

New York City Council

Memorandum in Support of Legislation

This memorandum is authored by the sponsor and explains the need for the legislation referenced below, in accordance with Rule 6.00(d) of the Rules of the Council.

Introduction Number:

Int. No. 0404-2024

Prime Sponsors:

By the Public Advocate (Mr. Williams), Kamillah Hanks, Farah N. Louis, Crystal Hudson, Lincoln Restler

Bill Title:

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring reporting on crime statistics in shelters.

Submitted by:

Public Advocate Williams

Justification:

In New York City, all residents experiencing homelessness have a right to shelter. However, many New Yorkers avoid shelters due to fears about safety. With no private space and sleeping in rooms with dozens of other shelter residents, those who have spent time in shelter report feeling unsafe; one former resident described developing a “hypervigilance” during his stay.¹ Shelter residents say they constantly fear theft, robbery, and assault, and the fear of victimization compounds the existing trauma many residents experience. Those living in shelter do not only fear their fellow residents; some Department of Homeless Services (DHS) “peace officers,” which maintain security in city-owned shelters, assault, abuse, and illegally detain residents with little to no accountability.²

It is important to understand the scope of violence in homeless shelters in order to address the problem, and arrests made at homeless shelters do not provide the full picture. This bill would require DHS to produce to an annual report detailing “critical incidents” occurring in shelters, including assault, sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse or neglect, weapons possession, arson, and theft. The annual report will also detail efforts to upgrade security and any agreements made between DHS and the New York City Police Department or other entities to enhance security.

¹ <https://advocate.nyc.gov/reports/committee-end-homelessness-year-2026>

² <https://nysfocus.com/2024/04/15/new-york-city-homeless-abuse-police>

