



October 23, 2023

Testimony of

New York City Office of Asylum Seeker Operations

Interim Director Molly Schaeffer

Before the New York City Council Committees on General Welfare, Finance, and
Oversight & Investigations

Oversight Hearing: Asylum Seeker Response Efforts- Cost and Projections

Good morning, Chairs Brannan, Brewer, and Ayala and members of the Finance, Oversight & Investigations and General Welfare committees. I am Molly Schaeffer, Interim Director of the New York City Office of Asylum Seeker Operations (OASO), my colleagues and I are happy to be here before you to discuss the surge of asylum seekers arriving in New York City and the fiscal impact on the city's budget. Joining me at today's hearing is Molly Wasow Park, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Social Services (DSS), Zach Iscol, Commissioner at the NYC Emergency Management; from the Office of Management & Budget (OMB) are David Greenburg, Deputy Director and Michael Chimowitz, Associate Director; Dr. Theodore Long, Senior Vice President at NYC Health and Hospitals; and George Sarkissian, Chief of Staff at the NYC Department of Housing, Preservation, and Development (HPD).



New York City will always be a city that welcomes immigrants. The Statue of Liberty continues to be a beacon of hope for all new arrivals both foreign and domestic, and we are proud of that. Our city knows the positive and long-lasting impact immigrants can have on our city and country. Since April 2022, our city has led a large humanitarian response that has sheltered, fed, and provided essential services to over **130,600** asylum seekers who have come through our intake system. However, with over **65,400** currently in our care and nearly 4,000 new arrivals entering our system each week, the city is over capacity. *To be clear*, the city is at a point where we don't have the capacity to house all the newly arriving asylum seekers or provide the level of care that asylum seekers or 54,000 long time New Yorkers in our care deserve. We have been consistent in saying we need more support from other levels of government. While we appreciate the resources that we received so far, more resources are needed to try and sustain an unsustainable national crisis. The city has pulled every lever of city government to address and support asylum seekers, rapidly responding on a large scale to support households who have often made a perilous journey to reach our city. To put that into context:

- We have opened 213 emergency sites, including our arrival center and 16 large Humanitarian Relief Centers;
- We helped process over 5,600 federal asylum applications;



- Provided clothes for families with children;
- Provided diapers, formula, and baby wipes;
- Provided medical services;
- Provided education services;

And this is just the tip of the iceberg. To be clear: I am not saying we have done too much, but we are saying we cannot sustain this level of service. This administration has led this humanitarian crisis with compassion and an open heart, but the city doesn't have unlimited resources to fund this emergency crisis. All these services have a significant cost associated with them and the cost of goods and services is the highest it's been in years. As public servants, it is our fiduciary responsibility to use public funds to meet the needs of the city. As we have consistently said, if we don't receive additional funding we will eventually have to reduce or cut the services that millions of New Yorkers rely on.

On September 9th, Mayor Adams announced that the city would have to take several steps to stabilize the city finances because of the significantly higher cost of the asylum seeker humanitarian crisis and due to limited financial support from other levels of government. To put that into context, before Title 42 expired in early May 2023, on April 23, 2023, the city had over **35,000** asylum seekers in our care and **115** sites citywide. As of October 15th, just six months later, we now have



over 65,400 asylum seekers in our care and increased the total number of emergency sites to a staggering 213. In other words, in the span of six months, the population doubled forcing us to open dozens of emergency sites and increase spending. Since April 2022, our city has spent **over \$2** billion dollars on this emergency. If we continue to spend funds at this rate, then we are tracking to spend upwards of \$12 billion over three fiscal years.

Our city has taken urgent action to support asylum seekers, ensuring families with children have not been forced to sleep on the street. As City leaders, we have utilized every tool in our toolbox to rapidly meet the need, including emergency contracting and procurement, in some instances opening facilities overnight to respond to that day's arrivals. Using these tools, we have opened emergency shelters in all five boroughs, serving families with children, single adults, and adult families. Despite our best efforts, the city doesn't control the front door at the border, and we can't continue to solve a national crisis at the local level.

Asylum seekers are arriving in our city via varying modes of transportation. Our committed city staff, along with our contracted vendors, immediately act, whenever the buses arrive, and provide health screenings, meals and compassionately engage with asylum seekers who are suffering trauma after an intense and arduous journey in search of the American dream.



Every day, our teams meet and work around the clock to prepare, discuss operational logistics, and ensure we are providing a safe environment for asylum seekers. In addition to the thoughtful leaders next to me, there are thousands of public servants, some of whom have their own immigrant journeys, committed to supporting and helping asylum seekers as they take the next steps in their journeys. They are the real heroes, and we ALL owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

Conclusion

The city's response to the asylum seeker issue is not only a whole-of-government effort; it is a whole-city response. However, we can't continue to do this alone, and you are seeing other municipal governments across the country sound that alarm that we have been raising for months—we are over capacity. We thank our many partners, community-based organizations, contracted vendors, and others for moving at a quick speed to help this city, our city, respond to this unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. We are now available to answer your questions.



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

**Testimony of Win (formerly Women In Need, Inc.) for the New York City Council
Committee on Finance, General Welfare, and Oversight & Investigations
October 23rd, 2023**

Introduction

Thank you to Chairs Brannan, Ayala, and Brewer and to the esteemed members of the Committees on Finance, General Welfare, and Oversight & Investigations for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Chris Mann, and I'm the Assistant Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at Win. Win is the City and nation's largest provider of shelter and services to families with children experiencing homelessness. We operate 14 shelters and nearly 500 supportive housing units across the five boroughs. Each night, more than 6,500 people call Win "home", including 3,600 children. We estimate that a third of our families are immigrants, and 270 of these families are recently arrived migrants who have come into our shelter system without legal status or access to public benefits.

Asylum Seekers at Win

Win has always welcomed immigrants to our shelters, and we work to ensure a safe place to rest, heal, and recover for all New Yorkers in need, regardless of their immigration status. As we work to level the playing field for all our families, we have devoted extra resources and care to assure that the asylum seekers living in our care are set up for success in this City. Amidst significant budget cuts and without receiving reimbursement, Win has provided food and clothing for families, legal services, orientation for newcomers, childcare and recreation programming for immigrant youth, income building and employment services when possible, and referrals for physical and mental healthcare. Overall, Win has spent well over a million dollars on unanticipated emergency services and supplies for our migrant families.

History has shown time and again that migration bolsters the economy and the community, and we urge the City to remember this reality.ⁱ However, Win is also well aware that the current approach to the influx of asylum seekers is unsustainably expensive. Sheltering migrants families can cost nearly \$400 a night, and current expenditures have exceeded \$1.7billion.ⁱⁱ In response to this unsustainable path, the City must prioritize moving people out of shelter and into permanent housing, which costs far less. Additionally, we urge the City to invest the necessary upfront resources to assistance all that are eligible with asylum, work, and TPS applications. The City must focus on long-term solutions, rather than shortsighted cuts and attacks on essential rights, which will end up costing the city immensely in the long run.

Implementation of the CityFHEPS Bill Package

On July 13th, the New York City Council overrode the Mayor's veto of legislation that would greatly reform and expand the CityFHEPS rental assistance voucher program. The CityFHEPS voucher is a powerful and proven tool to combat homelessness, and, when implemented, these bills will not only help families in shelter move out to permanent housing but also keep families



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at-risk-of eviction in their homes. While noncitizen households remain ineligible for the CityFHEPS voucher, these bills would still slow the shelter census and open safe and quality beds for migrant families who need emergency shelter by moving eligible households into permanent housing.

Furthermore, this bill package would result in huge savings for the City. According to a Win analysis, expanding CityFHEPS vouchers to New Yorkers at risk of becoming homeless would cost just over \$1 billion annually, far less than what City Hall has predicted and less than one percent of the City Budget. On the other hand, the cost of doing nothing and letting these New Yorkers become homeless would be more than \$1.7 billion — which means there would be net savings of approximately \$730 million if CityFHEPS vouchers are expanded.

City Hall should implement Intros 878, 229, 893, and 894, as it would help more than 92,000 New Yorkers gain and maintain housing and would relieve the current strain on the shelter system.

Extend Housing Voucher Eligibility to Households Regardless of Their Immigration Status

New York City should also expand access to housing vouchers for all families in need, regardless of their immigration status. For families in transitional housing, subsidies are an extremely impactful tool to end homelessness. In FY22, 15% of families with children who exited shelter without a subsidy returned within one year, compared to less than 1% of families who exited with a subsidy.ⁱⁱⁱ In New York City, CityFHEPS is the most widely used housing subsidy, and over 30,000 households gained or maintained permanent housing with the voucher in FY22. However, migrant families are systemically excluded from this voucher.^{iv}

In addition to offering families a pathway to permanent housing, opening up housing subsidies to households regardless of immigration status would also increase capacity in shelters, thus making it easier and less expensive for New York to care for homeless families. A Win report shows that the expansion of housing vouchers is correlated with a decline in the homeless population and associated costs.^v Additionally, the utilization of housing vouchers can lead to future savings, as the subsidies reduce shelter costs enough to almost entirely offset the cost of the voucher.

More immediately, however, the use of housing vouchers instead of emergency shelter for migrant families can result in significant savings. The CityFHEPS voucher costs just \$72 per night for families living in a 2-bedroom apartment.^{vi} In contrast, New York City is spending on average \$383 to shelter households in emergency hotels.^{vii} In a public briefing on August 9th, 2023, Mayor Adams noted that there were 57,000 asylum seekers in the care of the city, comprised of 25,604 households.^{xii} The cost of sheltering 25,604 households per year in emergency welfare hotels, equates to \$3.58 billion dollars. It would cost just \$673 million to house those households with CityFHEPS vouchers, a cost savings of \$2.9 billion per year.



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New York should take the commonsense and cost-effective step to extend eligibility for housing subsidies to all households most in need, regardless of their immigration status. Noncitizen households, rather than becoming long-term stayers in the shelter system, should have access to long-term solutions that will relieve the shelter system and allow families to truly thrive.

Invest in Legal Assistance

New Arrivals are ready, willing, and able to work. Unfortunately, for most of them, their path to self-sufficiency is blocked by an inability to legally work. Frustratingly, many of the barriers that prevent new arrivals from working require federal policy change. Nevertheless, there are several things New York City can do to help new arrivals get up on their feet more quickly.

For the newly arrived asylum seekers, the key to getting to work is completing the asylum application as quickly as possible and then applying for work authorization. Win recognized this early on, which is why we stood up our in-house LEAD clinic, which is a pro se plus model aimed at getting all of Win's eligible clients to apply for asylum as quickly as possible. Win was forced to stand up our own pro se plus clinics because of a lack of city resources, but we are happy to see that the City is finally making real progress helping process asylum applications and for those that have applied for asylum, helping with work authorization applications. The reported 5600 asylum applications that the City has helped process is a step in the right direction, but with more than 60,000 new arrivals in the City's care, there is a long way to go.

After an asylum seeker enters the US, they have just one year to apply for asylum. Most of the asylum seekers in the care of the city have still not applied and time is ticking on their one-year windows. For those that don't apply in time, their path to remaining in this country legally is almost entirely blocked. That's why it is so critical that the city prioritizes legal assistance for asylum seekers to help them complete the initial asylum application and then work authorization.

The redesignation of Temporary Protected Status for Venezuela is a game changing victory, the effects of which will take some time to materialize. With approximately 40% of new arrivals coming from Venezuela, redesignation opened the legal ability to work for almost half of new arrivals. Win fiercely advocated for redesignation of TPS for Venezuela and continues to do so for several other countries. However, those eligible for TPS still need to apply, therefore New York City must take an all-hands-on deck approach to ensure everyone eligible for TPS applies.

Legal assistance for new arrivals in the form of asylum, work authorization, and TPS application assistance does require upfront investment from the City. But money spent upfront now will significantly reduce the City's long-term costs as those investments are essential to creating pathways to self-sufficiency for New Arrivals. Additionally, because of the one-year window for asylum seekers, funding is urgently needed. If we don't act now, thousands of asylum seekers will lose their one shot and be relegated to living in the US illegally with no ability to legally work, pay taxes, or support themselves and their families.



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Additional Recommendations

The right to shelter is the floor, not the ceiling of what people experiencing homelessness need and deserve. For decades, every New Yorker has been given the option to stay in shelter, protected from the elements regardless of whether they had been in New York for decades or had just arrived. The guarantee of shelter is not only a right, but one of our most important values as a city. The Adam's administration has presented eliminating the right to shelter as a necessary solution to the migrant crisis, but it is not a solution. If the Adam's administration were to be successful in rolling back the right to shelter, the City would be far worse off.

New York has always been a city of immigrants, attracting wave after wave of immigration for centuries. Eliminating the right to shelter will not reduce the number of people coming. The current levels of immigration are a global phenomenon and New York's right to shelter will have no impact on the global forces that are driving migration. Eliminating the right to shelter will simply mean that when people arrive, they are forced to live on the streets. We know that the cost of homelessness goes far beyond the cost of providing shelter and those additional costs would certainly rise if New York were to stop providing shelter. New York has defied the trends of mass street homelessness seen in many other major cities because of our right to shelter. Without it, we would betray our values as a city and would inevitably see a mass rise in street homelessness. With the majority of our homelessness population being made up of families with children, that would inevitably mean children living and dying on the streets of New York City.

Conclusion

The wave of recent arrivals coming to New York City that started last year is a challenge that no one saw coming. Yet, after more than a year of dealing with the challenges that accompanied this wave of immigration, the City must move beyond crisis mode. Win, advocates, and many in the City Council have developed a menu of solution-oriented interventions that will allow the City to move away from its reliance on emergency hotels and to help new arrivals move into homes of their own and get on a path to self-sufficiency. Thank you again to this council for your bold leadership on the expansion of CityFHEPS. We implore the Adam's administration to work in collaboration with the Council on implementation of that groundbreaking bill package. We also stress the need for housing vouchers for all regardless of immigration status, whether through CityFHEPS or another City Voucher such as the Rent Supplement Program. We know vouchers are far less expensive than emergency hotels. Additionally, we implore the City to prioritize legal resources, so new arrivals who qualify can apply for asylum, work authorization, and TPS. It is urgent that people are able to apply before the window closes and with proper resources, the city can build a bridge to self-sufficiency for all of the new arrivals, which will greatly reduce the strain on City resources in the long run. There is absolutely no need or justification for eliminating the right to shelter. The City just needs to prioritize this menu of solutions that have already been identified.

AUGUST 2023

SAVINGS & STABILITY



Permanently Housing Rather Than Just Sheltering Asylum Seekers Could Save the City Over \$3 Billion Annually

Christopher Mann, MA

Director of Policy & Advocacy, Win

Hannah Tager

Policy Analyst, Win

Theodore Moore

Vice President of Policy & Programs, NYC



I came here out of necessity. People think we come here for selfish reasons, but if I had an opportunity to work in my country or I could depend on anything there, I would have stayed in my home.

Win Client & Undocumented Immigrant

Context

Presently and historically, New York City has been the home to the country’s largest foreign-born population.ⁱ As this number has grown in recent months, the city’s social services have also adapted to meet the emerging needs of these new arrivals. **Over 100,000 asylum seekers have arrived in New York City over the past year, with the majority of them depending on the city for shelter and services.** Currently, 57,300 asylum seekers are living in City run facilities and the Mayor projects that this number will continue to grow.

Furthermore, these figures do not account for the thousands of immigrants who were already living in New York City shelters before governors from southern states began inhumanely busing migrants to New York City in August 2022. **These many immigrant households have been systematically excluded from the social safety-net, most notably rental assistance, resulting in them becoming long-term stayers in the shelter system and forcing families into prolonged poverty.** New York City’s homeless response system, which was already under strain from the expiration of pandemic related funding and protections for renters, has been pushed beyond its limits. Shelter capacity is at less than 1%, and many immigrants living in shelter have no prospect of leaving.

Currently, these vulnerable families and children are ineligible for most housing subsidies, a denial that is exacerbating the capacity crisis and trapping noncitizens in transitional housing shelters for incredibly long periods of time. **New York has the authority to act unilaterally and expand housing vouchers to households in need, regardless of their immigration status. This expansion could save up to \$2.9 billion per year while helping the newest New Yorkers exit shelter, freeing up space in our homelessness response system.**



I’ve been here for five years, and I haven’t gotten any closer to leaving.

Win Client & Undocumented Immigrant

Solution

Housing subsidy programs are widely recognized as one of the most effective tools to combat homelessness. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development’s [Family Options Study](#) revealed that, rather than staying in shelter, receiving long-term rent subsidies sharply reduced homelessness and increased housing stability.ⁱⁱ In addition, rental subsidies also promoted benefits in other domains of family well-being, including halving intimate partner violence, reducing adult psychological distress, parent-child separation, absenteeism and behavior problems for children, and increasing food security.ⁱⁱⁱ In FY22, of the 5,207 families with children in New York City that exited shelter to permanent housing, 79% of placements were subsidized.^{iv} Many sheltered, unhoused, and at-risk households rely on housing subsidies to transition to permanent housing, and **over 30,000 households gained or maintained permanent housing with CityFHEPS, the City’s most widely**

used voucher, in FY22.^v Furthermore, without housing subsidies, families often struggle to make a sustainable exit from shelter. **In FY22, 15% of families with children who exited shelter without a subsidy returned within one year, compared to less than 1% of families who exited with a subsidy.**^{vi}

When properly implemented, housing vouchers can be New York’s permanent and inclusive solution to the homelessness crisis. However, this crisis cannot be contained without solutions that include immigrant New Yorkers. Giving all households the support necessary to break the cycle of homelessness with vouchers will promote fairness and maintain the integrity of the nation’s most expansive social services system. **New York has the responsibility to provide a permanent housing solution for households regardless of immigration status and should implement the expansion of the vouchers to all New Yorkers.** Vital benefits have been provided legally to all New Yorkers regardless of immigration status through Promise NYC, HHC Options, and others, and **New York has the legal authority to grant immigrants access to housing vouchers.**

“
It’s so hard to want something, but not be able to achieve it. Like a job: I can’t work, and my children need a home.
”

Win Client & Undocumented Immigrant

Cost Savings

Not only is providing subsidized housing vouchers the solution that has the best proven well-being outcomes, but it is also the most cost-effective approach to addressing homelessness. **Offering housing subsidies to households regardless of immigration status would increase capacity in shelters, making it easier and less expensive for New York to care for homeless families.** Over time, changes in the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter census show that the introduction of rental assistance subsidies is correlated with a decline in the homeless population and associated costs (Table 1). This past year’s growth in the shelter census and costs can be attributed to the fact that the current vouchers in circulation are not available to most recent arrivals. Furthermore, improvements and expansions of vouchers also increase move-outs, and in the five months after the value of the CityFHEPS voucher increased in May 2022, Win’s CityFHEPS placements were 79% higher compared to the months immediately before, and 40% higher compared to the previous year.

DHS Shelter Census, Contextualized

Values

- Sum of Recent Asylum Seekers
- Sum of Other Shelter Residents

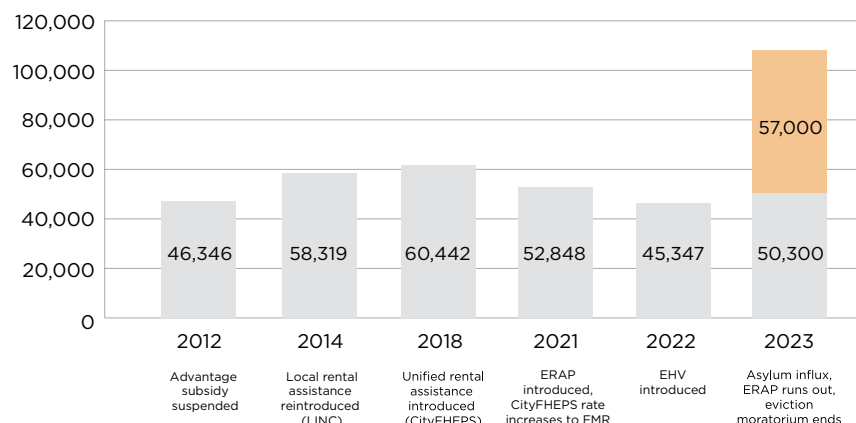


Table 1. DHS Shelter Census, Contextualized, by Catherine Trapani, Homeless Services United March 2023, updated by Hannah Tager, Win, August 2023. <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dhs/about/stats-and-reports.page>

In general, the expansions and introductions of housing vouchers can lead to future savings, as the subsidies reduce shelter costs enough to almost entirely offset the cost of the voucher. **Savings associated with permanent housing are returned through decreased reliance on the health care, corrections, and emergency shelter systems, which may be close to or above the cost of rental assistance and services.**^{viii} As well, the halving of intimate partner violence associated with the utilization of rental subsidies can result in improved economic outcomes for individuals and communities.^{ix}

While the vouchers currently available have been extremely effective and economically efficient, expanded access is still necessary for those who aren't eligible for existing vouchers. **Put another way: excluding the *newest* New Yorkers from using vouchers comes with an immense social and fiscal cost. For example, the CityFHEPS voucher costs just \$72 per night for families living in a 2-bedroom apartment.^x In contrast, New York City is spending on average \$383 to shelter households in emergency hotels.^{xii} In a public briefing on August 9th, 2023, Mayor Adams noted that there are 57,000 asylum seekers in the care of the city, comprised of 25,604 households.^{xii} The cost of sheltering 25,604 households per year in emergency welfare hotels, equates to \$3.58 billion dollars. It would cost just \$673 million to house those households with CityFHEPS vouchers, a cost savings of \$2.9 billion per year.**

Similarly, the proposed NYS Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP) would cost as little as \$50 per night for household.^{xiii} If the State were to pass and implement the HAVP voucher or something similar, it would cost just \$465 million to house the 25,604 asylum-seeking households with HAVP for a year. Housing families with state-level vouchers instead of sheltering them in emergency hotels could result in saving over \$3.1 billion per year.

New York should take the commonsense and cost-effective step to extend eligibility for housing subsidies to all households most in need, regardless of their immigration status. Noncitizen households, rather than becoming long-term stayers in the shelter system, should have access to long-term solutions that will relieve the shelter system and allow families to truly thrive.



I've been here so long...My daughter was basically raised in the shelter system. I don't want that for her.

Win Client & Undocumented Immigrant

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Since its founding to provide emergency shelter to four homeless women and their children, Win has grown into the largest provider of family shelter and supportive housing in New York City and the country. Win offers transitional housing and permanent supportive housing that's coupled with programs and services developed to support long-term housing stability. All of Win's services are guided by its mission—to transform the lives of New York City homeless families with children by providing the safe housing, critical services, and the ground-breaking programs they need to succeed on their own—so families can regain their independence and children can look forward to a brighter future.

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The New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) is an umbrella policy & advocacy organization that represents over 200 immigrant and refugee rights groups throughout New York.

The NYIC serves one of the largest and most diverse newcomer populations in the United States. The multi-racial and multi-sector NYIC membership base includes grassroots and nonprofit community organizations, religious and academic institutions, labor unions, as well as legal and socioeconomic justice organizations. The NYIC not only establishes a forum for immigrant groups to voice their concerns, but also provides a platform for collective action to drive positive social change.

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JULY 2023

SAVINGS & STABILITY



CityFHEPS Bills Could Save NYC Millions and House Thousands of Families

By: Cassidy Teminsky; Christopher Mann, MA; Hannah Tager; Henry Love, PhD; Martin Gamboa, PhD

win

Introduction

On May 25, 2023, the New York City Council passed a package of bills that would significantly improve and expand access to CityFHEPS housing vouchers. Win fiercely advocated for this package of bills, through advocacy and a [report](#) on the financial impact associated with the legislation.¹

The bill package is comprised of:

- [Intro 878](#), sponsored by Deputy Speaker Diana Ayala, ends the 90-Day Rule requirement that voucher applicants live in shelter for 90-days before they are eligible to apply for rental assistance vouchers.
- [Intro 229](#), sponsored by Council Member Tiffany Cabán, prohibits the deduction of utility costs from the maximum rental allowance.
- [Intro 893](#), sponsored by Council Member Pierina Ana Sanchez, expands voucher eligibility to all individuals at risk of eviction that meet the other CityFHEPS requirements.
- [Intro 894](#), sponsored by Council Member Pierina Ana Sanchez, eliminates the work requirements and raises the income eligibility for rental assistance vouchers.

Although the New York City Council passed the bills with a veto-proof majority in a vote of 41-7, Mayor Adams vetoed the package and criticized the legislation for its cost. In contrast, Win's analysis of eviction data estimates dramatic savings accrued through reductions in shelter and other service utilization. In addition to bringing about significant social and emotional benefits, Intro 878, Intro 229, Intro 893, and Intro 894 will also result in financial savings of over \$730,000,000 for New York City.

On a per person basis, the cost of doing nothing and allowing individuals to become homeless is \$18,883 as opposed to just \$10,950 to prevent homelessness with the CityFHEPS voucher, a savings of \$7,933 per person per year.

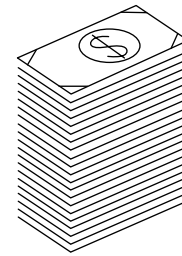
The upfront investment to the CityFHEPS program outlined in these bills is more than offset by savings in costs associated with eviction and homelessness, such as shelter, healthcare, foster care, education, and justice involvement.

\$730 million+

The CityFHEPS Bill package could save NYC **\$730,000,000+** per year.

92k+

CityFHEPS could help **92,000+** New Yorkers gain and maintain housing.



On a per person basis per year, the cost of doing nothing and allowing individuals to become homeless is **\$18,883**.

On a per person basis per year, the cost of providing CityFHEPS vouchers is **\$10,950**.

\$7,933.16

With the CityFHEPS voucher, homelessness prevention saves **\$7,933** annually per person.

Costs of the CityFHEPS Expansion

In this study, we examined the cost of expanding CityFHEPS to households at risk of eviction, as outlined in the bill package. To solve for the annual cost of this expansion, we looked at the number of families displaced annually by eviction for rent non-payment reasons by looking at the number of eviction filings from May 2022 through May 2023 in New York City [122,868]ⁱ for non-payment [82%]ⁱⁱ and determining the expected percentage of executed eviction petitions [9%]ⁱⁱⁱ, plus the total number of informal evictions [4%]^{iv} coming out to 13,098 families. We then multiplied our defined population by the cost of providing the CityFHEPS voucher, estimated at \$72/night, to these families for one year [\$26,280.00].^v

Overall, to provide the CityFHEPS vouchers and prevent homelessness for these 13,098 families annually would cost New York City \$344,215,440.

We are aware that for every eviction notice filed there are many more households unstably housed and facing rent demands. To account for those additional households, we also examined the savings from the expansion of CityFHEPS to a larger population defined in a study done by The Community Service Society of New York.^{vi} Their defined population that would be able to benefit from the expansion of CityFHEPS is more inclusive, as they looked at the 38,681 households with incomes below 50 percent AMI who are currently severely rent-burdened (paying more than 50 percent of their household income on rent) and would be evicted without the CityFHEPS voucher.

If we apply this number to our formula, it would cost the City \$1,016,536,680 to expand CityFHEPS to this population.

Savings from the CityFHEPS Expansion

To determine the savings associated with the CityFHEPS bill package, Win analyzed the financial impact of factors associated with eviction and homelessness. To do so, Win approximated the financial impact for households who are currently denied the CityFHEPS voucher due to eligibility guidelines requiring a previous stay in shelter. While numerous systemic savings are associated with eviction prevention, for this study, Win specifically looked at medical, juvenile detention, educational, child welfare, and shelter costs for displaced families whose evictions could be prevented with an expansion of CityFHEPS. To determine medical costs, Win looked at the additional expenditures on the healthcare system that individuals living in shelters and on the street expense versus their housed peers, which is \$1736 annually per person.^{vii} We also examined youth incarceration, as homeless youth are at a higher risk of justice involvement because of increased interaction with surveilling systems and the criminalization of homelessness.^{viii} For these estimates, Win looked at the price of arrest and juvenile detention, which one-fourth of youth displaced or experiencing homelessness will face, and multiplied it by average length of stay, coming out to \$88,307 per a youth who could otherwise remain housed with the CityFHEPS bill package.^{ix} For savings related to education, we examined the anticipated differences in earnings between students who were homeless and their peers. In addition to having lower educational achievement (lower math and ELA scores)^x, children who had experienced homelessness had lower earnings than other students. On average, students that had experienced homelessness and went into the labor force after high school earned \$766 less annually than similarly disadvantaged students that entered the workforce at the same time.^{xi} Children and youth who do not graduate high school tend to have a net negative fiscal cost on society, meaning that the cost of providing benefits to them is, on average, not offset by the annual tax payments made by that group. We also examined the cost of child welfare investigation and placement for children who are displaced and enter homelessness that could be prevented by the CityFHEPS expansion. We found that

there was an annual cost of \$63,478^x per child that was placed in foster care and that 18% of homeless youth are involved in child welfare^x, with 23% of those youth ending up in foster care.^{xi} Finally, we looked at the price of housing displaced households in an emergency hotel, where most new families are being sheltered since family shelters are at capacity, costing the City \$383 a night.

xii

Altogether, by looking at these costs and solving for the households and children who could experience homelessness because of voucher denial, New York City spends almost \$600,000,000 in medical, juvenile detention, education, foster care, and shelter costs alone. In other words, the current system-wide cost of these households experiencing displacement and homelessness is \$600,000,000, whereas our forecasted cost of the CityFHEPS expansion for individuals at risk of eviction is only \$344,215,440.

Subtracting the medical, juvenile detention, educational, foster care, and shelter costs diverted as a result of this bill package will result in savings of at least \$249,380,600 for New York City and prevent homelessness for 31,000+ New Yorkers.

Likewise, when applying this applying this savings model to the broader population defined by The Community Service Society of New York, we find the current system-wide cost of homelessness to be over \$1,753,000,000 and the cost of the CityFHEPS expansion to be \$1,000,000,000.

The CityFHEPS bill package will thus result in annual savings of more than \$730,000,000 and prevent homelessness for more than 38,000 families and 92,000+ individuals.

Constraints

The findings of this analysis are subject to limitations, and the calculations required assumptions due to data constraints. First, the context of housing and homelessness in New York City is unique, even among other high cost of living locales. While we attempted to find cost data specifically focused on New York City, this was not always possible; when our baseline data was not New York specific or from recent years, we performed cost-of-living and inflation adjustments in order to offer a more accurate cost analysis. The total count of the impacted population who would be eligible for CityFHEPS voucher is also an area where assumptions were necessary. The City's financial analysis for the bill estimated that 47,000 new families would be eligible for the voucher, though their budget does not specify the percentage breakdown of those people who are currently housed in the community and those who are in shelter. The Community Service Society of New York estimated that there would be 40,000 new families eligible, and that 10,000 of those families would enter shelter without access to CityFHEPS through the passage of the bill package. However, the number of households lacking adequate shelter or precariously housed is likely greater than the reported count, as multiple studies have shown that **1)** people will live in overcrowded units with families or friends before going to homeless shelters and **2)** heads of households that are housing unstable do not always disclose their situation out of fear of punitive measures.

Recommendations

This suite of bills represents a multi-faceted effort to keep some of the poorest New Yorkers in their homes and reduce the stress on an already overburdened homeless service system. This analysis, and others like it, demonstrate that the passage of these bills would not be as expensive

as the NYC Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) analysis suggested, and would provide cost savings and shelter relief in the short-term and increase the likelihood for upward mobility in the long-term. In order to ensure that these bills have their maximum positive impact, Win has the following recommendations:

- The Mayor and the Council should streamline the process of ensuring qualified applicants receive their vouchers in a timely manner, rather than having to apply multiple times.
- Minimizing the amount of times applicants need to reapply for the voucher will reduce redundant paperwork and ensure that families do not cost the City money by entering into shelter during the voucher qualification period.

According to the New York City Housing and Vacancy survey, the number of habitable units that are unavailable for rent has increased sharply across price ranges, reducing available supply, and therefore increasing price and demand for the housing stock that remains.^{xiii} State, city, and local officials should incentivize making this hidden stock available, and disincentivize using housing as a speculative asset in the midst of a housing crisis.

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About Win

Since its founding to provide emergency shelter to four homeless women and their children, Win has grown into the largest provider of family shelter and supportive housing in New York City and the country. Win offers transitional housing and permanent supportive housing that's coupled with programs and services developed to support long-term housing stability. All of Win's services are guided by its mission—to transform the lives of New York City homeless families with children by providing the safe housing, critical services, and the ground-breaking programs they need to succeed on their own—so families can regain their independence and children can look forward to a brighter future.



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**Chinese-American Planning Council
Testimony Before the New York City Council Finance Committee, Committee on
General Welfare, and the Committee on Oversight and Investigations
Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair
October 23rd, 2023**

Thank you to Chair Brannan and members of the finance, general welfare, and oversight and investigations committees for the opportunity to testify. My name is Ashley Chen and I'm the Policy Analyst at the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC). The mission of CPC is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 280,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities. We are grateful to testify about issues that impact the individuals and families we serve.

CPC is part of the Peoples Plan and we strongly endorse their platform in investing in our communities through care not budget cuts. We strongly oppose the Mayor's decision to make additional budget cuts across city agencies. This would be devastating to the communities that we serve across the city that rely on the services provided. The Mayor is creating a false narrative that the influx of migrants warrants budget cuts to meet their needs. Not only is this creating the false perception that the resources in the city are scarce but it further reinforces xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments in our city. And the needs of newly arrived asylum seekers are still not being met. Our city was founded and continues to thrive because of our immigrant communities. We have historically welcomed immigrants and we should continue to do so as they have been an integral part of our economy and cultural fabric.

Many of these migrants are fleeing from war-torn countries that have been escalated due to decades of failed American foreign policy. We have a moral obligation to provide the support and assistance to these migrants and social service agencies have been filling in those gaps. At CPC, we have been providing child care through Promise NYC and legal services to asylum seekers, as well as adult literacy classes, emergency food services, and benefits navigation. One mother enrolled in our Promise NYC program explaining that she and her children came to the US in order to escape life-threatening shortages of medications that they faced in Venezuela. Her oldest child would have died without access to medications and treatment. There was no time to wait for the strenuous and

long immigration processes and therefore is now seeking asylum. She is relying on PromiseNYC so that she can access childcare for her children, and thus access employment and income to support her family. We must live up to our values as a sanctuary city and provide the resources for our newest neighbors to find permanent housing and work.

The City has failed to handle the influx of migrants with care and dignity. Budget cuts to our essential services and programs is not the answer. In fact, according to an analysis from the [Fiscal Policy Institute](#), they found that “while the growth in asylum seeker costs is adding new fiscal strain, the City’s request for 15 percent cuts across all agencies — which totals \$10 billion in cuts in one year — significantly overstates the fiscal impact of migrant arrivals.” It also remains counterintuitive to make budget cuts to the very same agencies that provide critical services to migrant families. However, this administration has continued to invest in tactics that are meant to harm our vulnerable communities rather than uplift them. The Adams administration has continued to discourage migrants from entering the city noting the capacity issues. In fact, last month, the Mayor decreased the limit to 30 day shelter stays for adult migrants and migrant families with children to 60 days.

The Mayor has cited the fiscal strain and their inability to support the overwhelming migrant population. However, there are tangible and effective solutions that can be utilized to alleviate this burden like raising revenue through taxing the ultra-wealthy. In one of the richest countries in the world and in the richest city in the world, we need to ensure that our vulnerable communities are not struggling and that starts with the top 5% of New Yorkers paying their fair share.

We stand firmly against the budget cuts and we hope that the Council continues to push back on these budget cuts. New York City is an immigrant city and we should be implementing meaningful policies that uplifts and empowers them. We thank you for your time and consideration and if there are any questions, please contact Ashley Chen at achen9@cpc-nyc.org.



**Testimony of Juan Diaz
Policy and Advocacy Associates
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**

**Submitted to the New York City Council Oversight Hearing on Asylum Seeker Response Efforts -
Costs and Projections. New York City October 23rd, 2023**

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multiuse child advocacy organization. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through civic engagement, research, and advocacy. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chair Ayala, Chair Brannan and all the members of the City Council Committees on General Welfare and Finance for holding today's oversight hearing on the City Administration Asylum Seeker Response Efforts, Costs and Projections.

CCC is steering committee member of the Family Homeless Coalition. The Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC) is comprised of formerly homeless mothers and 20 organizations representing service and housing providers and children's advocacy organizations united to end family homelessness.

We acknowledge the City Council's efforts to address the unprecedented migration of asylum-seeking families and individuals looking for opportunities to thrive and contribute to this city and nation. However, CCC and advocates across the city are strongly opposed to several City Administration actions and proposals that would have a negative impact on migrant children's overall well-being.¹

- The proposed shelter stay of modification 60-day limits for immigrant families with children is a deeply concerning measure that would have wide-ranging, harmful impacts on migrant children's education and overall well-being. Children enrolled in schools near the shelters that they are currently residing in would have to travel long distances and, in many cases, missed school days.
- Advocates across the city are concerned over on the City Administration proposal to shelter about 500 recently arrived immigrant families with minors in a tent facility at Floyd Bennett Field, a federal site on Jamaica Bay. These types of tents are prone to floodings and lack the privacy and space that families with children need to have overall stability. Additionally, the Winter is weeks away, adding more barriers for migrant families to thrive.
- As of last week, 371 households were staying in 14 hotels on 28-day stays as part of the Hotel Vouchering Program. Similarly, like the 60-day stay limitation, migrant families with children will have to get back to emergency drop-in centers to access emergency shelter in less than a month. This policy puts children at risk of missing school days and underperforming compared to the rest of the students.

The cost of Humanitarian Emergency Response and Relief Centers, or HERRCs, which are run by NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H) is excessive, and these relief centers do not provide the services that a DHS shelter can provide such as intensive case management. Through September 30, 2023, NYC H+H expenditures made up the largest portion of asylum seeker spending, at \$443.0 million, or 43.9 percent of total asylum seeker spending.ⁱⁱ The City Administration should consider more cost-savings solutions such as opening DHS shelter space by speeding up housing applications and filing vacant positions at housing services agencies.

We are also deeply concerned about city and state proposals to erode the government's responsibility to provide shelter and safety to those in emergency shelters, and strongly oppose any attempts to suspend the right to shelter.

As the right to shelter revision enters a negotiation process, we urge all parties involved to prioritize cost-saving solutions such as filling vacant positions to help expedite housing and public benefit applications; expediting move outs to set-aside affordable housing units; and streamlining applications for housing and public benefits.

To safeguard the housing and economic security of NYC's most vulnerable we urge the City Administration to reconsider The Mayor's proposed 15% budget cuts to agencies like the Department of Social Services (\$1.4 billion) and Department of Homeless Services (\$800 million), which will exacerbate an already problematic situation of individuals and families not receiving benefits, such as SNAP, cash assistance and housing vouchers, on time.

Finally, families and students in housing instability regardless of immigration status need the support to thrive while their families are placed in stable housing.

CCC therefore urges the City Administration to:

- **Support the effective implementation of legislation that would expand CityFHEPS eligibility** that open shelter space and save the City millions of dollars in administrative and funding costs. removing administrative and eligibility barriers and expediting access to housing support for families in the community and in shelters.
- **Baseline \$3.3 million to maintain the 25 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators** currently funded with City dollars. shelter-based community coordinators are essential for children's overall wellbeing and a support system for their parents.
- **Baseline Promise NY** so immigrant families can have access to affordable childcare. In FY24, \$16 million was allocated and advocates including elected officials, have called for permanent funding.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this critical issue for children's health and well-being. We look forward to continuing to work with the City Council and Administration to make sure that all New York City families and children have access to the support they need to recover from the pandemic and thrive.

ⁱ Emma Whitford and Daniel Parra "They Assigned Us Far Away": As Shelter Limit Policy Expands, Some Families Are Already Too Familiar". City Limits. October 18, 2023.

ⁱⁱ "Committee Report and Briefing Paper of the Finance, Legislative, and Oversight & Investigations Divisions" NYC City Council. October 23, 2023.

Submitted Testimony of Good Shepherd Services

Before the New York City Council Committee on Oversight and Investigations Jointly with the Committee on General Welfare and Committee on Finance

Oversight Hearing on Examining the City's Response and Delivery of Services to Migrant

Submitted by

Rosanna Cruz, Senior Program Director

October 23, 2023

Thank you, Speaker Adrienne Adams and Deputy Speaker Diana I. Ayala, for the opportunity to submit testimony on the oversight hearing on Asylum Seeker Response Efforts- Costs and Projections.

My name is Rosanna Cruz, and I am the Senior Program Director of the Benefits Assistance Program at Good Shepherd Services located in East New York, where we serve over 6,000 clients annually and continue to support residents from across the city with a concentration in Brooklyn and Queens. The East New York program has been open since 2001 when the program was part of Groundwork, Inc. I have been with the program since 2003 and, prior to this work, I did community and tenant organizing.

GSS is part of a network of community-based organizations that created the Eastern Brooklyn Emergency Response Collaborative, which has been working together since the pandemic to address pressing neighborhood needs. Since October 2022, exactly 1 year ago, GSS, in collaboration with the Collaborative, hosted several resource events targeting new arrivals/asylum seekers in the community, providing them with food, clothing, personal care and baby items as well as legal assistance, benefits enrollment and housing help. These events were hosted at walking distance from shelters throughout Brooklyn and drew hundreds of migrants and asylum seekers from across the city. We hosted the last resource fair on 05/24/2023, in collaboration with the National Guards, and we continue to collaborate with local schools and CBOs to plan more resource fairs. We continue to receive numerous requests from asylum seekers who walk into our site requesting assistance.

Today, my testimony will speak to what we have learned from our efforts to support the asylum seekers. I would like to emphasize that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the conditions and needs that already existed and that, with the influx of asylum seekers, the needs are now greater. Community Based Organizations have, as during the COVID-19 pandemic, been responding to those needs with already limited resources.

The greatest needs are:

Legal services. There is still a lack of legal services available to help individuals apply for asylum and work permits.

Although the TPS was recently approved for Venezuelans, only 2k migrants have applied for Work Permit and less than 400 of those were Venezuelans. Since NYC has not prioritized Venezuelans, they have not received the needed legal

assistance, which is a shame. Asylum seekers from other countries have received expedited legal assistance when they come to the USA, so why not Venezuelans?

Asylum seekers are still struggling to find legal support. They are relying on notaries and individuals without legal skills to apply for asylum and TPS because they are desperate. The city has allocated so much funding for legal-immigration assistance for asylum seekers, but we have yet to see many of our clients receive such legal assistance. We need an immediate plan to assist asylum seekers. DSS should connect asylum seekers to legal assistance instead of assuming that they should go out on the streets looking for assistance. All asylum seekers within the shelter system should be scheduled for a legal-immigration consultation as soon as they enter.

Shelter Concerns. Many asylum seekers are not receiving the needed services to navigate the system. There is a lack of collaboration between DSS-shelters and local CBOs. Shelters' staff should be fully trained in all the services asylum seekers qualify to be able to connect them with the needed resources. We understand that not all shelters have trained staff to work with asylum seekers because many of the asylum seekers have been placed in non-traditional shelters (i.e., hotels and other public places). However, DSS should allow CBOs to come to the shelters to provide the needed services and resources. Asylum seekers do not know how to travel in NYC and don't have the financial means to pay for transportation to seek assistance.

DSS should create a one-pager or a guideline for new arrivals and that guideline should include crucial information such as mental health services, immigration, education, health, benefits, among others. The system cannot rely on having resources on the 311 website or online because asylum seekers don't have access to a phone or the internet. DSS should also keep in mind the language barrier and offer a guide in multiple languages. DSS should add orientation or workshops and invite CBOs to talk about the services we offer in the community.

Let's also emphasize the concern of xenophobia that asylum seekers are dealing with in NYC. US citizens are under the assumption that asylum seekers are taking away resources from them. However, we must better educate New Yorkers that asylum seekers are not eligible for federally funded benefits until they apply and get approved for asylum.

Mental Health Services. There is a stigma around seeking mental health services which extends to the recently arrived immigrants who have experienced great trauma. We urge the city to make greater investments in mental health support in shelters, schools, hospitals, community centers and wherever they are accessing other services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



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Homeless Services United's Written Testimony for

The NYC Committees on Finance, General Welfare, and Oversight and Investigations on the City's Asylum Seeker Response Effort held on Oct 23rd, 2023

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 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, Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan, and Chair Brewer and members of the Council for holding this hearing and allowing me to submit testimony.

HSU is grateful to Speaker Adams and Deputy Speaker Ayala and members of the City Council for your steadfast commitment to preserving the human services safety net ensuring that all New Yorkers in need, from life-long residents to recently arrived households, can access public benefits, emergency housing assistance, and shelter when in crisis. While focusing on the City's response to the asylum seeker crisis, **we urge the Council to prioritize maintaining the fiscal viability and sustainability of the DHS contracted non-profit providers. The City must stop cutting the budgets of DHS-contracted non-profit providers, and address delays with contract registration and invoice reimbursements. Any additional measures to strengthen homeless services without first addressing these two critical priorities will undermine the effectiveness of those measures and may result in service reductions elsewhere.**

HSU urges the Council to stand strong against the Mayor's proposed 15% cut to the Department of Social Services/DHS/HRA. DHS-contracted homeless services providers have already been forced to reduce their personnel lines by 2.5% for FY24 and outyears by collapsing multiple positions into one, reducing non-mandatory services like on-site mental health or employment assistance services, and eliminating vacant positions like housing specialists and case managers, all of which mean permanently higher caseloads and lowered level of services for clients. **Further cuts will mean shelter providers will have to make even tougher decisions, including possibly reducing the number of security guards within their shelters.**

In addition to budget cuts, **DHS-contracted non-profits providers continue to be imperiled by delays in contract registration, budget modifications, and invoicing reimbursement delays which must be remedied.**

Providers are still awaiting budget modifications for FY23 and even FY22 budgets which prevent providers from being able to draw down funds as well as close their books. They are also waiting over half a year to receive determinations for new needs requests. While shelter budgets include contingency budget lines for emergency expenses, providers have been unable to quickly access those funds to cover urgent expenses like replacing broken boilers or leaky roofs, meaning they either need to front the cost for emergency repairs or hold off on addressing condition issues for months or longer while awaiting a response from DHS.



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City-contracted shelter providers are being asked to rapidly open new sites to meet the evolving needs of the sector while not being paid on time for services already provided, to the point that **non-profits are taking private loans to make payroll for staff and pay their vendors. Cashflow for DHS shelter providers has slowed to a trickle, as approvals for subcontractors (DSS Form 65A) regularly exceed the 30-day approval time limit**, with some providers still awaiting approval for services rendered in FY23. **Submitted invoices will sometimes sit at DHS for several weeks or months without action, and even after funds are marked “approved” in HHS Accelerator, providers experience lags over a month or longer before funds are remitted.**

Some providers are *still* waiting for DHS to implement FY23 Workforce Enhancement Initiatives (WEI) which gave a very modest 2% average increase to program staff wages, even though we’re already well into the next fiscal year. It is extremely challenging work under the best circumstances, but when the City cannot make good on timely wage increases for non-profit staff after years without a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), it is no wonder that our workforce is experiencing record high turnover and 20% average vacancy rates across programs. While DHS is rightly focused on increasing housing placements from shelter to create much needed capacity with the DHS system, this additional work cannot be accomplished without corresponding resources. Starting positions like housing specialists are amongst the lowest paid positions within DHS contracts, and **homeless services providers need meaningful cost of living adjustments to raise wages for vacant positions which cannot attract and retain qualified candidates.**

Key investments in the services within DHS Sanctuary sites can help build long-term stability for recently arrived immigrants and asylum seekers.

1. Baseline funding in the City Budget for LMSWs (50:1 caseloads) within DHS Sanctuary shelters to provide on-site mental health services.

DHS Sanctuary sites do not have the same level of services as other DHS shelter programs, and many of the more recent sanctuary sites’ budgets do not include funding for licensed social workers (LMSWs). Without LMSWs on-site, shelter staff have become heavily reliant on hospital emergency rooms to provide crisis intervention services, as the scarcity of in-community mental health resources results in a two-to-three-month waitlist to access. If DHS implements the 30-to-60-day time limit for recently arrived immigrants and asylum seekers, households would effectively be unable to access mental health services before timing out of shelter.

DHS Sanctuary sites staffed with LMSWs would be able to address crisis intervention needs of families and individuals on a therapeutic level and offer short-term psychotherapy to residents, while referring households to clinical resources within the community which can serve their needs long-term.

However, longer-term challenges for mental health services must also be addressed. Salaries for LMSWs and LCSWs in shelter settings must be increased to comparable levels with other settings like hospitals, as it drives a scarcity of Clinical Supervision within homeless services, hindering providers’ ability to take on and support LMSWs. Additionally, the City must continue to expand in-community mental health



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clinics and resources, as well as expand capacity of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT), Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) and Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams which provide mental health services that follow individuals as they transition into the community.

2. Baseline funding in the City Budget to hire Paralegals within DHS Sanctuary shelters.

Paralegals within DHS Sanctuary Shelters would be able to screen and refer households who have strong cases for asylum to legal providers and assist Venezuelans with applying for Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

Given the limited capacity of immigration legal service providers, agencies are seeking prescreened referrals for households with strong cases for asylum. Paralegals within Sanctuary sites could sit down with shelter residents to ascertain whether they have a strong case which should be referred. In instances where households may not have strong cases, filing for asylum may actually jeopardize their ability to stay within the U.S. Because of this risk, it's important they have their case reviewed by an attorney to determine whether they need further legal representation for a full asylum case.

By baselining Paralegals within DHS Sanctuary sites, the City can also help more Venezuelans to apply for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) which would grant employment authorization, an important first step towards permanent residency within the United States, enabling them to apply for public benefits as well as begin paying income taxes which would generate revenue for New York. As the administration testified, only several hundred Venezuelans currently have appointments with City-contracted providers to apply for TPS through the end of the calendar year, as demand far outstrips capacity. Predatory businesses are already popping up across the City, falsely posing as attorneys and offering to file TPS applications for a substantial fee while in actuality jeopardizing the immigration status of the household. Without additional capacity, Venezuelans will be forced to take their chances with scam artists or wait months for a legitimate appointment to be able file an application that would eventually enable them to seek gainful employment, slowing their path towards long-term self-sufficiency within our City.

Through shielding DSS/DHS/HRA from further proposed PEGs in upcoming City Budgets, making key workforce investments to value the work of homeless services workers, and strengthening DSS and DHS fiscal procedures to ensure timely registrations and reimbursements for City-contracted services, the City can get the homeless services safety net back to a sustainable place. Our sector has been sorely tested by long-standing deficiencies of City Human Services contracts and disruptive fiscal policies and practices but, through stronger collaboration and investments in the non-profit organizations underpinning the City's ability to provide critical services and shelter to both new and lifelong New Yorkers, we will ensure a bright path forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and if you have any questions, please contact me at elee@hsunited.org.

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Name: Marye Schaeffer, Interim Director

Address: Office of Asylum Seeker Operations

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I represent: Self

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I represent: New York City Emergency mgmt

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I represent: Ballet Hispanico

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