoline: The 24/7 Shelter Hotline launched in February 2016 and takes complaints from shelter residents as well as the public on shelter services and conditions. We completed this expansion in December 2016.

36. Communicate more information to clients through flyers, posters and other media: We recognize that better information for clients will enhance access to services, including employment and housing assistance. In March 2017, flyers and posters were provided to shelter sites for distribution and posting. We continue ongoing work to ensure flyers and posters are updated and replenished regularly as appropriate.

Rehousing

Finding safe and affordable housing is essential to addressing homelessness. Coordinating rehousing resources in the City under one management structure, making the rental assistance

programs easier to navigate, enhancing aftercare services, and enforcing housing discrimination laws will improve shelter move-outs and housing stability.

37. Move Rehousing program management from DHS to HRA: DSS, DHS, and HRA are developing a more coordinated program structure to promote move-outs, leveraging the expertise of each Agency. The DHS Supportive Housing Unit is on track to transfer to HRA in May 2017.

38. Streamline the HPD housing placement process: The City will establish a streamlined process to connect homeless clients to HPD-financed units that are available and appropriate for their needs. Planning is under way to identify and assist shelter residents who are eligible to apply for HPD lotteries for affordable housing.

39. Continue to utilize NYCHA placements to address homelessness: We have continued to place 1,500 DHS families and 300 survivors of domestic violence in HRA or DHS shelters last year and this year.

40. Consolidate and streamline the LINC, SEPS and CityFEPS rental assistance programs: The City will consolidate and streamline the operations of its rental assistance programs to enhance shelter move-outs. The streamlining plan is expected to be finalized this summer, now that the FEPS lawsuit has been settled.

As we reported last month, 20,183 households moved out or avoided shelter using rental assistance and our rehousing programs. As of the February 26, 2017 DHS shelter census, there are 7,315 cases with active LINC certifications. This number captures both families and individuals. As of the Jan Plan for FY17, the total budget for the LINC program is \$111.9 million gross and \$90.4 million CTL.

41. Increase enforcement of source of income discrimination law: The City will train and dedicate HRA staff to conduct testing to identify potential discriminatory practices and take enforcement action to supplement the efforts of the City Human Rights Commission. We reported previously that we had been involved with 35 cases, including cases that we worked on with CCHR over the past year, most of which have resulted in a favorable outcome for the client. DSS has distributed a Source of Income Discrimination Informational flyer with a phone number to contact, and New Yorkers can also call 311. Both HRA's Infoline Central Complaint Unit number and 311 are advertised on the flyer.

42. Implement a more effective aftercare program: Using the critical time intervention as a model, the City will enhance aftercare services for rehoused clients. In October 2016, a concept paper was released; and a Request for Proposal for enhanced community supports for persons

exiting shelter with subsidies was released in February. The new services are expected to be in place in this summer. In the interim, current Homebase providers are providing this assistance.

43. Provide assistance to obtain federal disability benefits: Earlier this year the City dedicated services to focus on enrolling shelter residents on SSI/SSD to increase income and promote rehousing. This year, SSI/SSD enrollment assistance is planned for clients in shelter who receive Cash Assistance and are determined to need home visits.

44. Incorporate Continuum of Care strategic planning into homeless strategy development and establish a leadership reporting structure: Drawing on the model in other jurisdictions, the City will enhance the role of the Continuum of Care in the policy and planning process. As part of this initiative, the City is exploring ways to further coordinate access and assess need for those experiencing homelessness, following the HUD approach. By September 2016, a leadership reporting structure had been created, and regular meetings were scheduled with the Continuum of Care co-chairs and DHS and HRA leadership.

45. Provide clear and concise information and written materials to clients about available assistance and programs: Materials describing available assistance and programs have been compiled and are ready for distribution; materials will be distributed throughout the spring. We continue with ongoing work to provide updated materials as appropriate and replenished supplies.

46. Call on the State to: (a) permit use of Medicaid funds for apartment search and shelter relocation services for homeless clients with disabilities; and (b) approve HRA's requested FEPS plan modifications: These policy changes will enhance both rehousing and prevention efforts. Though the FEPS settlement, the HRA FEPS plan was approved and will be implemented after the settlement is approved by the court. Medicaid waiver issues have been affected by the change in administrations in Washington.

Turning the Tide on Homelessness in New York City

In February, the Administration announced a comprehensive borough-based plan—titled *Turning the Tide on Homelessness in New York City*—to shrink the footprint of the City's homeless shelter system by 45 percent and reduce the shelter census over the next five years. *Turning the Tide* builds on the reforms identified as part of the 90-day review that began in December 2015, for which a comprehensive operational review of homeless programs was conducted.

Our vision of *Turning the Tide* relies on three approaches:

- First, doing more to keep people in their homes by stopping evictions, helping families and individuals remain with family members in the community, and making housing more affordable.
- Second, continuing to enhance our HOME-STAT program to bring people in from the streets.
- Third, a reimagined approach to providing shelter that:
 - Ends use of the 17-year cluster apartment program by the end of 2021 and the decades-old use of commercial hotel facilities by the end of 2023;
 - Cuts the total number of shelter facilities by almost 45% by getting out of 360 cluster apartment and commercial hotel locations and replacing them with a smaller number of 90 new high quality shelters in all five boroughs; and
 - Provides homeless families and individuals with an opportunity to be in shelter as close as possible to their own communities and the anchors of life – like schools, jobs, health care, houses of worship and family – to help them get back on their feet and out of shelter more quickly.

Keeping people in their homes and moving them off the streets:

- **Affordable housing:** 200,000 affordable apartments preserved; in just three years the City has financed a record 62,506 affordable residences.
- **Affordable Housing Update:** Committed \$1.9 billion to expand our housing programs to include 10,000 apartments focused on seniors, veterans and other low-income families.
- **Added rental assistance for seniors:** We continue our work with our colleagues in Albany to pass the mansion tax that will create a new Elder Rental Assistance program to help more than 25,000 seniors stay in their homes.
- **Rental assistance/rehousing initiatives:** Since 2014, over 55,000 people have secured permanent housing through our rental assistance and rehousing initiatives.
- **Emergency rental assistance:** We provided emergency rental assistance to 161,000 households, helping rent burdened New Yorkers at risk of eviction stay in their homes.
- **Supportive Housing:** 15,000 new units of Supportive Housing will be provided over the next 15 years, representing the largest municipal commitment to supportive housing.
- **Legal assistance:** As the Administration provided increased funding for legal services, more than 40,000 New Yorkers were able to stay in their homes and evictions are down 24%.
- **Legal Assistance Update:** Earlier this year, the City made a commitment to providing universal access to counsel in Housing Court proceedings. Phased in over five years, all

people facing eviction in Housing Court will have access to free legal assistance and all people with low-incomes will have full legal representation.

- **Street homeless:** We moved 690 individuals off streets into transitional programs or permanent housing last year.

Making Long-Needed Operational Reforms:

- **90 day review:** At the Mayor's direction, we took an in depth look at homeless services resulting in 46 reforms aimed at preventing homelessness, addressing street homelessness, improving conditions and safety in shelter, and helping New Yorkers transition from shelter to permanent housing.
- **Shelter conditions:** Inspections are up 50%, while violations are down 83%. In 2016, the City conducted almost 13,000 inspections – a 50% increase from 2015 – and with nonprofit providers fixed more than 14,000 code violations.
- **Close Cluster Apartments:** We have gotten out of more than 750 cluster apartments, prioritizing those with the most serious problems and working to end the use of clusters all together.
- **Security: Doubled Investments, NYPD Takes the Lead:** in 2016, NYPD conducted a comprehensive review of security at homeless shelters. The Administration doubled the 2013 investment in DHS security, with a total annual security spending of \$217 million for FY17.
- **Security Update:** As of 2017, NYPD oversees DHS shelter security, including standardizing and professionalizing security, surveillance, staff training and deployment.
- **End Vets Homelessness:** The Administration placed 3,153 homeless veterans into permanent housing; and in 2015, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) declared chronic veteran homelessness a thing of the past.

Reimagined Shelter Strategy:

- **Closing All Cluster Apartments and Commercial Hotel Facilities:** Over the course of this plan, we will get out of all 360 cluster apartment sites and commercial hotels and replace them with a smaller number of 90 new borough-based shelters. There are approximately 270 buildings with cluster apartments in them with approximately 10,000 people in roughly 2,900 units. And around 7,500 individuals occupy hotel rooms.
- **Creating Fewer New Borough-Based Replacement Shelters:** The City will open approximately 20 shelters annually over the next five years with a wide range of services onsite. This borough-based approach will allow families and individuals to be placed in proximity to schools, jobs, health care, houses of worship, family and neighbors.

Turning the Tide Together:

- As we shrink the footprint of shelters citywide by 45%, we will reform how we notify communities about our plans to open shelters when they are needed to meet multiple court-ordered right to shelter mandates. And we welcome the support of this body in bringing our providers suitable locations to open these needed facilities.

Legislation Before the Committee

As the Committee considers the package of legislation before it today, we want to provide some initial feedback on the bills. In each instance, we support the intent of the bill, and in many cases we are already doing the work required by the proposed legislation. We look forward to working with the Council to address potential gaps as well as how the proposed legislation aligns with the work currently underway so as not to duplicate resources and ensure appropriate outcomes for our clients.

Intro 622, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Homeless Services to educate homeless persons on domestic violence and child abuse.

We agree with the intent of Intro 622, recognizing over 34% of families entering shelter have a history of domestic violence and we need to target our efforts to engage these families and connect them with needed services. The City is also committed to a broad prevention strategy to avert violence before it takes place and engage survivors sooner, issues that are front and center in the current work of the Mayor's Task Force on Domestic Violence.

After the 90-day review several recommendations were made to address the prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the homeless population and to improve client services for survivors of IPV. One of those recommendations was to enhance domestic violence services at DHS shelters by providing IPV specific training for shelter staff, contracted staff, DHS Peace Officers and contracted security.

As a result, the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence (OCDV) and DHS created a work plan for providing these trainings. OCDV created a comprehensive training on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV101) facilitated by OCDV Policy and Training Coordinators that aims to equip shelter staff with the knowledge, skills and tools they need to effectively identify and engage with survivors. OCDV began the enhanced IPV trainings for DHS in June 2016, and has since facilitated 87 trainings reaching approximately 2,200 staff members. The following is a breakdown of OCDV DHS trainings to date:

- DHS Family Service Staff: 31 trainings and 4 presentations have been provided and approximately 680 people attended the trainings and 74 attended the presentations.
- Adult Family Services Staff: 7 trainings attended by 121 staff members.

- DHS Single Adult Staff: 6 Train the Trainer Courses were provided and 89 people attended.
- DHS Prevention – Homebase: 7 trainings were provided and 133 staff attended.
- DHS Peace Officers: 32 trainings were provided and a total of 1,047 staff attended, consisting of DHS Peace Officers, DHS Cadets, Sergeants and Lieutenants, and Captains.

The Administration is ready to collaborate with the Council to further improve our response to domestic violence, particularly as it effects the homeless population, and we look forward to discussing the best practices in addressing this public health epidemic.

DHS currently has information pertaining to the identification and reporting of instances of child abuse, including written materials at intake and in shelter.

Intro 1066, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Homeless Service to conduct quarterly point-in-time counts of the unsheltered homeless population

As part of HOMESTAT being fully implemented, the Agency already conducts quarterly counts in addition to the annual HUD-required Homeless Outreach Population Estimate (HOPE) Count.

Intro 1443, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring that certain Department of Homeless Services employees be trained in administering opioid antagonists.

Prior to the introduction of this bill, DHS began an initiative to train DHS and provider staff on the administration of opioid antagonists. Naloxone training for DHS staff has been completed. Likewise, all providers participated in the training, except for one provider which will be addressed through the contract oversight process. In a separate effort within HRA, we are training staff at HASA emergency housing.

Intro 1460, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the formation of an interagency coordinating council to combat homelessness

Following the 90-day review, an interagency coordinating council to combat homelessness was convened. The Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services leads the council, which includes the other Deputy Mayors and the senior leadership of 20 City agencies. The council meets quarterly and smaller working groups meet as well.

Intro 1459, to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to updating the report on utilization of and applications for multi-agency emergency housing assistance

DSS supports the change to the report that is contemplated within this bill, which adds information to an existing report on the total number of unduplicated persons utilizing all City-

administered facilities and disaggregated. As we continue to develop an updated and transparent accounting of our shelter population, this bill is in line with that effort.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify and discuss the Agency's progress in implementing the 46 reforms that the Mayor adopted following last year's 90-day review of homeless services in New York City. I welcome your questions.

DHS

Shelter Program

Operations:

- Adult Services
- Family Services

Shelter Support

Operations:

- Capacity Planning & Development
- Shelter Maintenance & Repair
- Shelter Administration (e.g. supplies, food, etc.)
- Office of the Medical Director
- Shelter Security
- Public-Private Partnerships
- DHS Program Budgeting

DSS

- Advocacy & Outreach
- Citywide Health Insurance Access
- Constituent Services & Ombudsperson
- Contracts/ACCO
- EEO
- External Affairs
- Facilities (Offices)
- Finance
- Human Resources
- IDNYC
- Infoline
- Labor Relations
- Legal Affairs
- MIS/OIT
- Policy & Planning
- Program Accountability & Audit
- Security (Offices)
- Emergency Management
- Public/Private Partnerships and Grants

HRA

HRA Benefits

Programs:

- Cash Assistance
- SNAP/ Food Stamps
- Health Insurance
- Child Support

HRA Special Services:

- HIV/AIDS Services
- Domestic Violence
- Adult Protective Services
- Home Care
- Customized Care
- Disaster Relief

Homelessness

Prevention:

- Diversion/ Prevention
- Legal Services
- Permanency (Rental Assistance & Housing)



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**Testimony of Catherine Trapani, Executive Director, Homeless Services United, Inc.
Before the NYC Council Committee on General Welfare
April 20, 2017**

ONE YEAR AFTER THE 90 DAY REVIEW OF HOMELESS SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

My name is Catherine Trapani, and I am the Executive Director of Homeless Services United (HSU). HSU is a coalition of over 50 non-profit agencies serving homeless and at-risk adults and families in New York City. HSU provides advocacy, information, and training to member agencies to expand their capacity to deliver high-quality services. HSU advocates for expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency and transitional housing, outreach and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers.

Homeless Service United's member agencies operate hundreds of programs including shelters, drop-in centers, food pantries, HomeBase, and outreach and prevention services. Each day, HSU member programs work with thousands of homeless families and individuals, preventing shelter entry whenever possible and working to end homelessness through counseling, social services, health care, legal services, and public benefits assistance, among many other supports.

One full year after the completion of the 90 day review of homeless services, we have seen great progress in some areas – evictions are down, placements into permanent and transitional housing from outreach teams are up and shelter conditions are improving - but, we still have a tremendous amount of work to do. When the administration sets clear goals, dedicates necessary resources, designates and empowers project managers and, effectively engages service providers during policy development and implementation, great things can be accomplished.

Where progress has lagged, it is usually in an area where one of those elements is missing –sufficient funding, leadership, or collaboration and coordination with experienced providers.

FUNDING

Absent comprehensive shelter services' rate reform, many of the underlying reasons why the system was allowed to get into a state of disrepair with limited available services for clients that necessitated the review in the first place, remain a problem. Issues like not being allowed to have a capital reserve fund to ensure adequate resources are in place to repair buildings as they age, not having escalation clauses in contracts to help providers keep up with rising occupancy costs in rented properties or increasing health care costs for employees, and, not providing sufficient resources to pay competitive wages to attract and retain qualified staff are all unresolved.

Providers still have not seen the framework the administration plans to use for rate reform and it remains unclear if this exercise is limited to direct program costs or, if it includes other drivers of spending on shelter services such as administrative costs and fringe. The preliminary budget released by the administration does not explicitly designate any funding for the rationalization and reform of rates and it is unclear when providers can expect to see enhancement in funding and in which areas.

This fiscal uncertainty coupled with ongoing chronic delays in contract registration has put homeless service providers in precarious situations making it difficult to implement program enhancements imagined by the 90-day review. For example, last year DHS announced one way they would enhance and target services for families in shelter as described in the review would be accomplished via the Thrive Mental Health Initiative. Shelters were instructed to submit proposals on how they would utilize social workers in their shelter programs and told the agency would work with them to implement the change. One year later, these shelter providers are still awaiting contract amendments to fund these new staff lines to be registered. Until the funding is available, providers cannot afford to hire this staff. One HSU member who did hire social workers shortly after DHS announced the initiative has been self-funding those positions for a year without any reimbursement from the City – this practice is completely unsustainable. Yet, on April 17, 2017, DHS sent families with children shelter providers a letter informing them that those who requested social workers in 2016 must hire them by April 30th – just two weeks from now. This mandate is being strongly reinforced in meetings with providers despite the fact that the agency has not providing any funding to fulfill it. Adding insult to injury, such demands are made of providers while DHS has several vacancies in their ranks, including that of the Chief Homeless Services Administrator. **If the City hopes to see system-wide results, sustainable, adequate funding mechanisms and timely contracting must be part of the strategy.**

LEADERSHIP

Even in cases where funding has not been an issue, some of the initiatives announced in the review have yet to take shape. Examples of low to no cost initiatives HSU had hoped would be implemented quickly, include targeting rental assistance for youth in DYCD shelters and eliminating the requirement for school aged children to be present at PATH for multiple appointments at intake. With no administrator yet appointed to lead DHS, several vacancies in DHS staff and, the absence of a clear chain of responsibility for the implementation of the myriad of initiatives announced, progress in these and several other areas has proven elusive. While there may be obstacles to implementing these changes that HSU is not aware of, from the outside, it appears as if the delay is due to a lack of capacity at the agency level to implement the change.

In addition to the above mentioned staff vacancies, there has also been considerable turn over in contracts and program staff at DHS. This turnover has resulted in a loss of institutional knowledge and gaps in operational support for homeless services providers. For the remaining DHS staff, morale is low. People are juggling multiple responsibilities receiving pressure from all sides to overhaul agency operations with limited person-power. A current organizational chart is not publicly available and, while the commissioner has been extremely accommodating to HSU and made himself and his senior staff available to work on many issues facing the sector, homeless service providers would benefit mightily from having partners to work with on day to day operational concerns. **DHS must appoint leaders and develop the internal capacity to manage the changes announced in the review and support staff charged with implementing reforms if they are to be successful.**

COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

Program Operations

For those initiatives outlined in the review that have already been implemented, the most successful have been those in which the Department of Social Services (DSS) has worked collaboratively with providers to implement the change. For example, working collaboratively with HSU and our member programs, DSS and the Mayor's Office of Operations streamlined shelter inspections by first piloting and then expanding a coordinated inspection system that allowed shelter providers to work with multiple City agencies to inspect shelters on the same day, consistently record violations and provider corrective action plans and, track repairs using a building compliance system. This work happened alongside a related project to establish new protocols to track "new needs" requests for repair funding to ensure providers have the necessary resources to maintain their properties. While the "new needs" process still isn't perfect, the collaborative spirit of this work has paid off – non-cluster violations are down more than 80% system wide.

Areas in which there has been less success in implementing reforms often occur when there is a disconnect between ideas and practical issues impacting implementation that could be addressed with improved collaboration with homeless services providers. This may be due to the lack of staff available at DHS for program management as discussed earlier but, it also may be indicative of an organizational culture that does not consistently support collaboration and provider feedback.

Thoughtful collaboration with providers can often identify other potential obstacles to success and improve outcomes for clients. For example, when the City first changed the way 311 responded to reports of homeless persons on the street in an effort to be more responsive to community concerns, they initially started deploying outreach teams for every call that came in to 311. Outreach teams were quickly overwhelmed and distracted from their core work serving chronically homeless people living on the streets because 311 callers cannot distinguish between pan handlers and those who are actually chronically homeless. The City took feedback from providers and modified the way 311 routed calls to allow teams to focus on the neediest clients. Following that change, nearly 700 people have been brought in off the streets.

Despite these successes, homeless services providers are not consistently included in the implementation of new initiatives which can lead to a clumsy rollout. Examples of barriers to implementation that could have been resolved by closer collaboration with service providers include those stymied by relatively mundane, operational obstacles known best to persons working directly in programs. Some homeless services programs lack the physical space to accommodate the new program initiatives. Shelters that were assigned enhanced security personnel do not have sufficient space to provide locker rooms and office space for these workers. Homeless prevention programs also struggled to accommodate co-location of HRA staff at their HomeBase offices.

Returning to the example of having social workers in family shelters – not only are those positions not yet funded but, early on there was confusion about what exactly they were being asked to do within existing program models. When the first staff members were hired at sites able to self-fund the reform until City funds could be made available, the role they were to play was not clear. New hires were mandated to attend DHS sponsored training on evidenced based practices in shelter but, existing shelter staff were not allowed to attend that training, including persons expected to supervise the new social work staff. As a result, supervisors were put in the position to have to ask their own employees what DHS was instructing them to do so they could understand what the agency expected of the program. A better approach would have been more inclusive so that program leadership could effectively integrate

new staff into existing program models with more frequent communication to ease confusion and better manage systems' change.

More advanced planning, communication, inclusive training, additional resources for additional office space or, repurposing existing space for enhanced social services for clients *even if it would result in having fewer shelter units available for occupancy* would go a long way towards improving the implementation of programmatic reforms.

Re-housing

Perhaps the most crucial element of an effective homeless services delivery system is having access to robust permanent housing resources. Sadly, the current suite of rental assistance programs (LINC, SEPS, CITYFEPS), Supportive Housing, HPD Section and affordable units and, NYCHA Public Housing have not been able to move families and individuals out of shelter in sufficient numbers. Part of this problem is simple supply – there are not permanently affordable resources to go around. **The City can and should increase the number of public housing units available to homeless New Yorkers as well as commit more deeply affordable HPD financed housing units to homeless families.** In addition, the City should also partner with homeless services providers to better target existing resources so that clients can be matched with the type of housing assistance most appropriate for their needs so they can exit shelter quickly and, avoid returning to shelter in the future.

Current practice reserves homeless priority for NYCHA public housing units – the most deeply affordable housing option of all – for homeless households with at least one working adult. Working households also qualify for a LINC I voucher where they can rent an apartment in the community using a City sponsored subsidy. Households that face significant barriers to employment cannot qualify for either of these options but, because they may not have mental health or substance abuse disorders required to access supportive housing and, cannot qualify for a subsidy like CityFEPS that requires a recent eviction, they have no pathway to permanent housing at all. One such family residing in an HSU member program consists of a deaf mother raising a blind son who spends most of her days shuttling her child back and forth to therapy and service programs to help him learn to navigate the world with his disability. DHS is pressuring the provider to place this client in permanent housing and continuously asks how many apartments this person has looked at and what she is doing to leave shelter. These questions persist even though she has limited income, does not qualify for any subsidy programs and is ill equipped to land a full time job to qualify for a LINC I voucher or NYCHA priority given her the obstacles she is faced with. Families like this must be given access to NYCHA priority or an HPD set-aside unit. Families that have the ability to work full time should be given flexible housing assistance not dependent on their eligibility for TANF programs (pegged at 200% of the federal poverty level or less) at rates that reflect the current housing market to allow them to transition back to the community quickly and permanently.

The City pledged to streamline rental assistance programs in the 90-day review – providers should be part of this conversation. Shelter providers can help identify gaps in existing programs and re-align eligibility criteria with the realities homeless people confront every day so that we can match people with the kinds of housing supports they need to exit shelter quickly and permanently.

NYC COUNCIL BILLS

Finally, before I conclude my testimony I would like to remark upon the bills being heard by the Committee today.

- Int. 622 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of homeless services to educate homeless persons on domestic violence and child abuse.
 - Domestic violence is a leading cause of homelessness among families. The more that we can do to educate families and individuals about the signs of abuse and the services available to help support victims the better. HSU recommends that the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence work with the Council and the Department of Social Services to implement a public education campaign that helps spread the word about available victims' services.
- Int. 1066 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of homeless service to conduct quarterly point-in-time counts of the unsheltered homeless population
 - HSU agrees that more frequent counts of unsheltered New Yorkers can more accurately reflect the number of homeless people living on the streets and in our transit system than the single count currently conducted each winter as required by HUD. DSS has adopted an approach similar to the one proposed in this legislation already via its HOME-STAT initiative that is showing impressive results. Given the allocation of appropriate resources, HSU would support the expansion of this work citywide.
- Int. 1443 – A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring that certain Department of Homeless Services employees be trained in administering opioid antagonists
 - The opioid epidemic is a serious public health emergency. Fortunately, medications are available to neutralize the effect of an overdose and have been proven to save lives. Most HSU members already train their staff to administer such drugs to persons suspected of overdosing. Many member agency staff members have saved lives by having done so. We encourage this training to continue citywide and support efforts to reach additional staff. HSU requests that the Department of Homeless Services work collaborative with homeless services providers to develop, fund and implement a robust training program so that all appropriate staff have access to this life saving training.
- Int. 1459- A Local Law updating the report on utilization of and applications for multi-agency emergency housing assistance
 - HSU supports any and all effort to improve the utility of existing reports to effectively capture the scope of the homeless crisis in New York City.
- Int. 1460 - A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the formation of an interagency coordinating council to combat homelessness
 - HSU supports the creation of an interagency taskforce on homelessness that is inclusive of homeless services providers. Much of the testimony given today centers around on how the expertise of providers can be more effectively leveraged when crafting and implementing policy to the benefit of homeless New Yorkers citywide.

CONCLUSION

Homeless Services United recognizes the difficulty in remaking an entire service delivery system – the structural reforms alone require a tremendous amount of effort to achieve – but we hope that the City is willing to meaningfully engage with providers as full partners to realize our shared goal delivering high quality services as efficiently and effectively as possible in order to prevent, reduce and manage homelessness. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony of
Coalition for the Homeless
And
The Legal Aid Society

on

Oversight – Reforms to Homeless Services, One Year Later
Intro 1443 Regarding Opioid Antagonist Training

Presented before

The New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare

Giselle Routhier
Policy Director
Coalition for the Homeless

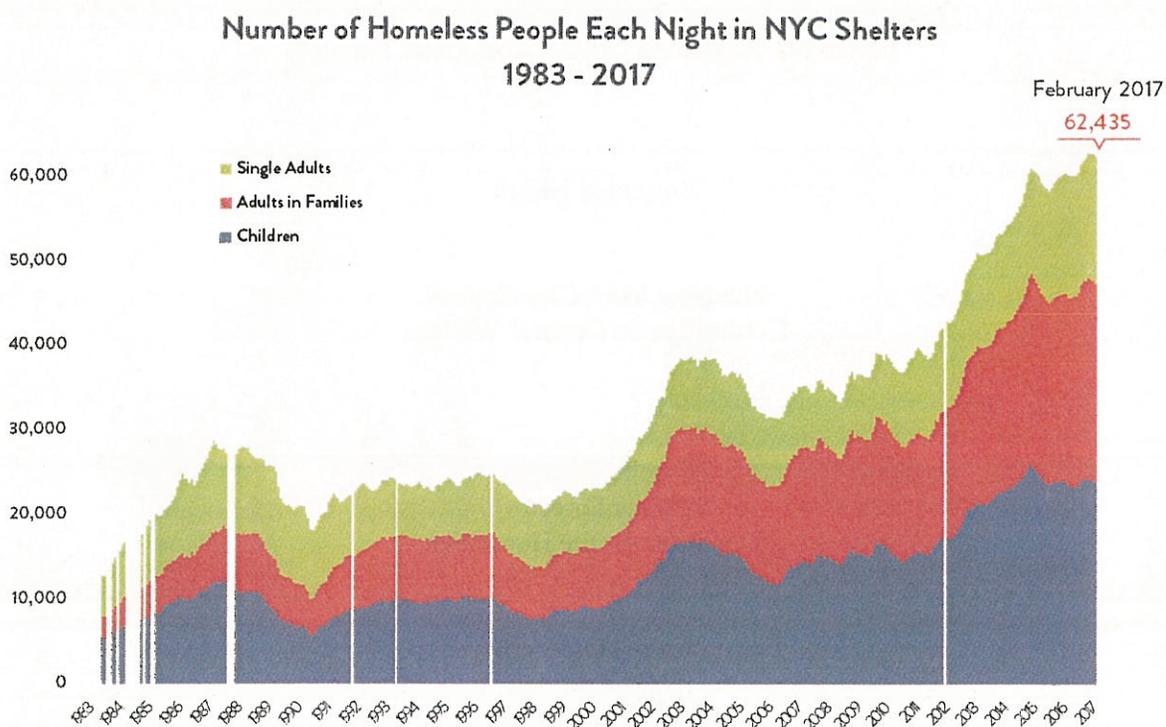
Joshua Goldfein
Staff Attorney
The Legal Aid Society

April 20, 2017

Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society welcome this opportunity to testify before the Committee on General Welfare regarding the status of reforms to the Department of Homeless Services and actions needed to address near-record homelessness.

Near-Record Homelessness in NYC

New York City remains in the midst of the worst homelessness crisis since modern mass homelessness first emerged in our city roughly four decades ago. In February 2017, a near-record 62,435 men, women, and children slept in shelters each night – about 2,000 more than in February 2016. The number of people in shelters now is roughly double what it was in the years preceding the Great Recession. Thirty-eight percent of all individuals in shelters are children.



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resource Administration; LL37 Reports
Data includes individuals in veteran's shelters, Safe Havens, stabilization beds, and HPD emergency shelter.

DHS Reform a Year Later and Mayor's New Plan to Address Homelessness

Mayor de Blasio's 90-day review of the NYC Department of Homeless Services was completed in April 2016 and outlined 46 individual reform proposals to address prevention, street homelessness, shelters, and rehousing. One year later, some progress has been made, but many issues remain unresolved – as detailed in the Coalition's *State of the Homeless 2017* report released last month. On February 28th, the Mayor released his new plan to address homelessness, entitled *Turning the Tide on Homelessness*. This plan is drawing criticism from many for placing too much emphasis on building new shelters and not enough on building and providing the

permanent housing that can actually reduce the number of New Yorkers relegated to homelessness. In response to the reforms announced in April 2016 and the new plan released this past February, we note the following concerns:

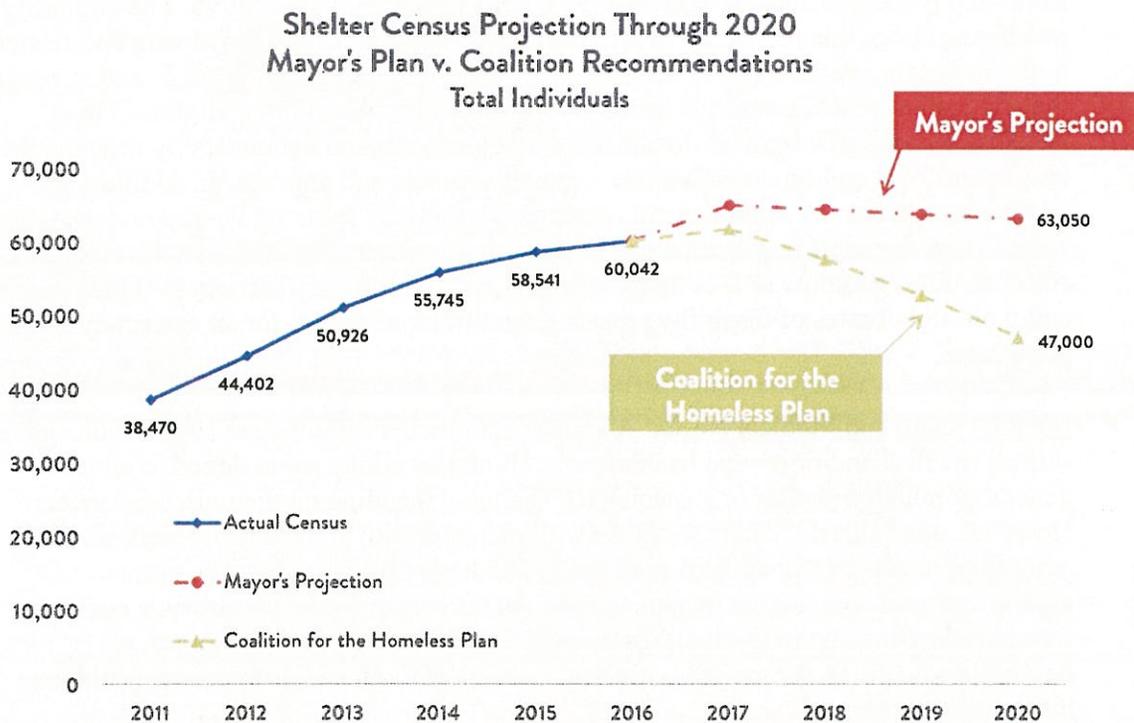
- Housing Placements: Despite policy changes made by the de Blasio administration to re-open access to NYCHA public housing, Section 8 vouchers, and City-funded subsidies for homeless individuals and families in shelters, the amount of permanent, affordable housing made available to homeless households is still not sufficient to make up for the Lost Decade in which the prior Administration denied access to NYCHA and Section 8 for homeless families, let alone meet the current need. More families are now receiving stable housing placements than any year since 2005, but the number of NYCHA public housing apartments, Section 8 vouchers, and HPD apartments remains below the level needed to make a real dent in homelessness. Our specific recommendations for housing placement goals are outlined below.
- Intake and Eligibility: We are extremely concerned about the recent dramatic decline in the percentage of families found eligible for shelter after enduring an already-onerous application process. In February 2017, the eligibility rate was just 37.6 percent, down from 46.6 percent in January and from 51.6 percent in February of 2016. The eligibility rate has not been this low since 2012. This disturbing trend is combined with and related to the increasing percentage of families erroneously found ineligible and forced to repeat the application process multiple times before ultimately being found eligible. These needless bureaucratic barriers do not solve homelessness and demonstrably increase the trauma inflicted on homeless families – mostly mothers and children. In addition, the administration has yet to implement recommendation #29 from the 90-day review, which would align the adult family intake process with procedures for families with children. Adult families continue to face many unlawful and unnecessary barriers to shelter entry, and their higher rates of disability present even further obstacles for an extremely fragile population.
- Mental Health and Medical Needs: A significant number of homeless single adults have serious medical and/or mental health needs. Homeless adults are assigned to either a general population shelter or a specialized shelter, depending on their circumstances. However, specialized shelters for those with mental health and medical needs are struggling to adequately address such needs and have difficulty securing more appropriate permanent housing placements. As the shelter system becomes a last resort for many low-income individuals discharged from hospitals, nursing homes, or psychiatric facilities, far too many find themselves without access to proper health and mental health care.

We commend the administration's efforts to end the use of cluster sites and hotels – stated as one of the primary goals of the Mayor's new plan – and support the goal of creating a shelter system that reduces community displacement and trauma for families who lose their homes. However, we believe a far more robust effort is needed to provide enough affordable housing for homeless individuals and families to meet the tremendous scale of need. Homelessness cannot be solved without recognition that the City cannot solve its homeless crisis without making up for

the Lost Decade of NYCHA and Section 8 placements and add far more affordable housing targeted to homeless households. This obvious history and readily available remedy has been ignored in the Mayor's new plan.

The Critical Need for Affordable Housing

Mayor de Blasio's investments in homelessness prevention and new rental subsidy programs, in conjunction with the City's use of stable Federally-funded apartments (albeit at inadequate levels), did succeed in stemming the skyrocketing shelter census after unchecked growth from 2001-2014. However, the City cannot truly "turn the tide" and substantially reduce homelessness without: 1) fully utilizing all of its existing housing resources, including increasing stable housing placements in NYCHA and HPD to 5,500 per year for families, as well as 5,000 rent subsidies and supported placements for single adults, and 2) creating a new aggressive capital development program to finance construction of at least 10,000 additional units of affordable housing for homeless households over the next five years. Taken together, these recommendations could help reduce the number of families and single adults staying in shelters and prevent their number from growing by thousands in the coming years.



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Coalition for the Homeless Analysis

Note: see full methodology and recommendations in *State of the Homeless 2017*, available at: coalitionforthehomeless.org/soth

Intro 1443 Regarding Opioid Antagonist Training

The Coalition for the Homeless supports Intro 1443 and addressing the increasing problem of opioid- and synthetic opioid-use in shelters and across New York City. We recommend adding language to the bill that would allow for shelter residents to be trained in the provision of opioid antagonist medication. Often, the first person to find someone who is overdosing is a fellow shelter resident. In cases where shelter residents are trained and have Naloxone, more lives can be saved.

We thank the Council for the opportunity to testify and look forward to working together on our mutual goal of ending homelessness in New York City.

About Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society

Coalition for the Homeless: Coalition for the Homeless, founded in 1981, is a not-for-profit advocacy and direct services organization that assists more than 3,500 homeless New Yorkers each day. The Coalition advocates for proven, cost-effective solutions to the crisis of modern homelessness, which is now in its fourth decade. The Coalition also protects the rights of homeless people through litigation involving the right to emergency shelter, the right to vote, and life-saving housing and services for homeless people living with mental illness and HIV/AIDS.

The Coalition operates 11 direct-services programs that offer vital services to homeless, at-risk, and low-income New Yorkers. These programs also demonstrate effective, long-term solutions and include: Supportive housing for families and individuals living with AIDS; job-training for homeless and formerly-homeless women; and permanent housing for formerly-homeless families and individuals. Our summer sleep-away camp and after-school program help hundreds of homeless children each year. The Coalition's mobile soup kitchen distributes over 900 nutritious hot meals each night to homeless and hungry New Yorkers on the streets of Manhattan and the Bronx. Finally, our Crisis Intervention Department assists more than 1,000 homeless and at-risk households each month with eviction prevention, individual advocacy, referrals for shelter and emergency food programs, and assistance with public benefits as well as basic necessities such as diapers, formula, work uniforms, and money for medications and groceries.

The Coalition was founded in concert with landmark right to shelter litigation filed on behalf of homeless men and women (*Callahan v. Carey* and *Eldredge v. Koch*) and remains a plaintiff in these now consolidated cases. In 1981 the City and State entered into a consent decree in *Callahan* through which they agreed: "The City defendants shall provide shelter and board to each homeless man who applies for it provided that (a) the man meets the need standard to qualify for the home relief program established in New York State; or (b) the man by reason of physical, mental or social dysfunction is in need of temporary shelter." The *Eldredge* case extended this legal requirement to homeless single women. The *Callahan* consent decree and the *Eldredge* case also guarantee basic standards for shelters for homeless men and women. Pursuant to the decree, the Coalition serves as court-appointed monitor of municipal shelters for homeless adults, and the City has also authorized the Coalition to monitor other facilities serving homeless families.

The Legal Aid Society: The Legal Aid Society, the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform.

The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of more than 1,100 lawyers, working with some 800 social workers, investigators, paralegals and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26

locations in New York City, the Society provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program. With its annual caseload of more than 300,000 legal matters, The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States. And it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession.

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, the Society's law reform representation for clients benefits more than 1.7 million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

The Legal Aid Society is counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless and for homeless women and men in the Callahan and Eldredge cases. The Legal Aid Society is also counsel in the McCain/Boston litigation in which a final judgment requires the provision of lawful shelter to homeless families.



**Testimony of Cathy Kim
Program Director
Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.**

**To the New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
Oversight Hearing: The Department of Homeless Services 90-day Review
and
Hearing on Intro 1460**

April 20, 2017

Good morning. My name is Cathy Kim and I lead the Vulnerable Populations program for Enterprise Community Partners, a non-profit affordable housing organization that has worked to create and preserve affordable housing here and nationwide for 30 years. Thank you, Chair Levin and the members of the City Council's Committee on General Welfare, for the opportunity to comment on the progress made on the recommendations in the DHS 90-day review.

On behalf of Enterprise, I would like to applaud the City for completing this 90-day review last year with many stakeholders and the progress that has been made thus far. We believe these recommendations, if fully implemented, will lead to meaningful changes that will help families and individuals struggling with housing challenges to find the help they need, and we would like to offer the following suggestions to advance the progress achieved thus far.

First, the focus on prevention in the report is critical. From a cost perspective as well as protecting individuals from the long-lasting trauma of homelessness, prevention is a smart investment. However, what qualifies households to access homelessness prevention services is often an open eviction case, and this is too late for many families. We should work to help families identify housing instability further upstream and connect to the most appropriate resource that will not only prevent instability but promote upward mobility. Through Enterprise's Come Home NYC program, in which we connect homeless families with income to existing affordable housing units with connection to light touch services, we have learned that eviction prevention is needed as soon as a household demonstrates the inability to pay rent on time or at all. We urge the City to consider this kind of targeting.

Second, in the long term, we must continue to increase the supply of affordable housing. In the current tight housing market, there simply aren't enough units, especially those affordable to the lowest-income New Yorkers. In the meantime, we must ensure that homeless households are able to compete for units. Services that help build and repair credit scores and housing court records would remove some barriers to homeless families seeking housing.

Third, while we try to increase the supply of affordable housing for the most vulnerable New Yorkers, it is equally critical that we put forth every effort to keep households in their homes. The City is steadily losing rent-stabilized units-with a net loss of 150,000 between 1994 and 2012. The City cannot sustain this loss in the face of such an acute housing affordability crisis. We urge the

City to work with the State to revisit its rent-stabilization regulations in order to preserve the supply of rent-stabilized units.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight three programmatic issues that should be carefully considered as plans are implemented:

- 1) **Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS)** - We know housing is the solution to homelessness, but with limited resources and a spectrum of need, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. CAPS consists of a universal assessment tool to accurately determine the needs of all homeless households; a complete inventory of available housing for homeless households; and a matching tool to ensure that needs and resources are appropriately and quickly matched. It also helps to identify where resources are lacking. We commend everything the City has done thus far to implement a CAPS pilot and begin the plans for its expansion. This will help ensure that the right households get matched to the right housing resources, but also that New York City complies with US Department of Housing and Urban Development's mandate for a coordinated entry system, safeguarding a critical source of homelessness assistance funding.
- 2) **Services for Households** - Supportive housing is a proven model, and it effectively ends homelessness for those who need deep long-term support, which includes those who are chronically homeless, and typically are severely mentally ill and/or suffering from addiction. But all households, even those who don't require supportive housing, need some level of services. Developing a thoughtful aftercare program for all populations exiting homelessness will go a long way in keeping people stably housed and preventing shelter re-entry. Furthermore, investing in a system that connects all low-income residents of affordable housing to already existing quality and critical services will ensure that vulnerable families – who are often at risk of homelessness - are able to build assets and put themselves in a position to avoid shelter entry.
- 3) **Family Homelessness** - While the picture that may come to mind when we think about homelessness is often a single person on the street, the vast majority of individuals in the shelter system are part of a family. As we think about and invest in solutions to homelessness, we must lift up families, especially children, as a priority population – preventing homelessness, ensuring quality of life in shelter, and providing speedy connections to quality affordable housing and services.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify on these important priorities. And thank you to the Committee for your efforts to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to a stable home and connection to opportunities.



Testimony of

Stephanie Gendell, Esq.
Associate Executive Director
For Policy and Government Relations
Citizens' Committee for Children

Before the

New York City Council
General Welfare Committee

Oversight Hearing: Reforms of Homeless Services, One Year Later

April 20, 2017

Good afternoon. My name is Stephanie Gendell and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 73-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank General Welfare Chair Stephen Levin and the members of the General Welfare Committee for holding today's oversight hearing on the reforms to homeless services since the release of the Department of Homeless Services' 90-Day Review in April 2016. CCC also thanks Council Members Levin, Crowley, Espinal, Jr. and Torres, as well all of the co-sponsors, for introducing the five pieces of legislation that will also be addressed at today's hearing.

CCC also appreciates the de Blasio administration's attention to this issue. Given the historic levels of homelessness and the numerous challenges homeless children and their families face, we had hoped that the 90-day review and its resulting 46 recommendations would have set the City on a new course as it relates to homeless families.

What became clear to CCC, the de Blasio administration and others was that the homelessness crisis was not resolving quickly and that there was insufficient capacity to serve homeless families with children in appropriate shelter facilities; nearly half of the family shelter system is currently living in cluster sites or hotels/motels. We therefore also appreciate the administration releasing another plan in February of this year, *Turning the Tide on Homelessness*. This plan focuses on a phasing out cluster sites by 2021 and motels/hotels by 2023 by building 90 additional purpose built shelters and renovating 30 other days. While this plan does not aggressively reduce the homeless population, CCC does strongly believe that it is critical that the shelter system positively impact the well-being of children and their families, and thus we believe the building of new shelters to replace cluster sites and hotels is critical.

The 90-day review, in April 2016, came at a time that felt like unprecedented homelessness. On April 18, 2016, there were 12,261 families with 22,805 children living in the DHS shelter system.¹ In total, there were 57,921 individuals in the DHS shelter system.² On April 17, 2017 (essentially one year later), the shelter census is even larger, with 12,521 families in shelter, including 22,425 children. The total shelter population is 58,903.³ Nearly 70% of those in shelter are parents and their children.⁴

We know that housing instability causes stress and trauma for families and children. The data and research on the experiences of homeless children paint a disturbing picture regarding the well-being of the record numbers of homeless children, even in the best of circumstances. Homelessness creates risks to the physical and emotional well-being and educational success of children.

¹ <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf> accessed April 2016.

² Id.

³ <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/dailyreport.pdf>, accessed April 18, 2017.

⁴ DHS Local Law 37 report: http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/temporary_housing_report.pdf

For example, children experiencing homelessness have an increased risk of illness compared to children who are not homeless: they suffer from four times as many respiratory infections, five times as many gastrointestinal infections, and twice as many ear infections.⁵ Additionally, they are four times as likely to suffer from asthma and have high rates of asthma-related hospitalizations.⁶ Homeless children also suffer disproportionately from food insecurity, as they are twice as likely to go hungry as non-homeless children, and, due to these nutritional deficiencies they are at an increased risk of obesity.⁷

Being homeless has also been demonstrated to be harmful to children's emotional well-being. Homelessness causes traumatic disruptions in the lives of children, who, in addition to losing their homes, experience loss of their friends and community, sense of security, routines, possessions, and privacy.⁸ Homelessness also makes families more vulnerable to other forms of trauma, such as witnessing violence, physical or sexual assault, and abrupt separation from family members.⁹ As a result, homelessness increases a child's risk of experiencing mental illness. For example, half of school-age homeless children experience anxiety, depression, or withdrawal, compared to 18 percent of children who are not homeless, and one in three homeless children ages eight and under suffers from a major mental disorder.¹⁰

The impact of homelessness can also be devastating to a child's education because it often causes disruptions that impact their attendance and academic performance. Only 55% of families in the City's shelter system are placed in a shelter in the school district where the youngest child attends school.¹¹ As outlined in tremendous detail in the IBO's October 2016 report, *Not Reaching the Door*, homeless children struggle to get to school and are often chronically absent.¹²

Despite the numbers, the obstacles, and the impact of family homelessness, we know that the administration, the providers, the advocates and others have been working hard to prevent homelessness and help families secure permanent housing. We recognize the challenges of doing this in New York City where median income has not been able to keep up with median rent.

We appreciate all of these efforts, but respectfully submit the following recommendations and analysis regarding the 90 day review, the current well-being and needs of families in shelter, and the legislation on the agenda for today's hearing.

⁵ The National Center on Family Homelessness, *The Characteristics and Needs of Families Experiencing Homelessness*, Dec. 2011. Available at: <http://www.familyhomelessness.org/media/306.pdf>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, *Facts on Trauma and Homeless Children*, 2005, at page 2. Available at:

http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/promising_practices/Facts_on_Trauma_and_Homeless_Children.pdf

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ New York City Mayor's Management Report FY 2016, Department of Homeless Services.

¹² Independent Budget Office. *Not Reaching the Door: Homeless Students Face Many Hurdles on the Way to School*. October 2016. <http://www.ibo.nyc.us/iboreports/not-reaching-the-door-homeless-students-face-many-hurdles-on-the-way-to-school.pdf>

1) The 90 Day Review

According to the administration, the City's 90-day comprehensive operational review of NYC's homeless programs was to "ensure homeless services are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible in order to prevent, reduce and manage homelessness."

When the City Council held a hearing on the 90-Review and Recommendations last year, CCC identified the components of the plan below as key to addressing the needs of homeless families with children. CCC is bolding those that have been implemented and italicized ones that are partially implemented. Those not bolded or italicized have either not been implemented or their status is unknown to CCC.

- *Implement an integrated management structure with DHS and HRA reporting to a single Commissioner of Social Services.*
- *Create an Interagency Homelessness Accountability Council reporting to the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services.*
- *Expand HomeBase staffing and services.*
- *Develop an intake model that builds on Homebase and enables families to obtain services within their borough rather than needing to go to PATH.*
- Use data to proactively target prevention services for families at risk of becoming homeless.
- *Target outreach to doubled-up families with school-aged children through a model where HRA and DOE will work together.*
- Target services and rental assistance to youth in DYCD shelters.
- Expand eligibility criteria for the City's rental assistance programs to youth living in DYCD youth shelters who are at risk of entering DHS shelters.
- **Deploy an NYPD management team to help DHS develop an action plan to upgrade shelter security.**
- **Expand domestic violence services to Tier II family shelters.**
- **Implement a more extensive reporting system for critical incidents in shelters.**
- *Phase out the use of cluster sites and commercial hotels by 2018.*
- Rationalize shelter provider rates so that they have funds for maintenance.
- Expand the shelter conditions complaint process through HRA's Infoline.
- Develop a centralized reporting structure to promote move outs.
- **Continue to place 1,500 DHS families on the NYCHA waiting into vacancies.**
- Consolidate and streamline the City's rental assistance programs.
- *Implement a more effective aftercare program.*

Last year, we made the following recommendations to enhance the plan:

- Prevent family homelessness by enhancing the child welfare housing subsidy by increasing the amount from \$300 to \$600 per month and enabling youth who age out to receive the subsidy until age 24 (rather than 21.)
- Expedite the elimination of cluster sites for children and their families.
- Increase the investment in services that keep children safe and address trauma.
- Ensure homeless children have access to child care.
- Be transparent about implementation of the recommendations.
- Seek a greater role for the state as a partner in addressing homelessness.

CCC has been looking forward to today's hearing because even though our recommendations included the need for transparency, we only know the status of a portion of the 90-Day review's recommendations.

On the positive side, CCC is pleased that since the 90-day review, DHS has done the following:

- Issued a new RFP for HomeBase services that will expand the number of sites, increase the amount of services, pilot a shelter intake process at a HomeBase office in Staten Island and expand HomeBase services to include after care.
- Eliminated the requirement for children reunifying from foster care with a homeless parent, reunify at PATH intake. Now just the parent can come to PATH and the family reunify in the shelter placement.
- Removed 647 cluster apartment units. (We should mention that we are, however, concerned that these have been replaced by hotels/motels.)

We understand from DHS's previous testimony that they had been waiting for the FEPS settlement before streamlining the rental assistance programs. We are pleased that the settlement has now happened and look forward to hearing plans to streamline the programs. DHS has also explained that this has led to the delay in rental assistance program for Runaway and Homeless Youth. We similarly look forward to learning more about the plans for this critical rental assistance for vulnerable RHY youth.

CCC is disappointed that many of the other recommendations have either not been implemented yet or the system has not been transparent enough for us to know the status. We urge the administration to expeditiously address the following:

- The timeline to eliminate cluster sites and hotels: Last year, CCC was disappointed in the timeline to eliminate the use of cluster sites. Since then, the administration has actually extended the deadline to eliminate their use from 2018 to 2021. We are also concerned about using hotels until 2023.
- Create a LINC program (or other rental assistance program) for runaway and homeless youth.
- Increase the rates for shelter providers.
- In addition, we would like to once again reiterate the recommendations we made last year, particularly with regard to addressing trauma, providing child care and being transparent.

2) Addressing the Well-being of Homeless Children and Their Families

We appreciate that the Mayor's new homeless plan includes plans to make shelter placements more appropriate for families with children. We also appreciate that the plan includes a borough-based approach. We understand that to keep families close to their community of origin (when safe) and to place them in purpose-built shelters, will require the creation of additional shelter facilities. We urge New Yorkers to be open-minded about opening new family shelters in their neighborhoods.

While shelter is intended to be temporary, families with children had an average length of stay of 431 days in FY16¹³, well over a year. This length of stay makes it even more imperative that the systems address issues related to family and child well-being. Insufficient capacity of purpose-built shelters in the DHS system (referred to as Tier II family shelters) has significantly contributed to the negative impacts on families' well-being, with 40% of families being placed in commercial hotels and cluster sites. This dearth of purpose-built shelter capacity also results in families being placed far from their communities, schools, jobs, social service providers, friends, families and support systems, even when it is safe and in their best interests to remain in their communities. For school-aged children this removal from their communities of origin has translated into school transfers and/or long commutes, with high rates of absenteeism. For parents this situation means long and complicated morning and evening commutes to access their children's schools, child care, jobs, public assistance appointments and medical appointments. As a result, families experience disruptions in social service supports, as well as the supports from friends and families in their communities.

In the Department of Homeless Service shelter system, there are currently about 13,000 homeless families—but only approximately 6,800 Tier II family shelter units to serve them—meaning only about half of all homeless families with children are in shelters built for that purpose. The remaining half of homeless families with children are living in cluster sites and hotels.

Hotel rooms are often far from transportation, far from communities of origin, and lacking in services provided by Tier II shelters. Hotel rooms typically lack kitchens, and some hotels lack cooking facilities completely, meaning only microwavable meals are provided. Hotel sites often lack laundry facilities for family use, play areas for children, and communal space for visitors. Due to the hotels' attempt to prevent homeless families from claiming tenancy rights, families are forced to move rooms in the hotel every 29 days—removing any potential stability a family in crisis could try to create. Furthermore, hotels have not been designed or funded to have appropriate shelter staff, such as housing specialists, educational specialists, recreational specialists, etc.

To begin to better address the well-being needs of homeless students and homeless families living in hotels and cluster sites, CCC makes the following suggestions:

- Restore and baseline the \$10.3 million one time addition for guidance counselors and social workers at schools with high numbers of homeless students, and then add an additional \$7.3 million to the Executive Budget to fund a total of 100 DOE social workers (add 67) at schools with high numbers of homeless students.
- Reorient the system to be more proactive about helping homeless families with school-aged children, rather than being responsive to parents only after there is a problem identified.
- Better staff PATH so that every parent with school-aged children can meet with an expert in education, educational stability, McKinney Vento, and transportation while at PATH.
- Create a better system to arrange busing/transportation than the current process whereby busing cannot begin to be arranged until after the family is found eligible for shelter.

¹³ <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2016/dhs.pdf>

This 10-day eligibility process can take substantially longer for families who are not initially found eligible, and thus leads to a tremendous delay in arranging busing.

- Provide monthly MetroCards (rather than weekly) for families awaiting transportation arrangements.
- Increase the number of DOE staff troubleshooting education issues for school-aged children in temporary housing from the current 8 staff. Increase the number of family assistants who aid at shelters to better accommodate families placed in hotels.
- Improve the conditions for families in hotels by:
 - Eliminating the practice of requiring families in hotels to move rooms every 29 days.
 - Ensuring families in hotels have access to laundry.
 - Ensuring families in hotels have access to high quality, palatable food that meets the needs of clients with special dietary restrictions.
 - Creating space in the hotels for children to play and for families to have visitors during specified hours.
 - Providing shuttle service and/or car service reimbursement for homeless hotel residents located further than a 10- minute walk from a subway and those with disabilities who cannot walk to the subway.
 - Ensuring all hotels have regular access to social service staff who are trained in trauma-informed care and to assist with housing, benefits, education, early childhood education, early intervention, accessing health, behavioral health, and child welfare preventive services, and employment training and assistance.
- Provide trauma-informed care training for DHS and provider staff in all shelters and PATH intake.

3) City Council Legislation

- Int. 1443-2017, in relation to requiring that certain DHS employees be trained in administering opioid antagonists:

This legislation would require that all DHS employees who may encounter a person experiencing an opioid-related overdose to be trained annually in providing an opioid antagonist such as naloxone. CCC supports this legislation.

While we support the legislation, the majority of staff who will come into contact with a homeless client overdosing will be staff working for non-profit shelter providers rather than DHS. We suggest amending the legislation to require that there be one person on-site at each shelter facility at all times who has been trained and how has access to the opioid antagonist—and that the providers be reimbursed for the cost of this training and purchasing the medication.

- Int.0622-2015, in relation to requiring the department of homeless services to educate homeless person on domestic violence and child abuse.

This legislation would require that those found eligible for shelter at adult and family intake offices receive information about child abuse and domestic violence. Specifically, it requires DHS to issue and circulate electronic and written materials, which at minimum

is to include a video and an illustrated brochure explaining the nature and proper reporting of domestic violence and child abuse.

CCC likely supports this legislation but seeks more information about what educational materials will be provided.

CCC appreciates the need to educate New Yorkers about domestic violence and child abuse. We feel that it would be necessary for us to view the written and electronic materials before being able to support their widespread distribution. It would be important for the materials to be available in multiple languages.

- Int.1460-2017, in relation to requiring the formation of an interagency coordinating council and homeless services advisory council to combat homelessness

This legislation amends a 1993 local law to strengthen the interagency coordinating council and to create an advisory board. CCC supports this legislation. We think that adding the City Council General Welfare Chair (or a designee) and being specific about more agency participation is key. We also think that creating a non-governmental advisory board that the Commissioner is required to meet with and make recommendations, is an important and critical addition.

The legislation calls for an 11 member advisory board, with 5 members appointed by the Speaker and 6 members appointed by the Mayor. Representatives would need to include CBOs and service providers and at least one person who has been homeless in the last two years.

To strengthen this legislation, CCC makes the following recommendations:

- Require a subcommittee of the interagency council and advisory board to focus on homeless children and their families.
- Amend the requirements for advisory board members to include at least one advocate, one legal services organization, someone who specializes in affordable housing, and someone who specializes in child well-being.

- Int. 1066-2016, in relation to requiring DHS to conduct quarterly point-in-time counts of the unsheltered homeless population.

CCC supports this legislation.

- Int. 1459-2017, in relation to updating the report on utilization of and applications for multi-agency emergency housing assistance

This legislation aims to make the Local Law 37 reports easier to locate and to understand by a) requiring that they be posted on the homepage of the Mayor's Office of Operations' website and the Open Data web portal and b) that it include a summary page.

CCC supports this legislation.

This report is very important because it provides a truer sense of the numbers of homeless individuals and families because it includes those served by agencies beyond DHS (such as HRA Domestic Violence shelters and DYCD).

Currently it is very difficult to locate the local law 37 report online. This amendment would make finding the report much easier. In addition, a cover page that summarizes the totals would also be very helpful. Right now, each agency submits their own numbers in their own format, making it often hard to get the full picture.

CCC is grateful to the City Council for its commitment to homeless families. We look forward to working together to finalize these important pieces of legislation and to improving the homeless service system for children and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

FOR THE RECORD

FOR THE RECORD

Partnership for the Homeless
Family Resource Center
100 Pennsylvania Avenue, 3rd floor
Brooklyn, NY 11207

Testimony of Jill Orrock, Director of Social Services
In Support of Int 1460-2017, the Formation of a Interagency Coordinating Council
Before the Committee on General Welfare
Thursday, April 20, 2017

Thank you for opening the floor for testimony on this important topic.

My name is Jill Orrock and I am the Director of Social Services at Partnership for the Homeless' Family Resource Center. The Family Resource Center is located and works with people in East NY Brooklyn- a community that's heavily impacted by homelessness. As we are all aware, homelessness touches the lives of children, seniors, immigrants, victims of domestic violence, the chronically ill, people working minimum-wage jobs, and more. And no single city agency is able to address the multilayered needs of the homeless. Therefore, the proposed Local Law 1460-2017 is an exciting foot forward in the unified fight against homelessness, providing structured and mandatory collaboration between city agencies.

At the Family Resource Center we often see the intersection of city agencies and how it impacts our clients who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability. Unfortunately, what we've witnessed is city agencies that are constrained due to budgets and independent missions, and therefore operating separately. This way of operating often provides significant barriers, a lack of support to rising out of homelessness, and is not conducive to collaboration towards a unified goal such as solving homelessness. Consequently, the big picture can easily be lost.

However, with the purposeful implementation of both an advisory board and an interagency coordination council, I believe city agencies can take an essential, unified, first step towards directing all of the city's existing services and resources to combat homelessness. This proposed interagency coordination begins the building of a seamless model where city agencies are actively working together, sharing data, and using common metrics for success. I do hope, however, that this is only one of many steps to be taken on the road to further battle the increasing numbers of people and families falling into homelessness in New York City. As a city, I do believe we have the capacity to work together, seamlessly and proactively, to give our best effort towards conquering homelessness.

I look forward to the implementation of this law and what will come from it.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jill Orrock, LMSW

FOR THE RECORD

FOR THE RECORD



Testimony of Craig Hughes

Policy Analyst

Coalition for Homeless Youth

RE: Oversight – Reforms to Homeless Services, One Year Later

New York City Council

Committee on General Welfare

April 20, 2017

Thank you Chair Levin and members of the Committee on General Welfare for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Craig Hughes and I am the Policy Analyst at the Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY), also known as the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services. The Coalition for Homeless Youth has advocated for the needs of runaway and homeless youth (RHY) for nearly 40 years. The coalition is comprised of 67 providers of services to homeless youth across New York State, including 29 members in New York City.¹

Our members include providers that are directly contracted to provide services to RHY, many of whom interact daily with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and the larger Department of Social Services (DSS). Many RHY access or attempt to access DHS shelters. The services provided by DHS are decisive to the daily lives of thousands of RHY in New York City. This testimony must also discuss DYCD – an agency not under the purview of General Welfare – because DYCD runs the youth-specific homeless system in New York City. Homeless youth find themselves navigating an often confusing and uncoordinated set of City agencies and while we are hopeful that positive changes are in the works, our optimism is tempered by significant concern for how little has been done by the City for homeless youth in the past year.

Since modern homelessness began in the late 1970s, homeless youth have faced the reality that the City does not provide enough age-appropriate shelter and largely leaves them out of access to permanent housing options. Under the current administration there have been some improvements in addressing the needs of RHY, particularly in adding some transitional beds and some funding for mental health services. The recent opening of a shelter for LGBTQ young adults in the DHS system – the first of its kind in the municipal continuum – is an exemplar in the kind of work that can be done when the City acknowledges the scope of vulnerability homeless young people face and provides necessary resources to meet the needs of some of our City's most vulnerable young adults. We commend DHS, HRA and Councilmember Torres for this remarkable work. Further, the City's recent RFP for youth-specific supportive housing beds, released in February, presents a long-term solution for some young people that should come on-line in years to come, and we are deeply appreciative of the Mayor's commitment to fund these long-term beds.²

Still, the harsh reality is that there are still nowhere near enough resources provided by the City to meet the needs of its homeless youth. The lack of a right to youth shelter, the relatively small number of beds in the City's RHY continuum, and the marginal number of age-specific beds in the

¹ Our website is available at: www.nychy.org

² See: <https://shnny.org/rfps/nyc-hra-provision-of-congregate-supportive-housing/>

DHS system, all present major gaps that cause too many young people to fall through system-based cracks. The ongoing lack of coordination between City agencies serving homeless young people only makes this situation more difficult for youth reaching out for help. According to the 2016 Point in Time (PIT) data, there were 1,653 unaccompanied homeless youth – the vast majority between 18-24 years old – in shelter across the five boroughs.³ Many of these young people were in DHS or HRA facilities. This does not include thousands of young people between 18-24 who are heads of households with children in City shelters or part of so-called ‘adult families’ without children other City shelters. Many of these young people were in DYCD shelters, and many were in DYCD shelters before aging out and landing in the DHS or HRA shelters.

The lack of almost any available subsidized exit from DYCD facilities – partially a result of the historic ping-ponging of responsibility for homeless youth between City agencies, which has meant that those relying on the DYCD programs are typically left out of permanent housing options – means that right now the City’s homeless young people often circle around DYCD programs, sometimes ending up in DHS or HRA shelters, and often ending up on the streets as homeless adults. For many homeless youth this is preventable if the City turns its attention their way. Had there been a subsidized permanency option available to them in DYCD facilities as younger adults, there’s good reason to believe they may not have entered the HRA or DHS systems.

We must focus on housing

In a study recently completed by the Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence (CIDI) that looked at outcomes for youth in the ACS, DHS and DYCD systems between 2008 and 2013, analysts found that “Having a subsidized exit substantially reduced the likelihood of both future system use and being a high service user in all models—by about two-thirds and 85%, respectively.”⁴ Access to subsidies is a life-changing matter. Currently, homeless youth relying on homeless youth services (DYCD) are one of the only homeless sub-populations in New York City that has been left with virtually no option for permanent housing to help them exit homelessness. Youth relying on DYCD’s homeless youth programs currently have no access to local housing subsidies like LINC. These young people do not receive any priority access to NYCHA units, or priority access to Section 8 subsidies. Youth eligible for supportive housing also face significant barriers to accessing a unit, and there has been ongoing difficulty ensuring fair access to supportive housing interviews and

³ Data available at: https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_NY-600-2015_NY_2016.pdf

⁴ Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence, Office of the Mayor. 2017. “Housing Trajectories for Transition-age Youth.” <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/housing-trajectories-of-transitionage-youth.pdf>. Quote is from page 6.

acceptance for homeless young people, particularly those with serious and persistent mental illness. The latter issue is not solely a result of the dearth of available supportive housing, but also a result of referral decisions made by City agencies and cherry-picking/creaming at the provider-level, which we have previously testified to this committee about.⁵

City data in regards to what happens to youth relying on the DYCD homeless youth continuum is sobering. According to records released by DYCD in response to a FOIL request in December of last year, in FY16 less than 1% of those discharged from DYCD-crisis shelter beds moved into their own apartment. Only about 18% of those discharged moved along the continuum from crisis shelter to a transitional independent living (TIL) bed. More than half of those discharged either went right back into a crisis bed (29.7%) or disappeared (23.5%). Data on TIL discharges, which includes less than a tenth of the number of crisis discharges, is similarly alarming. Fifteen-percent of youth discharged from TIL beds went back into crisis beds, nearly 12% went into DHS shelters, and nearly 12% disappeared. Only about 9.5% moved into their own apartment. About 21% moved in with friends or other relatives – situations that are known to often be very precarious. Less than 20% returned home.⁶

It is clear that housing support is needed.

Reforms

A. Housing and Shelter

Recommendation #7: Youth Access to Rental Aid

We are appreciative that the Mayor's most recent plan on homelessness states that homeless youth in DYCD programs will be given access to rental subsidies this year. Youth access to subsidies which was also recommendation #7 in the 90-day review.⁷ While we still haven't been given a clear timeline on when this year the administration will put this into motion, this commitment by the administration shows a move in the right direction. However, it is important to note that the matter has clearly not been an urgent one for the administration – a year since the recommendation made in the City's 90-day review, no subsidy access has been granted. According to preliminary budget testimony last month, the City expects these subsidies to be made available when all subsidies are streamlined following finality of FEPS litigation. To have gone nearly a full Mayoral term with youth relying on the City's homeless youth programs virtually left out of rental subsidy options is

⁵ Please see our testimony to General Welfare dated January 19, 2017

⁶ DYCD clarified that this discharge data is not unduplicated.

⁷ Mentioned on page 20 of the *Turning the Tide* report. <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/pdf/turning-the-tide-on-homelessness.pdf> as well as the 90-day review report at: <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/reports/2016/90-day-homeless-services-review.pdf>

regrettable, to say the least. As the numbers mentioned above, the need is dire – the City’s should strive to expeditiously meet that need. Rather than wait for yet another step to occur before granting youth in DYCD shelters access to these subsidies, the City should move immediately on the matter in order to allow homeless youth a decisive resource for them to use and exit homelessness.

Additionally, it is important to note that the 90-day review and the Mayor’s new homeless plan emphasizes eligibility for subsidies will be expanded to youth in DYCD *shelters*, which does nothing for the many young people from 21 years old and up who rely on DYCD drop-in centers. What are they to do to exit homelessness?

Finally, we want to emphasize that DYCD facilities are not funded for housing specialists. As anyone who has done frontline work with folks experiencing homelessness knows, housing specialists and case managers hold very different positions, and this is all the more the case given how discriminatory New York City’s hyper-expensive rental market it is to those with subsidies. Simply put, the City should fund housing specialists in DYCD facilities so that youth can find permanent housing.

Recommendation #26: Streamlining Access to DYCD Shelter

Also youth-specific, recommendation #26 of the 90-day review included “[t]argeting services for emerging new trends in the single adult population.” Homeless young adults were specifically mentioned here, though there was no specific intervention named. While there are many things the City could do to fulfill this recommendation, two in particular are of note. First, expand the number of youth-specific beds in the DHS system. The youth beds that DHS provides – for example Project Renewal’s new shelter, Turning Point, and Create Young Adult Men’s Shelter (the latter two who are not members of CHY) – tend to have good reputations among young people. DHS can learn from these programs and expand on them to ensure that young people who enter into the DHS system are housed with people in their own age-range and working with providers trained to provide tailored services to young people.

Secondly, the administration should allow DYCD to administer shelter for youth between 21-24 years old (currently youth shelter ends at age 20), which State rules are set to allow in the new year with the passage of the new budget. Per our discussions with City officials, the City is not in support of this locally and does not plan to expand youth-shelter access in DYCD to young people through 24 years old. Given that many homeless young people will not enter or re-enter a DHS shelter due to their negative experiences, or cannot gain access to a domestic violence bed due to very-limited capacity for singles in particular, the City’s very conservative take on this matter is unfortunate and will leave many young people struggling without aid on cold nights. We will

continue to press the City on this matter and hope that the Council will join us in strongly encouraging the City to provide appropriate shelter to homeless youth 21-24 years old.

Recommendation #30: Streamlining Access to DYCD Shelter

Recommendation #30 of the 90-day review included a plan to “[s]treamline access to DYCD shelter for homeless youth” by “deploy[ing]” placing staff to “offer” age-eligible youth entering into DHS into a DYCD bed. Many found this goal alarming to begin with, fearing that this could easily lead to vulnerable homeless youth being turned away at the City’s doorstep. According to DYCD, dozens of DHS staff have been trained to use Capricorn (a DYCD database) to locate vacancies in the DYCD system and refer appropriately. We urge monitoring of this process given the long history of DHS staff inappropriately diverting youth from DHS’s entry points. This is particularly important given that many DYCD beds have specific eligibility requirements, and there is only a single 24-hour drop-in center, which is also population-specific.

Additionally, the 90-day review noted that “the plan to triple the number of youth beds is a critical element in this reform.” However, documentation obtained in a FOIL from December showed that DYCD was continuing to struggle to open new crisis beds. Important to note is that there is no established and formalized mechanism to get a young person from the streets into an available transitional (TIL) bed, which tend to be higher-threshold and have tighter eligibility criteria, without going through a crisis bed first. While tripling the available beds still would not solve the desperate need for an on-demand, expansive youth shelter system, the City should deal forthrightly with its struggles in opening crisis beds and ensure that resources are provided so that new crisis beds can be placed on line. Major factors here include the lack of start-up or capital funds for new programs and bed rates that are too low for many providers to successfully run RHY programming.

Additional Matters: Tightening the Front Door and Presumptive RHY Eligibility

Finally, we must also express alarm at the City’s unfortunate and regressive approach to reducing the DHS census, which went into effect late last year: tightening the front door to homeless families. HRA’s successful request to the State for more latitude to deny families entering into the shelter system has led to an increase in young families struggling at the front door. As providers will often tell you, and as thousands of homeless folks will attest, repeated efforts to gain access to the City’s family shelter system is a traumatizing process. We hope the City will reconsider its approach to denying homeless families shelter. Additionally, we again want to point out that families relying on DYCD programs must enter into the family shelter investigative process as if they aren’t already homeless. This presents an unnecessary bureaucratic hurdle for some of our City’s most vulnerable

young people. The City should implement a clear process by which families relying on DYCD homeless youth resources can be presumed eligible for family shelter.

B. Homeless Counts & Street Homelessness

We do not have a recently conducted, realistic and reliable estimate of the homeless youth population on the streets on any given night. The last serious and reasonable effort at getting at such a number was conducted, with City Council support, a decade ago. Recent efforts by the City to estimate the number of young people on the street (the Youth Count) have been severely under-resourced and lacked anything resembling a serious commitment by the de Blasio administration to coordinating its energies to coming up with a reasonably accurate estimate. Many homeless young people living on the street go uncounted and many of these young people enter into long-term chronic homelessness as adults.

Recommendation #10: HOME-STAT

The 90-day review focused on HOME-STAT and increasing “tools for outreach teams to bring people in from the streets”. It is of note that there was no mention of the HOPE effort in the recommendations, even though this is the number of street homeless people that the City popularizes and the number that is accepted by the federal government for its official tally of homelessness. In response to criticism on this matter, City officials have emphasized that their focus is not to count homeless people but to serve them. This isn’t a particularly helpful response and serves more to evade than engage. Advocates have long-argued that the HOPE methodology is deeply problematic and now is the time to deal with that, not to side step it. Since HOPE is such an important number we strongly encourage the City to reconsider its methodology. More specific to HOME-STAT, it is of note that there is no City-driven effort to coordinate HOME-STAT with the youth-specific outreach teams that DYCD funds. Surely some coordination would be beneficial to ensure that competent youth-focused services are provided to those young people encountered by adult-oriented municipal outreach teams.

Recommendation #11: Drop-Ins and Safe Haven Beds

Importantly, the City has planned to increase drop-in services and expand safe haven beds for the street homeless population. We believe it is important to note that there is only one 24-hour drop-in center for homeless youth in New York City. This drop-in center is a desperately needed resource and we are deeply appreciative that the City funds it. However, it exclusively serves LGBTQ homeless young people, and many other street homeless young people are left without an option. There is a substantial need for additional 24-hour youth drop-in centers for youth living on the street

to help them with respite and finding their way out of homelessness. Additionally, DYCD homeless youth outreach teams have no access to the safe haven placement system. Such access should be coordinated between City agencies to ensure that homeless youth have options to get off the street.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Coalition for Homeless Youth is appreciative of recent efforts by the City to provide more services to homeless youth. There is still a very long way to go in providing adequate resources for some of the City's most vulnerable young people. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

City Council General Welfare Committee Hearing on April 20, 2017
Oversight - Reforms to Homeless Services
One Year Later

My name is Wendy O'Shields and I am testifying as an Advocate for Homeless New Yorkers.

Int. No. 622

In relation to requiring the department of homeless services to educate homeless persons on domestic violence and child abuse.

Suggestion: screen for domestic violence survivors at the Department of Homeless services assessment shelters during the intake process. Immediately refer to the New York City Family Justice Centers and the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence if DV is reported. Permanent housing for survivors should include themselves and their minor children regardless of the type of shelter they reside.

<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/domestic-violence/introduction-to-domestic-violence.page>

Refer to the New York City Family Justice Centers (FJCs) provide comprehensive civil legal, counseling and supportive services for survivors of domestic violence, elder abuse and sex trafficking. Located in all five boroughs, the FJCs are safe, caring environments that provide one-stop services and support. Key City agencies, community, social and civil legal services providers, and District Attorney's Offices are located on-site at the FJCs to make it easier for survivors to get help. Services are free and confidential. All are welcome regardless of language, income or immigration status.

<http://www1.nyc.gov/site/ocdv/programs/family-justice-centers.page>

Int. No. 1443

In relation to requiring that certain Department of Homeless Services employees be trained in administering opioid antagonists.

The Department of Homeless Shelter staff should not be allowed to administer the Naloxone shot without their "CPR Training" as required by the Callahan Consent Decree "Shelter Law."

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-free-naloxone-training-sessions-across-new-york-state>

As per the "CALLAHAN CONSENT DECREE" "SHELTER LAW" "SHELTER STANDARDS"

(g) A staff attendant trained in "FIRST AID" shall be on duty in each shelter facility at all times.

<http://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/CallahanConsentDecree.pdf>

DHS allows this crime to continue at their DHS and DHS Non-Profit vendor shelters. Enforce the implementation of the Callahan Consent Decree, which requires a trained staff in "First Aid" and "CPR."

Int. No. 1460

In relation to requiring the formation of an interagency coordinating council to combat homelessness.

The New York Interagency Council on Homelessness' should include City of New York Homeless advocates and DHS shelter Homeless residents.

The Interagency Council should liaise with DHS shelter Homeless residents and affordable housing agencies such as HUD/HPD/HDFC/and the like to assist in rapid re-housing. Permanent affordable housing is the primary solution to reduce the backlog of shelter Homeless residents.

Additionally create a City of New York Department of Homeless Services "**HOMELESS SHELTER RESIDENT HIGH PRIORITY CODE**" possibly **H-0** for rapid re-housing.

Posit a DHS shelter Homeless resident selection process as high priority for independent living in permanent housing when eligible. **H-0** a high priority code coming before an applicant not residing in a DHS Homeless shelter. DHS referrals using the **H-0** code for HUD Housing Choice Vouchers, New York Housing Connect, NYCHA, HPD Affordable Housing, Mitchell-Lama Housing, and other permanent housing programs shall supersede other applicants.

(Please see page 3 for my original document)

Thank you for hearing my concerns.

3/30/17

Criminal Grievance
Wendy O'Shields vs. DSS/HRA/DHS
The City of New York Department of Social Services
NYC Human Resources Administration
Office of Legal Affairs
150 Greenwich Street, 38th Floor
New York, New York 10007

LET THE RECORD SHOW

DHS "HOMELESS SHELTER RESIDENT HIGH PRIORITY CODE" H-0

Suggestion create a City of New York Department of Homeless Services "**HOMELESS SHELTER RESIDENT HIGH PRIORITY CODE" H-0** for rapid re-housing. The **H-0** code could be universally applied to all DHS shelter Homeless residents regardless of their categories singles, couples, or families with or without children.

Behind closed doors in DHS shelters reside the City of New York's Homeless shelter population. Warehousing homeless residents in DHS shelters for many years is criminal. With nearly zero referrals to permanent housing over time, the DHS shelter Homeless have multiple while permanent housing issues are compounded.

Posit a DHS shelter Homeless resident selection process as high priority for independent living in permanent housing when eligible. **H-0** a high priority code coming before an applicant not residing in a DHS Homeless shelter. DHS referrals using **H-0** to HUD Housing Choice Vouchers, New York Housing Connect, NYCHA, HPD Affordable Housing, Mitchell-Lama Housing, and other permanent housing programs.

Federally, New York State, and City of New York funded permanent housing programs should apply the **H-0** Homeless high priority code to secure permanent housing for DHS shelter Homeless residents. Shelter Homeless residents are in emergency housing and warrant the highest designation for placement in permanent housing. Many shelter residents are in a recidivist cycle of DHS shelter housing, illegal room renting, renting not to code slum landlord apartments, priced out of market rent apartments, and squatting. These residents re-enter the DHS shelters frequently to avoid Street Homelessness.

Stop the circle of DHS shelter Homelessness and implement the **H-0** code as a means to prioritize permanent housing for DHS shelter Homeless New Yorkers!

Wendy O'Shields
Advocate

NYCHA Reference

EXCLUSIVE: Housing Authority gives homeless families priority over domestic violence victims for public housing

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Thursday, July 31, 2014, 2:30 AM

BY GREG B. SMITH

The Housing Authority has quietly okayed a plan to jump homeless families ahead of domestic violence victims on its huge waiting list for public housing.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nycha-homeless-families-priority-public-housing-article-1.1886320>

HARLEM UNITED

1438
Testimony in Support of Int ~~1443~~-2017
April 20, 2017

For nearly three decades, Harlem United has changed lives by helping New Yorkers most in need improve their health and well-being through compassionate, client-centered care. From our roots—planted in the basement of a church in Harlem at the height of the AIDS crisis—we have grown into a full-fledged, community-based, healthcare and housing provider that serves New Yorkers who live in every borough and City Council district. Across the decades, our founding ethic has remained the same: **Harlem United is a family, and no matter what we're here to help.**

1442
Harlem United urges the New York City Council to support Int ~~1443~~, which would ensure that DHS employees who are involved in outreach or who work in shelters would be trained in administering Naloxone to individuals who have overdosed on opioids, in order to prevent deaths. **In 2016, Harlem United trained over 200 individuals, including clients, staff members and community members, in overdose prevention.** These individuals can recognize signs of a potential opiate overdose, administer Naloxone, and call for help. **In 2016, we received reports of over 25 lives saved because of the heroic work of the overdose responders we trained.**

Naloxone saves lives. The sooner a person receives it after overdosing, the better the chance that they will live. If a person overdoses in a homeless shelter or other DHS facility, having to wait for an ambulance to arrive to receive Naloxone will reduce their chance of survival. It is imperative that staff at DHS agencies that engage clients who use drugs be ready to respond to overdoses.

In addition to the frightening increase in opioid use overall in New York City, Fentanyl is present in more and more batches of heroin. Fentanyl is highly dangerous because it is much stronger than heroin and can cause a person to overdose very easily. Harlem United's Naloxone Training Program has acknowledged this trend and altered messaging accordingly. We now tell clients to: Assume Fentanyl is in your drugs; Inject a small amount to see how strong it is; Use drugs with someone nearby who has Naloxone.

As harm reductionists, our goal is to support clients so that they can live healthy and informed lives. As long as the communities we serve use drugs, Harlem United will be here to make New York City as safe as possible for them, whether that means reversing their overdoses or providing them with culturally competent care. We urge the Council to support this goal by passing Int 1443-2017.

For additional information, please contact:

Rebecca Goldberg

Managing Director, Harm Reduction and Recovery Support Services

O: 212-924-3733 ext. 1259 // F: 212-289-2394 // C: 718-501-3089



**Testimony to the New York City Council
General Welfare Committee
Submitted by Laura Mascuch, Supportive Housing Network of New York
April 20, 2017**

As the Executive Director of the Supportive Housing Network of New York and I a one of the Co-Chairs of the NYC Coalition on the Continuum of Care (CCoC), I support bill number 1460 to broaden the Interagency Coordinating Council to combat homelessness to include a co-chair of the CCoC, as well as stakeholders who have experienced homelessness.

The Supportive Housing Network of New York is a membership organization of approximately 200 nonprofit developers, owners, and providers of supportive housing statewide. Collectively, there are 50,000 units of supportive housing in the state and 32,000 in New York City. Supportive housing represents a critical component of ending homelessness, offering permanent housing solutions with wraparound social services for homeless individuals and families with special needs. Over the next fifteen years, the NYC 15/15 initiative will create 15,000 new units of supportive housing. An additional 20,000 units will be created through the state's Empire State Supportive Housing program.

The NYC Coalition on the Continuum of Care (CCoC) is a body of city and state government officials, housing and homeless service providers, both homeless and formerly homeless people, various provider membership coalitions representing a broad range of constituencies which include domestic violence, runaway and homeless youth, people living with HIV, seniors, those with mental illness and other behavioral health issues as well as other key stakeholders with the primary purpose of coordinating New York City's annual application for HUD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance funding. Over the last several years, the CCoC has received between \$107 million and \$120 million per year of HUD funding, which has been allocated to permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, and transitional housing. The CCoC also receives direct technical assistance and guidance on policy issues from HUD and HUD consultants. In 2016, the CCoC was awarded \$600,000 to fund a city-wide Coordinated Assessment and Placement System.

The CCoC is comprised of a number of working committees which include the Consumer Committee and the Youth Advisory Board, which includes people with lived experience of homelessness as well as the Policy & Advocacy, the Youth, Evaluation and the Performance & Quality Improvement Committees.

The CCoC is involved in sharing information about and implementing important federal policies. For example, the CCoC arranged for a HUD briefing for local providers about the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, an amendment to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which – among other things – changed HUD's definition of homelessness and chronic

homelessness, increased resources for prevention, and increased emphasis on performance. The Youth Committee helped coordinate the first Homeless Youth Count and provides technical assistance to runaway and homeless youth providers in implementing Housing First policies, which incorporate harm reduction principles and posits that an individual cannot properly address health and wellness issues without first having a stable place to live.

The CCoC has formed a steering committee in 2015 to devise and implement a coordinated entry system, known in New York City as the Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS). This is a HUD mandate with a requirement to implement by January 2018. CAPS will ensure that, regardless of a person's entry point into the homeless system, their needs will be evaluated consistently. The system will incorporate a vulnerability index, as specified by HUD guidance and one of the key recommendations made by the Mayor's Supportive Housing Task Force: "Target units to three broad populations – adults, families, and youth – and incorporate a vulnerability index to target housing to those most in need." This is one of the many ways the CCoC serves as an important bridge between federal and local priorities in the City's response to homelessness.

The CCoC also plays an important role in coordinating with state efforts to end homelessness. When the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative (ESSHI) launched in 2016, the NYC CCoC ensured that the ESSHI Request for Proposals required proposers across the state to align their projects with needs identified by their local CCoCs. Because of the important role the CCoC plays with our federal partners and because of its existing broad representation of stakeholders, we believe it is critical for any interagency coordinating council on homelessness to require participation from the CCoC.

While President Trump proposed in his budget request the elimination of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, which coordinates 19 federal agencies in an effort to end homelessness nationwide, we must continue to assert the importance of breaking down silos and working together on this complex and devastating issue. I commend Council Members Levin, Salamanca, Richards, Barron, Menchaca and Rosenthal for recognizing the need for a local interagency coordinating council that incorporates more stakeholders and emphasizes transparency and information sharing. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to continuing to work toward coordinated solutions to homelessness in my role as one of the Co-Chairs of the NYC CCoC.

Respectfully submitted by:

*Laura Mascuch
Executive Director
Supportive Housing Network of New York
247 West 37th Street, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10018
646-619-9641
lmascuch@shnny.org*

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1443 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LOUIE ROBLES

Address: BRONX, NY

I represent: BOUN! Health

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1443 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: STEPHEN WELTSEK

Address: BROOKLYN, NY

I represent: myself

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Steven Banks

Address: DSS, Commissioner

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Robert Suarez

Address: 1365 St. Nicholas Ave

I represent: Harlem N.Y.

Address: 80 a 11th Ave

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1443 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Giselle Routhier Joshua Goldfein

Address: _____

I represent: Coalition for the Homeless?

Address: Legal Aid Society

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1443-2017 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 4/20/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jason Ciavatta

Address: 306 Lenox Ave, 3RD floor

I represent: Harken United

Address: 306 Lenox Ave, 3rd Floor

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ^{b22} 1443, 1460 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 4-20-17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Wendy O'Shields

Address: 40 Rector Street NY, NY 10006

I represent: Self

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1443 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Hector MORA

Address: 82-A 4th Ave BK NY

I represent: VOCAL-NY

Address: 82-A 4th Ave BK NY

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 4/20/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Cathy Kim

Address: _____

I represent: Enterprise Community Partners

Address: 1 Whitehall

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stephanie Gerbell

Address: _____

I represent: Citizens' Committee for Children

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1460 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 4/20/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jill Orrock

Address: 100 Pennsylvania Ave. 3rd floor Bk

I represent: Partnership for the Homeless

Address: _____

◆ Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms ◆

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 4/20/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Towaki Komatsu

Address: One Penn Plaza, NY, NY

I represent: Self

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Craig Hughes

Address: _____

I represent: Coalition for Homeless Youth

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms