

**Testimony of New York City Human Resources Administration
Oversight: HRA's System of Domestic Violence Shelters**

**Hearing before New York City Council's Committees on
General Welfare and Women and Gender Equity
September 19, 2019**

Good morning Chairperson Levin and Chairperson Rosenthal and members of the General Welfare and the Women and Gender Equity Committees. Thank you for this opportunity to testify and offer updates on our efforts to provide assistance and support for survivors of domestic violence. My name is Annette Holm, and I am the Chief Special Services Officer for HRA, I am joined by Natasha Godby, the newly appointed Deputy Commissioner for Emergency Intervention Services, who began on April 1st of this year.

As you know, next month is Domestic Violence Awareness month, and HRA welcomes the opportunity to inform our staff and providers about current issues related to domestic violence. This year, we will focus our efforts on client-centered decision making and self-care training for staff who are exposed to the secondary trauma related to those who provide services to domestic violence survivors.

HRA is the nation's largest social services agency, assisting over three million New Yorkers annually through the administration of public assistance programs including cash assistance, employment programs, food stamps, public health insurance and other supports that help New Yorkers remain in the workforce. HRA also plays a role in the administration of housing programs such as supportive housing and services, designed to assist individuals who are chronically homeless, coupled with HIV/AIDS, serious mental illness and/or are survivors of domestic violence, among others. Much of our work focuses on advancing one of this Administration's chief priorities: reducing income inequality and leveling the playing field for all New Yorkers.

We know that domestic violence is unfortunately far too common and blind to one's socio-economic status, immigration status, gender identity and sexual orientation – anyone, anywhere can fall victim to domestic violence. HRA addresses the scourge of domestic violence, a major driver of poverty and homelessness, by ensuring survivors and their families have access to a safe living environment and trauma-informed services, both within the shelter systems and as they transition back into communities.

Operating under the New York State Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 1987, the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) works with a network of providers to provide support services for survivors of domestic violence and their children. The law requires counties to provide shelter and services to survivors of domestic violence and establishes funding for these programs. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) promulgates and maintains regulations for licensure and the standards for the establishment and maintenance of residential and non-residential domestic violence programs. OCFS authorizes DSS/HRA to administer the financial and contractual requirements of domestic violence emergency residential service programs. The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) authorizes DSS/HRA to administer the financial and contractual requirements of the domestic violence Tier II system.

HRA administers the largest domestic violence shelter system in the country. The emergency domestic violence shelter system consists of 55 confidential facilities throughout all five boroughs. There are 2,514 emergency beds. The emergency beds provide trauma-informed shelter services to domestic violence survivors who are in immediate risk. Included in the 54 sites are 9 DV Tier II/transitional shelter facilities which account for 362 units. Only domestic survivors who are stabilized in the emergency system can be transferred to the Tier II shelters. In FY19, the HRA domestic violence system served 10,983 individuals, which included 355 single adults and 3,877 families.

In September 2015, Mayor de Blasio announced that the City would develop 400 additional DV Tier II units and 300 emergency beds – an unprecedented addition by the City to address capacity in the domestic violence shelter system. **All 300** emergency beds have been awarded. A domestic violence shelter which was constructed primarily to accept households with pets, opened last week, and we are actively working to fill the beds. Additionally, 295 of the 400 Tier II units have been awarded. Three Tier II shelters are currently scheduled to open in 2020. For the remaining 105 Tier II units, there is currently an open RFP and we strongly encourage providers to submit proposals.

Enhanced Domestic Violence Services

Emergency shelter services are designed to address domestic violence survivors who are in imminent danger and in need of a safe housing. Programs are client-centered with a focus on managing the crisis and trauma of domestic violence, strengthening coping skills, and enhancing client self-sufficiency. Services shall include individual counseling, advocacy, psycho-educational groups, and trauma-focused interventions that address the dynamics of domestic violence. All shelter programs may include on-site or have linkages to childcare services, housing assistance,

benefit entitlement assistance, financial development service, and economic empowerment programs to maximize self-sufficiency.

Enhanced services which may be available include expressive therapies (art, play, recreational), stress reduction coping skills techniques, mental health/substance use counseling and linkages to community-based medical providers. DV shelter providers offer an array of services to children, including, but not limited to, individual counseling for children.

HRA conducts monthly meetings with DV shelter providers, the purpose of which is to discuss programmatic developments, share best practices and address matters related to shelter operations. This year, in collaboration with the Homeless DV Provider Coalition, HRA hosted three DV Residential Best Practice Forums. The latest one focused on child welfare services and policies. Previous forums included trauma-informed care for children, and presentations by the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV), the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), and Autism Speaks.

Over the course of the past six years, this Administration has advanced substantial policy changes that have had both immediate and long-term positive outcomes for domestic violence survivors accessing residential and/or non-residential services.

I'd like to take some time to highlight numerous developments that have been made to assist domestic violence survivors, improve their shelter experience, and assist them in transitioning out of shelter and back into the community.

- Inter-Agency Collaboration - HRA, in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the NYC Administration for Children Services received grant funding to transform 15 domestic violence (DV) shelters in New York City over three years. The initiative will engage survivors and staff to enhance environments in the shelters, promoting wellness and supporting the social-emotional needs of survivors and their children.
- Language Access Services – DSS offers to share, at no cost, telephonic interpretation and ASL interpretation services with all DV shelter providers. This helps ensure that all DV survivors have access to shelter and support in their language.
- NYC Well – HRA continues to explore ways in which it can strengthen the provision of trauma-informed mental health services within the Domestic Violence programs. Recognizing the importance of having access to mental health support outside of providers' regular business hours. HRA delivered over 5,000 posters, flyers and informationals to providers about services provided by NYC Well – a signature program funded through ThriveNYC. The posters are prominently displayed throughout the facilities so that clients have a connection to free, confidential mental health support. NYCWell enables callers the ability to speak with a counselor via phone, text or chat and get access to mental health and substance misuse services, in more than 200 languages, 24/7, 365 days a year.

- HRA collaborates with ENDGBV to ensure that all domestic violence providers are aware of training opportunities for staff, as well as services offered to survivors at the NYC Family Justice Centers and in communities across the city. These services can enhance what is offered by shelter providers to inform a more robust service package to survivors.
- School busing – HRA and the Department of Education collaborated to ensure that DV shelter residents and their children are safely placed in schools and have resources to meet their educational needs. The school busing program upholds confidentiality and safety by not conducting pick-ups and drop-offs in front of the facility, but at a nearby location.
- We conduct presentations at ACS borough offices to inform staff of DV shelter rules and regulations, HRA partners with ACS to address complex case matters and assist with shelter needs.
- This July, we received a donation of 100 free cell phones for DV clients, provided by the DSS Emergency Management Office. This benefits survivors whose communication devices were linked to their abusers and can now have a safe means of communication.

Gender Equity Initiative

I'd like to take an opportunity to specifically highlight our work on gender equity. Historically, domestic violence services were created with ciswomen and hetero-normative families in mind. Cisgender men, transgender and gender non-conforming people accessing domestic violence services may encounter obstacles related to shelter placement.

The DSS Diversity and Equity Team's Gender Equity Initiative engaged HRA's non-residential domestic violence providers in their interest in becoming more welcoming and inclusive spaces for people of all genders. In 2017, trainings were offered to increase knowledge around gender inequity and provide affirming and welcoming engagements for survivors of domestic violence. Subsequently, a gender equity survey was issued to non-residential DV service providers to assess their gender equity competency and identify gaps. We were encouraged by the surveyed providers' interest and measures taken to have LGBTQI and gender-nonconforming clients feel welcome, accepted, and treated with respect and dignity. We continue to support their efforts to improve services to these clients in need of DV services. Our next engagement phase will include training, technical assistance, and surveying HRA's residential domestic violence providers in the coming months.

Streamlining of Rental Assistance

Within the HRA Office of Domestic Violence (ODV), the DV Housing Support Services Unit works with DV shelter clients who are eligible for HRA housing subsidy programs, issuing housing certifications, approving housing application packages, conducting lease signings, and renewals.

DV Housing Specialists also seek available housing, work with landlords, brokers, and clients to facilitate linkages to housing.

Earlier this year, HRA instituted an enhanced safety planning protocol, in which clients are able to self-determine safe areas in communities where they are seeking permanent housing. During the safety planning discussion, the client uses NYC zip codes and neighborhood maps to select their safe areas. This greatly eases limitations and expands housing options for DV survivors in the community.

After-Care/Wrap-Around Services

As clients transition back into communities, it is essential to utilize programs and services designed to support and assist DV clients, particularly through the NYC Family Justice Centers and community-based services. These services include crisis intervention, case management and advocacy, counseling, support groups, housing advocacy, and economic security advocacy.

HRA contracts with nine providers to offer state-mandated non-residential services throughout the five boroughs. The goal of this program is to provide a range of supportive services to families of domestic violence. In addition to offering a series of core level services required by NYS regulations (telephone hotline assistance, information & referral services, advocacy, counseling, community education and outreach activities), these providers offer after-care services for clients transitioning out of shelter to ensure that when they enter permanent housing, they are safe, financially secure and on track for employment. In FY19, the non-residential service providers served, on average, 2,016 clients.

Other non-residential services include legal advocacy and assistance in obtaining orders of protection, securing U-visas, and navigating divorce and child support proceedings, as well as services for adolescent and child witnesses of domestic violence. We recognize that oftentimes clients wish to receive services outside of their residence, or even the broader community. It is our goal to ensure that clients are aware of the client-centered service options available to them throughout NYC and are able to access the services of interest to them through referrals and direct linkages to providers in the broader community, such as the Family Justice Centers in every borough.

DV Legal Services

Through its Office of Civil Justice (OCJ), HRA oversees, manages and monitors the City's programs that provide civil legal assistance to New Yorkers in need. Since 2014, the City has made great strides in increasing, enhancing, and making more efficient the delivery of civil legal services to

low-income New Yorkers facing legal issues that may jeopardize the “essentials of life,” including things like housing and immigration status. As a result of these important efforts, New York City is a national leader in providing civil legal services for low-income people.

Legal services programs that specifically address the legal needs of survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence are key components of OCJ’s and HRA’s work to provide access to justice. For survivors facing housing legal issues such as possible eviction, harassment by an unscrupulous landlord or other threats to the stability of their homes, OCJ and its non-profit legal services provider partners have made housing legal assistance available to survivors in all of the City’s Family Justice Centers. These legal services, launched in 2017 in partnership with ENDGBV, help to ensure that survivors have access to well-trained and skilled legal advocates to protect their rights as tenants and assist them to remain in homes that are safe and stable for them and their families. Through referrals at the FJCs, the program has provided legal assistance to over 3,000 survivors and other household members.

In addition, HRA supports legal services programs for survivors in need of immigration legal services. In FY18, the Administration’s immigration legal services programs, including ActionNYC, IOI and legal programs supported by federal Community Service Block Grant funding have assisted survivors in over 1,000 immigration legal matters. In addition, programs under HRA’s Division of Emergency Intervention Services include immigration legal services for survivors. Through this program, legal providers with expertise in domestic violence issues and experience in immigration law partner with local community-based groups that serve immigrant populations. Together they provide increased access to these services in communities and build capacity within community-based groups to identify and respond appropriately to these issues.

OCJ also administers legal services programs as part of the SAVE program funded by the City Council. SAVE - Supporting Alternatives to Violent Encounters – provides free legal services to DV and IPV survivors in areas including family, matrimonial and consumer law, as well as domestic violence prevention, counseling, advocacy, and social services referrals. SAVE also includes training sessions for pro bono attorneys on matrimonial and family law, addressing issues of orders of protection, custody and visitation, child and spousal support and divorce. We are grateful that in FY19 the City Council increased its funding for SAVE, enabling the three participating legal services provider organizations - Her Justice, Safe Horizon, and Sanctuary for Families – to increase services for survivors facing matrimonial and family law issues in Family Court and Supreme Court.

Prevention

Along with addressing the needs of survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence with an array of services and partnerships to assist with their well-being, we recognize that in order to

prevent and lessen the incidence of DV, educational efforts need to continue targeting youth as they enter middle and high school, promoting the importance of healthy relationships.

For twenty years now, HRA's Teen Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP) has helped teens attending public high schools and middle schools develop healthier relationships. Social workers (MSW) deliver an array of relationship abuse services through four components: prevention classes, intervention counseling, staff development and training, and community outreach. RAPP fosters a school climate with zero tolerance for abusive behavior in all of its forms, thereby promoting a safe and productive learning environment for students and staff. For several years, RAPP has also focused on pregnancy-prevention efforts. Currently, 32 MSWs are serving 93 schools citywide. During the 2018-2019 school years, over 8,000 students received RAPP intervention services and counseling, and more than 5,500 completed the three-session curriculum.

Streamlined Transition

State regulations require emergency domestic violence shelters to provide temporary housing and supportive services to DV survivors for a maximum of 90 days, and then two additional 45-day extensions may be provided for residents who continue to be in need of temporary shelter and emergency services. Every provider is expected to assist clients in developing a transition or exit strategy. The Office of Domestic Violence (ODV) works closely with providers to support staff and clients during each transition.

In 2017, HRA and, our sister agency, Department of Homeless Services (DHS) collaborated and implemented a streamlined process for survivors exiting DV emergency shelter who reached maximum length of stay to transition to DHS shelter. This process promotes a safer and more efficient path for DV clients to access DHS resources and simplifies admissions. This results in immediate placement in a DHS facility for DV survivors and their children, avoiding the PATH intake process and conditional DHS placement status.

While these clients are waiting for DHS placement, they maintain their placement in the domestic violence emergency shelter system, and as part of the streamlined process, they complete discharge plans which include linkages to after-care services.

HRA Domestic Violence Programs and Services

The Office of Domestic Violence (ODV) provides temporary housing, emergency shelter and supportive services, and trauma informed programming to survivors of domestic violence and their children.

No Violence Again (NoVA)

NoVA, established in 1991, addresses the needs of domestic violence survivors seeking emergency housing from DHS. When a family member discloses that she/he has experienced domestic violence during the DHS intake process (at PATH for families, AFIC for adults without minor children, and single intake centers), the family or individual is sent to NoVA for a domestic violence safety assessment and possible placement in an HRA-administered DV shelter. NoVA staff use a set of criteria to determine eligibility based on the following:

- Whether s/he is a domestic violence survivor in accordance with New York Social Services Law § 459 and the definitions and procedures specified in 98-ADM-3;
- Whether there is a relationship between the need for emergency shelter for current safety and the incident of domestic violence; and
- Whether the perpetrator meets the definition of “family or household member” in accordance with NoVA procedures.

Domestic Violence Liaison Unit

The Domestic Violence Liaison Unit is a service mandated by the Family Violence Option Act, which is intended to protect survivors of domestic violence, both living in shelter and in communities, who could be further endangered through compliance with public assistance requirements, particularly those related to employment and child support.

Liaisons serve all HRA FIA Job Centers and determine eligibility for waivers from work and other requirements as the client’s confidentiality needs dictate. These waivers give some clients a greater opportunity to avoid activities that put their safety in jeopardy and give other clients an opportunity to safely comply with federal and state work requirements, so that they develop the skills and training necessary to locate a job, and quickly transition from HRA benefits and services in order to establish and maintain their financial independence. In FY19, the Domestic Violence Liaison Unit assessed 11,482 clients for safety and DV service needs and 7,365 waivers were granted.

Anti-Domestic Violence Eligibility Needs Team (ADVENT)

In FY19, the Anti-Domestic Violence Eligibility Needs Team (ADVENT) provided specialized services to an average of 1,369 clients in DV shelter each month. ADVENT conducts routine and ongoing eligibility determinations, provides case management, and engages survivors of domestic violence in activities designed to address their individualized needs. ADVENT works closely with domestic violence liaisons to monitor and respond to the needs of survivors of DV and their families. The Unit also processes housing applications and lease ups for HRA housing programs for clients in DV shelter.

The Alternative to Shelter (ATS)

The Alternative to Shelter (ATS) program minimizes the need to enter shelter by giving survivors of domestic violence – who have orders of protection – the option of remaining safely in their home. An ATS client's safety needs are assessed and a safety plan is put in place with close coordination with the NYPD to ensure that the individual and/or family are able to quickly alert the authorities when in danger. The program provides clients with a personal electronic response alarm system linked to a 24-hour monitoring center that will notify authorities to dispatch police in the event of an alarm activation. Survivors of domestic violence also receive crisis intervention counseling, ongoing case management, advocacy and referrals to services. In CY18, ATS received 554 new referrals and had an average active caseload of 195 clients per month.

Response to Legislation

Intro 1712 would amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York, in relation to reporting on the services provided to transgender and gender non-conforming individuals in domestic violence shelters.

We look forward to working with the sponsor to ensure that all clients are treated with dignity and respect. As drafted, we have some concerns, namely about ensuring that collection of such information about transgender and non-binary people does not create barriers to access, raise privacy concerns, and/or further traumatize a client in an already vulnerable situation. We look forward to better understanding the purpose of the data collection – for example, an interest in the number of TGNC people accessing DV services, or about service provision, and/or specialized DV services for TGNC people. There may be alternative means to meet our shared interest in ensuring gender-affirming services for transgender and non-binary people accessing our DV shelters.

Intro 152 would amend the Administrative Code of the City of New York, in relation to requiring the Department of Homeless Services to report on families with children in shelter. We look forward to working with the sponsor to better understand the intention and goal of such reporting. I'd like to remind the Committee that clients in domestic violence shelters are subject to strict confidentiality requirements and, as written, would require client consent for the collection and exact use of the data for this reporting purpose.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and I look forward to your questions.

REMARKS OF

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER/GENERAL COUNSEL ELIZABETH DANK
MAYOR'S OFFICE TO END DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY AND COMMITTEE ON
GENERAL WELFARE

"Oversight – Update: HRA System of Domestic Violence Shelters"

September 24, 2019

Good morning Chairpersons Rosenthal and Levin, and members of the City Council Committees on Women and Gender Equity and General Welfare. I am Elizabeth Dank, Deputy Commissioner/General Counsel of the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV). I am pleased to be here today with our colleagues at HRA to speak with you about Domestic Violence resources and services.

The Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence (ENDGBV), which was re-launched and expanded in 2018 via Executive Order 36, develops policies and programs, provides training and prevention education, conducts research and evaluations, performs community outreach, and operates the New York City Family Justice Centers (FJCs). We collaborate with City agencies and community stakeholders to ensure access to inclusive services for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, including: intimate partner and family violence, elder abuse, sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking.

The FJCs are walk-in multi-service Centers in each borough for survivors to access free, confidential services and support. ENDGBV has an onsite administrative team at each FJC to oversee operations and coordination of all onsite partners and providers, which include community-based organizations that provide civil legal services, case management, counseling, and children's services; City agencies, including the Human Resource Administration (HRA), Health+Hospitals (H+H) and the New York City Police Department (NYPD), as well as District Attorney's Offices; and other providers that offer a wide array of supportive services. Through our partnership with the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC, at every Family Justice Center there are now on-site clinicians to

provide mental health services and support for domestic violence and gender-based violence survivors and their families. Co-locating providers and agencies onsite at each FJC makes it easier for survivors to get help. FJCs welcome people of all incomes, ages, sexual orientations and gender identities, regardless of the language they speak, their immigration status, or housing situation. FJC services and programs are available to all qualifying New Yorkers, including those in shelter, whether they are in domestic violence shelter or the broader homeless shelter system. Service delivery at the FJCs is consistent with trauma informed, client-centered approaches to care.

In 2019, through September 1st, the five Family Justice Centers have served almost 18,000 unique clients through 43,000 client visits. During that time, over 1,300 clients received housing and shelter advocacy services such as advocacy with shelter placement and assistance applying for the permanent housing options available for dv survivors in the City. Of the 1,300 clients receiving housing and shelter advocacy services this year, almost 600 of them received assistance obtaining emergency shelter.

ENDGBV collaborates with City agencies and community partners to connect survivors with resources including the comprehensive array of services available at the FJCs, through community based domestic violence programs and through other City programs. All New Yorkers including those in domestic violence and homeless shelters, may access these services.

ENDGBV, including the FJCs, work closely with our colleagues and partners at the Department of Social Services (DSS) to assist FJC clients seeking shelter or other housing assistance. We also collaborate with the City-contracted shelter

directors, streamline referral processes to services and resources, and discuss ways to enhance collaboration and support for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence entering the shelter systems.

Additionally, onsite FJC providers provide advocacy and navigation assistance to support FJC clients with the domestic violence shelter intake process and/or the homeless shelter intake process. ENDGBV and HRA are also committed to enhancing partnerships between the FJCs and shelters, and we have worked closely with ThriveNYC to ensure shelter residents have access to onsite mental health services at the FJCs, which are implemented through H+H staff, and include psychiatry and psychotherapy. The FJC Mental Health Program has served approximately 340 unique clients so far in 2019.

In addition to our collaboration through direct services for survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, ENDGBV also works closely with DSS to provide relevant trainings and technical assistance to shelter staff and service providers. ENDGBV's Training Team has developed a cadre of trainings that range from Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) 101 to more advanced trainings including topics such as trauma-informed practices, risk assessment and safety planning, and IPV and the LGBTQ+ Community, which are designed to equip direct service providers with best practices when working with survivors. Through our partnerships with HRA and DHS, we have trained over 5,300 agency employees and contracted staff who work with or may come in contact with people in the shelter system who are experiencing or have experienced domestic and/or gender-based violence. We have also partnered with DHS and HRA to provide ongoing monthly IPV101 trainings and advanced trainings for their staff,

specifically targeting new employees and contracted staff for the IPV101 training. During IPV101 trainings, DHS and HRA representatives often deliver presentations on agency policies and procedures related to domestic and gender-based violence.

ENDGBV works to provide comprehensive, accessible services for all New Yorkers experiencing domestic or gender-based violence. Our work extends from connecting survivors with direct service providers to training service providers and City agency staff across the City to work with individuals in a trauma-informed manner. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with our City agency colleagues, our community partners and other stakeholders to better serve survivors, particularly those in shelter. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to these issues, and I welcome any questions the committees may have.



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**Testimony of Jelaine Altino,
Deputy Clinical Director of Residential Services
Sanctuary for Families
before The New York City Council
Committee on Women & Gender Equity
and Committee on General Welfare
September 24, 2019**

Good morning. My name is Jelaine Altino, and I am the Deputy Clinical Director of Residential Services at Sanctuary for Families, New York State's largest provider of comprehensive services exclusively for survivors of domestic violence and trafficking. We are so grateful to the City Council for the opportunity to testify today, and to Council Members Levin and Rosenthal for bringing this critical discussion of the domestic violence shelter system to the Council's attention. We are also grateful to the Human Resources Administration and Department of Social Services for being our trusted partners in providing high-quality services to our residential clients.

We are all aware of the crisis of poverty, homelessness, and lack of affordable housing that confronts the poorest members of our community. For more than 25 years, Sanctuary has run a large, 58-family transitional shelter and four small crisis shelters that together provide residence for 350-400 adults and children annually—200 each night. Access to trauma-informed, holistic supportive services for clients during their stay in shelter can make a huge difference in their post-shelter outcomes—whether they find living-wage jobs, secure affordable permanent housing, receive benefits to which they are entitled, and experience recovery from the trauma of abuse. Integral to the delivery of high-quality services is the City shelter system's responsiveness and flexibility in dealing with the struggles faced by abuse survivors, its funding support for supportive services and housing vouchers, and its sensitivity to people who have experienced trauma.

HRA's Emergency Intervention Services unit has made significant improvements in recent years—for example, facilitating a quicker turnaround time for shelter reimbursements, and introducing a new voice recognition system for residents to complete daily check-

ins. There are, however, a few areas that warrant attention, related to the need for a more trauma-informed approach to working with families impacted by abuse.

For example, in multiple instances, our shelter residents were initially deemed ineligible for housing vouchers based on incorrect calculations of income against federal poverty guidelines. The response from Emergency Intervention Services is that the clients should request fair hearings through another HRA department to verify the numbers. It would be a great help if HRA could investigate such errors internally through interdepartmental communication—rather than burden abuse survivors with the additional stress and economic anxiety of a fair hearing.

Another major concern is the complex, arguably punitive public assistance requirements placed on shelter residents in order to qualify for housing vouchers. Clients must strike a delicate balance, working and showing some income—but not too much—while their voucher is pending. They may have to decline job opportunities that would disqualify them for vouchers (but not enough income to pay unsubsidized rents)—and ensure that they never miss PA meetings, which would result in a sanction and make their voucher null and void. They must navigate this confusing bureaucracy while living in shelter and dealing with the many challenges of being a single parent recovering from trauma.

The struggle to find affordable post-shelter housing remains the single most pressing issue to be addressed for residents of the City's domestic violence shelters. Voucher levels are insufficient to meet NYC market rents, and brokers rarely have apartments within reach. Landlords are still reluctant to accept vouchers because they do not want to be forced to make repairs for HRA inspections, or to rely on housing subsidy programs which come and go. Lastly, vouchers expire and take a long time to renew, which can put the housing search on hold indefinitely, leading to longer shelter stays or transfer to the PATH system—an unsuitable and often dangerous situation for abuse survivors and families.

Annual shelter costs are far costlier than housing vouchers. At our Tier II shelter, 30 days of shelter for a family at \$138 per night comes to \$4,153 per month—or more than \$50,000 annually. At our crisis shelters, we receive \$125 per person/ per night—for a family of four

that is \$498 per night, almost \$15,000 per month—close to \$180,000 annually. From the city’s perspective, it is clearly sound economics to ease the voucher process for abuse survivors and their families so they can find permanent housing quickly after leaving, and not put bureaucratic roadblocks in their way.

Sanctuary does its best to mitigate the challenges our residential clients face with a rich web of supportive services to help them navigate complex systems. Our shelter residents have regular meetings with case managers and housing specialists; licensed clinicians are available for mental health needs; and our Tier II shelter has a full-time childcare center. Sanctuary shelter clients also have access to our full range of additional services including legal representation; counseling; economic aid including Metrocards, a well-stocked clothing boutique, food pantries, and emergency financial assistance; and our career training program, which offers priority to shelter residents.

We know these services are critical to shelter clients establishing durable independence after they leave shelter—but shelter reimbursements do not meet the cost of even shelter-based services, let alone support critical services like our career training. Sanctuary invests over \$500,000 annually to cover supportive services at our crisis and transitional shelters. Needless to say, this is not a sustainable model over the long term.

Another critical issue is the lack of shelter for single abuse survivors. Like most DV shelter providers, Sanctuary has almost exclusively family shelters, and although we periodically take a financial loss to provide safe housing to single survivors, we cannot afford to have them occupy family units on a long term basis. The needs of single abuse survivors must be part of any conversation about streamlining shelter referral processes as well as prioritization for NYCHA and other affordable permanent housing options.

HRA has been an outstanding partner in problem solving—the EIS team has been so responsive when we have concerns to address. Given that, we are confident the issues highlighted today can be effectively addressed as well. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and thank you for your work on behalf of abuse survivors and their families on their journeys from survival, to safety, to independence.

While there isn't time to read this now, I am attaching with this testimony comments from a recent shelter resident that give a stark example of the challenges faced trying to navigate the housing voucher process. I urge you all to read it.

TESTIMONY

"I lived in a domestic violence shelter, with my autistic son for 2 years and 9 months. I was completely overjoyed about being accepted into a one bedroom apartment, through a non-profit New Destiny. That excitement quickly turned into despair. I anticipated exiting the shelter with a voucher would be a fairly easy obstacle, since I had been in a shelter for an extensive amount of time. Unfortunately HRA turned that process into a seven month process which felt like years to calculate my household income. My time had no value to HRA. After that long intensive wait, they still made mistakes, and had no desire to rectify them.

They ultimately rejected my City FEPS packet. My housing specialist tried to provide accurate information and hope, which was impossible, since HRA unit was negligent to correspond. This battle for a city voucher has been the hardest obstacle I faced in my life. I completely lost all hope that I would exit the shelter system, and a will to live. After seven long months I finally moved into my apartment. I'm writing this testimonial, to manifest change within the shelter system. HRA should have deadlines to provide information to all parties involved. Client vouchers should be updated periodically, not when they find an apartment. Clients' household income should be budgeted accurately. Most importantly, treat individuals like human beings. I hope my testimonial holds HRA accountable for aiding New York's broken shelter system."



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Good morning. My name is Alida Tchicamboud, and I am a Survivor Leader for Sanctuary for Families, New York State's largest comprehensive service provider exclusively for survivors of domestic violence and trafficking. We are so grateful to the Committee on Women and Gender Equity and its Chair, Council Member Helen Rosenthal, and the committee on General Welfare and its Chair Stephen Levin for the opportunity to speak today. We greatly appreciate the City Council's concern about the efficiency of the HRA Domestic Violence Shelter system.

As a former resident of a Sanctuary for Families shelter, I cannot stress enough the importance of such facilities operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.

I came to NYC three years ago with my three little girls completely broken and barely alive. After a couple of nights in a scary motel, being admitted at a domestic violence shelter was the best thing that could have happened to me. On April 2016, I stepped through the doors of the shelter. There I was, a nervous and defeated woman who was at the lowest point of her life with no options at all.

I had never been in a shelter before, but surprisingly this place defeated all the stigma I had of a homeless shelter. The DV shelter was really the best thing since I started the long journey of running away from my abuser. I really liked it there. The facility was clean, well-maintained, and the staff was properly trained to deal with DV clients. I was happy in that one-bedroom apartment. The neighborhood was safe and convenient and we had wonderful social events with other families living in the shelter. I remember sharing with my friend next door how blessed we were at the DV shelter, because I exchanged with other women I met at HRA who had horrible experiences in other general shelters.

Sadly, after three months, things started changing for me and my experience suddenly was not that great anymore. The minute I received my Cityfeps housing voucher, the pressure was on. I was immediately urged to find an apartment and move out of the shelter. I could not stay at the DV shelter past six months.

I had just started to feel better, I was just transitioning from heavy medication to medium intake, and remember that I am new to New York City, so I had no idea how difficult, or I'd rather say, how impossible, it is to find an apartment in three months. To prove to the agency how hard I tried to find a place, I had a record of 4 notebooks that I used as an apartment search log, a Ziploc bag full of realtors' business cards and a special folder called "Apartment search" in my inbox with 650 emails.

Can you imagine 650 emails standing between you and finding a place for your family to live?

The apartment search was so hard because:

- Landlords are very skeptical and many of them don't accept housing voucher programs. I was afraid to even mention the voucher over the phone because they would hang up and not let me see the apartment.
- The vouchers that are given now are not nearly enough to cover New York City rent prices, especially an apartment for a family.

The housing specialist in charge of helping me admitted that it was not my fault. It was so important to hear this because my abuser always set me up for failure and made me feel like it was my fault. The apartment search made me feel the same.

I looked for an apartment day and night and I didn't find one. The pressure of finding an apartment was nothing compared to what I was going to live through outside of the shelter. After six months at the DV shelter, the nightmare started. I went back to PATH, and things got worse. Unfortunately for me, all the DV shelters in New York City were full, so I had to be placed in a regular family shelter.

How could this happen? I wondered why?

Just when things started to get better, when I could finally see the end of my nightmare, I went back into the downfall. There was no other answer than: the system had failed me. Here I was, entering the non-confidential homeless system and no one cared how dangerous this could be for my young children and for myself. I won't elaborate on that, because that's another issue on its own. But what I want to point out here is that six months is not enough for a DV survivor to get well and move on into something else.

Based on my experience, I see three problems with the system.

First of all, if we are going to have shelters, even though they are transitional, let's give survivors a minimum of 1 year to build themselves first. And because New York City has such a complex housing policy, let's put the burden of finding housing on the community agencies, not on the survivors.

Secondly, it's imperative to increase the City vouchers annually to match the rent stabilization guidelines, because what is being given right now is unrealistic to find an apartment. New York City is an expensive city.

Lastly, it seems like the system works against survivors, especially for single women with dependent minor children by forcing them to fall back into the cycle of lifetime public assistance.

Just to cite a couple of examples:

- Client PA cases are mistakenly closed, putting survivors and their families at risk of eviction while they resolve the case. (which is my situation right now)
- Exiting shelter without proper planning, in my case, without trauma-focused support, delays survivors in their healing journey. I am talking about the support accessible on site when you are in a DV shelter, which is completely different from the assistance you can receive from community agencies.

HRA has been good at providing appropriate and safe sites to survivors of domestic violence, now the challenge is to assure efficient solutions when exiting those shelters.

That's why we recommend that the City builds more affordable permanent housing units with survivors of domestic violence as the top priorities to occupy those facilities.

We suggest that the City elaborates on and implements trauma-focused strategies to accompany survivors exiting shelters.

Finally, we need to strengthen the City's efforts to prosecute landlords who illegally refuse to take rental assistance.

Thank you for all that you do to support New York City's abuse survivors and for the opportunity to testify here today.



moving victims of violence from crisis to confidence

**Testimony of
Jimmy Meagher
Safe Horizon**

Oversight - Update: HRA System of Domestic Violence Shelters

In Support of T2019-5075: Authorizing shelters for victims of domestic violence to be reimbursed for any payment differential for housing a single individual in a room intended for double occupancy. (A.2381/S.5471)

Committee on Women and Gender Equity

Hon. Helen K. Rosenthal, Chair

Committee on General Welfare

Hon. Stephen T. Levin, Chair

New York City Council

September 24, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Jimmy Meagher, my pronouns are he/him/his, and I am Policy Director at Safe Horizon. Safe Horizon is the nation's leading victim assistance organization and New York City's largest provider of services to victims and survivors of crime and violence, their families, and communities.

I am here today to offer information about Safe Horizon's role connecting transgender, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary (TGNCNB) folx to domestic violence shelter. And I am also here to offer Safe Horizon's strong support of Council Member Farah Louis' resolution calling for the New York State Legislature to pass A.2381/S.5471. This legislation would authorize shelters for victims of domestic violence to be reimbursed for any payment differential for housing a single individual in a room intended for double occupancy.

Safe Horizon operates New York City's 24-hour domestic violence hotline. Our hotline advocates offer personalized, non-judgmental support to survivors of domestic violence and provide safety planning and information about local resources. Our hotline is also the centralized intake for survivors seeking emergency domestic violence shelter in New York City.

A major obstacle facing many survivors is difficulty accessing domestic violence shelter as a single adult. Based on our data, this obstacle may be felt acutely by TGNCNB survivors. We have some data on the number of TGNCNB survivors calling the hotline for shelter, though of course trans, gender nonconforming, and nonbinary survivors calling our hotline may not disclose their gender identity for any number of reasons, including the fear of discrimination. We do not require callers to disclose this information, and those who do disclose do so voluntarily. In FY19, of the thousands of single adults who called seeking shelter placement, 35 (or 1%) identified their gender as trans or "other." Only three people identifying their gender as trans or "other" sought placement with one or more children.

In FY19, the hotline provided telephonic services to 7,586 unique callers seeking placement in emergency domestic violence shelter. 3,328, or about 44%, of those callers seeking shelter placement were single adults. This category of survivors, single adults with no children, was the largest category of survivors calling for shelter. Although 44% of hotline callers seeking shelter were single adults, we were only able to link 33% of these callers to shelter. By comparison, 16% of our hotline callers were from a family of three (typically a mother and 2 children), and we were able to link 73% of these callers to shelter. 30% of our hotline callers were from families of two (typically a mother and one child) and we were able to link 75% of these callers to shelter. These numbers refer to callers being linked to a provider for that organization's own assessment, not callers actually being accepted into shelter. This barrier to shelter is why we support A.2381/S. 5471, which I will return to in a moment.

In addition to managing the hotline, Safe Horizon also operates six (6) emergency domestic violence shelters and two (2) transitional, or Tier II, shelters across New York City. We currently provide 745 beds across these eight (8) shelters. Our confidential domestic violence shelters provide healing environments for families and individuals leaving a dangerous situation. We provide safety planning, counseling, housing assistance, case management, and other supportive services. We provide on-site mental health treatment at two (2) of our shelters, and we offer economic empowerment programming at all of our shelters. We have an agreement with the

New York City Anti-Violence Project, AVP, which works with LGBTQ+ survivors, to set aside three (3) beds for AVP clients. Sometimes we have up to four (4) additional beds available in another one of our shelters.

TGNCNB survivors face all of the same obstacles and challenges that many cisgender survivors do: trauma, confusing and controlling systems, economic insecurity, the herculean task of finding affordable permanent housing, etc. But they also face discrimination, hate, and additional forms of violence. Here are two client stories provided by my colleagues at one of our shelters:

A white trans man in his thirties relocated to one of Safe Horizon's domestic violence shelters after being physically assaulted by his intimate partner. He was able to bring his service animal, a cat, with him during his shelter stay, which helped. This survivor expressed that he was concerned about other shelter residents finding out about his identity as a trans man. He also worried about his housing options once he timed out of shelter; finding safe permanent housing is incredibly difficult in NYC and he had many safety concerns about entering a DHS shelter as a trans person. When his time in the DV shelter ended, he relocated to a friend's house. This is not an option for all survivors.

Another survivor, a trans woman of color in her thirties, entered one of our DV shelters after her partner threatened her with a gun. She escaped and temporarily stayed with her mother. She never called the police because she did not feel safe to do so. She, too, expressed how difficult finding safe, secure, affordable housing is, and she, too, stated that DHS shelters are not safe. During her DV shelter stay, a roommate in her safe dwelling apartment expressed anger and frustration to be living with a transgender person and having to explain to her teenage son what "transgender" means. Our shelter staff mediated. Our client explored living with her mother but felt ambivalent because her mother did not accept her being trans. When her time in shelter ended, she left to stay with a friend. Again, this is not always an option for all survivors.

Safe Horizon strives to be an inclusive, accepting, healing environment for all survivors. When it comes to serving LGBTQ+ survivors, and more specifically TGNCNB survivors, we train and support staff, but we can always do better. We are grateful for our relationship with AVP. We have leaned on and learned from AVP's expertise countless times, whether for training staff on LGBTQ Terminology 101 and TGNCNB Awareness, consulting on individual cases, or advocating together around macro-level issues facing survivors. And our shelter staff are guided by the Shelter Access Toolkit, created by the New York State LGBTQ Intimate Partner Violence Network, which is coordinated by AVP.

Safe Horizon's LGBTQ+ Affinity Group is a space for members of the LGBTQ+ community at Safe Horizon to meet one another, support one another, and guide the organization's efforts to be an inclusive space for LGBTQ+ staff and clients. We are working to develop more in-house trainings. We've facilitated several conversations on intersectionality, racism and sexism within LGBTQ+ communities, and the experiences of queer and trans folx of color.

Because of the challenges facing single adults trying to access domestic violence shelters, Safe Horizon strongly supports A.2381/S.5471, which will increase the availability of domestic violence shelter options for single adult victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and

trafficking. The bill will ensure that domestic violence shelter providers who accommodate a single adult in a room designed for two individuals will receive a differential to preserve the existing per diem rate.

Across the State but particularly in New York City, the emergency domestic violence shelter system was configured for families. Most rooms are designed to hold a family of two, three, or more. Single adults seeking safety in a domestic violence shelter, then, face significant obstacles in obtaining this needed program. A.2381/S.5471 will require New York State to preserve the full reimbursement rate for providers who “downsize” a room configured for a family of two to accommodate a single adult individual. By removing the financial barrier for domestic violence shelter providers to house single adults, the bill will give greater access to the domestic violence shelter system to single adults who otherwise faced considerable obstacles to accessing the shelter system.

Currently, the New York State Office for Children and Family Services (OCFS) reimburses non-profit domestic violence emergency shelter providers with a per-person, per-night rate. This reimbursement rate is intended to cover all costs associated with operating the shelter, including rent, utilities, staffing, insurance, and other programmatic costs. Any reduction in this reimbursement severely impacts a provider’s ability to cover the operating costs of the shelter. This gives domestic violence shelter providers a major financial disincentive to downsize rooms intended for families to house smaller families, including single adult individuals who are victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault. This current policy disproportionately impacts single individuals, who have a more difficult time accessing the emergency shelter system and who might remain in unsafe situations as a result.

A.2381/S.5471 will require New York State to preserve the full reimbursement rate for providers who “downsize” a room configured for a family of two to accommodate a single adult individual. By removing the financial disincentive for domestic violence shelter providers to house single individuals, A.2381/S.5471 will give greater access to the domestic violence emergency shelter system to single adults who otherwise faced serious obstacles to accessing this shelter system.

As I discussed earlier, our domestic violence hotline receives many requests from individuals seeking shelter, and while the City has added more shelter capacity for single adult victims of domestic violence, emergency shelter options for single adults continue to be extremely limited. By allowing shelter providers greater flexibility to downsize a room meant for two people to accommodate a single adult, organizations will have increased capacity to serve single adults fleeing violence and abuse.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any additional questions.



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**Testimony of New Destiny Housing Corporation
Joint Hearing by Committee on General Welfare and the Committee on Women's Issues
September 19, 2019**

**Presented by
Alyssa Keil, Director of HousingLink, New Destiny Housing Corporation**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today at this Joint Oversight Hearing for HRA's Domestic Violence Shelter System. My name is Alyssa Keil and I am the Director of HousingLink at New Destiny Housing, a 25-year old not-for-profit committed to ending the cycle of domestic violence and homelessness by connecting families to safe, permanent housing and services. New Destiny currently operates 8 affordable housing projects with on-site services for domestic violence survivors. Another 208 units in 3 projects are under construction.

I would like to start by saying that New Destiny supports Introduction 152, Introduction 1712, and Resolution A.2381/S.5471 and thanks the Councilmembers for their efforts to create much more transparency around the New York City shelter systems.

Domestic violence is one of the main drivers of family homelessness in New York City. In the 2018 HUD Point In Time (PIT) Count for New York City, victims of domestic violence were the third largest homeless sub-population in NYC after the mentally ill and people with substance abuse histories.

Yet, despite their size and significance among NYC's homeless population, domestic violence survivors have remained a marginalized and often neglected group. The choices available to them are limited. Considerable resources have been invested in the domestic violence shelter system but very few investments have been made in alternatives to shelter and post-shelter housing and services.

Temporary, safe shelter is a critical part of any continuum of care for survivors. Some victims of domestic violence need the service-rich, short-term respite that domestic violence shelter provides.

But, not everyone fleeing abuse wants to, or can, go into shelter. The reasons are many - including the fear of dislocating children from schools and friends or of leaving a supportive religious or cultural community or the desire to maintain a job.

Unfortunately, those victims are too often presented with only one choice: go into shelter or remain in a dangerous situation.

In other parts of the country, however, groups serving domestic violence victims have begun looking at new and different ways of helping victims achieve long-term safety and stability – including rapid rehousing and safety in place.

For over 4 years, New Destiny has operated a **rapid rehousing program** -- modeled on similar programs in Washington and Oregon -- that connects victims of domestic violence with vacant units managed by private and nonprofit affordable housing providers. This unique program, co-located in NYC's Family Justice Centers, offers an alternative to shelter for survivors fleeing domestic violence who are trying to avoid becoming homeless. New Destiny identifies potential apartments, matches applicants to them, provides financial and technical assistance as needed, and offers support services for up to 2 years after a survivor is placed in a unit. Landlords *and* tenants know they can call on New Destiny if there are problems after the move. With a lean staff and minimal funding, New Destiny has been able to place 100 households in permanent housing – helping them to avoid shelter or to significantly shorten their shelter stay as well as the trauma of homelessness for themselves and their children. Based on our experience, we know rapid rehousing is an innovative and cost-effective approach that can reduce the number of survivors using shelter and that it can be implemented even in a high-cost housing market like New York City.

Safety in place is another approach which could reduce the use of costly shelter. The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence found that victims of domestic violence would often choose to remain in their current housing if they could afford it. Unless safety dictates moving to a confidential location, remaining where they are is often the least expensive and least disruptive option for domestic violence survivors, especially for families with children. Frequently, however, victims cannot cover their housing costs once the abuser leaves. Rental assistance, at least for a short time, would help victims remain housing stable, assess their options, and determine their next steps without up-ending their lives and those of their children.

New York City HRA currently operates a safety in place program, Home + Safe program. While it has been used by only a small number of clients thus far, this program could be scaled up with three changes: (1) providing temporary rental assistance to allow victims to cover housing costs, (2) conducting more nuanced safety assessments that do not rely on an Order of Protection to qualify for the program, and (3) providing linkages to social services to support families as they remain in their housing.

Both of these approaches – rapid rehousing and safety in place—complement the existing shelter system and make the services and options available to survivors more robust. They are also less expensive and less traumatic than shelter. Again, shelter is necessary and the optimal place for some survivors. However, other shelter residents might not be there if other options were available. And, we need to provide safe options for victims who choose not to use shelter if we are to address and reduce domestic violence in New York City.

Finally, a few words about the choices that confront survivors leaving a short-term stay in domestic violence shelter. For the fortunate ones, a rental subsidy may provide a way to find housing in the private market. For others, they leave without stable housing and services—forced to rely upon friends and family to take them in temporarily or to apply for shelter in the general homeless system.

Permanent supportive housing, the evidence-based housing strategy for the chronically homeless, is not an option for most victims of domestic violence, due to the eligibility criteria of long-term homelessness or medical disability, as well as the small number of family units available.

In response to the dearth of permanent housing for domestic violence survivors, New Destiny has developed, and implemented over the past two decades, a **service-enriched rental housing** model which is a promising alternative for vulnerable survivors. With at least 50% of the units reserved for survivors and the remaining units for the so-called general population, services are provided on site directly by a small staff as well as through referrals to trusted community partners. Services are tailored for survivors and their children with the goal of helping them achieve housing stability, freedom from violence, economic security, and family well-being. Based on New Destiny's experience, the outcomes have been very positive -- with 98% of tenants remaining housing stable and violence free.

We can end the cycle of domestic violence for individuals and families at risk of homelessness and domestic violence by increasing the choices for victims beyond shelter. New models – rapid rehousing, safety in place, and service-enriched housing – provide opportunities for survivors to move directly or soon after shelter to safe permanent housing. Moreover, we need to seek parity between homeless victims of domestic violence and other homeless groups. Survivors of abuse should have equal access to existing resources financed by HPD.

Shelter will always be an important resource. But, it should not be the only resource.

We thank the Council for the opportunity to speak today and welcome any questions you may have.

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**The New York City Anti-Violence Project's Testimony
To the Committees on Women and Gender Equity and General Welfare**

"HRA's System of Domestic Violence Shelters"

**Council Member Helen Rosenthal, Chair, Committee on Women and Gender Equity
Council Member Stephen T. Levin, Chair, committee on General Welfare**

September 24, 2019

Good morning, Chair Rosenthal and Chair Levin, my name is Catherine Shugrue dos Santos, and I am the Deputy Executive Director for Programs at the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP). AVP wants to extend our deep gratitude to both of you for bringing your honorable committees together to discuss the life-saving resource that the HRA-operated domestic violence shelter system represents for New Yorkers in need. AVP appreciates our partnership with the Council, and particularly the Committee on Women and Gender Equity and the Committee on General Welfare, to ensure that LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities have access to safety, support, and services around all forms of violence. We also appreciate our partnership with HRA, with whom we have worked extensively to increase LGBTQ cultural competency among shelter providers in New York City, and with the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender Based Violence (ENDGBV), which has demonstrated strong leadership in ensuring New York City's prevention and response to domestic/intimate partner violence is relevant across sexual orientation and gender identity. In spite of promising work that is going on across the City, we have a long way to go to make safe, confidential, domestic violence shelter accessible to survivors across the spectrum of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Therefore, we support the bill introduced by Chair Rosenthal, "Reporting on the services provided to transgender and gender non-conforming individuals in domestic violence shelters."

As someone who ran domestic violence shelters in our City for fifteen years, I know firsthand that New York City has one of the most extensive and essential networks of shelters and safe homes for domestic violence survivors in the state and in the nation, but I can also attest that lifesaving resource is barred to most LGBTQ survivors of IPV, creating significant risk of escalating, even deadly violence for our communities. This is a crucible moment when we can take strong, positive steps to change that. AVP offers our expertise as a national provider of training and technical assistance on LGBTQ anti-violence work to support this effort.

AVP envisions a world in which all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ), and HIV-affected people are safe, respected, and live free from violence. AVP's mission is to empower LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities and allies to end all forms of violence through organizing and education, and support survivors through counseling and advocacy. AVP is the only LGBTQ-specific victim services agency in New York City, and the largest organization in the country dedicated exclusively to working with LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence, with a special focus on intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence (SV), hate violence (HV), hookup/pick-up/dating violence, stalking, and institutional violence. AVP contracts with HRA as the City-Wide provider of non-residential domestic violence services to LGBTQ communities, and we are the only LGBTQ-specific rape crisis center in New York State. All of our services are free, confidential, culturally specific, and geared towards meeting the needs of diverse LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence. AVP serves on the New York City Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee, the Mayor's Task Force on Domestic Violence, the New York City Gender Equity Commission, and New York State Office for Victims Services Advisory Council. AVP Chairs the Task Force on Domestic Violence and Economic Justice, as well as the Coalition on Working with Abusive Partners.

IPV is as pervasive, as dangerous, and as deadly in LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities, as it is in all communities, yet mainstream domestic violence service prevention and service programs have not kept up with the need to serve all survivors of IPV across sexual

orientation and gender identity. According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), LGB people experience intimate partner violence at about the same or slightly higher rate than non-LGB people.¹ The CDC report did not include findings on TGNC people, but research by the Williams Institute shows that 31 – 50% of Trans identified people report IPV in their life time, and 25-47% of Trans identified people report sexual violence from intimate partners in their life time.² AVP recognizes that LGBTQ and HIV-affected people hold multiple, intersecting identities (around race, class, immigration status, ability, age, and more), many of which are marginalized and put them at great risk of violence, including IPV, and which minimize their options for support, safety, and services. LGBTQ communities of color, as well as transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) communities, face disproportionate rates of violence and more barriers to support. Within the context of IPV support and services, gay and bisexual men are also particularly at risk for IPV and have little—if any—access to safety, support, and services, because mainstream DV services, especially shelter, are geared towards cisgender women abused by cisgender men. In this heteronormative, binary gender paradigm, LGBTQ survivors—particularly gay and bisexual men, and those who identify outside the binary of cisgender man/woman, like transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) communities—are invisible. This can have deadly consequence. According to a report by the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, a project of AVP, LGBTQ and HIV-affected IPV is deadly, with eleven homicides related to IPV reported in 2017—and we suspect the number is much higher, but under-reported, in part due to the invisibility of LGBTQ IPV. Of the 2017 reported

¹ Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Findings on Victimization by Sexual Orientation* (Jan. 2013). Retrieved on 4/26/14 at http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_SOfindings.pdf This survey did not include transgender or gender non-conforming people and no national federal study does.

² Brown, N.T. and Herman, J. L. (Williams Institute, 2015) *Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Abuse Among LGBT People: A Review of Existing Research*. Available at: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Intimate-Partner-Violence-and-Sexual-Abuse-among-LGBT-People.pdf>

IPV homicides, people of color made up the majority of the reports of LGBTQ and HIV affected IPV homicides.³

Despite the requirement set forth in the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act in 2013, which explicitly included anti-discrimination provisions on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity for the first time in federal law, and in the Administrative Directive⁴ issued in 2015 from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, which oversees domestic violence shelters there are precious few, if any, beds in New York City available at any time for survivors who do not identify as straight cisgender women with dependent children. Here at AVP, our clients regularly report being turned away from shelters and having no where to stay, thereby putting them at risk of further, potentially deadly violence. With hate violence against LGBTQ communities on the rise, these inexcusable practices endanger the lives of LGBTQ survivors. Survivors who cannot get into the domestic violence shelter system often end up in the homeless system, where they too often face hate violence around their LGBTQ identities, from staff and other residents. This is another urgent area for action by the Council.

LGBTQ survivors are often barred from other sources of support and safety in response to IPV, like reporting to police. Despite high rates of IPV in LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities, only 60% of survivors reporting to NCAVP shared that they engaged with the police, likely due to historical and current barriers. Of those who interacted with law enforcement, 58% reported that law enforcement was indifferent (47%) or hostile (11%) towards them. Police misconduct is one example of the intersecting forms of violence, including hate violence associated with their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of IPV have very often experienced as well as other intersecting identities,

³ National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), (2018), *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and HIV-affected Hate and Intimate partner Violence 2017*, available at <https://avp.org/2017-hv-ipv-report/>

⁴ http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/policies/external/OCFS_2015/ADMs/15-OCFS-ADM-23.pdf

which carry their own far-reaching negative health implications⁵ that compound the negative impact on physical, emotional, and economic health associated with IPV.⁶ For many survivors who don't feel comfortable going to the police or courts system, domestic violence shelter is one of the only pathways to safety they can consider, and it is too often barred to them, due to outdated and discriminatory practices that deny transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and masculine identified survivors.

Each year, millions of federal, state, and local public dollars are given to organizations to provide shelter to domestic violence survivors, and despite the fact that LGBTQ people are at higher risk for IPV, they have been historically excluded from these shelters, particularly transgender, gender non-conforming and non-binary survivors, and those who identify as gay and bisexual men. Historically, domestic violence programs have denied LGBTQ survivors full and equal access to their services, including safe shelter, because LGBTQ survivors did not meet many programs' traditional assumptions about who experiences IPV. As services were designed and structured to assist cisgender women, abused by cisgender men in heteronormative intimate relationships, LGBTQ survivors are excluded from services, and forced to endure abuse far longer and with greater intensity, because no competent service providers opened their doors. Like other survivors, LGBTQ people are forced to choose between homelessness, going back to their abusive partner, or stay in homeless shelters, increasing an LGBTQ individual's risk of harm, from their partner stalking them at a non-confidential location, and/or due to extensive hate violence experienced by LGBTQ people in homeless shelters. This form of institutional oppression is not only re-traumatizing, but it is also a violation of state and federal law that endangers the lives of IPV survivors.

⁵ Meyer, I., Ouellette, S., Haile, R. and McFarlane, T. Sexuality Research and Social Policy "'We'd Be Free': Narratives of Life Without Homophobia, Racism, or Sexism," in *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, September 2011, Volume 8, Issue 3, pp 204-214.

⁶ Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Intimate Partner Violence Consequences*, retrieved on 5/4/14 from: <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/consequences.html> and Raphael, J. Op. Cit.

In this climate of increasingly virulent hateful rhetoric and escalating attacks on LGBTQ people on the streets, in their homes, and in the public eye, survivors of IPV feel they have nowhere to turn if they also face violence in their intimate relationships. Therefore, it is more urgent than ever to expand access for LGBTQ survivors.

HRA and ENDGBV have long been allies in ensuring that all survivors have equal access to safe shelter, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We look forward to continuing this work with HRA and ENDGBV to build on this progress together.

Specifically, we respectfully ask that, in addition to passing the bill that requires data collection on TGNC survivors served in shelter, The Council work with the Mayor to:

1. Identify and release more funding to HRA and ENDGBV to create space that can accommodate single survivors of IPV in DV shelter, who identify across the spectrum of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI).
2. Identify and release more funding for community-based organizations to collaborate with HRA and ENDGBV to provide more and deeper training for mainstream shelter providers on how to engage survivors across SOGI, and how to create safe and affirming shelter spaces across SOGI.
3. Create mechanisms for ENDGBV and HRA to work together ensure compliance with local and federal shelter laws, including the 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and the Administrative Directive from the Office of Children and Family Services prohibiting discrimination on the basis of SOGI for entrance into DV shelter; and to protect LGBTQ survivors from enduring further violence from shelter staff, volunteers, or residents, once in the shelter system.

AVP is at the ready to continue our work with the Council, with HRA, and with ENDGBV to support these efforts. AVP provides direct services to survivors of LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of violence, including crisis intervention, safety planning, counseling, advocacy,

economic empowerment services, as well as information and referrals to organizations and institutions that provide services and resources outside the scope of AVP's services. AVP operates a free bilingual, 24-hour, 365-day-a-year crisis intervention hotline that is staffed by trained volunteers and our professional counselors and advocates, and welcomes survivors at walk-in hours at all of our eight intake sites across the five boroughs, including at all five New York Family Justice Centers, as well as community-based organizations serving LGBTQ and HIV-affected people. By providing direct services in all five boroughs, we are able to serve LGBTQ and HIV-affected survivors of all forms of violence who need our services where they live, work, and spend time, and we work with communities to address the issues specific to their neighborhoods.

AVP provides technical assistance to support shelters expand access and meet state and federal guidelines. Our trainings focus on LGBTQ 101, inclusive intake processes, and how to begin to shift practices and cultures to create inclusive shelter spaces. AVP coordinates the New York State LGBTQ IPV Network, which runs a Shelter Access Campaign that launched a Shelter Access Toolkit to support mainstream providers in creating safe and affirming spaces for LGBTQ survivors. AVP leads webinars on pertinent topics for shelter staff and management, such as the importance of data collection when serving LGBTQ survivors and other marginalized groups, and the experience of LGBTQ immigrant survivors. We welcome working in partnership with HRA and offering technical assistance around how to increase access to domestic violence shelter and nonresidential services for survivors across the spectrum of gender identity and sexual orientation, particularly for TGNC survivors and gay men, who are often denied access to these life-saving services.

We extend our gratitude to the Council for hearing our testimony, and urge you to act quickly to ensure access to lifesaving confidential domestic violence shelter for all survivors of intimate partner violence, across the spectrum of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Submitted 9/26/19

TOGETHER,
WE VOW TO
CREATE CHANGE.



Voices of Women
ORGANIZING & EMPOWERING SURVIVORS
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

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✉ info@vownow.org
VOWNOW.ORG

Date: Tuesday, September 24th, 2019

Location: Council Chambers - City Hall

Good Morning to the Committee on General Welfare, and all those present in the room at City Council. My name is Sharlena Powell and I am a proud survivor and advocate working with Voices of Women Organizing Project (VOW).

At VOW, we are a domestic violence survivor-led organization that has been built on improving the systems that survivors and their children turn to for safety and justice. The overarching goal at VOW is to implement strategies to hold accountable the governmental systems that should protect survivors and their families from violence and poverty, and aid them in their efforts to break the cycle of violence - most specifically the child welfare, family court, and homeless systems. Through training workshops, leadership opportunities, and healing activities, VOW members gain the skills and confidence needed to analyze practices and attitudes, document systemic failures, create recommendations, and meet with public officials and engage in important policy debates.

Domestic Violence should never equal Homelessness, although that has become the fate of countless survivors who have exhausted their stay at a Domestic Violence Emergency Shelter upon fleeing abuse. As the Housing Reform Campaign chairperson at VOW, part of our goals in relation to our mission is to educate fellow and incoming survivors of domestic violence on the existing housing systems, so that they are truly empowered by knowing how to navigate NYC's complex housing market. Within our plan of action, we have hosted and facilitated community focus groups on current solutions, or lack there-of, for survivors in need of rebuilding their lives and developing individualized plans in obtaining safe and affordable housing, and the prevention of revictimization and recidivism.

We support Councilman Levin from the previous Intent No. 152 proposed in early 2018, on data collection of the total number of families with children leaving shelter to permanent housing, disaggregated by shelter placement including: (a) tier II facility; (b) domestic violence shelter; (c) HASA shelter; (d) DYCD-administered crisis shelter; (e) cluster site; and (f) hotels. We would like to include data surveys of those who have been accommodated with a CITY FHEPS supplement, and well as a count of unknown residency, or return to their originally abusive intimate partner.

We also concur with identifying the percentage of families with children living in shelter in the same zip code, or a nearby zipcode within the respective zone/borough, where the family receives community based preventative services. Due to the projected

uncertainty of a survivor's family leaving shelter and establishing sustainability in a likely unknown neighborhood, it is imperative that the family receive adequate options for long-term planning, along with financial stability goals and technological savvy assistance, beyond their state of crisis.

We recommend that this overdue proposal in local law should have a level of urgency, in order to uncover the necessary steps needed to ensure survivor safety within their home, along with transparency measures needed at the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) and case management services. Thank You to all who are listening and we look forward to working with you in your respective communities.



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare and Committee on Women and Gender Equity

Re: HRA System of Domestic Violence Shelters and Intro. 152

September 24, 2019

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the education of students living in domestic violence shelters and legislation related to students living in shelters. My name is Randi Levine, and I am the Policy Director of Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For nearly 50 years, Advocates for Children has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. We assist and advocate for students whose needs are often overlooked, including students who are homeless.

In our work on the ground, we see a clear need for more coordination between the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Education (DOE) to meet the needs of students living in domestic violence shelters. We have had cases in which DOE staff has contacted and provided school information to an abuser, putting the safety of families in jeopardy. The City should review all DOE recordkeeping systems to help ensure that student information is protected and that the location of domestic violence shelters is not disclosed and must ensure that DOE staff is sufficiently trained. Furthermore, while all kindergarten through sixth grade students living in domestic violence shelters are entitled to bus service, we have seen challenges getting bus service in place. Unlike students in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) family shelters, students in domestic violence shelters are not automatically provided with busing, and there is often confusion about the responsibilities of school staff members and domestic violence shelter providers in arranging transportation and entering confidential addresses. This confusion leads to delays, unnecessary school transfers, and school absences. It is critical for the DOE and HRA to develop a joint protocol and training on school transportation, school enrollment, school-based safety planning, and procedures for collecting, storing, and keeping confidential information for students living in domestic violence shelters.

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We are pleased that Intro. 152-2018 is on today's agenda. This bill would provide important information about children living in shelters, including indicators regarding their education. For example, currently, the Mayor's Management Report includes the percentage of families placed in a shelter in the same *borough* as the youngest school-aged child's school. Given the large size of the boroughs, we are glad to see that Intro. 152 would require DHS to report the percentage of families placed in a shelter in the *school district* of the youngest school-aged child's school. We also appreciate that the bill includes indicators regarding early childhood education for children living in shelters. We are attaching a mark-up with recommendations to strengthen the bill to help ensure it produces effective data.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you. We look forward to working with you to move forward Intro. 152 and strengthen education for children and youth living in shelters. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Recommendations from Advocates for Children of New York re: Int. No. 152

Int. No. 152

By Council Members Levin, Brannan and Gibson

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of homeless services to report on families with children in shelter.

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 3 of title 21 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 21-321 to read as follows:

§ 21-321 Reporting on homeless families with children in shelter. a. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

Families with children. The term "families with children" means families comprised of adults and children under the age of 21, a single pregnant woman, or families including at least one pregnant woman.

Cluster site. The term "cluster site" means individual apartments within private buildings or a group of private buildings in geographic proximity to each other, under the operation of a social services provider, and used by the department to shelter families with children.

Child care assistance voucher. The term "child care assistance voucher" means a subsidy provided by the administration for children's services to eligible low income families to help them pay for child care.

DYCD. The term "DYCD" means the department of youth and community development.

DYCD-administered crisis shelters and transitional independent living programs. The term "DYCD-administered crisis shelters and transitional independent living programs" means city-administered facilities that provide short term emergency housing and longer-term shelter for

runaway and homeless youth and are managed by a provider under contract or similar agreement with DYCD.

Early Learn. The term “early learn” means affordable to no cost child care provided for eligible families through the department of education or by a provider under contract with the department of education, serving children from 6-weeks-old through 4-years-old.

Head Start. The term “head start” means federally funded affordable to no cost child care preschool focused on providing free child development activities and educational programs in the community for eligible families provided pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 9801 et seq.

Converted hotel. The term “converted hotel” means a building that historically operated as a hotel prior to its use as shelter and is currently used by the department as shelter.

Commercial hotel. The term “commercial hotel” means a building that continues to operate as a commercial hotel and also provides a number of units to the department to shelter residents.

Domestic violence shelter. The term “domestic violence shelter” means shelter directly managed by the department of social services or by a provider under contract or similar agreement with the department of social services, which provides temporary housing and supportive services to families with children who are victims of domestic violence.

HASA shelter. The term “HASA shelter” means congregate facilities managed by a provider under contract or similar agreement with the department of social services to provide emergency shelter for recipients of services from the HIV/AIDS administration.

HPD shelter. The term “HPD shelter” means a family center managed by the department of housing preservation or managed by a provider under contract or similar agreement with the

department of housing preservation and development to provide emergency shelter for families who have been displaced from their homes as a result of fires or city-issued vacate orders.

Homeless youth. The term “homeless youth” means a young person living in a DYCD-administered crisis shelter or a transitional independent living program.

Individualized education program (IEP). The term “individualized education program (IEP)” means a written statement, developed, reviewed and revised in accordance with section 200.4 of title 8 of the New York codes, rules, and regulations, provided to meet the unique educational needs of a student with a disability.

Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH). The term “prevention assistance and temporary housing (PATH)” means the intake facility where families with children must apply for shelter.

Preventative services. The term “preventative services” means services provided to families by the administration for children services that are designed to help families keep their children safely at home.

Shelter. The term “shelter” means a building, or individual units within a building, being utilized by the department or a provider under contract or similar agreement with the department to provide temporary emergency housing.

Tier II facility. The term “tier II facility” means a shelter facility subject to the provisions of part 900 of title 18 of the New York codes, rules, and regulations which provides shelter and services to 10 or more homeless families including, at a minimum, private rooms, access to three nutritional meals a day, supervision, assessment services, permanent housing preparation services, recreational services, information and referral services, health services, and child-care services.

b. Not later than July 1, 2018, and monthly thereafter, the department shall submit to the speaker of the council and post online a report regarding information on homeless families in shelter **including both conditional placements and placements for families who have been found eligible for shelter.** Such report shall include, but is not limited to, the following information:

1. The total number of homeless families **with children and homeless youth** currently living in shelter disaggregated by shelter placement including but not limited to: (a) tier II facility; (b) domestic violence shelter; (c) HASA shelter; (d) DYCD-administered crisis shelter **or transitional independent living program**; (e) cluster site; ~~and~~ (f) **converted** hotels; (g) **commercial hotels**; and (h) **HPD shelter placements.**

2. The total number of families with children who are new entries to the shelter system disaggregated by the total number of applications submitted prior to being found eligible.

3. The average length of stay for families with children in shelter **and homeless youth**, starting from the day families receive their first conditional placement where applicable, disaggregated by average length of stay in shelters administered by (a) the department of homeless services; (b) human resources administration's office of domestic violence; (c) HASA; (d) DYCD; and (e) HPD.

4. The total number of families with children **and homeless youth** leaving shelter to permanent housing disaggregated by shelter placement including: (a) tier II facility; (b) domestic violence shelter; (c) HASA shelter; (d) DYCD-administered crisis shelter **and transitional independent living programs**; (e) cluster site; (f) **converted hotels**; (g) **commercial hotels**; and (h) **HPD shelter placements.**(f) ~~hotels.~~

5. The percentage of families with children living in shelter in the same zip code where the family receives community based preventative services.

6. The percentage of families with children living in shelter in the same zip code as the head-of-household's job.

7. The number and percentage of students ~~families with children~~ in pre-k through 8th grade who, at the time of application, are placed in a shelter in the community ~~placed in the~~ school district where the ~~family's~~ youngest child ~~is attends school~~ enrolled in school, disaggregated by whether or not the youngest child enrolled in school has an IEP.

8. The number of students in pre-K through 8th grade enrolled in schools in New York City at the time of application for shelter.

~~8. The percentage of families with children placed in the district where a child has an IEP.~~

9. For students placed in shelter by the department of homeless services, ~~t~~he number and percentage of pre-k through 12th grade students who transfer schools while living in shelter disaggregated by (a) students who transfer schools while living in a conditional shelter placement and (b) students who transfer schools while living in shelter after they have been found eligible for shelter ~~school transfer rate for children living in shelter.~~

10. For students placed in shelter by the department of homeless services, ~~t~~he number and percentage of pre-k through 12th grade students; pre-k students; kindergarten through 6th grade students; 7th and 8th grade students; and high school students who missed more than (a) 10 days and (b) 18 days of school in one academic year ~~The average school attendance rate for children in shelter.~~

11. For students placed in shelter by the department of homeless services, ~~T~~he number and percentage of students who missed (a) 1 day of school, (b) 2-5 days of school, and (c) more than 5 days of school following initial intake at PATH disaggregated by: (a) students in pre-k; (b)

students in kindergarten through 6th grade; (c) students in 7th through 8th grade; and (d) students in high school.

12. For students placed in shelter by the department of homeless services, tThe number and percentage of students who missed (a) 1 day of school, (b) 2-5 days of school, and (c) more than 5 days of school following initial intake at PATH disaggregated by: (a) students who stayed in the same school; and (b) students who transferred schools.The average number of days from PATH intake to a child's enrollment in a new school.

12. The average number of school days missed after PATH intake, before a child's return to their school of origin.

13. The average number of days from entry into a domestic violence shelter until a child is enrolled in a new school.

134. The average number of days from when a child is first placed in shelter by the department of homeless services, including any conditional placement(s) entry into the shelter system until school transportation bus service is arranged starts for a child.

145. The number of children, ages 0-3, placed in shelter by the department of homeless services in ~~child care~~early care and learning programs, disaggregated by type including: (a) early learn; (b) head start; (c) 3-k for all; ~~and~~ (de) child care assistance voucher; and (e) preschool special education classes.

156. The number of children placed in shelter by the department of homeless services ~~in the shelter system~~ who are age-eligible for pre-kindergarten (pre-k for all) enrolled in (a) pre-kindergarten (pre-k for all); and (b) preschool special education classes.

16. The total number of children placed in shelter by the department of homeless services ~~in the shelter system~~ who are age-eligible for pre-kindergarten (pre-k for all).

17. The number of children, ages 0-3, placed in shelter by the department of homeless services in the shelter system screened referred for early intervention disaggregated by (a) the number who complete an early intervention evaluation; (b) the number found eligible; and (c) the number receiving early intervention services.

18. The total number of children, ages 0-3, placed in shelter by the department of homeless services in the shelter system.

c. No information that is otherwise required to be reported pursuant to this section shall be reported in a manner that would violate any applicable provision of federal, state or local law relating to the privacy of information relating to the privacy of student information or that would interfere with law enforcement investigations or otherwise conflict with the interests of law enforcement. If any category requested contains between 1 and 5 youth-in foster care, or allows another category to be narrowed to between 1 and 5 students, the number shall be replaced with a symbol.

§ 2. This local law takes effect immediately.



URINYC
Urban Resource Institute

CITY COUNCIL TESTIMONY

URBAN RESOURCE INSTITUTE

75 Broad Street, Suite 505, New York, NY 10004

September 24, 2019

My name is Dr. Carla Smith and I have had the pleasure of serving as the Chief Program Officer for the Urban Resource Institute for the last four years. Prior to assuming this role I served as the Director of Finance and Administration at the Antiviolence Project where I also completed my dissertation research on examining access barriers to emergency domestic violence shelters for transgender survivors of intimate partner violence. During that time I became acutely aware of the challenges experienced by members of the LGBTQ community in accessing shelter. My decision to transition to my current role at URI stemmed in part from my understanding of URI's commitment to developing innovative residential and nonresidential services for victims of IPV, including those who identified as LGBTQ.

For those of you who are not aware, URI has been in operation for close to 40 years and is now the largest domestic violence shelter provider in the country. We currently offer close to 1200 beds to victims of domestic violence on any given evening and are in the process of expanding services to respond to the need for additional beds for victims of DV. We have been and remain committed to developing and delivering innovative client centered and trauma informed services to victims of domestic violence and other vulnerable populations.

URI has long recognized the need to serve underserved communities including those who identify as LGBTQ, so much so that in the last four years, we have been one of the organizations that has had the capacity to respond to the mayor's call for the development of additional DV shelter beds in NYC. That call consisted of a request for providers to develop an additional 300 emergency shelter beds and 400 Tier II transitional units. Since that emergency declaration, URI has been able to secure all 300 emergency shelter beds and a portion of the tier II units in an effort to meet the growing needs.

At the time of the development of these new properties, URI intentionally began to develop shelter beds for singles, many of whom identified as LGBTQ. We understood that most of the shelters developed early on in the movement were created in direct response to the needs of cisgender identified women and their children. And while there is still a need to provide shelter access to this population, we understood that others, including singles were often left out. When we looked at the data we understood that singles included, members of the LGBTQ community, the elderly, people with pets and others who were unable to access DV shelter at the time. We also understood that LGBTQ community members were and continue to experience IPV at similar rates of their cisgender, heterosexual brothers and sisters.



URINYC
Urban Resource Institute

As an organization committed to filling this gap, we intentionally developed units and beds for singles, including victims who identified as LGBTQ and singles with pets. Now while we understand the importance of providing safe harbor, we also recognized that providing shelter is just part of the puzzle and that all victims of IPV need to have access to comprehensive support services. In preparing to serve these communities we knew that we needed to make sure that our staff was trained and that our spaces were welcoming.

In order to ensure that we were providing culturally competent services, we needed to provide training and resources for our staff. We developed and incorporated LGBTQ cultural competency training into our staff orientation process. We began by training all senior and executive team members, and thereafter our line staff. This training has become part of the required training for all staff carried out by a newly established Quality Improvement, Evaluation and Training Department. We have also reviewed intake and assessment protocols to make sure they are inclusive and are also in the process of reviewing all policies to make sure they reflect our ongoing commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

In order to ensure spaces are welcoming, we continually seek ways in working with our Facilities team to ensure space design and presentation are inclusive with gender neutral bathrooms, and LGBTQ representative materials in the spaces. We are also seeking ways to enhance the education we provide both to staff and clients who are working and residing in our facilities.

Now we know we cannot do this work alone, so we have and will continue to partner with experts in the field, like AVP and others in the DEI field to ensure we continue to provide services and spaces that are responsive to all of our clients. We understand that the needs of this community far outweigh what is currently available, yet we are committed to working with others to increase access to culturally competent shelter services and reducing the barriers experienced by so many in our community.

Our soon to be released new strategic plan, including a new mission and vision statement, will reinforce our commitment to an open access model of care where all individuals, families, children and pets are welcomed and celebrated in whatever way they identify.



About Urban Resource Institute (URI)

Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP)

Serving thousands of teens throughout New York City, RAPP partners with public schools to provide outreach, education, and counseling on healthy relationships. Dedicated social workers placed in middle and high schools deliver an innovative array of services on a variety of subjects related to teen abuse. In an intensive seven-week summer program, social workers and students develop trainings for their peers that build teen leaders who can speak out against relationship abuse and promote active student involvement.



Crime Victims Services

By definition, all domestic violence victims are crime victims and many need financial assistance to recover collateral destroyed by abusers. New York State's Crime Victims Board provides compensation to victims for losses they incurred as a result of a crime. Bilingual case managers coordinate services, educate the community about crime victim benefits, and provide counseling to survivors of domestic violence.

Homeless Families

URI began providing supportive services for homeless families in 2016 when the organization took over the operation of two shelters in New York City. Because there are a multitude of causes for homelessness – domestic violence, poverty, mental health issues, environmental factors such as fires and flooding, and substance abuse – URI takes an individualized approach. Families work with staff to develop a service plan based on their specific needs and circumstances, and URI then monitors progress and identifies barriers that may be impacting the family's ability to work toward self-sufficiency.



Adults with Developmental Disabilities

URI operates a variety of individualized treatment and care programs in New York City for adults with disabilities who have "aged out" of special education.

The Urban Center for the Developmentally Disabled (UCDD)

UCDD provides one-on-one job counseling, training, placement and coaching services for individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities, giving them the tools to be productive, develop self-confidence and build independence.

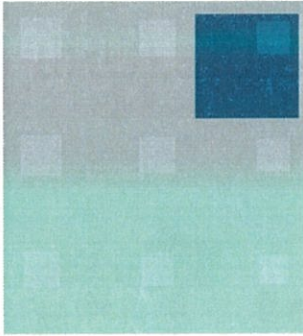
Residential Facilities

URI manages two types of residential services for individuals diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities: intermediate care facilities and an individualized residential alternative. All residences offer client-centered planning and a wide variety of services including transportation to day programs, community and recreational activities, nutritional and occupational therapies, and speech services.

URI Mission

To provide quality, compassionate, and innovative client-centered services to victims of domestic violence and other vulnerable populations so that they may lead the safest and fullest lives possible.





About Urban Resource Institute (URI)

For more than 38 years, URI has been developing innovative programs to improve the lives of vulnerable populations, with a particular focus on survivors of domestic violence. We help individuals and families escape abuse, safely heal, and gain the resources needed to live healthy, independent lives. We are also the only organization in New York City, and one of the few nationally, that extends these services to pets.

Other programs support homeless families, provide housing and supported employment opportunities for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Domestic Violence Programs



Serving thousands of clients each year, Urban Resource Institute (URI) is the largest and most

comprehensive domestic violence shelter provider in the country. URI operates emergency shelters, which help and house survivors immediately following their escape from abuse, and transitional shelters, which provide survivors with stable housing as they rebuild their lives. Our newest shelters include residential space for singles, including those whom identify as LGBTQ and have previously experienced barriers to shelter access due to most shelters being constructed with female-identified victims in mind.

Providing safe refuge for victims is step one. To break the cycle of abuse, URI offers a range of innovative services and programs, giving survivors the support and tools they need to get back on their feet, rebuild their lives, and plan their futures. Services include:

- Individual and group counseling for adults and children
- Job training
- Financial literacy education
- Legal assistance
- Educational and recreational services
- Long term housing assistance
- Abuse intervention services

People and Animals Living Safely (PALS)

Very few domestic violence shelters in the U.S. allow pets. As a result, many victims face a difficult choice: stay and protect their pets or enter a shelter and protect themselves?

As many as 48% of domestic violence victims stay in abusive situations because they don't want to leave their pet behind.

URI launched the People and Animals Living Safely (PALS) program in 2013. PALS is the only program in New York City and one of the few nationally that allows survivors and pets to stay together. Our pet-friendly shelters offer a range of services including private dog parks so that residents can play with their pets outside without fear of encountering their abusers.

Economic Empowerment

Economic abuse is an often overlooked form of domestic violence. An abuser may run their partner's credit score into the ground, forbid them from working, or restrict their access to financial resources.

URI's economic empowerment programs help survivors become self-sufficient and economically independent. Residents of URI's shelters work with program specialists to identify educational and career goals, gain financial literacy, and address credit and debt issues.

A key element of URI's economic empowerment program is the Working Internship Network (WIN). Participants

receive intensive job-readiness training and learn marketable skills while gaining experience working in professional environments. In 2017, nearly 100 domestic violence survivors graduated from the WIN program.

Legal Education and Advocacy Program (LEAP)

LEAP offers on-site legal advice to the residents of URI's domestic violence shelters. The program provides assistance with family law issues including custody, visitation, orders of protection, child support, and divorce. We also assist immigrant victims seeking legal status and offer education and training workshops for clients and staff.

Abusive Partner Intervention Program (APIP)

While providing safe shelter and support for victims of domestic violence is our focus, URI recognizes that the key to ending domestic violence is prevention. Our newest program, the Abusive Partner Intervention Program (APIP), aims to reduce recidivism among convicted offenders in the greater New York City area.

The program is grounded in the belief that individuals are capable of change if given the support and tools needed to do so. Over the course of 65 sessions, participants work with staff to better understand why their behavior is abusive, identify the underlying thought patterns that influence their action, and develop healthier habits and behavior.





Testimony of
Coalition for the Homeless
and
The Legal Aid Society
on
Update on HRA's System of Domestic Violence Shelters

Presented before

The New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare jointly with
the Committee on Women and Gender Equity

Giselle Routhier
Policy Director
Coalition for the Homeless

Beth Hofmeister
Staff Attorney
The Legal Aid Society

September 24, 2019

The Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council's Committees on General Welfare and Women and Gender Equity regarding the Human Resources Administration's domestic violence shelter system, including Intros 152 and 1712. We thank Chairs Levin and Rosenthal for their ongoing dedication to the issues of homelessness, permanent housing, and ensuring that all New Yorkers who need shelter and services have access to them.

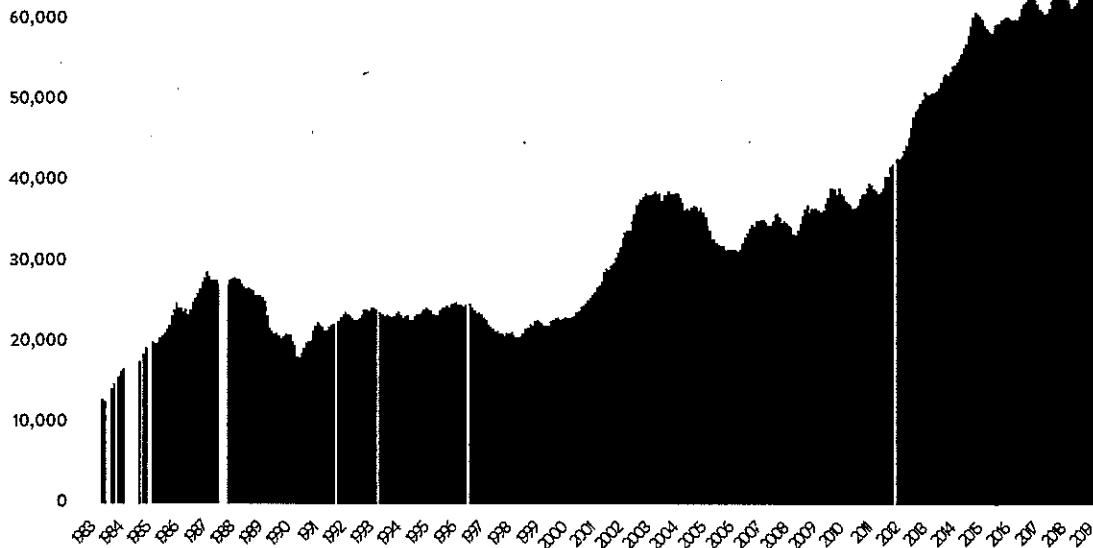
Record Homelessness in New York City

New York City remains in the midst of the worst homelessness crisis since the Great Depression, with more than 61,000 adults and children sleeping in Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelters each night. Domestic violence (DV) continues to be the primary reason families with minor children enter shelters. While the Human Resources Administration (HRA) may run the country's largest DV shelter system with nearly 2,700 emergency beds and almost 300 Tier II units,¹ those beds do not fully address the need for services and support specifically tailored to survivors and their families. Further, many additional survivors of domestic violence seek shelter through DHS. In 2017, more than 4,300 families with children entering the DHS shelter system cited domestic violence as the immediate cause of their homelessness, and an additional 700 adult families and single adults entered the DHS shelter system that year because of domestic violence.²

Number of Homeless People Each Night in NYC Shelters

1983 - 2019

July 2019
61,054



Data include individuals in DHS shelter system (including Safe Havens, stabilization beds, veteran's shelters, criminal justice beds) and HPD emergency shelters (<2 percent of total census).

Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services; Local Law 37 Reports

¹ New York City Department of Social Services 2018 Annual Report on Exits from NYC Domestic Violence Shelters as mandated by Local Law 83 of 2019. Page 2.

² Data received from the Department of Homeless Services, via FOIL.

Need for Permanent Housing

City data reveal that many survivors of domestic violence struggle to find permanent housing once they enter shelters. The Department of Social Services' 2018 Annual Report on Exits from Domestic Violence Shelters indicates that 39 percent of the 2,444 households who were discharged from HRA DV shelters in 2018 were discharged to shelters run by DHS.³ The report states these 2,444 households include clients who were timed out of DV shelters and those who were administratively discharged.⁴ A sizeable percentage of the population leaving DV shelters continues to experience homelessness rather than exiting to permanent, affordable housing. The report also notes that only 24 single adults moved out of DV shelters into affordable housing, including NYCHA apartments, supportive housing, and apartments rented with a voucher or other rent subsidy.⁵

These figures further underscore how difficult it continues to be for all shelter residents to find permanent housing. As thousands of survivors of domestic violence find themselves trapped in homelessness, urgent action is needed to expand the supply of permanent housing necessary to break this cycle. Since January 2018, the House Our Future NY Campaign has urged Mayor de Blasio to align his *Housing New York 2.0* plan with the reality of record homelessness by building 24,000 new apartments and preserving the affordability of 6,000 more for homeless New Yorkers by 2026. The 67 organizations that have endorsed the House Our Future NY Campaign include leading domestic violence advocacy and services groups. We appreciate the Council's steadfast support in this campaign as we continue to encourage Mayor de Blasio to take action to create this desperately needed housing.

Intro. 1712

Intro. 1712 provides an opportunity for HRA to present information about the number of non-binary and transgender/gender non-conforming (TGNC) shelter residents entering and being served by the DV shelter system. DV exists in every community, and the DV shelter system should reflect and support this diversity of experience. Many DV shelters do not allow males or male-identifying clients to reside there, including households with older male and male-identifying children. Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society staff witness the difficulty these individuals face in trying to access a safe, confidential shelter. This difficulty also persists for non-binary and TGNC individuals. While there may be a need for some shelters to limit the availability of beds to only those individuals who identify as female, we are concerned that particularly vulnerable New Yorkers who would otherwise qualify for beds in DV shelters are left without access to these necessary centers of support and safety because of their gender identity. Intro. 1712 provides a framework to better understand the patterns of this population's access to the DV shelter system and will hopefully provide information about how the City can improve services for non-binary and TGNC clients residing in DV shelters. We support Intro. 1712 and look forward to analyzing the data once it is released.

Intro. 152

Many of the data points proposed in Intro. 152 are already reported via Local Laws 37 and 79, or are proposed in Intro. 1642, which will amend Local Law 37. In order to keep data as consistent

³ New York City Department of Social Services 2018 Annual Report on Exits from NYC Domestic Violence Shelters as mandated by Local Law 83 of 2019. Page 3-4.

⁴ Id.

⁵ See Figure 1 of the DSS Report on Exits from Domestic Violence Shelter on page 3.

as possible over time, we do not recommend duplicating sources of identical data points. We suggest that Intro. 152 be revised to require only data that is not already reported through Local Laws 37 and 39 or that will be reported once Intro. 1642 is passed.

Conclusion

We are pleased that the New York City Council continues to acquire information about various components of the shelter system to ensure that all New Yorkers who need these services have access to them. We look forward to opportunities for further advocacy to address the needs of all homeless New Yorkers.

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.

**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: 10/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Layla Mohamed

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jennifer DeCarli

Address: 100 Gold St

I represent: ENDGBV

Address: 100 Gold 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: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Dank

Address: 100 Gold St

I represent: ENDGBV

Address: 100 Gold St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1712 Res. No. —

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/2019

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Beth Hofmeister + Giselle Routhier

Address: _____

I represent: The Legal Aid Society + Coalition for the Homeless

Address: 199 Water Street 129 Fulton Street

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jamie Powlowich

Address: 495 Flatbush Ave #61 Brooklyn

I represent: Coalition For Homeless Youth

Address: same

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 152 1712 Res. No. 12381

in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alyssa Keil

Address: 585 Carlton Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11238

I represent: New Destiny Housing

Address: 12 W 37th St. NY, NY 10018

**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: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Catherine Shugrue dos Santos

Address: 116 Nassau St, 3rd floor

I represent: Nyc Anti-Violence Project

Address: see above

**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: DR. Carla Smith

Address: Chief Program Officer

I represent: Urban Resource Institute

Address: 75 Broad St

Please complete **THE COUNCIL** *Sergeant-at-Arms*
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 7209-5075

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jimmy Meagher

Address: _____

I represent: Safe Horizon

Address: 2 Lafayette St, NY NY 10007

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Natasha Godby

Address: _____

I represent: NYC HRA

Address: 150 Greenwich Street

Please complete **THE COUNCIL** Sergeant-at-Arms
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: Annette Holm, NYC HRA

Address: 150 Greenwich Street

I represent: NYC HRA

Address: _____

Please complete **THE COUNCIL** Sergeant-at-Arms
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: Randi Levine

Address: _____

I represent: Advocates for Children of New York

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: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dania Danwish

Address: 965 70th Street, Bk, NY, 11228

I represent: Asiyah Women's Center

Address: _____

Please complete **THE COUNCIL** *Sergeant-at-Arms*
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

Date: 9/22/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JELAINÉ ALTINO

Address: PO BOX 1406, WALL STREET STATION

I represent: SANCTUARY FOR FAMILIES

Address: SAME AS ABOVE

Please complete **THE COUNCIL** *Sergeant-at-Arms*
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 152 Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 9/24/19

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharlena Powell

Address: _____

I represent: Voices of Women Organizing Project

Address: _____
(VOW)

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