



Human Resources  
Administration  
Department of  
Homeless Services

**Testimony of Molly Park, First Deputy Commissioner  
Department of Homeless Services**

**Before the New York City Committee on General Welfare  
Oversight - Outreach NYC and Barriers to Shelter for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness  
February 28, 2020**

Good morning Chairperson Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. My name is Molly Park, First Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Homeless Services, joining me today is Erin Drinkwater Deputy Commissioner for Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs for the Department of Social Services. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today about Outreach NYC and our comprehensive HOME-STAT program. Outreach NYC is one element of the recently announced six-point action plan to end long-term street homelessness in New York City over the next five years. This Administration is proud to be leading the nation in efforts to end long-term street homelessness, and we welcome this opportunity to discuss components of The Journey Home.

**Outreach NYC - Mobilizing Frontline City Agency Staff to Help Address Citywide Challenge**

In November, Mayor de Blasio announced the launch of Outreach NYC, a new, city-wide, multi-agency effort to help homeless New Yorkers across all five boroughs. The initiative builds on historic investments in HOME-STAT to mobilize thousands of frontline City Agency staff to request outreach assistance via 311 when they observe individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The goal of Outreach NYC is to help more unsheltered New Yorkers transition off the streets and subways into transitional and permanent settings.

By training staff to submit Service Requests (SRs) for outreach assistance, City Agency employees are engaged as essential partners in our ongoing, 24/7/365 outreach effort by helping us deploy targeted homeless outreach teams in real-time. So far, the City has trained: 500 staff from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (Environmental Health Inspectors), 500 staff from the Buildings Department (Building Inspectors), 1,100 Parks workers, 300 Community Service Associates, 500 Maintenance and Operations Supervisors and 1,000 Department of Sanitation Supervisors and 15,000 FDNY staff, including 11,000 firefighters and 3,000 EMTs and Paramedics to submit Service Requests through 311.

Outreach NYC builds on additional enhancements to street outreach announced over the summer. All service requests, including those from Outreach NYC, are routed to the City's Joint Command Center (JCC), managed by DHS and NYPD, where interagency staff triage requests, prioritize and deploy multi-Agency responses as appropriate and analyze trends, with a goal to provide collaborative assistance to the more challenging cases involving high-needs individuals.

## **Joint Command Center**

Through Outreach NYC, DHS, DSS, and our sister agencies are leading by example to help our homeless neighbors to make the journey home. These engaged City employees contribute to the utilization of new resources such as the Joint Command Center, a new approach that increases operational and outreach efforts. The JCC deploys additional DHS outreach workers to address the most challenging cases of unsheltered homelessness. These cases involve high-needs clients, who often face the most significant, and overlapping challenges, including mental health diagnoses and substance misuse.

The Joint Command Center brings relevant Agency experts to the table to develop tailored approaches to engage each individual based on their unique needs. HOME-STAT outreach teams are coordinating with Agency partners to address the needs of a specific subset of individuals who are confirmed to be experiencing long-term unsheltered homelessness, are known to outreach teams and meet a set of designations such as service resistant or medically vulnerable as an indication of greater need requiring more interagency expertise. Through close collaboration with partners including the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and Health + Hospitals (H+H), we are developing targeted interventions on a case-by-case basis to make the breakthroughs that encourage these individuals to finally accept services and transition off the streets and subways.

## **The Journey Home Plan**

As I testified to last month, under The Journey Home, a strategic plan that encompasses the operational structures of the Joint Command Center and HOME-STAT, we are investing in housing, mental health and medical services for unsheltered individuals, as well as enhancing outreach resources to deliver more urgent and rapid responses to unsheltered individuals in need. Our current strategies have helped more than 2,450 individuals come off the streets and into transitional programs and permanent housing since the launch of HOME-STAT (Homeless Outreach & Mobile Engagement Street Action Teams) in April 2016.

By marshaling new and critical resources, the Journey Home plan will:

1. Increase Safe Haven capacity by opening 1,000 new Safe Haven beds.
2. Create 1,000 new low-barrier permanent apartments by working with partners across the housing and social services sectors.
3. Deliver new health resources to people where they are, providing treatment through street medical care and behavioral health care, and building the trust needed for clients to come inside.
4. Provide coordinated rapid outreach response through the Street Homelessness Joint Command Center.
5. Leverage state-of-the-art outreach technology to better connect clients to the services they need to transition into housing.
6. Expand Diversion and Outreach in our subway system.

## **HOME-STAT**

Further, the Journey Home plan builds on the nation's most comprehensive street outreach program, the Department of Homeless Services' HOME-STAT initiative—with outreach teams canvassing the five boroughs and engaging New Yorkers who are unsheltered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year.

Through HOME-STAT, hundreds of highly-trained, not-for-profit outreach staff, including licensed social workers, canvass the streets, proactively engaging New Yorkers experiencing street homelessness. Outreach workers offer services and assistance, while working to gain trust with the goal of addressing the underlying issues that may have caused or contributed to street homelessness in order to ultimately help these individuals transition off the streets. HOME-STAT also provides aftercare services, continuing to work with individuals as they make that transition to ensure that they get the supports they need to remain in housing and off the streets.

Since 2014, the City has redoubled outreach efforts, through HOME-STAT, we have:

- Tripled the City's investment in street homelessness programs from approximately \$45M to more than \$140M before the additional investments for the Journey Home plan.
- Tripled the number of 'safe haven' beds dedicated to serving street homeless New Yorkers citywide since 2014. As of this year, there are approximately 1,800 beds dedicated to street homeless New Yorkers operating citywide.
- Tripled the number of outreach staff from fewer than 200 in 2014 to now nearly 600 through the Journey Home plan that builds on the doubling of outreach staff through HOME-STAT.
- Built the City's first-ever "By-Name" list of individuals known to be homeless and residing on the streets to improve delivery of services to help them come off the streets. Outreach teams now know approximately 1,800 street homeless individuals by name and actively engage another 2,400 individuals encountered on the streets to determine whether they are homeless.
- Increased joint outreach operations with the NYPD and partner agencies such as NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), the FDNY Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and the Department of Parks & Recreation (Parks) to engage more New Yorkers and offer more supports.

The Journey Home builds on these investments, adding another \$100M in annual budget authority, bringing the total to \$240M. Among other initiatives, this spending will increase by 1,000 the number of Safe Haven beds dedicated to serving street homeless individuals available to HOME-STAT outreach teams, bringing the total of these beds to 2,800 citywide, and will provide permanent housing for 1,000 New Yorkers experiencing street homelessness by creating a new low-barrier permanent housing model to meet clients where they're at.

**HOME-STAT works by Building Trust, Person by Person** – Our outreach teams remain focused on persistent, proactive, positive engagement, offering services and supports to New Yorkers in need 24/7/365.

Accepting outreach efforts, including services that will help homeless New Yorkers transition indoors from the streets or subways, is voluntary—and, in accordance with NYS Mental Hygiene Law, street homeless New Yorkers cannot be involuntarily removed from the streets unless they are posing a danger to themselves or others. Unsheltered individuals residing underground often face complex, layered challenges, and may be resistant to accepting services, but our teams remain undeterred in their efforts to help them transition off the subways. To that end, HOME-STAT outreach teams have access to:

- Licensed clinicians who work with clients on the streets, provide on-going case management, and assess each individual for immediate risk/crisis during each encounter
- Psychiatrists who perform psychiatric evaluations on the streets, as needed, helping understand and better meet the individual needs of each street homeless New Yorker

- Substance use resources, including ability to immediately connect individuals to detox and other rehabilitation programs—and are trained in naloxone administration

### Legislation

There are two bills that are pre-considered at today's hearing. The first would amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to the provision of case management services for homeless individuals.

Experienced outreach teams from not-for-profit service providers canvass the five boroughs 24/7/365 as part of our citywide effort to identify and engage individuals who may be homeless, encourage them to accept services, and ultimately help them transition off the streets. With no one-size-fits-all approach to ending homelessness, the by-name list enables HOME-STAT outreach teams to more effectively engage each of these individuals on a case by case, person by person basis, directly and repeatedly. Outreach teams meet individuals where they are, and evaluate the immediate and root causes contributing to their homelessness. Nearly 600 not-for-profit outreach workers are engaged in developing the unique combination of services that will enable individuals to transition off the streets, and build the trust and relationships that will ultimately encourage these individuals to accept services.

In their ongoing efforts to offer services, supports, and a helping hand, HOME-STAT outreach teams have access to:

- licensed clinicians who work with clients on the streets, provide on-going case management, and assess each individual for immediate risk/crisis during each encounter;
- psychiatrists who perform psychiatric evaluations on the streets, as needed, helping understand and better meet the individual needs of each street homeless New Yorker;
- substance use resources, including ability to immediately connect individuals to detox and other rehabilitation programs. HOME-STAT staff are also trained in naloxone administration.

We support the intent of the bill, but we want to make sure that the requirements of the bill do not result in a return to a one-size fits all approach that does not work. We look forward to working with the sponsor.

The second pre-considered bill would amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to rental assistance eligibility requirements for New Yorkers experiencing street homelessness.

In the Journey Home, we reiterated our policy that a shelter stay is not a requirement for unsheltered individuals working with outreach teams to qualify for rental assistance. From the moment our teams engage individuals experiencing street homelessness, they are working to identify the roots causes of homelessness and what customized approach will get them connected to care and services. This includes pathways to permanent housing which might include rental assistance, supportive housing or a new low threshold model as a first step to bring someone inside.

We look forward to working with the sponsor to ensure the needs of individuals experiencing unsheltered street homelessness are provided the resources necessary to get back on their feet. Again, we want to make sure that we are not recreating a one size fits all approach. We think that our current policy in terms of eligibility for rental assistance strikes the right balance, particularly as we bring on additional safe haven and other permanent housing resources. And of course, shelter is always offered and available to help bring people inside at any point. In addition, we urge that the focus at this time continue to be on developments in Albany where there is broad support in the Legislature for Home Stability Support that

would provide significant funding for State rental assistance to prevent and alleviate homelessness all across the State. And, as we testified last week at a Council hearing on other legislation, we need to be laser focused right now on addressing a \$1.1 billion proposed State cost shift to New York City for the Medicaid program and a \$102 million State cost shift over two years to New York City for the TANF and EAF programs – all of which would limit significantly our ability to sustain our existing programs, let alone develop new ones.

The two other bills being considered today relate to the accommodation of pets in shelter.

Introduction 1483 would require the agency to develop a plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families in the shelter system while Introduction 1484 would require reporting on the placement of pets whose owners enter homeless shelters. We applaud the intent of both of these provisions.

It has been our longstanding policy to permit service animals, as needed. Regarding pets as distinguished from service animals, we appreciate their importance in people's lives, particularly the support and stability they provide. At the same time, we must be mindful of the physical limitations of the haphazard shelter system we inherited, where many locations may not be effectively designed for pets and recognize that the one-size-fits-all approach of the past doesn't work. That's why we issued our Turning the Tide plan and modernized our open-ended request for proposals: to transform our shelter footprint, develop new approaches, increase the options available to those we serve, and raise the bar on services we provide. We encourage our not-for-profit partners to propose innovative new shelters and safe havens based on real-time needs clients may be experiencing on the ground, including for pet-friendly locations. We have been actively encouraging our partners to propose pet-friendly sites. We will continue working with partners to find a way to accommodate the various specific needs of clients with respect to pets.

### Conclusion

Outreach NYC is just one example of how we use every tool at our disposal to help New Yorkers in need to get back on the path to stability. Homelessness is a moral challenge for our City that demands everyone's attention and action. As public servants, we all wear one uniform, and are working collaboratively to identify unsheltered New Yorkers and mobilizing resources to help.

Through HOME-STAT, by strengthening engagement, building trust, and providing more pathways off the streets, DHS continues and builds on our efforts, which have already helped more than 2,450 New Yorkers come off the streets and subways and into transitional programs and permanent housing. With compassionate frontline public servants acting as additional eyes and ears, helping our HOME-STAT teams further target their outreach and meet people where they are, we remain squarely focused on taking this progress further. Thank you and I would be happy to take your questions.



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Gale A. Brewer, Borough President

February 28, 2020

**Gale A. Brewer, Manhattan Borough President  
Testimony before the NYC Council Committee on General Welfare  
Oversight: Outreach NYC and Barriers to Shelter for Individuals  
Experiencing Homelessness**

My name is Gale A. Brewer and I am the Manhattan Borough President. Thank you to Chair Levin and the members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify today.

In November 2019, Mayor de Blasio announced Outreach NYC as a new program that would train front line city employees to identify people experiencing homelessness. Sanitation workers, firefighters, building inspectors, and others will be “deputized” to act as eyes and ears to alert the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to dispatch Street Outreach teams to such unsheltered individuals that they spot on the street. Sometimes it can take dozens of interactions before an unsheltered person agrees to accept placement in a shelter, so a program that bolsters outreach and interaction is a step in the right direction toward providing our city’s unsheltered individuals with the support they need.

Time will tell how well Outreach NYC has strengthened the engagement aspect of reducing street homelessness. But outreach is only part of the process to help someone access shelter. It is just as important to address the barriers to shelter that range from inconsistent coordination among agencies and shelter sites to a mismatch between shelter requirements and shelter seekers’ unique circumstances.

My office works closely with DHS’s Street Homeless Solutions Unit and with advocates from the Emergency Shelter Network (ESN) to track and improve the ongoing utilization of respite beds offered at houses of worship throughout New York City. Run by volunteers who are often congregation members, churches, synagogues, and other religious facilities open their doors to provide overnight shelters to clients deemed eligible for respite beds through intakes at DHS drop-in centers. In Manhattan, as many as 20 religious facilities offered between 121 and 194 respite beds on a given night over the past year. According to the latest available data my office obtained from July 2019 on respite bed utilization, 24 congregations citywide offered a combined total of 236 beds during that month. Of that, 12 Manhattan sites offered 121 beds—half of the citywide total in both number of sites and in total available beds.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> DHS Street Homeless Solutions Unit, respite beds utilization report from July 2019 (FY20 Q1). Data is collected monthly, with respite bed availability listed as “Average Available Beds” at each site from a given month.

DHS's data also shows that, overall, the Average Daily Utilization rate of respite beds is within a range of 74%–86% over the past four quarters. In Manhattan, data from the two Manhattan-centric drop-in centers shows an Average Daily Utilization rate as low as 61% for one month and as high as 92% for another month. While the wide ranges reflect the transitory nature of street homelessness and fluctuations are to be expected, I believe addressing the following issues will increase the utilization rate of respite beds and allow for expansion of the respite shelter model into more houses of worship throughout the city:

- Curfew requirements. Individuals placed into respite sites are required to report to the site by a certain time, sometimes via designated transportation from the drop-in center to the site. They must remain onsite until a specified time the next morning, also required to be transported back to a drop-in center at some locations. The curfew is very limiting to people who work or have other obligations that prevent them from getting to a respite site on time. DHS should work with respite shelters on more flexible curfew requirements so working individuals who need shelter can access respite beds.
- Pets. Individuals with pets are not eligible for respite bed placements. As this committee considers Intros 1483 and 1484 today on accommodating pets of homeless individuals in the shelter system, I urge you to extend this consideration for respite bed shelters as well.
- Drop-in center accommodations. Multiple constituents have raised concerns to my staff about drop-in centers being a barrier to shelter. At least one drop-in center in Manhattan has no beds and clients are only given a chair to sleep on overnight until an assessment and placement can be secured. A veteran informed my staff that he had nowhere to elevate his legs to alleviate his medical conditions while he was at a drop-in center. Another constituent, an elderly woman, felt unsafe while waiting in line to be let into a drop-in center and decided to leave prematurely. Drop-in centers must become more accommodating to client needs, especially for those with medical issues and the elderly who cannot always spend a long time standing in line.
- Coordination with sites. Most respite shelter sites are run by volunteers. Understandably, volunteer availability impacts the overall availability of respite beds—for example, fewer sites are open during summer months because congregation members may be out of town. Yet both DHS and advocates from organizations like the Emergency Shelter Network recognize that having a consistent number of available beds is beneficial to program coordination and placement. One idea that the ESN supports is for nearby shelter sites to collaborate and keep more beds open through sharing volunteers, a model that DHS would have to accommodate on its end through adjusting its intake and placement process—and through resources.
- Resources. Ideally, an umbrella coalition like the ESN would have consistent and sufficient funding to bring on a full-time coordinator to encourage collaboration among existing respite shelter sites and to expand the program into the many other houses of worship throughout the city. This person can also be a liaison between shelter sites, drop-in centers, and DHS's Street Homeless Solutions unit. Both the Administration and City Council must back the commitment to eliminate barriers to shelter by allocating funding for program coordinators who can strengthen the respite shelter program.

While the respite shelter program serves a very specific demographic within New York City's larger homeless population, the issues I highlighted above are not exclusive to people seeking to access respite beds. My office has also assisted constituents who encountered similar barriers with the more traditional DHS shelter placement process.

For example, Mr. S was evicted from his apartment in December 2019 and has been on the street, sometimes sleeping in a Dunkin' Donuts. My office connected him with Adult Protective Services (APS). Although APS referred Mr. S to a shelter, his case manager did not take steps to assure his intake. As someone with severe health conditions, Mr. S was unable to move into just any shelter due to many of their conditions that would exacerbate his health problems. In the end, he chose to remain on the street.

Ms. M lost her employment in September 2019 and was left without a home for her and her two-year-old daughter. She could not move in with her parents, who live in a NYCHA apartment with four other grandchildren. When Ms. M sought help at Department of Social Services, she was inaccurately refused shelter and told to go live with her family in NYCHA, which she could not do as this would make her parents' apartment overcrowded and violate NYCHA house rules. Ms. M and her daughter now float around at different friends' home.

Both of these stories show how city agencies, which are supposed to help people access shelter, are themselves barriers that keep those in need of a home from securing suitable shelter. In Mr. S's case, the APS case manager failed to coordinate with DHS staff to ensure Mr. S would be provided with shelter that would not worsen his health. For Ms. M, she was refused shelter outright due to a DSS staff's mistaken belief that she could move into her parents' NYCHA unit. These cases highlight the lack of coordination and communication of accurate information among agencies, and the people these agencies are supposed to help end up suffering the consequences.

As much as I believe the Administration's effort to reduce the city's approximately 3,500 street homeless population through Outreach NYC is well intended, this number will not significantly decrease until barriers to shelter, sometimes created by city agencies, are addressed. As this committee considers my recommendations, I urge you to follow through by committing resources to homeless advocacy organizations and service providers, and to improve interagency coordination through more staff training so that everyone experiencing homelessness can have access to adequate and appropriate shelter.



**Mayor's Alliance  
for NYC's Animals®**

**Steve Gruber, Director of Communications**

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**Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals**

*Hearing before the New York City Council's Committee on  
General Welfare Int. No. 1483 - A plan to accommodate pets of homeless  
individuals and families in the shelter system, and  
Int. No. 1484 Reporting on the placement of pets whose owners enter  
homeless shelters.*

**Wednesday, February 26, 2020**

Good morning. My name is Steve Gruber and I am Director of Communications for the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals. I'd like to thank the Chair and Members of the Committee for the opportunity to speak today on Int. 1483 and Int. 1484, introduced by Council Member Levin.

Since 2003, the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals has worked to reduce the number of pets entering New York City's animal control shelters as a means of reducing unnecessary euthanasia. One of the core objectives of our strategic plan was to reduce animal homelessness. One of the most effective ways to reduce animal homelessness is to ensure that pets remain with their owners, and to remove barriers that separate pets from their owners.

It is widely accepted that the human-animal bond is important to people's well-being. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), "the human-animal bond is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and other animals that is influenced by behaviors that are essential to the health and well-being of both." This bond is critical during times of crisis or stress. For many people facing homelessness, their pet may be their only source of comfort and stability.

In 2006 we created the Helping Pets and People in Crisis program, managed by a Certified Social Worker, in response to the many requests for assistance we received from people facing heartbreaking separation from their pets during times of crisis. One of the goals of the program, in addition to providing assistance to individuals and families, was to make social service agencies aware of this important need. Over its 12-year duration, the program assisted in more than 1,000 individual cases. Last year we transitioned the program to another animal welfare organization.

In 2013, the Alliance began a partnership with the Urban Resource Institute (URI), the largest provider of domestic violence sheltering in New York City. We worked with URI to create the People and Animals Living Safely (PALS) Program by providing support in

*See reverse.*

the form of animal welfare expertise, assistance in implementing the program, as well as providing pet care supplies. The URI PALS program is the only program for survivors of domestic violence in New York City that offers **co-sheltering** for families and their pets. This visionary program allows families and their pets to shelter together, thereby preserving the welfare and safety of all.

Since 2006, I have had the privilege of representing the Mayor's Alliance on the Animal Planning Task Force of NYC's Emergency Management. In this role we, and our task force partners, including Animal Care Centers of NYC, the ASPCA, and others, have worked to develop and implement a plan to accommodate pets in New York City's emergency shelters during declared disasters. Today, New York City's emergency shelters accept pets, and New York City pet owners no longer are faced with the unfathomable choice of leaving their pets behind if they must flee their homes.

People with pets who are facing homelessness are no different from pet owners facing mandatory evacuation during a disaster in at least one important way: their pets are part of their family and they should not have to choose between living on the street with their pets or relinquishing them to an animal shelter in order to gain a bed for the night and a roof over their head. We support these bills, which would result in the collection of data and require a plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families.

We would like to bring to the Committee's attention that non-profit organizations, i.e., New York City's rescue groups and animal shelters, are already stretched to their limits in partnering with Animal Care Centers of NYC's New Hope Department. Therefore, we urge the City to require homeless shelters to develop and fund co-sheltering programs.

Thank you.



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Alysha Lewis-Coleman, Board Chair

Susan Stetzer, District Manager

Committee on General Welfare

February 28, 2020

I am Susan Stetzer, District Manager of Manhattan Community Board 3, which is the East Village, Lower East Side, and Chinatown. We have many street homeless, especially in the East Village where we have many services, and also in 3 of our parks. We have over 15 shelters. We work very closely with Goddard Riverside, our Manhattan Outreach Consortium group. I want to start by saying the work of these outreach workers shows the best of New York.

Regarding pets, our CB has been advocating for shelter for people with their pets for years, and we are very happy to see there is finally progress. Currently there are some dogs that have been registered as emotional support animals and have been accepted into safe havens with owners. MOC will take responsibility for this process, including fees. It takes 1-3 week and then is submitted to DHS for reasonable accommodation, which can take another week. LES Harm Reduction will also have dogs registered as support animals—but there needs to be much more awareness that this can be done. I am sure more organizations would do this if they understood the need. We need many more beds available for people with pets as well as drop-in centers. I also suspect that PD homeless outreach does not know about the current possibilities for reasonable accommodation. Currently half a block from my office I have a couple with a dog living under scaffolding for months. They are an example of street homeless with barrier to shelter. They are both on case management. Your legislation appears to ask for counts of people entering shelter with pets, but not people on the street with pets.

I will take this opportunity to speak about barriers to shelter that are real, if not necessarily talked about. Safety is a big issue, and drugs are part of the safety issue. Regardless of what DHS says, many single adult men will not enter shelter or they leave shelter because they feel unsafe. There are drugs in shelters—and you are not going to have drugs and not have safety issues. About two weeks ago there was a shelter resident arrested who had 200 bags of heroin. This is not a safe place for other residents. We have lobbied unsuccessfully for DHS peacekeepers to increase safety—but DHS will assign them only to mental health and DHS-run facilities. This is a money issue. The amount of drugs on the street, including homeless people using drugs, cannot be ignored as part of the problem in people being homeless and also being afraid of men's shelter. Some men afraid of dorm-style shelters will go into safe havens. But there are not enough safe havens where there are homeless people, and many will not leave their community. We have 2 safe havens in CB 3—but we need more in lower Manhattan. Currently men from CB 3 offered safe haven beds in the Bronx may elect to stay on the street. So we essentially have a waiting list even though beds may be available in the City. There are more barriers to shelter, but not enough time.



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Marika Azoff  
Coordinator, Community Engagement

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American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

*Hearing before the New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare*

**February 28, 2020**

My name is Marika Azoff and today I am speaking on behalf of the ASPCA's Community Engagement Program; a program that works to keep people and pets together. We provide access to services that improve the health and welfare of animals whose caregivers are facing challenges or hardships. We provide spay/neuter services, access to veterinary care, behavioral assessments, supply support, educational resources and case management.

Our program supports people experiencing homelessness in a myriad of ways, but I will focus on two categories: pet owners who reach out to us for support, and pet owners who are referred to our program by the community.

Self-Referred: On average, our program receives 3 phone calls a week from people who are either at risk of becoming homeless, or who are already experiencing homelessness. The majority of these callers are seeking temporary or long-term boarding for their pets while they enter the shelter system. Some of these pet owners are in the process of getting ESA (Emotional Support Animal) letters so that their pets will have a better chance of going with them into shelter, a process that is complex and can take a long time. Some pet owners are in the process of being evicted and reach out because they want to avoid having to surrender their pets. And many of these pet owners are living on the streets because they would rather do so than be separated from their beloved pets. While the ASPCA can provide supplies and veterinary care for these pets and pet owners, we do not have the resources, nor the capacity to temporarily house people's pets. Instead, we encourage people to identify a friend or family member who is willing to house the pet(s) and we provide them with any needed supplies (food, bedding, crates etc.), transportation and veterinary care. While we aim to keep people and pets together, we also offer surrender support when needed. However, often people don't have a friend or family member

who is able to care for their pet(s) and many are forced to either give up their pets or stay out of the shelter system.

Referred to the ASPCA: We receive referrals from the community for people experiencing homelessness with pets. We send caseworkers to the location to offer our services to the pet owners. While it is certainly not ideal for humans or pets to live on the street, I am continuously impressed by the condition that most of the pets living on the streets are in. Most of the time, the pet owner(s) have spayed or neutered their pets, kept them up to date on vaccines and have a veterinarian that works with them and their pet(s). Pets are family, and for the pet owners experiencing homelessness that I've worked with, having their family with them is what keeps them going every day. I worked with a man in December 2019, who I visited after receiving a complaint of a "panhandler using his cat to make money." This man's cat was spayed, up to date on vaccines and had an entire suitcase full of clothes to keep her warm in the winter. She had a harness and a leash and was showing no signs of fear or stress. He had all her paperwork and so much food that he didn't even accept the food I had brought for him because it would be too heavy. I asked if he needed any support at all and he said, "I just want people to stop harassing me and my cat, and to find a place where we can live in peace."

Our program can provide a lot of support for community members experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness, but we can't solve the problem, we need reasonable pet and housing policies in place that help keep people and their pets together. I am constantly inspired by the strength of the love that pet owners have for their pets, even in the face of immense hardships. I hope that moving forward these individuals and families can receive more support in staying with their beloved pets. I urge you to support Intros. 1483 and 1484. Thank you.



THE AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS®

Michelle Villagomez  
NYC Legislative Senior Director

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American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

*Hearing before the New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare*

**February 28, 2020**

Good morning. I am Michelle Villagomez, New York City Legislative Senior Director for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). I would like to thank the Committee on General Welfare and Chairman Levin for hosting this hearing on barriers to shelter for individuals experiencing street homelessness.

The ASPCA is here to discuss the problem of a lack of pet-friendly shelters, and share our support of Introduction 1483, which would require the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, to develop a plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families with the objective of providing pet-friendly shelters. We also support Introduction 1484, which would require DHS to report, on a monthly basis, information on the placement or disposition of pets that belong to people who enter homeless shelters. These bills are critical to understanding the scope of the problem created by a lack pet-friendly sheltering options and would push the City to come up with a practical plan to help homeless pet owners. It is important to consider that homeless pet owners may constitute a hidden population - some are secretive for fear of their pets being confiscated, and because pets (especially dogs) are not allowed in most shelters, homeless pet owners may not appear on counts.

The ASPCA believes that keeping people and pets together, whenever it is possible and appropriate to do so, should be a priority for the animal welfare community and for society as a whole. To achieve this goal, we must put aside preconceived notions and treat people with respect and dignity whatever their financial or other life circumstances. We must support laws and policies that strengthen and support rather than break the bond between people and animal companions. We have seen that co-sheltering, a housing approach that keeps pets and people together works. Here in NYC, we can point to the successful PALS (People and Animals Living Safely) program created by The Urban Resource Institute (URI), a domestic violence shelter and service provider.

URI discovered that nearly ½ of its clients were staying in abusive relationships to prevent harm to their pets. URI now has animal-friendly accommodations at 6 facilities, which have allowed more than 100 families to escape domestic violence.

A qualitative study performed by the New York University Silver School of Social Work conducted in 2018, found four themes regarding barriers to obtaining housing and accessing services: obtaining identification and documentation, lack of accessibility amid complex healthcare needs, waiting as part of the process, and pet exclusion policies (Wusinich, Bond, Nathanson, & Padget, 2018). The prohibition of animals in city shelters, drop-in centers, and transitional housing programs presents a major barrier for those who would accept placement if not for their pets. City shelters accept service and emotional support animals, but homeless people with pets still face an agonizing choice: give them away or remain on the streets together. Surveys of homeless pet owners reveal a level of attachment to their pets that may be greater than reported by pet owners who live in traditional residences. Indeed, as Leslie Irvine, who conducted a study of 72 homeless pet owners in California, Colorado, and Florida points out, keeping a pet while homeless involves an intense level of commitment and more than a little hardship. The homeless routinely give up offers of shelter housing that would require them to give up or separate from their pets (Irvine, 2013).

Numerous private organizations provide essential services for the homeless with companion animals. Through our own pet retention and community medicine work in New York and Los Angeles, we are learning how effective collaboration between animal welfare, law enforcement and human service agencies can be in helping people keep pets, reducing the numbers of animals entering shelters, and allowing more effective use of shelter and law enforcement resources. My colleague, Marika Azoff, from our Community Engagement

department will speak to the ASPCA's programs, services, and experiences working with the homeless.

While solving the complex societal issue of poverty is beyond the ken of the animal welfare field, we absolutely can solve some of the obstacles to pet retention, but we need the City to show the same compassion and create a path for the homeless and victims of domestic violence to seek refuge in shelters with their pets, and pass laws and policies that expand affordable pet friendly housing options.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our support of Intros 1483 and 1484. The ASPCA looks forward to working with all of you to achieve a more humane city.

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**Committee on General Welfare**

**Stephen T. Levin, Chair**

**Members: Vanessa L. Gibson, Barry S. Grodenchik,**

**Robert F. Holden, Brad S. Lander, Antonio Reynoso,**

**Rafael Salamanca, Jr., Ritchie J. Torres and Mark Treyger**

**March 26, 2020**

**Testimony**

**Int 1483-2019**

**A Local Law in relation to a plan to accommodate pets of  
homeless individuals and families in the shelter system.**

*Animal Rescuer*

**My name is Marion Koenig and as a lifetime pet owner, I am here to testify  
that passing Intro 1483 is the only choice our society can make.**

**My admiration goes to the City of New York for its persistent work toward  
achieving Co-Sheltering/Pet friendly shelters. I am aware that the City issued a  
request-for-proposals for a shelter that would take pets. That was more than a  
year ago. I looked into what this delay may be.**

**The only tangible reason I could fathom is possibly liability insurance. The  
city with the help of ACC and ASPCA can whittle this cost down by providing the  
following during intake:**

- 1. Proper size cages for dogs and/or cats to be placed next to owner's bed  
outfitted with pads and water bowls. Cages for cats can be outfitted  
with cardboard litter pans, a cardboard box for cat to hide.**

**2. Proper fitting muzzle as a Rule when outside room and proper fitting leashes. Volunteers instruct safest way hold a leash – securely wrapped around wrist.**

**3. Eco-friendly Pet Waste Bags & Dispenser. Folks walking pets from a shelter are no different from those walking outside their homes.**

**A homeless person's pet could very well be their lifeline to caring to exist at all. Their last shred of love. Perhaps their only shred of love.**

**MEANING when individuals breakdown and enter a shelter it is not with relief or peace but pain. “What if...Rusty was with us now. What if.”**

**This bill (Intro 1483) will help HUMANS get off the street.**

**Imagine newly sheltered individuals exiting their shelter with their best friend on a new leash, enjoying the dog's happiness AND walking together BACK INTO THE SHELTER. There is no other answer. There needs be no “What if...”**

## **New York City Council General Welfare Hearing on Street Homelessness**

**2/27/19**

**Josh Dean, Human.nyc, Executive Director**

Good morning/afternoon Council Members. My name is Josh Dean and I'm the Executive Director of Human.nyc. We work alongside people who are living on the streets and subways, and together, we advocate for human-centered and common-sense policy reforms.

I have no doubt today that my colleagues will make a strong case for increasing the capacity for and accelerating the development of safe havens and supportive housing, which is ultimately what we need to bring people in off the streets and subways. We have discussed this issue in depth. We've shared our concerns with the timeline, and the length of time it takes between when these units are committed and when they come online. We want to further emphasize that the solution to homelessness is housing, but knowing that, we want to focus on immediate things we can, starting today, to keep people safe and maximize all of our *existing* resources.

Last year, 148 people died while living non-sheltered. Despite the fact that HUD data indicates that only 5% of the homeless population is unsheltered, unsheltered homeless deaths account to 37% of homeless deaths. On the morning of October 5, we lost Cheun Kok, Anthony Leon Manson, Nazario Vazquez Villegas and Florencio Moran, to a tragic and preventable murder. I'd like to pause for a moment of silence for everyone who we lost on the streets last year because we failed to provide them with adequate housing.

We're seeing the city and state resort to cruel tactics to deter people from staying in public spaces, especially those where wealthier and whiter New Yorkers spend their time. Here are just four examples:

- 1) Recently, Elizabeth Kim of Gothamist reported that at the West 4th St Subway Station, the MTA removed the backs of benches to deter people from sleeping there.
- 2) Our colleagues at the Safety Net Project FOILed for data that showed a 44.5% increase since 2017 in displacements, also known as street sweeps or cleanups
- 3) The Subway Diversion Program, which we discussed in last month's hearing
- 4) I can share that I have personally been discouraged by senior staff at the Department of Homeless Services from giving out socks. They say that by giving out socks, we make it harder to convince people to accept services. To them, I say that if a pair of socks is the make-or-break between coming inside or accepting services, you'd better take a hard look at what services you are offering.

Besides providing housing, there are steps we can take, today, to help humanize and streamline the process of getting off the streets. We have over thirty recommendations on our website, Human.nyc, but today, here are four.

- 1) Today, we published a report, *The Two Truths: Understanding & Reforming A Policy That Doesn't Technically Exist*, to recommend strategies for clarifying and streamlining paths to vital case management services for people on the streets. I want to thank two of our street homeless neighbors, Peter Malvan and Charmian Hamid, for co-authoring this report with us. With this report, we support the introduction of the case management legislation discussed today.
- 2) Next, we recommend reforming the city's definition of *chronic homelessness*, which applies to the safe haven system, to provide outreach teams with more flexibility. We have had countless conversations with people who are on the streets, with absolutely no intention of returning to shelter, who brave the cold until they become eligible for a safe haven. We believe this phenomenon of people waiting to become eligible is an unintended consequence of the effort to help those who need it most. We also recognize that the eligibility requirements go hand-in-hand with the high demand relative to the low supply. As such, we recommend that as we increase safe haven capacity, we should relax the stringent eligibility requirements.
- 3) We want to thank the Council for including *direct shelter placements* in its recent A Case For Change report. Direct shelter placements would allow people to bypass the intake and assessment shelters by completing the intake process with outreach teams on the streets. Given the trauma that many people have faced at places like 30th Street, this is a common-sense reform that must be implemented as widely as possible. Each direct shelter placement reduces the chance that we see the unacceptable number of homeless deaths next year.
- 4) Last, although this shouldn't have to be said, we should ensure that we treat our street homeless neighbors with dignity. Providing people with blankets, socks, and warm meals may not be politically popular insofar as it may be seen as encouraging people to stay outside, however, it could save lives. People reject traditional shelter for rational reasons and cannot accept housing until it is made available. During that period of time, we need to make sure people do not die. The current policy of "a hand up, not a handout" is dangerous and misguided.

I want to thank the Council for holding this hearing, and the General Welfare Committee Staff, namely Aminta Kilawan, Crystal Pond, and Natalie Omary, not only for their tireless work on behalf of homeless New Yorkers, but also for bearing with me as I asked countless times, "When is the street homelessness hearing going to be?"

Thank you.

Good morning Chairman Levin and Council Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Kathy Nizzari. I am a board member of Voters for Animal Rights and I work with animals and their humans on behavioral issues. As such, I fully support Intros 1483 and 1484. These bills are important for their recognition of animal companions as integral family members. The physical and mental health benefits of living with animals for both the human and animals have been well documented. And I've provided a few references for you. As a professional, I see the bond between humans and their treasured companions. Studies have shown that women's brains respond the same way to their dogs as they do their human babies. Some areas of the human brain actually show a greater response when shown images of their dogs. We have a caregiver attachment, an emotional bond that is stronger and more secure than we have with most other humans. This often gives people a sense of purpose, that another living being depends on them. The symbiotic relationship releases chemicals in our and in our pets' brains that are responsible for happiness, intimacy and relaxation, among others. They sense our moods, and give us comfort and support.

Sadly, I also see what happens when that human-animal bond is broken. We've all seen videos of how cows grieve when their young are taken from them. It's heartbreaking. Our cats, dogs, birds and other companion animals perceive us as their parents. Any of us who has ever lost a parent, knows that indescribable and profound devastation. It causes depression, anxiety, loneliness, that can all manifest in physical symptoms for both the animal and the human. It can trigger such extreme forms of separation anxiety where some animals will refuse to eat or drink, and sometimes self-injure. This is what we do to both the animal and human parent when we tear this nuclear family apart.

Companion animals have been paired with veterans suffering PTSD. In 100% of those cases, the traumatic symptoms were reduced. Our homeless population have experienced and continue to experience multiple traumatic events as well as depression, anxiety, and high levels of stress. They basically live in a state of isolation. We know from empirical evidence that having an animal companion creates a sense of connectedness and comfort. In some cases, their dog is their only means of protection from predators. By forcing them to endure another extreme stress – giving up their beloved family member, we are destroying so much for both the human and the animal.

Our NYC shelters and rescue groups are overloaded with homeless animals. If pets already have a family, they should be allowed to stay with them no matter where they live and not overburden our animal shelters which need room for truly homeless animals. This legislation tells DHS to create a plan to allow people with pets to enter and live in homeless shelters and not force any painful separations. It is common sense and compassion at its finest.

Let's truly be a progressive and compassionate city that helps two- and four-legged families stay together, and let's help our hard-working and overburdened animal shelters and shelter workers by reducing intake of pets who already have a home. For these reasons I urge the passing of Intros 1483 and 1484 and I thank you for your time.

2/27/20

kn

## KATHY NIZZARI REFERENCES FOR INTRO 1483 & 1484 TESTIMONY

### **Health Benefits of Living with a Companion Animal**

Children's health: development, boost immunity, fewer allergies and asthma, reduce autism symptoms, overcome shyness, improved cognitive skills, inspired patients to become involved in their treatment and be optimistic

Adults: cardiovascular health, blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, reduce risk of cancer, swifter surgery recovery, reduce Alzheimer's symptoms, and can even prolong a human's lifespan

<https://habri.org/about/mission-vision> Human Animal Bond Research Institute {founded 2010}

<https://www.lonetreevet.com/blog/human-animal-bond>

<http://www.vetstreet.com/dr-marty-becker/why-the-human-animal-bond-is-so-important>

<https://www.avma.org/policies/human-animal-interaction-and-human-animal-bond>

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<https://www.thesprucepets.com/the-human-canine-bond-1117458>

"Animal Therapy Has Benefits for Patients—and Healthcare Staff", "Ons Voice", 2018-08-12

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"Everything You Need to Know About Emotional Support Animals", "American Kennel Club", 2017-06-20

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Nagengast, S.L.; Baun, M.M.; Megel, M.; Leibowitz, J.M. (December 1997). "The effects of the presence of a companion animal on physiological arousal and behavioral distress in children during a physical examination". Journal of Pediatric Nursing. 12 (6): 323–330. doi:10.1016/s0882-5963(97)80058-9.

Ingraham, Christopher. "Own a dog and live longer, new research says". The Washington Post.

### **Mental Health Benefits**

Reduce symptoms of PTSD, depression, anxiety, anger, social isolation & loneliness, improve quality of life, sleep, and concentration, enhanced feelings of well-being, decreased reliance on prescription drugs and pain medications

<https://habri.org/research/ptsd/>

<https://habri.org/research/mental-health/social-isolation/>

<https://habri.org/research/>

<https://www.lonetreevet.com/blog/human-animal-bond>

<https://academic.oup.com/af/article/4/3/32/4638688>

Nittono H. , Fukushima M., Yano A., Moriya H. 2012. The power of kawaii: Viewing cute images promotes a careful behavior and narrows attentional focus. PLoS ONE7(9):E46362.

Healthy levels of hormones correlated with well-being including cortisol, oxytocin, b-endorphin, prolactin, phenylacetic acid, and dopamine.

Increased oxytocin promotes maternal care in humans and animals, bonding, intimacy, socialization, and stress relief.

The psychological stimulation induced by an animal and its need for care induces persons to take care of themselves.

Studies show stroking an animal increases dopamine and serotonin levels, essential for happiness and relaxation.

Even just gazing at an animal increases oxytocin levels.

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Brown, Sue-Ellen (2011) "Self Psychology and the Human-Animal Bond: An Overview," *The Psychology of the Human-Animal Bond*, part 2, pp. 137-149.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/10/141003214344.htm>

A recent study at Massachusetts General Hospital involving women receiving MRI brain scans after viewing images of their baby and their dog showed the following results: Areas important for functions such as emotion, reward, affiliation, visual processing and social interaction all showed increased activity when participants viewed either their own child or their own dog. The fusiform gyrus, which is involved in facial recognition and other visual processing functions, actually showed greater response to own-dog images than own-child images.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/10/141003214344.htm>

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Luke E. Stoeckel, Lori S. Palley, Randy L. Gollub, Steven M. Niemi, Anne Eden Evins. Patterns of Brain Activation when Mothers View Their Own Child and Dog: An fMRI Study. *PLoS ONE*, 2014; 9 (10): e107205 DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0107205

## **Animals Save Lives**

Many stories about animals saving, protecting, or rescuing humans.

<http://www.vetstreet.com/dr-marty-becker/why-the-human-animal-bond-is-so-important>

<https://www.nydailynews.com/news/politics/ny-hero-dog-chelsea-manhattan-homelessness-20191211-lywtc7pchvbqldhajfmqiavgri-story.html>

## **Health Benefits of the Human-Animal Bond for the Animal**

Studies demonstrated that oxytocin levels are increased in dogs interacting with their own owners versus strangers

Studies on the effects of human-animal interaction on the level of salivary cortisol in dogs show contact with humans was associated with lower cortisol levels

Dogs crave human attention. The intense attachment they feel towards their human is fundamental to their well-being.

Dogs release oxytocin when engaging in a positive social interaction, like being stroked, by a human.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pets-and-their-people/201211/the-bond-between-pet-and-owner>

Pop, Denisa Ana, et al. "Physiological Effects of Human-Animal Positive Interaction in Dogs: Review of the Literature." *Bulletin of University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Cluj-Napoca. Animal Science and Biotechnologies* 71.2 (2014): 102-110.

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Lynch J.J. , Fregin G.F., Mackie J.B., Monroe R.R.Jr 1974. Heart rate changes in the horse to human contact. *Psychophysiology*11(4):472–478.

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Dogs recognize human faces by sight and can follow the direction of the point or gaze of a human. This is a cognitive ability known as having a theory of mind. They can also anticipate the intentions of a person just from viewing his or her behavior. The canine brain responds differently to the odors of familiar and unfamiliar people.

Huber L. , Racca A., Scaf B., Virányi Z., Range F. 2013. Discrimination of familiar human faces in dogs, *Canis familiaris*. *Learn. Motiv.*44(4):258–269.

Hare B. , Brown M., Williamson C., Tomasello M. 2002. The domestication of social cognition in dogs. *Science*298(22):1634–1636.

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Berns G.S. , Brooks A.M., Spivak M. 2014. Scent of the familiar: An fMRI study of canine brain responses to familiar and unfamiliar human and dog odors. *Behav. Processes*

10.1016/j.beproc.2014.02.001.

## **The Human-Animal Bond and Its Necessity**

Humans have benefited from this unique connection for thousands of years. Animals were so essential to the daily lives of early humans that there is evidence we may not have survived or thrived

without them.

The HAB is so strong that for thousands of years, some people have chosen to be buried alongside their pets.

<https://www.lonetreevet.com/blog/human-animal-bond>

<https://time.com/5342964/human-bond-dog-thoughts>

The presence or even a photograph of animals trigger greater activation of the amygdala {the part of the brain responsible for memory and emotions} than views of famous people, landmarks, or common objects, indicating that animals are important to people.

<https://academic.oup.com/af/article/4/3/32/4638688>

Mormann F., Dubois J., Kornblith S., Milosavljevic M., Cerf M., Ison M., Tsuchiva N., Kroskov A., Quiroga R.Q., Adolphs R., Fried I., Koch C. 2011. A category-specific response to animals in the right human amygdala. *Nat. Neurosci.*14(10):1247–1249.

Humans and their companion animals experience attachment similar to infants and mothers or caregivers. The interaction brings comfort, care, and pleasure.

<https://academic.oup.com/af/article/4/3/32/4638688>

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Attachments to pets are often viewed as being even more secure than those with people.

More than three decades of studies have documented that some of the social behaviors that bring comfort between people are part of our interactions with our companion animals, especially dogs, cats, horses, and pet birds

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Mothers' brains respond differently to images of their child and their dog

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/10/141003214344.htm>

### **Homelessness Causes PTSD**

The National Alliance to End Homelessness has determined that the experience of being homeless causes PTSD

[https://b3cdn.net/naeh/973478e833747853ce\\_a1m6bx81p.pdf](https://b3cdn.net/naeh/973478e833747853ce_a1m6bx81p.pdf)

### **Separation Anxiety in Pets**

Separation anxiety is triggered when dogs become upset because of separation from their guardians, the people they're attached to. The sudden absence of a family member, being abandoned, surrendered to a shelter or given to a new guardian can trigger it. They will refuse to eat or drink, and pant and salivate excessively when distressed. Escape attempts by dogs with separation anxiety are often extreme and can result in self-injury.

It's natural for young mammals to experience anxiety when separated from their mothers and siblings; it's an adaptive survival mechanism. Since companion animals view their humans as their

parents, and dogs are highly social, depending on the human bond, the same feelings and behaviors will result from what they sense is being abandoned.

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/dog-care/common-dog-behavior-issues/separation-anxiety>

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/does-your-dog-freak-out-when-you-leave>

<https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/behavior/how-to-help-a-dog-with-separation-anxiety/>

### **Separation Anxiety in Humans**

Some humans experience separation anxiety when away from their pets. Common symptoms can include irrational fear, isolation, lack of focus or inattentiveness, headaches, gastric distress, high blood pressure or other physical manifestations of excessive anxiety or stress.

<https://farmersfeedco.com/blog/33202/do-you-suffer-separation-anxiety-from-your-pets>



Testimony of

Raji Edayathumangalam

Forensic Social Worker

New York County Defender Services

Before the

Committee on General Welfare

Oversight Hearing: Outreach NYC and Barriers to Shelter for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness

February 28, 2020

My name is Raji Edayathumangalam and I am a Forensic Social Worker at New York County Defender Services (NYCDS). I am also a New York State licensed clinical social worker. Thank you to Chair Levin for holding this hearing on barriers to shelter for people experiencing homelessness.

I am here to represent front-line social workers working directly with people who are tangled up in the scary web of the criminal legal system. Many of our clients are already homeless or on the verge of being homeless again. It is my deepest hope that this hearing today will be a watershed moment for the pandemic of homelessness that plagues our city and our collective conscience.

NYCDS is a public defender office that serves close to 15,000 clients in criminal cases every year. We estimate that approximately 40% of our clients are homeless (either living in a shelter or on the street) and thousands more are severely housing insecure. In fact, requests for shelter or housing assistance are our number one social work request.

Bail reform has forced public defenders to confront a related problem – there are a small number of people, often people who are experiencing street homelessness, who have dozens of arrests for low-level, non-violent offenses that stem from chronic poverty and related issues, especially substance use. Before bail reform, these people would be sent to Rikers Island, where they would

later likely plead guilty to a small crime, be released, and have the cycle repeat all over again, for years, if not decades. However, thankfully, hundreds of these people are no longer eligible for bail. These high-risk individuals require social work support to ensure their return to court and a non-jail outcome in their case, to be sure, but they also need housing, specifically supportive housing.

In 2015, doctors at the Bureau of Correctional Health Services (CHS) in the NYC Department of Mental Health and Hygiene conducted a study on hundreds of people who consistently rotated in and out of Rikers Island for low-level crimes.<sup>1</sup> The doctors called these people “hot spotters,” a term used in the medical field that refers to identifying and focusing on the highest users of health care services in a population and offering tailored, intensive case management in an effort to reduce costs and improve care. They followed the 800 people who came in and out of Rikers more than any others for six years to assess what works and doesn’t work for this high-risk population.

During the CHS study period, the 800 hot spotters experienced 18,713 incarcerations, with a median of 21 interactions. In total, they spent 1,423 years incarcerated at an estimated cost of \$129 million. Compared to a control group, the hot spotters were significantly older than other incarcerated people. 96% of them had a history of significant drug or alcohol use and 19% has a diagnosis of serious mental illness. Unsurprisingly, the researchers concluded that jail and prison were not working to address the underlying issues that led to the hot spotters frequent and ongoing arrest and incarceration. Instead, they found that supportive housing was best equipped to “reduce incarceration, reduce homeless shelter use, improve substance use indicators, reduce medical and psychiatric hospitalization, and cost less than usual care.”<sup>2</sup>

Suffice to say that forensic social workers are already in the crossfire of the new bail law and our city’s ongoing housing crisis. Our roles and responsibilities are swiftly changing as we speak. First, we are confronted with providing a high-level of support to so-called hot spotters, people who prior to January 1 were frequently institutionalized in city jails. Second, their homelessness will precipitate their cycling in and out of the criminal legal system even more hastily. Third, we social workers are now also caught in the web of highly under-resourced and fragmented systems that are totally unequipped to navigate this newly rising high tide of homelessness and need for services. Finally, forensic social workers must somehow carry on with our everyday roles and responsibilities in the courtroom, on top of everything else that is coming down the pike for us.

I was assigned seven new clients the week of February 3, 2020. Three of the seven are homeless, and two others are on the verge of homelessness. Like any good social worker, I take a deep breath and magically carry on with the task of turning my rage and utter sense of helplessness into wherewithal and compassion for homeless clients who are experiencing the same strong feelings and more, except on a whole other level of intensity. That’s because there are so few options for safe, affordable, and permanent housing, which is an impossible situation for clients who are in immediate need of housing. It’s almost as if social workers have to be magicians. Everyone comes to us for food, clothing, and shelter and we must somehow make that happen. While the first two are doable, the shelter piece frequently feels insurmountable.

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<sup>1</sup> MacDonald et al., *The Rikers Island Hot Spotters: Defining the Needs of the Most Frequently Incarcerated*, *AJPH* (2015), available at <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302785>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

As others have testified to here today, the barriers to shelter in New York City are countless. The shelters are overcrowded and unsafe. Supportive housing – the resource that Correctional Health Services found in their 2015 study to be the best solution to end the cycle of incarceration for hot spotters – can take months if not years to obtain. By that time, our clients may already have disappeared in the wind, or been re-arrested for a new crime.

I'd like to close by offering a few concrete asks that are also solutions to our looming crisis and will simultaneously address the high rates of re-arrest in our client population.

- First, the City must invest millions more in supportive housing facilities with onsite support staff and services for people in crisis.<sup>3</sup>
- Second, public defender offices like ours need more social workers to help manage our speedily evolving roles and high caseloads.
- Third, we need more integrated, comprehensive, and long-term mental health and substance use programs that are community based, trauma informed, and culturally sensitive.<sup>4</sup>
- Lastly, we need better systems of coordination between service providers across various City agencies and organizations. I have advanced degrees and I still find it difficult, if not close to impossible to navigate these systems.

We also support all four of the bills on today's agenda:

- Int. 1483-2019 (to require DHS to develop a plan to provide pet-friendly shelters)
- Int. 1484-2019 (to require DHS reporting on the placement or disposition of pets that belong to people who enter homeless shelters)
- Int. 1902-2020 (to require DHS to provide case management to provide case management to people they and their contractors interact with who are street homeless)
- Int. 1903-2020 (to limit to 30 days the amount of time DHS may require a street homeless applicant to receive case management to be eligible for certain rental assistance programs).

The City must do all it can to address this crisis head on and built more housing. If we want bail reform to be a success, and if we want to be able to close Rikers once and for all, we must significantly increase our investment in all kinds of housing, but particularly supportive housing. Our most vulnerable community members deserve much better.

If you have questions about my testimony, please contact me at [redayathumangalam@nycds.org](mailto:redayathumangalam@nycds.org).

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<sup>3</sup> See Just Leadership USA, *#buildCOMMUNITIES Platform* (Jan. 2019), pp. 10-11, for more details on specific supportive housing funding asks, available at <https://jlusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/buildCOMMUNITIES-platform.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* at 6.



coalition  
for the  
homeless

**THE  
LEGAL AID  
SOCIETY**

Testimony of

**Coalition for the Homeless**

and

**The Legal Aid Society**

on

**Oversight - Outreach NYC and Barriers to Shelter for  
Individuals Experiencing Homelessness**

presented before

**The New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare**

Giselle Routhier  
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The Legal Aid Society

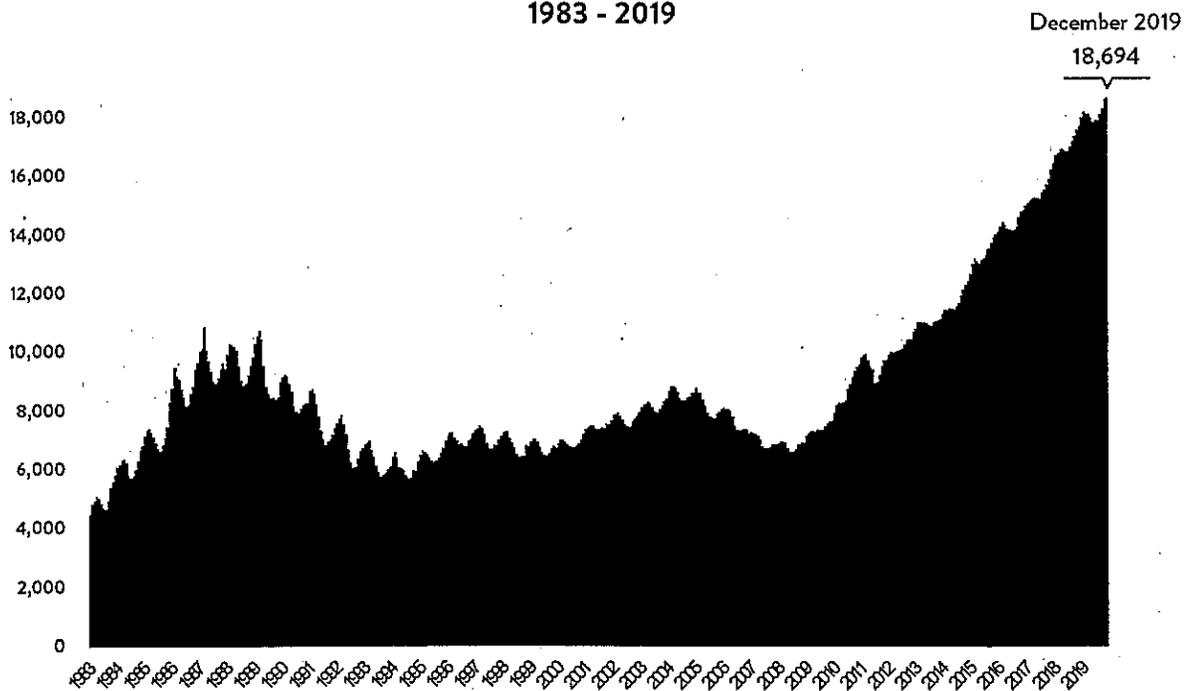
February 28, 2020

The Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare regarding Outreach NYC and street homelessness.

**Record Homelessness in New York City**

New York City remains in the midst of the worst homelessness crisis since the Great Depression, with more than 62,500 adults and children sleeping in shelters each night. The number of single adults in NYC shelters reached an all-time record high in December 2019 at 18,694 residents. Thousands more bed down on the streets every single night. Those who end up on the streets often do so after having attempted to access the shelter system and finding that it did not meet their needs or was unsafe for them. Others find the bureaucratic intake process too intrusive or complex to manage.

**Number of Homeless Single Adults Sleeping Each Night in NYC Shelters  
1983 - 2019**



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration; Local Law 37 Reports

**Outreach NYC**

Mayor de Blasio's Outreach NYC initiative comprises multiple policy shifts, none of which address the true cause of homelessness: a lack of affordable, safe, appropriate housing. The policies outlined in Outreach NYC, along with several other related street homelessness initiatives announced by Mayor de Blasio during the latter half of 2019, may seem innocuous, but they actually represent an underlying shift toward the criminalization of homeless New Yorkers. Taken together, these policies create a vast multi-agency surveillance system to monitor individuals who seek refuge in the transit system and bed

down on the streets, as part of a broader strategy to treat homelessness as a quality of life issue for non-homeless New Yorkers.

Outreach NYC consists of three distinct policies:

1. Training nearly 20,000 City workers to identify and report homeless individuals they see during the course of their work duties;
2. Launching a social media ad campaign to encourage family members of homeless individuals to contact the Department of Homeless Services for help reconnecting with them;
3. Establishing a Joint Command Center that actively tracks homeless people through CCTV and deploys outreach teams or NYPD to engage with them. This center and its cameras are actively monitored by the NYPD in real time.

The recently implemented Subway Diversion Program – as we testified at a prior Council hearing – adds an element of coercion to outreach by requiring NYPD Transit Bureau officers to issue summonses as a way to force homeless individuals to accept transport to a shelter, regardless of whether or not they intend to stay there. The underlying premise of the program fails to acknowledge that most people on the streets are aware of the shelter system and have made a rational choice to avoid shelters. The January 21<sup>st</sup> hearing illuminated how the Subway Diversion Program is increasing interactions between officers and unsheltered New Yorkers without offering them the services they actually want and need: NYPD officials testified that 1,296 summonses had been issued through this program, of which two-thirds had **not** been cleared. Please visit [DiversionIsCoercion.nyc](http://DiversionIsCoercion.nyc) to learn more about why we vehemently oppose this misguided program.

Likewise, Outreach NYC is the wrong approach to street homelessness because it does not address the root causes of homelessness or treat our neighbors on the streets with dignity. The missing solutions to homelessness are simple: supportive housing, affordable housing, and low-threshold shelters. Instead of embracing these solutions, however, Mayor de Blasio has emphasized surveillance of New Yorkers who sleep on the streets and in the subways. The requirement that a vast army of City workers report on the locations of homeless individuals as part of their job duties, coupled with the implementation of real-time CCTV monitoring of homeless people by the NYPD, are policies that serves only to turn New York City into the “Big Brother” dystopian society envisioned in *1984*. Increased contact with law enforcement for “quality of life” issues is not only unwelcome by homeless New Yorkers, but is actively harmful to individuals whose freedom, finances, and ability to obtain housing could be directly impacted for years to come as a result – to say nothing of the trauma inflicted by such encounters.

We urge the City to immediately end surveillance of homeless New Yorkers through the Joint Command Center and the City worker reporting requirement. We also repeat our recommendation that the City immediately cease the Subway Diversion Program and administratively clear all quality of life summonses that were issued to the hundreds of individuals targeted over the past few months.

### Legislation

Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society support the two pre-considered bills in relation to case management and rent assistance eligibility for street homeless individuals. We look forward to working with Council Member Levin to strengthen the language where possible and to advance these bills.

Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society also support Intro. 1483 and Intro. 1484, in relation to accommodating pets of homeless individuals and families in the shelter system and reporting on the placement of pets whose owners enter shelters. For homeless New Yorkers who have pets, the requirement that they part ways with their animal companions in order to enter a shelter could be a factor in their choice to reject shelters and sleep on the streets. If we want to help homeless New Yorkers move indoors, we must remove obstacles in order to make the shelter system more responsive to their needs.

**The Need for Permanent Housing**

In sum, there is no criminal justice, policing, or surveillance solution to homelessness in New York City. Homelessness is not a crime, and people avoid services and shelters for a variety of legitimate reasons, the most important being negative past experiences in the shelter system and other systems and bureaucracies that have repeatedly failed them. The vast majority of those bedding down in public spaces report a prior stay in the shelter system and contact with outreach teams since leaving the system. Because outreach workers are often unable to offer anything more than another trip to a shelter, their offers are frequently rejected. Reducing the tragedy of people taking makeshift refuge in transit facilities and on trains, or bedding down on the street requires giving them somewhere better to go. Urgent action is needed to expand the supply of permanent housing necessary to finally reduce homelessness. Mayor de Blasio must immediately expand access to low-barrier safe havens and low-threshold housing, and accelerate the pipeline of supportive housing for our homeless neighbors.

We thank the Council for the opportunity to testify, and we look forward to opportunities for further advocacy to address the needs of all homeless New Yorkers.

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## About The Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless

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 2,000 attorneys, social workers, 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 uniquely positioned to speak on issues of law and policy as they relate to homeless New Yorkers. 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. The Society, in collaboration with Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLC, filed *C.W. v. The City of New York*, a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in New York City. Our goal in litigation is to ensure that the City creates and maintains enough youth-specific beds to meet the needs of *all* youth seeking shelter. The Society, along with institutional plaintiffs Coalition for the Homeless and Center for Independence of the Disabled – NY, settled *Butler v. City of New York* on behalf of all disabled New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

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, the right to reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities, 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. In 2017, the Coalition, fellow institutional plaintiff Center for Independence of the Disabled – New York, and homeless New Yorkers with disabilities were represented by The Legal Aid Society and pro-bono counsel White & Case in the settlement of *Butler v. City of New York*, which is designed to ensure that the right to shelter includes accessible accommodations for those with disabilities, consistent with Federal, State, and local laws.



**HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED**

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**Homeless Services United Testimony before the NYC Council Committee on General Welfare**

**Oversight - Outreach NYC and Barriers to Shelter for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness**

**February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

My name is Eric Lee and I'm the director of policy and planning at Homeless Services United. Homeless Services United (HSU) is a coalition representing the mission-driven, homeless service providers in New York City. 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. Thank you Chair Levin and Members of the General Welfare Committee for allowing us to testify before you today.

**T2019-4435** Homeless Services United strongly supports efforts to reduce barriers to shelter and better serve the needs of homeless families and individuals in New York City. We applaud Speaker Johnson and Chair Levin for your leadership on homelessness with The Case for Change comprehensive plan, which contains a number of critical recommendations for street homeless individuals, including the number of safe haven beds, creating a robust medical respite system, and direct placement from the street into DHS shelters. It is through solutions like these, with client-centered services and housing options that the City will see a marked reduction in street homelessness.

HSU fully supports the idea that individuals who are verified street homeless should receive DHS case management services in a timely manner; in fact, they already do under current policy. Because this is already current practice we are unsure whether this legislation will affect a timelier provision of these services. Street homeless individuals have a unique set of challenges which outreach providers must navigate in order to identify, engage, and service them. Outreach staff use their clinical training to engage and assess to the best of their professional ability whether someone is street homeless and what their individual service needs are. Upon verification of their housing status as street homeless, they are then added to the outreach team's caseload. But to be clear, at any time during engaging with a DHS outreach worker, individuals have immediate access to other homeless services including transportation to an intake or drop-in center for case management and referral to shelter and other services.

Where HSU feels there could be opportunities to improve case management services for street homeless individuals is through greater collaboration and information sharing across all agencies, programs, and government departments which serve them. While DHS street outreach programs utilize StreetSmart and CARES databases to track homeless individuals seamlessly across providers, further data integration and collaboration with non-DHS programs could better capture the complex needs of individuals and all the systems which they touch. Non-DHS street providers do not have a formal process to verify if an individual is "known" to DHS, which could be a missed opportunity to reconnect them back to DHS case management services, concrete supports like a safe-haven or shelter bed, or coordinate care to avoid duplication of services. A more robust and open data tool for street homeless individuals would allow for providers to more holistically address the needs of individuals who they engage with, regardless of how or where they access services across the City.



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**T2019-4422** Thank you Chair Levin and the General Welfare Committee Members for your steadfast commitment to improving CityFHEPS vouchers. HSU supports the shortening of the caseload requirement for CityFHEPS eligibility for street homeless individuals down from 90 days to 30 days, with the rationale that those who truly only need housing assistance and not transitional services could see immediate benefits from a shorter time requirement. That said, DHS outreach providers have expressed that the majority of individuals who they serve who are not yet chronically homeless, do have other significant challenges such as active substance abuse, and are best served in supportive housing settings to ensure long-term stability. There are also some number of persons who would be successful in non-supportive settings and we see no reason to deny such persons a chance at housing earlier in the process. Still, in order to make this shortened caseload requirement a viable option that does not set someone up for failure once housed, we strongly recommend robust access to community-based wrap-around care, as well as transitional services to maintain stability for those with significant challenges that need to be addressed.

**Int 1483/1484-2019** Homeless Services United supports the reasoning that individuals and families should whenever possible, be able to bring their pets with them when entering shelter, given the inherently traumatizing and dehumanizing experience that homelessness inflicts upon them. Even so, we do caution the Council to approach implementing any such policy through extensive planning and research that will ensure it be rolled out in a thoughtful and safe manner. While we want to make the shelter experience as humane as possible, providers must prioritize the welfare of all families and individuals in their programs both with and without pets.

Some immediate challenges which we foresee given the current shelter system is that physical layouts of Single Adult shelters and housing will be much more challenging to implement this policy. Where family units are usually one family per room, singles can have shared dorm spaces or congregate settings where multiple individuals are housed. In these instances, room composition could easily become problematic, if two pets literally fight like cats and dogs, or may possibly put staff or roommates who are unfamiliar to the animal at physical risk, either being bitten or scratched, or possibly suffering allergic and asthmatic reactions. Given the low vacancy rate in the shelter system accommodating pets to work out such conflicts might necessitate a transfer when other options are unavailable or less appropriate for the animals which can also cause significant trauma for residents as this Committee has noted in other hearings.

In addition to logistics and liability concerns, funding must be reserved for instances where owners are unable to afford food or medical welfare of the pet and protocols must be in place to identify and address animal abuse and neglect. Additional funding for facilities to hire extra cleaning staff may also be necessary. Programs may even require capital funds for repairs from pet damage and/or to create spaces for humans and pets to exercise (e.g. dog runs or play spaces), especially for those who need to take pets out after curfew. It may also be necessary to build out "relief" areas for small pets (e.g. litter boxes and wee-wee pads) within the facility to ensure a sanitary environment for all.

Given all of the issues involved in planning to safely shelter people and animals together, it seems that the most prudent thing to do would be to study the issue more carefully first and measure the extent to which such accommodations are actually necessary, for whom, in what settings. Therefore, as a



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practical matter, it seems that Intro 1484 ought to be implemented for some period of time to collect sufficient data before Intro 1483 could be enacted thoughtfully.

Thank you Chair Levin and Members of the General Welfare Committee for your steadfast commitment to lowering barriers to services, shelter, and housing for families and individuals experiencing homelessness, and for creating client-centered services and policies which better serve the needs of New Yorkers.

Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)  
Oversight – Outreach NYC and Barriers to Shelter for Individuals  
Experiencing Homelessness  
Before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare  
February 28, 2020

Chair Levin, Council Members, and staff, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee on General Welfare on Outreach NYC and Barriers to Shelter for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness. My name is Deborah Berkman, and I am a Senior Staff Attorney in the Public Benefits Unit and Shelter Advocacy Initiative at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers in need combat social and economic injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, survivors of intimate partner violence, people with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, veterans, low-income members of the LGBTQ community, Holocaust survivors, as well as others in need of free civil legal services.

The Shelter Advocacy Initiative at NYLAG provides legal services and advocacy to low-income people in the shelter system. We work to ensure that every New Yorker has a safe place to sleep by offering legal advice and representation throughout each step of the shelter application process. Additionally, we assist and advocate for clients who are

already in shelter as they navigate the transfer process, seek adequate facility conditions and resources for their needs, and we offer representation at fair hearings. Based on our experience working with individual adults and homeless families in the shelter system, the Shelter Advocacy Initiative at NYLAG appreciates the opportunity to offer the following comments on DHS shelter accessibility.

I. The Current Process for Allowing Animals into Shelter is Insufficient

The proposed legislation to allow pets into certain proposed pet-friendly shelters, Intro 1483, would be one important way to lower the barrier to entry to DHS shelters. Currently, homeless New Yorkers can only bring an animal into shelter with them if the animal is a “service animal” or an emotional support animal. Service animals (as defined under the Americans With Disabilities Act) are always permitted in shelter. In contrast, in order to bring an emotional support animal into shelter, shelter residents must apply through the Reasonable Accommodation process for people with disabilities who need an accommodation to make shelter accessible. This application requires medical documentation from a healthcare professional verifying that the resident has a medical condition or disability that necessitates their use of an animal for assistance or support. This system creates significant barriers for most of our clients.

First, many people experiencing homelessness who are reliant on an animal have no idea the reasonable accommodation process exists. Even for those who are aware, the reasonable accommodation process presupposes that our clients have consistent access to affordable medical care. We know this is not true, as immigration status often prevents people from obtaining medical benefits, and even those with benefits often have other barriers to accessing the care they need, particularly mental health care. Thus, our clients

often have medically necessary emotional support animals, but do not have the means to prove it.

Next, even when clients can access medical documentation, often the clients and/or their medical professionals do not know the specific language necessary to justify the need for the animal. Reasonable accommodation requests are often rejected on this basis and without explanation as to what documentation and information would be necessary to grant the request.

Finally, responses to reasonable accommodation requests are often delayed and can take months to get approved. During that time, people experiencing homelessness who are reliant on their animals have no choice but to remain street homeless.

Using the reasonable accommodation process to determine admission of emotional support animals ignores the reality of our inadequate healthcare system for homeless New Yorkers and places an unfair and unreasonable burden on them. As a result, it inhibits them from bringing life-saving animals with them to shelter.

In addition, pet owners who are experiencing homelessness and who do not have a disability are currently (in most cases) prohibited from bringing their animals into shelter. Many of our clients will not go into shelter because they will not leave their pet behind. With no one to care for their pet and no housing alternative, clients will choose street homelessness over shelter, simply because of DHS' current restrictive policy on pets in shelter.

## II. Case Management Services Must be Enhanced

NYLAG also supports the proposed bill requiring that all shelter residents have access to case management services. The bill is a much-needed recognition of the vulnerability

that comes with homelessness and the ways in which the City can do more to support our homeless neighbors. However, simply providing case management to the people who want it is not enough. There must be infrastructure in place to ensure that this case management is effective. NYLAG's clients report that their DHS caseworkers are under informed or misinformed about available benefits and programs, that their caseworkers are so overloaded that they cannot be relied upon for any form of assistance, that their caseworkers do not attempt to help them, and, in some instances, that their caseworkers antagonize them.

For example, caseworkers do not or only minimally assist our clients with obtaining housing vouchers and do not inform our clients when their housing vouchers will expire. Clients are thus left with expired vouchers and with no information about the voucher process. On top of that, clients need more support than just being given a voucher, they need effective assistance finding apartments and using the vouchers effectively. Rental limits on most vouchers are very low, and, even if an apartment in the voucher's rent range is available, many landlords will not accept vouchers due to source of income discrimination. In many instances, without assisting clients to find housing, the voucher by itself is useless. Expanding the role of caseworkers would allow more people to exit shelter more quickly.

I urge the City Council to be cognizant of the ways in which the proposed expansion of case management services can be overseen and further resourced to ensure that these services are helpful to our clients. Providing more case management to homeless clients is just the first step in ensuring that shelter is an accessible and helpful resource on the path towards permanent housing.

### III. The Shelter Eligibility Process is Itself a Barrier to Entry

A discussion about barriers to entry to the DHS shelter system would be grossly inadequate if it does not include the ways in which the eligibility process is itself purposely designed to be a major barrier for people experiencing homelessness. First, clients at DHS family intake centers for shelter placement must provide a complete history of all the places they have lived in the last one or two years. For the chronically homeless, this burden is especially onerous. And secondly, this process then requires each place listed to be *verified* by outside contacts. Even for periods of street homelessness, clients are expected to provide contacts so that DHS can verify that the client was living on the street at a listed time. If the verification contacts do not answer the phone, or if DHS cannot speak with them, then the client is found ineligible for shelter for “not cooperating” with the investigation and they have to reapply, returning to an intake center every ten days and spending ten to twenty hours waiting for a new temporary shelter placement. Additionally, if DHS determines in their investigation that clients have an alternative housing option, even if clients have proof that the purported option is not available to them, DHS will deny them shelter and the clients cannot return to intake for thirty days. This means that when DHS believes clients have another place to sleep, even if the clients have been forbidden from returning to the suggested address or if that address poses health risks or is out of state, the clients are forced into street homelessness for thirty days.

This happens daily to our clients and can occur repeatedly for months before DHS can verify their housing history. If someone were not in fact homeless, they would not seek shelter, nor would they subject themselves and their loved ones to the trauma of the shelter intake process. I have clients who have gone through intake every ten days for the last year

and *still* have not been found eligible because of this process. Additionally, I have several clients who found the eligibility process so traumatizing and degrading that they have ultimately opted for street homelessness, put their children into kinship foster care, or opted for unsafe housing. I have seen clients with mental and physical disabilities face noticeable and tangible deteriorations in their health because of the shelter eligibility process.

#### IV. Other Barriers to Shelter

Lastly, I want to close by both thanking the Council for facilitating discussions on how we can make shelter more accessible and offering some further ways DHS could improve its accessibility based on NYLAG's work with homeless clients. There are several other DHS practices that cause shelter to remain inaccessible for many who need it. First, the curfew policies and prohibitions on bringing in outside food are one major concern. Secondly, DHS often makes unfounded claims of domestic violence between partners, precluding them from being sheltered together and ruining their chances at ever being granted family shelter. Thirdly, the intense policing of shelters and the aggression of shelter staff and security towards residents can make shelter, although a coveted resource, unpleasant and violent for residents. I have many clients who choose street homelessness over shelter simply to avoid interactions with shelter staff, who have been known to verbally and physically abuse clients. Shelters are also often terribly inaccessible for clients who use wheelchairs or other assistive devices. These clients often report broken elevators and facilities that are impossible to navigate in a wheelchair, even when the shelters are labeled "accessible." And lastly, shelter is often restrictive for homeless transgender or gender non-binary clients, who are at times prevented from living in the

shelter for the gender with which they identify and experience extreme harassment from staff and other residents.

It is my hope that the Council can continue to think about the ways in which we can offer more agency to those in shelter. Being homeless does not mean that one should have to feel dehumanized, infantilized, or in danger for seeking shelter. The proposed policies around allowing pets into shelter and providing enhanced case management structures are two important initial steps in what we hope will be continuing discussions about improving conditions and accessibility for shelter residents.

We thank the Committee on General Welfare for the work it has done to facilitate shelter for vulnerable New Yorkers and we hope we can be a resource for you going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

New York Legal Assistance Group



**TESTIMONY OF:**

**Julia Okun—Affordable Housing Specialist, Civil Justice Practice**

***BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES***

**Presented before  
The New York City Council Committee on General Welfare**

**Oversight Hearing on Outreach NYC and Barriers to Shelter for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness**

**February 28, 2020**

My name is Julia Okun and I am the Affordable Housing Specialist in the Civil Justice Practice at Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS). BDS provides multi-disciplinary and client-centered criminal, family, and immigration defense, as well as civil legal services, social work support and advocacy to approximately 30,000 Brooklyn residents every year. I thank the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare, and in particular Chair Stephen Levin, for the opportunity to testify today about barriers to shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness. BDS supports the proposed legislation, which seeks to reduce barriers to shelter and increase access to case management, critical first steps in addressing the homelessness crisis in New York City.

The Civil Justice Practice at BDS provides individual advocacy to clients on a range of issues, including housing court representation, eviction prevention, access to public benefits, and improvement of substandard housing conditions. BDS created an Affordable Housing Specialist position last year in order to provide housing relocation services to its clients, a previously unmet need that is prevalent across all practice areas. We recognized that a high volume of our clients, oftentimes due to their involvement with the legal system, were struggling to find permanent, affordable housing. Despite access to legal representation, housing vouchers, and other services, there was a substantial need for individualized support for clients struggling to actually *use* the programs for which they had been deemed eligible. BDS is now able to work with clients to retain their existing housing and, when necessary, assist them to successfully relocate.

## Background

There are approximately 80,000 people currently experiencing homelessness in New York City.<sup>1</sup> Over 20,000 are children, struggling to keep up in school as their lives fracture around them. These estimates do not encompass the vast number of New Yorkers who are housing instable, living with friends or family, trading sex for shelter, or just barely scraping together rent each month. Homelessness can be brutally disruptive; homelessness has been proven to drastically undercut school performance, inhibit job acquisition and retention, and negatively impact people's ability to manage substance use disorders.<sup>2</sup> And, significantly, studies have indicated that there is a causal link between mental illness and homelessness, which is only exacerbated by prolonged stays at shelters.<sup>3</sup> With average shelter stays in New York City surpassing one year for single adults, adult families, and families with children, the risks that homelessness pose are given more than enough time to compound in dangerous and harmful ways.<sup>4</sup>

The adverse effects of homelessness on mental and physical health are present in the extreme for the street homeless population, who have limited means of accessing wrap-around case management services. Though numbers can be hard to exact for this population, it is estimated that around 4,000 people are currently *street homeless* in New York City. These individuals face myriad additional health concerns due to prolonged exposure to harsh physical conditions and the very real safety concerns of living on the street. And yet this population has the least access to the supportive services that so many people experiencing homelessness vitally need.

BDS has often seen a reluctance to enter shelter on the part of the people we serve, born both of acute mental health concerns as well a widespread fear of the safety conditions within shelters. Unhoused people who choose not to enter the shelter system are often in the greatest need of services, yet they are systemically cut off from it. Reducing barriers to case management will be a critical step in addressing the root causes and consequences of street homelessness for the thousands of New Yorkers who face it every day, as will be expediting their access to housing vouchers and reducing additional obstacles they face for shelter entry.

## Client Stories

Ms. W is 56 years old and is currently street homeless for the first time in her life. She lost her apartment in June after becoming unemployed and failing to make rent. Since June she had been living out of her car until that, too, was seized following a recent arrest. She has no other family or friends to stay with, and vehemently does not want to move to shelter. Ms. W has no income, no voucher, and apart from a meeting with Homebase where she was told she had to enter shelter to receive assistance, she had been unable to access any supportive services or even acquire information on possible next steps. After a criminal defense attorney at BDS referred her to our

<sup>1</sup> <http://council.nyc.gov/data/wp-content/uploads/sites/73/2020/01/FINAL-PAPER.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> 70% of homeless children in New York failed the state English exams in the past year and homeless children had a graduation rate of under 60% in public schools. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/11/19/nyregion/student-homelessness-nyc.html>; <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10935-007-0097-5>; <https://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/addiction.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> 20-25% of people experiencing homelessness in America have serious mental health issues, compared to 6% of the general populace. [https://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/Mental\\_Illness.pdf](https://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/Mental_Illness.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CFHStateoftheHomeless2018.pdf>

Civil Justice Practice, we were able explain what a housing voucher is and how to get one without entering a shelter. While this meant Ms. W was able to begin making a long term plan for the first time since she became homeless, it also meant telling her, in the middle of winter, she could not get a housing voucher until she received DHS services for almost three months. Worse, it meant telling her this would only be the first step of many in securing permanent housing. As anyone who has a housing voucher or has helped people with housing vouchers can tell you, it can take months or even years to find a suitable apartment with a voucher, meaning far more time on the street.

BDS routinely sees homeless clients elect to live on the street due to concerns about safety and drug usage in shelters, often citing shelter conditions as inferior to jail facilities. People are often unaware that they can access case management services and housing vouchers without entering the shelter system.

We also regularly see the long-term disruption of family units due to the city's current policies for shelter entry. Mr. S was permanently banned from living with his wife and son in family shelter because of allegations of a verbal dispute with his wife during a past shelter stay. Current DHS policy causes couples to be permanently banned from living together in shelter if they have ever been the subject of a domestic incident report. Upon losing their home, our client's wife and son went into family shelter together. But Mr. S, who feared re-entering the violent and dangerous men's shelter system after negative experiences in the past, became street homeless for almost a year. He therefore had no access to services, and shelter staff continuously refused his wife and son a voucher that included Mr. S and accurately reflected their household composition. With no other options available, his wife was forced to choose between permanent housing and her husband. The family languished in shelter for years, despite the fact that both adults were employed and otherwise qualified for a voucher. Policies such as these make it impossible for families who rely on rental subsidies to find housing reflective of their actual family unit, and drastically reduce their prospects of becoming housed. Providing DHS case management for street homeless individuals would create an avenue for people like Mr. S and his family to get a rental subsidy true to their family unit. Without these measures in place, it is nearly impossible for many families to end their cycle of homelessness, let alone to do so together.

Once a family is split up between multiple shelters, it is often impossible for them to be placed on the same household composition for a housing voucher and receive a rental subsidy that would accurately reflect their family size and allow them to find housing together upon leaving shelter. Creating formalized processes for DHS to provide case management and screen for voucher eligibility while families are street homeless would substantially increase the likelihood that homeless families be able to receive accurate rental subsidies and thus remain intact as a family unit in the long term, even if they are unable to reside together in shelter.

The stories of these BDS clients are emblematic of a flawed approach still central to New York City's housing policy. The requirement that individuals in crisis proactively seek out resources they may not even know exist is both ineffective and insensitive. It has been shown, time and again, that providing stable housing *first* makes the provision of case management services far more effective, and we believe that New York City must continue to move towards ending a

policy that requires vulnerable New Yorkers to affirmatively seek out assistance before they have received any stabilizing services. Had today's proposed legislation been in effect when clients like Ms. W became street homeless, it would have allowed them to more swiftly access the services they needed to get off the street. Without them, it's often hard to see the end in sight.

### **The Need to Increase Street Outreach and Reduce Barriers to Shelter**

New York City is currently pouring \$3.2 billion per year into homelessness reduction, and yet rates of homelessness remain at an all-time high.<sup>5</sup> Radically reshaping our approach to homelessness is critical. BDS applauds the Council for holding this hearing on barriers to shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness in New York City. BDS supports the proposed legislation, which would allow animals in DHS shelters, require reporting of animals in DHS shelters, require DHS to provide case management services to street homeless individuals, and allow eligible street homeless individuals to access rental assistance programs after a maximum of 30 days.

#### ***Int. 1483 & Int. 1484***

The current denial of animals in DHS shelters is a significant barrier to entry for many homeless individuals, forcing them into street homelessness or other undesirable living arrangements. As stated above, the evidence of positively correlated experiences of homelessness and mental illness have been well documented. BDS supports Int. 1483 because not only would this bill remove a barrier to shelter for many individuals, it would allow them to maintain connections to animal companions who are often invaluable to mental and emotional health for people undergoing a high degree of instability and duress. We also support Int. 1484 as it increases transparency and communication between organizations and allows for a more effective monitoring of the proposed legislation.

#### ***Int. 1902***

BDS supports the provisions of the legislation directed at increasing services for street homeless individuals. Case workers are often essential in getting shelter residents into supportive programs, getting them adequate health care, and providing them with the rental subsidies they need to find permanent housing. Limiting that kind of support to only the individuals residing in shelter each night ignores a critical subset of the homeless population, who often require those services most. BDS supports this bill because it helps reduce the gaps in service provision for the homeless that currently plague our system. It acknowledges the need for proactive support and advocacy for populations who typically fall through the holes of our government safety net, and thus we believe that this is a critical piece of legislation.

#### ***Int. 1903***

BDS is in favor of limiting the number of days that street homeless individuals are required to receive DHS services before accessing rental subsidies. BDS routinely sees how difficult it is for chronically street homeless clients to maintain constant contact with case management services

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-york-citys-spending-on-homeless-hits-3-2-billion-this-year-11558562997>

for the required 90 days due to the high degree of instability in their day-to-day lives. Without a place to sleep at night or a regular place to receive mail, it is difficult for our clients to attend scheduled meetings, keep track of important documents, and stay in regular communication with case workers. And while reducing the number of days DHS services must be received from 90 days to 30 days is a step in the right direction, BDS believes that requiring over a month of regular service provision is still a prohibitively high threshold for street homeless individuals trying to access rental subsidies.

The Housing First Model has repeatedly been shown to be one of the most effective means of stabilizing the factors that contribute to chronic homelessness. Given the efficacy of that model, we urge the Council to adopt a far more expedited approvals process that would immediately vet chronically street homeless individuals for voucher eligibility as a part of every case management intake, and thus drastically curtail the time it takes for them to get housed.

### **Additional Policy Recommendations**

The report on homelessness issued by Speaker Corey Johnson last month acknowledges the breadth of the problem and desire to address the crisis. BDS supports the proposed legislation, one step toward addressing the crisis of homelessness in New York City. There are other critical steps that must be taken in conjunction with those put forward today in order to achieve substantive change.

We respectfully offer the following recommendations:

- **The maximum time in which eligible individuals receive housing vouchers must be reduced for all people experiencing homelessness, not just the street homeless.** Almost every person we work with who is currently in shelter struggles for months or years to successfully find an apartment with a voucher. Given the difficulty of use and the immediacy of need for all involved, we believe that timeline of voucher provision for eligible shelter residents must be curtailed, as well. Current policy requires people to be in shelter for 90 days to receive rental subsidies such as CityFHEPS; the minimum shelter stay requirement for housing vouchers must be instead limited to the duration it takes to verify eligibility upon intake.
- **Allocate additional funding for housing relocation services at shelters.** Every person in shelter already has a caseworker, however the people we serve often need additional support. Shelter housing relocation specialists must assist residents in actually obtaining new housing, rather than simply providing vouchers and expecting them to find places on their own. Increasing staffing, training, and funding for housing specialists at shelters will be critical in expediting moves out of shelter. And it would allow shelter residents to access that assistance in-house, rather than struggle on their own or be forced to seek out assistance from other agencies.
- While the proposed legislations would reduce barriers to voucher access for street homeless individuals, it fails to address the difficulty of using housing vouchers that plagues so many recipients. BDS clients routinely face rampant, unchecked source-of-income discrimination in every borough. **Additional legislation needs to be passed that**

**not only increases the voucher amounts to fair market rents, but that also creates mechanisms of enforcement and accountability for landlords and brokers.** The provisions currently in place for source-of-income (SOI) discrimination in New York have fallen short, and in order to truly reduce the numbers of homeless individuals, street and otherwise, SOI laws must be bolstered.

### **Conclusion**

BDS is grateful to The New York City Council Committee on General Welfare for hosting this hearing and to Chair Levin for sponsoring these bills. Thank you for your time and consideration of our comments.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Alexandra Dougherty, Senior Staff Attorney, at 718-254-0700 x 141 or [adougherty@bds.org](mailto:adougherty@bds.org).



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**Testimony to the New York City Council**  
*Committee on General Welfare*

February 28, 2020

Good morning. My name is Danielle Emery and I am the Director of the People and Animals Living Safely (PALS) program at the Urban Resource Institute (URI). I would like to thank the Committee on General Welfare for the opportunity to testify today in support of Bills 1483 and 1484, and Chairman Levin for his leadership and taking bold initiative on the issue of pets in New York City's shelter system.

URI has served vulnerable New Yorkers for nearly 40 years, including victims of domestic violence, homeless families and individuals with developmental disabilities, and notably related to this hearing – homeless domestic violence survivors with pets. URI is the nation's largest domestic violence shelter provider, offering an array of supportive services that are designed to promote safety and self-sufficiency for our clients. As such we are authorized to provide shelter for close to 1,250 victims of domestic violence on a nightly basis. We also are the only shelter provider in New York City and among less than 3% nationwide that offers victims of domestic violence access to shelter with their pets in a co-living environment.

URI began co-sheltering victims of domestic violence with their pets in 2013. The PALS program was developed and launched with, and continues to thrive today because of, the support of local animal welfare organizations including the Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals, the ASPCA, NYC's Animal Care Centers and Animal Haven. URI has been a leader in the national advocacy for accommodating pets in shelter, publishing a 2015 White Paper entitled "Escaping Domestic Violence as a Pet Owner," hosting roundtables with experts on the issue in both 2015 and 2018, and participating in countless media stories and presentations around the state and country. We advocated with national partners to help the Pets and Women Safety Act (PAWS) be signed into law federally,



and participate in a working group assisting lawmakers in determining how to appropriate the \$2 million the bill makes available to domestic violence service providers across the country. And in 2019, we opened PALS Place – the first domestic violence shelter in the country built from the ground up to shelter people *and* their pets. It is an extraordinary moment for URI to witness and lend our voice to this local progress as we work to promote co-sheltering across the country and world.

Since 2013 URI has welcomed 214 families and close to 300 pets into the PALS program; today we have 53 families and 71 pets in seven different shelter locations, including cats, dogs, rabbits and turtles. I share these numbers to illustrate that co-sheltering is *already* happening in NYC, and to offer our experience with the hope that those present will see URI as an example and resource for how implement these services.

The PALS program was founded to reduce barriers to shelter for pet owning domestic violence survivors. When PALS launched, URI was the only domestic violence shelter provider in the city to welcome survivors with their pets and we remain today the only one to do so in an official capacity. This is despite studies showing that as many as 48% of domestic violence victims with pets indicate that they would delay or not seek shelter due to the fear of what would happen if they left their pets behind and/or because they did not have access to resources for the animal members of their families. We have helped families that stayed in unsafe situations or went to drastic lengths such as sleeping in their cars to stay with their pets, even if it meant they were less safe. Furthermore, research shows that as many as 70% of domestic violence survivors with pets state their abuser had threatened, harmed or killed a current or previous pet. We have heard terrible stories from survivors served by PALS of abusers inflicting great harm by threatening or hurting their pets.

As the only provider in New York City to officially welcome people into shelter with their pets, we receive referrals from many individuals and families who unfortunately are



not eligible for domestic violence shelter. Of the nearly 600 individuals who have contacted us seeking shelter that we have not been able to serve, approximately 100 were seeking shelter due to reasons not connected to domestic violence. The remainder we were not able to help because they were singles (adults without children), and there are very few single spaces in the DV shelter system, catchment areas and not being safe at certain shelter locations, or because we had no PALS spaces or any beds available in our shelters at all. Many of these families or individuals will end up at PATH or a single assessment center and working with NoVA (No Violence Again) if the connection to domestic violence is made. As the Comptroller's Report "Housing Survivors" (published October 2019) showed, more than 40% of families currently in DHS family shelters are there as a result of domestic violence.

With only approximately 2,500 beds in the domestic violence shelter system, it is a reality of New York City that many individuals and families who become homeless as a result of domestic violence will seek assistance from the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Moreover, survivors who are able to access domestic violence shelter but not able to identify permanent housing before their time in emergency shelter elapses must also subsequently enter DHS shelters. For these reasons, any measures taken to address homelessness in New York City must explicitly take into account the role domestic violence has in its occurrence and two shelter systems seen as complementary and not disparate entities.

Of the many families I have worked with over my two years at URI, one that remains in the back of my mind constantly is Ms. H., her two human children, and their 12-year dog. Ms. H. adopted her dog when it was a puppy, and that dog had been part of her family for years before her human children were born. When the abuse in her relationship escalated to the point where she needed to leave her home – and become homeless – in order to keep her family safe, Ms. H. identified a friend to care for her beloved canine family member while she and her daughters sought refuge in the shelter system. This care



arrangement worked temporarily, but after a couple of weeks the friend was no longer able to care for her dog. Ms. H. did not know what to do or where to turn. She considered going back to her home, the barrier of not being able to bring her pet to shelter too great to overcome. She reached out to any resource she could find, and was connected to Jenny Coffey Director of Animal Haven's Community Engagement program, who is also present here today, who in turn connected her to PALS. We were able to transfer Ms. H. to one of our PALS locations, where the family was reunited. After the dog's arrival, Ms. H. shared with us that her two children had been experiencing frequent nightmares after leaving their dog, and were constantly asking if she was okay and when they would be back together. The memory of the pride on the children's faces when they introduced their dog to shelter staff, and the sheer joy that reunion brought to them, is what motivates me in advocating for co-sheltering programs and for speaking here today. This family was able to stay *together* in shelter, to identify housing *together* and continues to thrive *together* to this day.

It is crucially important that New York City, its government agencies and countless service providers continue to develop innovative services that reduce barriers to shelter for our city's most vulnerable populations, including homeless individuals and families, and among them homeless victims of domestic violence. For the pet owners within these populations, this means policies and services that not only accommodate but welcome and value the companion animals in peoples' lives. These two bills will help to illuminate the scope of need for services and begin the process of formalizing a coordinated, city-wide response. This response needs to be a joint effort between both human services and animal welfare agencies – it will not be successful unless we work together to develop and implement the response. URI hopes to be seen as a resource and model for how these efforts can take shape in NYC, as our community continues to expand our work in assisting pet-owning families in crisis.

Council Member Stephen T. Levin  
New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

Casey Riordan  
235 Pavonia Avenue,  
Jersey City, NJ 07302

Friday, February 28, 2020

Testimony in support of Int. No. 1483 and Int. No. 1484

Thank you, Council Members, for allowing me to testify here today. My name is Casey Riordan, and I am here as a private individual in favor of proposed legislation 1483 and 1484. Though I am a resident of Jersey City, I am deeply invested in this issue because I recently graduated from NYU's Animal Studies M.A. program, where I researched people experiencing homelessness with pets in New York City. Over the past year I surveyed dozens of homeless pet-owners throughout New York City with the help of the national nonprofit My Dog Is My Home, and found that:

- 46% of surveyed people reported there was a time in the past year when they wanted to stay in a shelter but could not.
- Of these, 55% said the main reason was because their animal was not allowed inside.
- 65% had been denied access to a shelter at least once because of their animal.
- Finally, 50% reported they would not stay in a shelter unless their animal was allowed inside.

It's a widespread argument that pets are family members and a responsibility for life, and most of the individuals I worked with over the past year acquired their pets before becoming homeless. By refusing to abandon their animals after losing their homes, these community members are merely living up to the expectations we have for all pet-owners: that is, to remain with and care for one's pets regardless of life hardships. It is my opinion that proposed legislation 1483 and 1484 are a critical step toward helping the city achieve its goal of putting an end to street homelessness and bringing *all* New Yorkers home. Thank you again for allowing me to testify here today.

Good afternoon, my name is Charmian Hamid. I've been homeless in New York City for much of the last 15 years. A few months ago, I was placed into an SRO. Before then, I lived on the streets rather than the shelters. I was more comfortable living on the streets because the city shelters, particularly the intake shelters, felt less safe than the streets.

Working with outreach teams was difficult. I lived near Penn Station, and I felt like I would meet countless different outreach teams. BRC is downstairs in the station, and Breaking Ground, which used to be Common Ground, is more likely to check on me when I'm outside. Head a few blocks up and you'll meet Urban Pathways at Port Authority. Then there's HOME-STAT, but I don't really know what they do. Also, the Homeless Outreach Unit of the NYPD comes by all the time. They just ask us for our name and date of birth, and that's really it.

One of the more frustrating things about living on the streets is that I've had to answer the same questions so many times. How long have I been homeless? Do I drink? Do I have any history of domestic violence? Every time there is a new outreach team, I have to answer those questions again. Every time my case manager leaves and I get a new case manager, I have to answer those questions again. It's so frustrating.

Another frustrating part of living on the streets is the "sightings" process, because it's so confusing. Breaking Ground, their thing was, we need to see you eight times, in that same location. Where you sleep at, where you go to the bathroom, where you eat at, that's where you have to be, whenever they come around. No particular timing or nothing, which is almost impossible, for a homeless person to do on the streets of New York. You have to move around at some point. You cannot just sit there for 24 hours in one spot hoping that an outreach team is going to come look for you to give you some information or get you some information. And you're never going to be placed in an appropriate manner, quickly and in a place you feel safe, if you're not seen that eight times and logged in by that same particular agency.

As a co-author of Human.nyc's new white paper on the "sightings" process, I hope that the recommendations will be taken seriously. People who want a case manager should get a case manager. Trust me, no one is out here pretending to be homeless. If you're homeless and asking about services, there should not be a holdup. Also, we really need the outreach teams to be giving out consistent information. BRC should have the same number of sightings as Breaking Ground. Otherwise, you leave us frustrated, confused, and talking amongst ourselves to try to figure out what is going on.

Thank you for your time. I don't have a phone, so please contact Josh Dean if you'd like to learn more about my story.

Good afternoon, my name is Peter Malvan. I am a Safety Net Activist, the Co-Chair of the Consumer Committee of the CoC, and the Vice President of the Midnight Run. I'm here today to provide my feedback to LS9863 and LS9872.

Having participated in outreach as case manager, and having also been a consumer of services, I am aware of how long it may take to get case management services through being assigned to caseload. This past year, I worked with Human.nyc to co-author a white paper on the "sightings" process, which includes recommendations on how to make outreach case management services more accessible to those of us living on the streets. Human.nyc has entered the white paper into the record, and I recommend you read it.

This brings me to Intro LS 9872, which would cut the 90 days on caseload requirement down to 30 in order for unsheltered New Yorkers to be eligible for any rental assistance going through NYC contacts. Based on interviews and findings in aforementioned white paper, I suggest additional criteria of obtaining eligibility for NYC Rental Assistance be 60 days post initial "sighting" and documentation that person is living on Street or place not meant or fit for human habitation.

Additionally, to make further progress on dealing with street homelessness, I believe that any sightings of known or recognized persons, asleep or awake, should be counted as a "sighting", and that there should be a uniform number of sightings and case management eligibility across all outreach teams. I'd also like to recommend that there be flexibility in the times when people are engaged; people should be engaged at times best for people who are street homelessness - not at the times that are best for the outreach workers, such as very early in the morning. There should also be transparency on available housing options, in addition to ensuring that case managers utilize best practices, such as the SOAR program, in linking to benefits for which they are eligible.



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**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL**

**COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE**

**T2020 -5865**

**OVERSIGHT – OUTREACH NYC AND BARRIERS TO SHELTER FOR INDIVIDUALS  
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

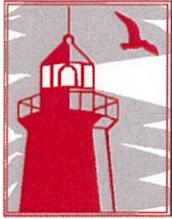
**TESTIMONY OF BEACON OF HOPE  
CATHOLIC CHARITIES COMMUNITY SERVICES  
ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW YORK**

**February 28, 2020**

Good afternoon, Honorable Chairperson and committee members. My name is Harold Moss and I am the Director of Beacon of Hope, a Division of Catholic Charities Community Services (CCCS), of the Archdiocese of New York. This testimony is provided on behalf of the agency's Division of Beacon of Hope (BOH) and based on extensive experience working with formerly homeless individuals with Serious Mental Illness. We thank you for the opportunity to testify about the needs of homeless individuals and to offer recommendations to help ensure this vulnerable population is connected to critical support services. This testimony is offered in support of **Int 2019-4435: A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to the provision of case management services for homeless individuals** and **Int 2019-4422: A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to rental assistance eligibility requirements for street homeless individuals.**

**I. CCCS AND BEACON OF HOPE PROGRAMS**

CCCS is a Not-For-Profit agency that has helped to solve the problems of New Yorkers in need: the neglected child, the homeless family and the hungry senior – for Catholics and non-Catholics alike. CCCS strengthens and rebuilds lives, and touches almost every human need – promptly, locally, day-in and day- out – always with compassion and dignity. The provision of services - as part of an integrated, holistic action plan to assist people in achieving stability in income, housing, employment, and nutrition is central to CCCS' mission. Through the work of dedicated and experienced staff, CCCS' programs and services are designed to meet the unique needs of each individual to achieve their goals of self-sufficiency. CCCS' network of services enables a participant in any of the agency's programs to access a continuum of services.



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Beacon of Hope (BOH) provides New York State Office of Mental Health (NYS OMH) funded housing and rehabilitation services to people who are seriously mentally ill through a continuum of housing, utilizing psychiatric rehabilitation principles and recovery-oriented guidelines. Most of the individuals housed have experienced homelessness at some point in their life. BOH operates 209 Licensed Housing beds, and 287 Supported Housing beds. In Fall, 2018, BOH opened St. Augustine Terrace – a new, mixed-using residence in the Bronx. Thirty-five individuals with serious mental illness became tenants. St. Augustine Terrace also provides housing to 77 individuals and families who meet the low-income housing requirements. In opening St. Augustine Terrace, BOH expanded its continuum of services as well as its housing options. In BOH's current housing portfolio, the Division operates Licensed Congregate Housing, Apartment Treatment beds scattered in the community, and scattered Supported Housing apartments. St. Augustine Terrace rounded out this continuum of care by providing congregate Supported Housing – an important resource for individuals who are ready for more independent housing but are not quite stable enough to live without on-site support. St. Augustine Terrace deepened the Division's commitment to housing those with mental illness and provided BOH clients with a flexibility of service that supports individuals' movement between different levels of housing with more ease. Throughout their stay, all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, and as members of the local community and the community at large. In 2020, plans are well underway at Catholic Charities for a two-building, 186 unit project funded by the Empire State Supportive Housing Initiative, with half of the units dedicated to homeless individuals and families, and the other half of the units set aside for low-income individuals and families.

BOH's Stabilization Bed program was created in June 2016, under a partnership between Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and the Bowery Residents Committee (BRC), through the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS). The program was a direct response to the Mayor's Office initiative to partner with Faith-Based organizations to help decrease the rise in the number of chronic street homeless in the city. Under this partnership BRC- a well- respected New York City organization that conducts street outreach to homeless men and women living under bridges, in subway stations or in parks, identifies individuals for admission to the Stabilization Bed program. The program operates out of a former convent of the Holy Rosary Church at 448 East 119<sup>th</sup> Street in East Harlem. Under this partnership, BRC is responsible for the 24/7 day-to-day program operations while CCCS serves as a subcontractor to deliver comprehensive case management services to these men and women who have spent years living in areas not fit for human habitation, and who have become particularly difficult to reach. In an atmosphere of care, non-judgement, and compassion, support and services are offered in a way that fosters trust and instills hope. With low threshold requirements for maintaining their residency and with the full support of all staff, these formerly Chronically Homeless men and women begin their road to recovery. Throughout this process, the focus is on securing housing that will promote their short and long-term recovery goals



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## **II. SERVICE NEEDS OF THE HOMELESS**

Individuals and families who are coping with homelessness have multiple service needs, often requiring a wide range of interventions and engagement strategies. While this population requires an affordable, safe and clean place to live, the types of services will be far ranging. For those who are homeless and have a Serious Mental Illness, service needs include psychiatric care, assistance with symptom management and medication, and direct assistance with many activities of daily living, including maintaining one's hygiene, apartment cleaning, food shopping and meal preparation, and doing the laundry. For those with a substance use disorder, interventions may vary depending on the individual's stage of recovery and their receptivity to assistance. For all however, case management services are a primary source of support, including but not limited to advocacy around legal and entitlement related issues, and referrals to rehabilitative programs – particularly for vocational training, educational programs, and job placement services. For those who are unable to manage their finances, budgeting and bill paying will be front and center. Many will also need to be challenged to find new ways to engage others and socialize. And perhaps the most neglected but most critical service need for the homeless is to address their compromised health. As many in this population suffer from multiple chronic medical conditions, interventions on this front become a central component of recovery. Many homeless individuals suffer from hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and diabetes. Many are smokers, have hepatitis, HIV, and are obese. With poor diets compounding their medical diagnoses, their conditions worsen over time. Coordinating medical care, providing education around medical diagnoses, and teaching self-monitoring go to the heart of this population's service needs. For without such interventions, the services provided on other fronts will be rendered useless as the individual is medically unfit to follow through with them. As homeless individuals, and particularly those with a serious mental illness die on average, 25 years younger than the general population, there is no more pressing service challenge. However, helping this population to recognize, accept, and mobilize around this issue becomes a service need in itself, as interventions may be rebuffed, dismissed, and/or ignored. To this end, staff interventions around such sensitive services is best when it is flexible and delivered in a way that individuals can understand and accept them. It may also be more effective when offered sooner rather than later.

## **III. THE COURSE AND OBSTACLES TO CARE**

Despite incentives and the perceived advantages of more permanent housing, many of the Stabilization Bed residents are reluctant to move on from the program. However, we believe the Stabilization Program model is effective as we accept the fact that we are working with residents who have decades of deeply entrenched behaviors, and a myriad of personal challenges -including medical and psychiatric conditions which have not been stabilized. So too, many of the residents may be overwhelmed by the massive undertaking associated with recovery and/or ambivalent about change. We believe that patience, consistency, objectivity, support and most of all, compassion,



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may still be our best options for reaching this very difficult to treat population. And, we believe that it is only through intensive, consistent, and timely case management services that this work can be successful. As such, we fully support the bill requiring case management services be provided to the street homeless once they are identified as such. Jump starting the recovery process while someone remains homeless could have a meaningful impact on an individual's experience in BOH's Stabilization Bed program. By transferring case management services instead of initiating them, the individual may be more hopeful, recovery oriented, have a shorter length of stay, and have less long-term dependence on emergency services and systems. Importantly, jump starting the recovery process with case management services has the potential to reduce the trauma of the homeless experience. To this end, we also support the bill that that would set 30 days as a maximum time that the Human Resources Administration may require a street homeless applicant to have received case management services to become eligible for rental assistance programs. The availability of such assistance would free-up a back log for beds at the BOH Stabilization Bed program as those who receive such financial assistance are placed more directly into housing programs. And, those individuals who have special needs can be served by more intensive case management services such as those provided in the Stabilization Bed program.

While the BOH NYS OMH residents do not tend to be homeless at the time of admission, the Stabilization Bed program admits homeless individuals directly from the streets. The Stabilization Bed program model allows residents to increase their participation in society at their own pace. However, staff consistently offer, and whenever accepted by residents, provide case management services to promote the individual's wellness. On any given day, staff provide referrals for services, accompany residents to appointments, and advocate on a wide range of issues. With securing housing as the central goal, staff work with amenable residents to ensure all the elements necessary for an HRA2010e Housing Application are in place. Since the Stabilization Bed program's inception however, the residents have been deeply ambivalent about moving forward with more permanent housing. To incentivize participation, Gift Cards are given to residents throughout the course of their stay. The Gift Cards are used to help the residents purchase clothing and toiletries, and to obtain haircuts. The Gift Cards may also be used if the resident desires a specific meal that is not served in the residence, and/or to purchase a special item that would improve their quality of life. The goal is to help residents slowly acclimate to and accept self-care goals. The staff also facilitate socialization activities e.g., escorting residents to a sports game, participating in gardening, going bowling, and various celebratory dinners – all intended to help residents connect with various environments and feel more at ease in public. And, the residents who receive more Gift Cards are those that are working with staff to put together the HRA2010e Housing Application, and to those who attend Housing Interviews with various providers.

Once on housing interviews, the goal is for the Stabilization Bed program residents to see and understand how more permanent housing supports their long-term recovery. The tour of an apartment – fully furnished and supplied with all the comforts of home, is hoped to be incentive



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enough for a resident to accept the trade-off of paying rent. The presence of on-site staff in the residences is intended to send a message of ongoing services and support. As many of the buildings to which residents are referred also provide socialization activities – often free of charge or for nominal fees, it is believed that this too may motivate the Stabilization Bed residents to accept permanent housing. In addition, as the permanent housing sites tend to be attractive environments with more privacy than their current program, such may also serve as an additional incentive for these men and women to accept housing. One of the questions for CCCS, BRC, and DHS however, is whether we should begin to set some participatory expectations associated with a resident’s stay so that the men and women begin to develop a deeper sense of personal responsibility sooner rather than later. The key of course, is not to tip the balance so that a resident wants to return to the street rather than work toward recovery.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

The histories and experiences of homeless individuals and families suggests they tend to be deeply involved with social service agencies and the health care system, often having very frequent visits to medical and psychiatric emergency rooms and a considerable number of inpatient stays. Both groups often have multiple and complicated medical conditions, can be psychiatrically unstable, have substance use related issues and are prone to relapse. As a result of having spent many years in highly structured and/or very stressful environments, many in this population are limited in managing their symptoms and medication, completing activities of daily living, and their ability to cope with life’s various challenges. Many have significant difficulty maintaining their entitlements, are involved in the court system, and deal with a wide range of complex psychosocial issues and situations, including estranged families, the involvement of child protection agencies, and domestic violence. Many such individuals lose any sense of hope and motivation as their capacity for resilience is crushed under the weight of a myriad of problems and a deep sense of shame. And the issues are only compounded when they retreat, isolate, and ignore the profound challenges they face. In failing to integrate into their communities, many in this population will resort to coping strategies that counter any efforts toward recovery. When long and intermittent forensic histories are factored in, the ability of this population to integrate is further challenged as the opportunities for work and moving forward are hampered by the stigma of incarceration. The conditions of life on the street and/or in homeless shelters present unique challenges to the seriously mentally ill population. Individuals with mental illness often do not have their psychiatric need met in the shelter system. Safety and other concerns also tend to disrupt and exacerbate the psychiatric issues of those with serious mental illness who reside in them. On the street, these conditions are exponentially harmful, with the added issue of being forced to weather the elements. Unlike some homeless populations who may benefit from a transitory housing environment with workforce development programs, those with mental illness are not likely candidates for job opportunities and require housing options that prioritize stability. In the absence of housing and



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social services to support them, homeless individuals and families find their road to recovery very long, immeasurably challenging and psychologically brutal. In effect, when intervention is deeply needed, why would one wait to deliver such services until the individual is in a Shelter or Stabilization Bed Program?

## **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Commence case management services to homeless individuals and families who are receptive to such care.
2. Prioritize case management services to homeless individuals and families based on evidentiary need.
3. Minimize the amount of time a street homeless applicant is required to have received case management services to be eligible for rental assistance programs.

We thank the New York City Council for your leadership and support of services to homeless individuals and families.

My name is Jenny Coffey and I am the Director of Community Engagement at Animal Haven, an independent animal welfare program in Lower Manhattan. I would like to thank Chairman Levin and the Committee on General Welfare for recognizing the significant challenges faced by homeless pet owners and the barriers they experience. I am here to testify in favor of bills 1483 and 1484 as I believe collecting critical data is central to better understanding this issue and this research can potentially contribute to developing innovative solutions to serve this population.

At Animal Haven, I am both a professional social worker and animal welfare specialist. For more than a decade I've overseen a unique safety net program providing human welfare and animal welfare interventions to thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers who risk losing their animals due to domestic violence, illness and housing emergencies. I've partnered with case workers, homeless outreach teams, community-based programs and city agencies with a goal of helping people keep their pets whenever possible. The work has contributed to Urban Resource Institute's co-sheltering program for survivors of domestic violence and has also supported the City's department of Emergency Management's efforts during Super Storm Sandy when homeless shelters briefly welcomed families with their animals.

Pet owners face enormous challenges in New York City when they experience personal life crises. Those directed to homeless services are told to first deal with their animals before accessing shelter because pets are prohibited from entering facilities. The restriction further marginalizes this population from seeking assistance. It puts both the people and animals at greater risk because they have nowhere to turn to for help. While Animal Haven accepts owner surrenders, the calls I receive are primarily not to relinquish dogs and cats but for surrender

prevention services. These cases are especially heartbreaking because homelessness in New York isn't a short-term crisis where holding animals temporarily can be a quick fix. It is a systemic problem which can last years.

The individuals and families I've assisted live in cars, on subway platforms, beneath underpasses, or in the middle of Union Square. One man, John with his cat named Princess, lived by the side of the Cross Bronx expressway for years. When I first met him, he reported being turned away from social services and was told he would never amount to anything. He ended up on the street, became addicted to drugs, and was known as the cat man who panhandled in the median of the highway. Pet owners, like John, who are referred to me are sometimes labeled as "more difficult to engage" or "resistant to services" but in large part, when it comes to their animals, they are desperate to find ways to care for them. As a social worker, the pets have served as a gateway. The interventions I offer include emergency planning, veterinary care, supplies, advocacy and linkages to human services. I also offer brief foster care but those I've assisted mostly decline this intervention because they don't want to separate from their animals.

As a City, we don't know how many people are currently homeless with pets and we don't inquire about animals during an eviction process. Finding data points to collect information may be difficult. The expectation is that pet owners make their own arrangements for their animals and with no other options, they bring them to local animal shelters. Most pet owners who are at risk of losing housing or who are already homeless view giving up pets as an additional trauma and will not surrender them under nearly any circumstance. Instead, they put themselves in deteriorating situations or find substandard solutions -- abandoned buildings, garages, rooms that

rent by the week where they may be exploited. Furthermore, intake data via animal shelters is skewed because of the shame and guilt associated with relinquishment or the fear that their animals may be euthanized. These animals are far more likely to enter animal shelters as a stray or as abandoned when a homeless pet owner requires hospitalization or dies. My hope is that data collection can focus on early access points. For instance, Homebase eviction prevention programs can ask about pets, housing courts can document animals in homes prior to eviction, and homeless outreach teams can record when they encounter pet owners. Another data point might be to track how many animals are currently within the DHS system as Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) and how many families requested this Reasonable Accommodation for their animals due to disabilities but were declined.

Luckily, there is a roadmap in New York City where innovation and creativity are taking place. Urban Resource Institute's co-sheltering program provides a best practice model that should be considered to better serve homeless pet owners needing shelter. Other programs, quietly, are less restrictive too. The man, John, I mentioned earlier, by the Cross Bronx Expressway is a good example. I was there on the brutally cold day his encampment was being cleared. Instead of being turned away from services though or forcing John to relinquish his cat Princess in exchange for a stabilization bed, there was another option. With a little nudging from me, the community-based program embraced the Housing First model and agreed bend a rule and allowed John to keep Princess with him. A year later, I met up with John again because Princess was due for an exam. You know what? John was doing well. He remained off the streets, he stopped using drugs and was in treatment, and he was moving into a supportive housing. To me, that is success and his cat Princess was a part of that.

Hi Marilyn Galfin from Voices for Shelter Animals

We support intro 1483 legislation to provide pet friendly shelters & alternative housing that preferably allows people to stay with their pets for the best possible psychological and emotional outcome.

The story of a dog Mydnite and his family could have had such a positive outcome with 1483. Mydnite lived with children from as young as 5 years old to teenagers. The family were evicted. They lost everything and with no other recourse they had to surrender their dog to the NYC Animal Care Centers only to end up be killed. Her owner described her as friendly, gentle and playful with children even as young as 2. A picture of him hiding scared under a sheet still haunts me as well as to imagine how devastating it would be for this family if they learned of their pet's fate.

This past December on an unbearably cold night in my Chelsea neighborhood I saw a group of 3 homeless people huddled together with their dogs who they buried deep under a mound of blankets trying to protect them from sub freezing temperatures.

It is not only heart breaking but unconscionable that there was no alternative for them to go anywhere with their pets.

No one should ever have to choose between a warm bed in a shelter for themselves or surrendering their pet to a kill shelter.

When a pet enters the NYC ACC an otherwise well behaved animal can develop fear based behavioral issues from the trauma of separation and the nature of the shelter environment as Mydnite's story with the possibility of the same outcome.

Separating a homeless person from their animal companion can cause severe psychological distress for both. It may exacerbate the sense of loss of control of their lives especially when in their most vulnerable state.

This bond can be the most important foundation for a homeless person, giving them a sense of responsibility for another life, motivating them to seek the help they need to put them back on the path to self sufficiency and personal responsibility. Their pets are their best friends, a family member, someone who gives them comfort. They need to be kept together.

Ultimately, It's critical that this city also addresses pets in housing discrimination and makes sure any new affordable housing is pet friendly as the best long term solution to the homeless human/animal crisis.

We ask the council to show compassion and pass Intro 1483 to create housing that keeps homeless people and their beloved pets together. We also support intro 1484 all the other legislation presented at this hearing today.

Mydnite





February 28, 2020

NYC Council Committee on General Welfare

**Testimony of Edita Birnkrant, Executive Director, NYCLASS**

**In favor of Intro 1483 and Intro 1484; [Edita@nyclass.org](mailto:Edita@nyclass.org); 917.940.2725**

Thank you, Committee Chair Levin and Committee Members for this important hearing. My name is Edita Birnkrant and I am the Executive Director of NYCLASS, (New Yorkers for Clean, Livable, and Safe Streets) an animal advocacy and political action non-profit organization founded in 2008 and based in New York City, with supporters in all five boroughs. I am a lifelong New Yorker and a resident of Queens.

NYCLASS is strongly in support of Council Member Levin's bills, Intros 1483 and 1484 which would help solve the ongoing problem of homeless shelters shutting out people in need of shelter who are pet-owners, due to a no-pet policy at NYC-run shelters.

Nearly every day and in all extremes of weather I see homeless people with pets suffering on our streets. In my conversations with many of them, and through discussing this pressing issue with other animal advocates, it is very clear that many of these individuals are *only* out on the street because their dog, cat, or other pet, whom they consider their family member, is prohibited from entering a shelter with them.

This puts people already dealing with so much in a heartbreaking dilemma: remain on the streets or abandon their beloved family member. This dilemma is also true of victims of domestic violence who are barred from most shelters if they own a pet. We know that many victims stay in abusive, life-threatening situations because they refuse to give up their pets in order to access a shelter. We must change this.

This winter I tried to help a man desperate get into a shelter the day a severe storm was to hit NYC. Because he had a dog, he had *no* options of entering a shelter unless he had emotional support papers for his dog, which he was incapable of procuring. He instead was forced to raise money for a hotel room, so he and his cherished dog wouldn't have to face the brutal pending storm on the street. Imagine how many other homeless individuals with pets in our City have similar stories.

A recent New York University study confirmed that pet ownership is one of the main barriers to shelter entry. Intros 1483 and 1484 would finally right this wrong and make our homeless shelters more accessible to people in need who have pets by providing pet-friendly shelters and identifying other temporary pet care arrangements that would allow homeless pet-owners to keep their pets.

NYCLASS commends Councilmember Levin and the other bill co-sponsors for being leaders in taking the initiative to create a more compassionate policy for homeless pet-owners seeking shelter in our City shelters. We urge the Committee to pass these bills.



# VOTERS FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS

February 28, 2020

Thank you, Council Member Levin, for introducing this important legislation.

My name is Allie Feldman Taylor and I'm the president of Voters For Animal Rights in Brooklyn. I also volunteer as a cat rescuer in my neighborhood of Bed Stuy. Today I want to tell you a personal story to illustrate why NYC badly needs resources and protections for people experiencing homelessness and their companion animals.

Last year on a quiet Sunday night, I was at home when there was a knock on my door at 10PM. My husband peered outside, saw a woman holding a bag on one arm and holding an orange cat on the other arm and said "I think it's for you."

I opened the door to a woman who appeared scared, nervous, and relieved. Her name was Lola. She explained that she had just escaped from her abusive husband and needed a place for her cat, Paco, to go safely for a few days so that she could go to a safe haven for herself in New Jersey. She explained that she lives in the neighborhood and had found my apartment by googling "animal shelter Bed Stuy" and my address came up.

I invited Lola and Paco inside and explained that despite having an above-average number of cats, my apartment is indeed not an animal shelter. Her face sunk. I knew I had to help her. This was an emergency. She could not go back to her apartment with an abusive husband and the safe haven in Jersey wouldn't take cats.

So I agreed to foster her cat for a few days while she got settled. Lola came back to visit Paco. We had to schedule her visits at specific dates and times because she was afraid that her husband who still lived nearby would see her, as he had been showing up at her office.

A few days of fostering Paco the cat turned into weeks and months as Lola struggled to get back on her feet. It is not easy to start over and find affordable, safe housing while working full time and processing a divorce with an abusive husband who continued to harass and stalk her. The situation was already difficult enough for Lola, but knowing that her cat was in a loving home provided solace to her during an extremely difficult time.

Lola and Paco are one of the lucky ones. What would have happened to them if I hadn't been home that night she knocked on the door? I can't even imagine the alternative. She just so happened to knock on the right apartment door at the right time. What happens to the millions of other women who want to leave domestic violence situations with their companion animals? There are zero programs that provide emergency shelters for victims of domestic violence and their companion animals, and there are zero programs that provide long term foster care for the animals while their humans are healing and rebuilding their lives. This has to change, and I urge the City Council to please take swift action. Thank you.

**Testimony of Caitlin Balagula  
New York City Council  
Committee on General Welfare  
February 28, 2020**

Good morning Committee Members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of Intros 1483 and 1484, measures that would improve the lives of people facing housing insecurity with pets in New York City.

My name is Caitlin Balagula. I am a psychology student at Macaulay Honors College of Hunter College. Additionally, I have helped to conduct mental health research at NYU Langone and Weill Cornell Medicine. At Cornell specifically, I worked with at-risk populations, such as veterans, 9/11 responders, and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, many of whom were experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

Thus, I come to you as a community member, born and raised in Brooklyn, who cares deeply about New Yorkers, and especially about our city's most vulnerable. I am also an animal lover. I feel we must do all that we can to help both New Yorkers and animals, and it just so happens, that in many cases, this means helping them stay together.

Sociologist Leslie Irvine has studied the lives of people with pets experiencing homelessness and concluded that most take exceptional care of their companion animals. Further research shows this population benefits tremendously from pet ownership. In fact, a 2016 study revealed that people experiencing homelessness with pets have fewer symptoms of depression and loneliness, compared to non-pet owners (Rhoades, Winetrobe, & Rice).

American actress and animal welfare activist Doris Day put it best when she said, "when you are deeply troubled, there are things you get from the silent devoted companionship of a dog that you can get from no other source."

I am sure many of you in this room have experienced the joy that an animal offers. People experiencing homelessness or who are housing insecure face tremendous stress daily. The comfort and companionship that pets provide people in these circumstances is invaluable. Please adopt these measures so that people do not have to choose between having a roof over their head and losing their best friend.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Balagula

## **Testimony in support of Intros 1483 and 1484**

Dear Ms. Adams and Ms. Kronk,

I am writing to express my strong support of Intros 1483 and 1484, bills that would immensely help NYC's homeless population as well as those fleeing domestic abuse by ensuring that there are pet-friendly shelters and temporary pet care options, allowing those in need to remain with their animals.

I am a very lucky New Yorker. I have a roof over my head and the peace of mind that comes from knowing that my beloved companion animal, my cat, who is a member of my family, is safe and warm. But many New Yorkers are not so fortunate. I can't imagine what it is like to have no place to call home. And I cannot fathom the pain that results from being denied shelter because you have a companion animal. To know that you and your beloved pet must continue to endure life on the streets because no other options are available must be a pain like no other.

A recent study conducted by New York University found that pet ownership is one of the main barriers to shelter entry. Intros 1483 and 1484 would change this. And so I urge the Committee to pass these bills and send a strong message that the great city of New York helps people in need *and* their family members, even those who stand on four legs. Thank you for your time and attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,

Elena Natale  
Beverley Rd  
Brooklyn, NY 11226  
elena.natale@gmail.com

## TESTIMONY OF THE REAL ESTATE BOARD OF NEW YORK TO THE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE IN SUPPORT OF INT. 1483, INT. 1484, INT. 1902 AND INT. 1903

February 28, 2020

The Real Estate Board of New York (REBNY) is the City's leading real estate trade association representing commercial, residential, and institutional property owners, builders, managers, investors, brokers, salespeople, and other organizations and individuals active in New York City real estate. REBNY strongly supports policies that expand the local economy, grow and improve the City's housing stock, and create greater opportunities for all New Yorkers.

Homelessness is a complex problem that requires a multitude of policy tools to combat. Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for the legislative goals of reducing barriers to accessing shelter placement and case management.

**BILL:** Int. 1483-2019

**SUBJECT:** A Local Law in relation to a plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families in the shelter system

**SPONSORS:** Levin, Levine, Brannan, Holden, Chin, Ayala, Public Advocate

**BILL:** Int. 1484-2019

**SUBJECT:** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to reporting on the placement of pets whose owners enter homeless shelters

**SPONSORS:** Levin, Holden, Chin, Lander, Brannan, Ayala

City-provided homeless shelters do not currently accept pets. Int. 1483 would require the Department of Homeless Services, in collaboration with the Department of Social Services, to develop a plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families with the objective of providing pet-friendly shelters and identifying other temporary pet care arrangements that would allow homeless pet-owners to keep their pets. Int. 1484 would require the Department to report, on a monthly basis, information on the placement or disposition of pets that belong to people who enter homeless shelters.

Pet ownership should not be a barrier to access housing, and a plan should be put in place that provides predictable and reasonable guidance related to the housing of pets with their owners within the shelter system. The social contract of our city only works when the rights of one group do not impede or infringe on the rights of another, so it's important to recognize the rights of other clients within the system and their experience and reactions to animals. The city plan should recognize legitimate concerns regarding the accommodation of pets including safety, sanitation, allergies of others and property damage. The plan should therefore also account for extra fees to cover damages caused by pets. Shelter providers must maintain the ability to recoup these costs. A successful plan will carefully balance the needs of all involved stakeholders to ensure the safety and wellness of all. A reporting requirement is an important component in measuring the success of any plan long term.

**BILL:** Int. 1902-2020

**SUBJECT:** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to the provision of case management services for homeless individuals

**SPONSORS:** Levin, Kallos

**BILL:** Int. 1903-2020

**SUBJECT:** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to rental assistance eligibility requirements for street homeless individuals

**SPONSORS:** Levin, Kallos

Int. 1902 would require the Department of Homeless Services to provide case management services to everyone assessed by either DHS or by an organization that contracts with the City, who is reasonably believed to be living on the street. Int. 1903 would set 30 days as the maximum time that the Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration may require a street homeless applicant to have received case management services to be eligible for certain rental assistance programs.

Case management services are a critical component of mitigating returns to street homelessness for those within the shelter system and exiting the shelter system. New York City has experienced success in reducing homelessness among veterans with its “Mission Home” program, which utilizes case management services. From 2016-2017 the number of homeless veterans decreased 4 percent in NYC compared to a 2 percent increase nationwide in the same period. In the years of the program, from 2011 to 2016, the population of homeless veterans in NYC decreased from 4,677 to 599, according to HUD PIT counts. NYC Department of Veterans Services employs peer support, after care, and landlord coordination to reduce homelessness in their “Mission Home” Initiative. Treating the service care component on equal footing with landlord coordination has been key to the success of the program. It is an explicit acknowledgement of the human needs of the veteran and the legal and fiduciary responsibility of the housing provider.

It is encouraging to see the Council expanding case management services to other homeless programs. All programs that include the housing and sheltering of people experiencing homelessness should find reasonable ways to incorporate these services.

## CONCLUSION

Providing housing is the first step to stability but it is not the only step. Funds must be allocated for accompanying services, job training and a robust assistance fund to cover hard costs for property owners. The combination of housing and dedicated funds to support the homeless and the providers housing them is equally critical to the provision of units to break the cycle of homelessness.

The Real Estate Board of New York is ready and willing to work with the Council and appropriate City agencies to design a system that balances the needs of the homeless individual or family, the obligations of the landlord, and that of the other tenants.

Thank you for the time and consideration of these points.

###

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February 27, 2020

Chris Sosa  
East 86th St,  
New York, NY 10028

Office of Council Member Stephen T. Levin  
250 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee on General Welfare:

I am writing to express support for Ints 1483-2019, 1484-2019, 1902-2020 and 1903-2020.

Int 1483-2019 recognizes that animals should not be treated as discardable property, rather sentient beings who merit moral consideration. For individuals experiencing homelessness, animal companions represent a key bond that fosters increased quality of life and positive mental health outcomes. Asking a person to choose between shelter and their companion animal/s is both cruel and unnecessary. Research demonstrates that forcing this choice upon individuals experiencing homelessness is among the leading causes of continued homelessness. For those experiencing separation from companion animals, Int 1484-2019 serves as a measure of accountability for the Department of Homeless Services and an opportunity for reunification for individuals who lose animal companions when entering a shelter.

Int 1902-2020 recognizes that homeless individuals deserve the dignity of being served as full constituents and generally do not possess adequate means to advocate for their own interests. The assignment of case managers ensures fewer people in need of services slip through the cracks of the system and continue unassisted in a cycle of homelessness.

Finally, Int 1903-2020 recognizes that homeless individuals cannot secure lasting shelter when the means to access is withheld. By capping the Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration requirement for rental assistance at 30 days, we can better ensure individuals are able to access needed resources to lift themselves out of the cycle.

Thank you so much for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Sosa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Sosa  
Democratic Candidate for New York City Council District 5

Chair Levin and members of the Committee,

Thank you for holding this important hearing. We are the Co-Chairs of the Village Independent Democrats' Animal Welfare Committee. We write to support Intro 1483 and Intro 1484.

Greenwich Village is one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in New York City. Our district contains no NYCHA developments and no DHS homeless shelters. However, we have numerous homeless members of our community that live on the streets, often without being counted by formal statistics as Villagers. According to recent data, only 43 of the countless homeless Villagers use NYC's shelter system.

From our experience as active community members, one of the main reasons people risk their lives to sleep on the streets -- dangerous in good weather and potentially deadly in bad -- is because they do not want to be separated from their pets. How many? We will never know without Intro 1484. However, our anecdotal experience is that the numbers are high enough that Intro 1483 is critical.

Among the three of us, one is a veterinarian, one is a volunteer at a pet shelter, and one is a vegan. All three of us understand the intense bond between humans and their companion animals. These companion animals are capable of the same love, support, and attachment as humans, and their companion humans know it, and need it. Homeless New Yorkers are a demographic that is in acute need of companionship, and non-human animals provide that for countless homeless New Yorkers every day. This love, support, and companionship is in many cases far more important to a human than safety or shelter. Making marginalized New Yorkers pick between the two is inhumane and unnecessary.

We understand why current rules prevent pets in homeless shelters. If nothing else, many New Yorkers are allergic to dogs, and they deserve to be housed safely too. However, it should be obvious that our only options are not "allow any pet in any shelter" and "ban all pets in all shelters." We applaud Intro 1483 for allowing DHS to develop a properly tailored plan to make our shelter system work for all homeless New Yorkers.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Jacobson, Debra Sherman, and David Siffert  
Co-Chairs, Village Independent Democrats Animal Welfare Committee

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Respectfully submitted,

Linda Jacobson, Debra Sherman, and David Siffert  
Co-Chairs, Village Independent Democrats Animal Welfare Committee

**Re: Intro 1483 &Intro 1484- Please enter into the record my testimony as follows:**

Dear City Council Members,

As co-founder of SOS:SAVE OUR SHELTER ANIMALS, I am writing on behalf of our many members and supporters, in support of the plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families in the shelter system. Most people today, consider their pets to be family members and are faced with painful decisions when they lose their homes, become homeless, and are forced to abandon or surrender their beloved companion animals in order to find shelter for themselves and their family. No one should be turned away from a shelter, simply because they have a beloved pet or pets for whom they feel responsible and wish to protect.

The NYACC, the NYC animal shelter system, is over-run and filled to capacity, so in order to avoid the almost certain "euthanasia" of even more animals who already have a home, this bill is a thoughtful, wise and essential step to protect animals and the individuals/families that love them.

I thank you in advance and urge you to support this bill and Vote YES!

Thank you for your compassion and consideration,  
Zelda Penzel, Co-Founder  
SOS:SAVE OUR SHELTER ANIMALS  
145 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue (14A)  
NY, NY 10003  
<zpenzel@twcmetrobiz.com>

Intro 1483 &Intro 1484

I am very much in support of 1483, the Plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families in the shelter system.

Pets have a special place in the hearts of all New Yorkers, no matter their housing status. I witness many homeless pets and their owners enduring abhorrently cold conditions for the sake of remaining together. As a human and advocate for pets and those less fortunate, I need to make my **STRONG** stance very clear. No one should be subject to freezing temperatures to remain with their animal.

I whole-heartedly am in support of this bill - and hope the members will find it within themselves to recognize that everyone, including animal companions, deserve a warm and safe space to sleep.

-Francine Katz

--

Francine Katz, RLA  
France715@gmail.com

Testimony for General Welfare Hearing on Int 1483 and Int 1484  
Good morning council members. My name is Kristopher Waller and I am a resident of Ridgewood, Queens. I have worked as a captain and a trainer for the past six years for Shadow Count, the evaluation component of the City's annual HOPE count, and I am a volunteer for the nonprofit My Dog Is My Home, a national organization that merges the worlds of homeless services and animal welfare. The opinions expressed in this testimony are my own.

I would first like to say to my own council member, Council member Holden, I support opening a homeless shelter in our district. To end homelessness in New York City, every community needs to play a part to make sure the most vulnerable residents, including those with pets, can get the help they need to get back on their feet. Not only would I welcome a shelter in my neighborhood, but I would like to see this shelter be the first in NYC to accept people and their pets together. I strongly support Intro 1483 and Intro 1484, as you do Council member Holden.

As a volunteer for My Dog Is My Home clinics which provide free animal and human care for people experiencing homelessness and their pets, I have seen how the relationship between people and their animals provides a sense of belonging and purpose. People cope with the trauma of homelessness through their animals. Even if accepting pets requires shelters to do more or do differently to accommodate them, keeping people and their pets together is worth the inconvenience.

I also believe that accepting pets in shelters is not going to require tremendous additional resources. Shelters already are legally required to accept emotional support animals. Truthfully, there is not a great distinction between pets and emotional support animals besides a doctor's letter. Can we not assume that all pets provide emotional support to people who are experiencing homelessness? Also, emotional support animals are not required to have any special training or certification. Why do we continue to require people to take the multiple additional steps to prove that their animals provide emotional support? These are additional, unnecessary barriers to shelter.

Also, if shelters are currently taking emotional support animals which I argue are like pets, then what additional resources do shelters need? Capital improvements and retrofits are nice but unnecessary. If shelters have figured out how to take emotional support animals, they can also take pets.

The City must have a plan to accommodate people and pets together at the same facility. I understand the Department of Social Services has already taken steps for having a pet-accessible shelter, and I commend them for their efforts and I also support Int 1483 and 1484. We need these efforts to be codified into law. Thank you.

Intro 1483 and Intro 1484

Dear Board,

I understand legislation is being reviewed that can help homeless people and their pets. Intro 1483 sponsored by Council Member Levin and Intro 1484. This is so essential to pass as so many homeless animals die each year because they are put down at the shelters - not because anything is wrong with them. Homeless people should not have to choose between a warm bed and their pet. It is devastating to both and New York is better than this. It is time to step up for these helpless animals and their distraught owners. It is bad enough to be homeless. Please find it in your heart to pass this legislation, as so many lives will be saved and the emotional turmoil of losing a pet is no longer faced by these homeless people who need these animals to survive. The unconditional love animals give is unable to be measured and really does help homeless people who own them to go on and face their obstacles and figure out a better life for them and their animal. You can see in their eyes the love they have for each other. Please help protect this and pass this legislation. This will make a huge difference in their lives.

Thank you,  
Caroline Preece  
<clpreece@aol.com>

Intro 1483 & Intro 1484

Hello,

I am writing to implore that intros 1483 and 1484 are passed. When someone loses their home everyone and everything in that home is affected. Sometimes people fall on hard times. Pets are a casualty of this and they are family. Allowing shelters to accommodate pets or providing some sort of resource where these pets get temporary shelter until their humans get back on their feet is the humane thing to do. It will prevent animals from being abandoned or ending up in overcrowded city shelters where they will spend an eternity in a cage, or be killed because of lack of space. There is no reason for this. No animal should have to die because their human has lost their home. No pet owner should have to also face surrendering their pet when they are already going through what is probably one of the most difficult times in their lives.

Thank you,

Roseann Losito-Raia  
<rlosito2121@yahoo.com>

Intro 1484 & 1483

Dear Council,

Please consider moving forward with the above referenced legislation. It is much needed as homeless people love their animals and they should be allowed in shelters with their owners when Code Blue weather alerts are in effect. In the end won't it save tax payer funds? Less animals in the ACC system?

Thank you for considering this legislation.

Best Regards,  
Toni Keller  
tmk.rn@comcast.net

Pets of people in homeless shelters

To whom it may concern:

As a Ph.D. psychologist in practice for more than 30 years, I have seen the immense support provided by pets to people of all ages and social strata who for myriad and often unforeseen circumstances become homeless. Often their only personal connection and bond is with an adopted animal. I urge the city council of New York to find some way of allowing homeless people to maintain their pets in homeless shelters or apartments. As an animal advocate as well as a people advocate, I recognize the difficulties and logistics which a policy allowing animals might incur. I am sure with the cooperation and administration of such a program by the SPCA and various local rescue groups, these difficulties could be resolved in favor of allowing pets in facilities to house the homeless.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee Ashington, Ph.D.  
<dashington@aol.com>

**AMINTA C. KILAWAN**

Senior Counsel  
New York City Council  
Committee on General Welfare  
[akilawan@council.nyc.gov](mailto:akilawan@council.nyc.gov)

March 4, 2020

Dear Ms. Kilawan,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony **in support of Intro 1483, In relation to a plan to accommodate pets of homeless individuals and families in the shelter system and Intro 1484, In relation to reporting on the placement of pets whose owners enter homeless shelters.**

I work at Animal Care Centers of NYC (ACC) as our Community Pets Program Manager. ACC is a nonprofit contracted by the City of New York to be the open admissions animal-sheltering organization for the five boroughs, and it has locations in each one. As such we take in approximately 25,000 companion animals as well as wildlife and farm animals per year. In 2019 we took in 23,172 companion animals (dogs, cats and rabbits).

ACC's mission is to end animal homelessness in NYC. A large number of animals we take in are pets belonging to people who for various reasons feel they can no longer keep their pet. A significant aspect of our work is to help keep pets and people together – out of the shelters and in the homes they already have. We do this by providing counseling and free resources to pet owners in need to try to solve the problems they are experiencing that are leading to surrender. This includes providing access to free vaccines, free spay/neuter, free vet care for those who qualify, free behavior training, and free pet supplies.

One area in which we are unable to assist which leads to large numbers of beloved pets being surrendered by heartbroken individuals and families, and which also contributes to the numbers of animals in our shelters, is when people are becoming homeless and have to give up their pet because of a lack of sheltering resources for pets and people.

DHS allows Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) and our staff and consultants provide information and assistance with the DHS ESA application process for those clients with ESAs, but even that presents challenges. During the application and approval process, there must be a place for the ESA to stay and ACC is only able to provide foster homes for a very limited number of these animals.

But where we cannot assist at all and must take in pets who already have loving families, and now have to separate from them, are the majority of people experiencing homelessness and have beloved animals who are not specifically ESAs.

It is well-documented with scientific evidence that companion animals provide comfort, support, mood-enhancement, and stress-reduction in humans. **This is especially important for people experiencing a crisis such as being homeless, who are in almost all cases experiencing high levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and even PTSD.** Forcing people to give up their beloved family members when they enter a homeless shelter leads to heartbreak for both the people and the animals in an already heartbreaking situation.

A specific case comes to mind, of which there are many more of this type. A woman who became homeless who had two beloved dogs and a beloved cat contacted us for help. She had to leave her home and while she refused to part with her dogs and thought they'd fare well living with her in her car, she knew her cat would be

too stressed in the car, so she put him on the street where her neighbor fed many community cats. She then was devastated to learn that the neighbor was no longer feeding the outdoor cats. Upon advice to go fetch her cat, whom she found terrified and hungry, she was relieved that an ACC staff member was fortunately able to foster her cat. However, she continued to live for months in her car with her 2 dogs which created so many barriers for her to attend appointments for needed services and search for a new apartment. One dog began to become too stressed and she finally gave him up to our Center. If she had just been able to enter a homeless shelter with her dogs, they'd have been comfortable and she would have been able to get on the road to recovery so much faster being in a secure place with her family members safe.

The no-pet policy in homeless shelters also significantly affects our ACC Care Centers and our rescue group partners which are very full with homeless animals. In fact, currently all 500 spaces in our 3 full service Centers are full. No matter how much behavioral enrichment and quality care our hardworking staff and volunteers give each of these animals, any shelter is very stressful for animals. Pets who already have a family should be allowed to stay with them no matter where they live and not overburden our city's animal shelters and rescue groups which need room and resources to help **truly** homeless animals.

A successful plan for DHS shelters to accept pets with their families will take careful examination, creativity, and resources. Rather than reinvent the wheel, we suggest DHS look at the successful co-sheltering being done by Urban Resource Institute at two locations where they provide housing for domestic violence survivors and their pets. Other cities have successful co-sheltering programs to also examine. As well, I and my colleagues at ACC are happy to be a resource for information, guidance, and animal welfare expertise in creating such a plan.

These 2 bills reflect a common-sense and compassionate philosophy for both people and animals. I urge the swift passage of Intros 1483 and 1484 so that as a progressive city, we can help families stay together, and at the same time help reduce intake into our Care Centers of animals who actually already have a family.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Joyce Friedman  
Community Pets Program Manager  
Animal Care Centers of NYC  
[JoyceFriedman@nycacc.org](mailto:JoyceFriedman@nycacc.org)  
917-596-7168

CC: Elizabeth Adams, Legislative Director for Council Member Stephen Levin  
[eadams@council.nyc.gov](mailto:eadams@council.nyc.gov)

**Testimony: Int 1483 and Int 1484**  
**Stephanie Augello**

I'm writing to encourage support of both Int 1483 and Int 1484. Recently, I offered my photography skills to NYC-based One Health Clinics in support of people experiencing homelessness and their companion animals. What I became a part of was a world of hope and gratitude. I'm sure that many people experiencing homelessness feel depressed, anxious, and alone. Those who are homeless, yet still care for a companion animal, probably still feel that way, but also have a greater sense of importance, love, and responsibility than many who do not. It becomes their job to look after the well-being of another living thing. Many will sacrifice the relative comfort of a shelter because they do not want to leave their pets. I firmly feel that they shouldn't have to. By supporting these bills, the City of NY will be supporting the ability of the homeless to embrace companionship, gain confidence, and know unconditional love.

Intro. 1483 & Intro. 1484

Hello City Council:

As a New Yorker I am urging you to support Intro. 1483 & Intro. 1484 because no person should have to choose between a warm shelter and the life of their beloved pet. As you know pets are family member for the people that have them. Their unconditional love and devotion deserve a place besides their owners when seeking shelter from the harsh elements of the streets.

Respectfully

Joan L. Sample

Author

<JSample718@msn.com>

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Loreal M Moore

Address: 274 W 40th St

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: 2/28/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lored Madonna Moore

Address: 274 W 40th Street

I represent: myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483/1484 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Maureen Medina

Address: 36-25 Parsons Blvd.

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

31

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1484 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28/20

Name: Diana Rose (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

30

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 14831 84 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/22/20

Name: Steven Gruber (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 20 Dongan Place # 415 NYC, NY 10010

I represent: Mayors Alliance for NYC's Animals

Address: 244 Fifth Ave. Suite R290 NYC, NY 10001

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Grzelle Roubiac & Josh Goldfein (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Coalition for the Homeless & The Legal

Address: Aid Society

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

28

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483+1484 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: GREGG ZUCKER

Address: 16 WEST 69TH ST

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

27

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Shelter Barrier Oversight Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gale A Brewer, Manhattan Borough President

Address: 1 Centre St 19th Fl. NY NY 10007

I represent: Hally Chu, MBPO

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

26

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: ERIC LEE

Address: 307 W 38th St

I represent: Homeless Services United

Address: 307 W 38th St

**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: Julia Okun

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: BROOKLYN Defender Services

Address: BROOKLYN, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

24

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Allie Feldman

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Voters For Animal Rights

Address: Brooklyn, NY

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483, 1484 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Steve Ember

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Mayor's Alliance for NYC's Animals

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: 2/28

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Craig Hughes

Address: 70 Lecter

I represent: Urban Justice - SVP

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: Molly Parkes - DSS

Address: First Deputy Commissioner

I represent: DHS

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: Erin Drinkwater

Address: Deputy Commissioner - DSS

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

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: 2/28/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Karim Walker

Address: 8 East 109th Street

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: Joshua Dean

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483/1484 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RAJI EDAYATHUMANGALAM

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: New York County Defender Services

Address: 100 William St., 20th Fl., NY NY 100 38

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. 1483 + 1484 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Edita Birnkrant

Address: 64-50 188 St Flushing NY

I represent: NY CLASS

Address: NYC

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483 Res. No. 1484

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jenny Coffey, Animal Haven

Address: 206 Centre St

I represent: Animal Haven

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483 Res. No. 1484

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Deborah Berkman

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: New York Legal Assistance Group

Address: 7 Hanover sq NY, NY 10004

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. 1483 <sup>1484</sup> Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joel Trechman

Address: 666 Greenwich St.

I represent: Myself

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483 & 1484 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2.28.20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Caitlin Balagula

Address: 1457 82<sup>nd</sup> Street Bklyn, NY 11228

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: Feb. 28, 2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Susan Stetzer

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: MAN, Community Board 3

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. 1483 Res. No. 1484

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Isabelle Adams

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483+1484 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28/20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: KATHY NIZZARI

Address: 410 W 25 ST NYC 10001

I represent: VOTERS FOR ANIMAL RIGHTS + BEHAVIORAL CONSULTANT

Address: same

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1483+84 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 7-28-20

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Linda Mann

Address: 600 West End Ave

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

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. 1483 <sup>1484</sup> Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Casey Riordan

Address: 235 Pavonia Ave Jersey City

I represent: Self

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: MARION Koenig

Address: 3801 HUDSON MANOR TERR

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 2019-4435 Res. No. 2017-4422  
 in favor  in opposition

Date: 2/28/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: HAROLD MOSS

Address: 1011 FIRST AVE. N.Y. N.Y. 10022

I represent: CATHOLIC CHARITATIVE COMM. MANICU

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: 2/28/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Marilyn Galfin

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Voices for Shelter Animals

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: 2/28/2020

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MARIKA AZOFF

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: ASPCA

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: 2/28

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Michelle VILLAGOMEZ

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: ASPCA

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

1483 + 1484

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. \_\_\_\_\_ Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: DANIELLE EMERT

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: URBAN RESOURCE

Address: INITIATIVES (URI)

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