



**Department of
Youth & Community
Development**

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE ON

YOUTH SERVICES

**Pre-considered Legislation to Amend the
Administrative Code on
Runaway and Homeless Youth Services**

BILL CHONG

COMMISSIONER

FEBRUARY 13, 2018

Good morning Speaker Johnson, Chair Rose, and members of the Committee on Youth Services. I am Bill Chong, the Commissioner of the Department of Youth and Community Development. I am joined by Susan Haskell, Deputy Commissioner, Youth Services and Randy Scott, Assistant Commissioner for Vulnerable and Special Needs Youth. With the start of the new term, we look forward to working with you to build on the progress we have made under Mayor de Blasio's leadership, in serving young people and communities across the City.

Thank you for the chance to testify today on three pre-considered bills that focus on runaway and homeless youth. We appreciate the City Council's long-standing interest in and support of DYCD's Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programs. For the benefit of new Committee members, I will start my testimony today with a brief overview of our programs.

DYCD's Runaway and Homeless Youth programs are designed to serve youth holistically, enabling them to obtain the services needed to place them on a path to independent living and stability. We are committed to helping young New Yorkers build new skills and flourish.

DYCD funds an integrated portfolio of runaway and homeless youth services that are delivered by community-based providers through contracts. The three types of services include residential services, drop-in centers, and street outreach.

- **Residential services** are comprised of crisis services programs (previously called "Crisis Shelters") and transitional independent living programs, currently serving youth ages 16 to 20. The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulates all residential services provided by Youth Bureaus across New York State. DYCD is the designated Youth Bureau for New York City.

Crisis Services Programs provide emergency shelter and crisis intervention services. Youth can have their basic needs met, while developing a service plan with short-term and long-term goals. In cases where family reunification is not possible, provider staff work with youth to identify appropriate transitional and long-term housing placements.

Transitional Independent Living (TIL) Programs are a longer-term housing option that provide support as youth establish an independent life through educational and career development services, health services and mental health care, counseling, and basic life skills training.

- **Drop-in centers** serve youth through age 24 and are in each borough. At seven drop-in centers, youth are provided with basic needs such as food and clothing, and supportive services such as recreational activities, health and educational workshops, counseling, and referrals to additional services, including shelter as needed.
- **Street outreach** focuses on locations in the city where runaway and homeless youth tend to congregate, offering on-the-spot information and referrals. The goal is to develop a rapport with the youth and connect them to services, including shelter.

When I testified on September 28, I highlighted some of the major achievements of this Administration, which has made unprecedented investments of over \$20 million to keep these young people safe and sheltered. By 2019, we will have tripled the number of beds available to runaway and homeless youth in this city. We remain deeply committed to supporting runaway and homeless youth and appreciate the ongoing conversations with the Council about how to best support this population.

Since my last testimony, we have even more good news to report. There are now 545 beds open and available to young people. Since September, a new 20-bed crisis services program opened in Harlem. An additional 206 beds are contracted or have been awarded, for a total of 751 beds. We anticipate another 100 of those beds to be certified and opened by June 30, and we are on target to have all 753 beds open in FY 2019.

Through First Lady Chirlane McCray's leadership on the New York City Unity Project, DYCD expanded its reach across all seven drop-in centers to serve 2,400 more youth. The Unity Project is the City's first-ever multi-agency strategy to deliver services to address the unique challenges and unmet needs of LGBTQ youth. A high proportion of the overall runaway and homeless youth population identifies as LGBTQ.

New resources from the Unity Project also funded the second drop-in center to operate 24/7, located in Queens and operated by Sheltering Arms. This builds on Ali Forney's 24/7 drop-in center in Harlem. We are pleased that through expanded hours, more young people can access services at any time when they need it. The First Lady and I visited the Queens drop-in center last month. It was a wonderful visit, and we appreciated hearing from young people about their experiences and needs.

With the support of ThriveNYC, runaway and homeless youth continue to access high quality mental health services. In the current fiscal year, nearly 1,400 youth have accessed mental health services. Since the launch of ThriveNYC's support, nearly 6,000 youth have benefited from this investment.

In partnership with the Department of Homeless Services, we launched a direct referral process to allow youth from DYCD-funded residential programs to more easily transition to the adult shelter system. The expedited intake and assessment process saves youth time and energy and streamlines the administrative process of moving to an adult bed. This practice was codified in December by the passage of a bill sponsored by Speaker Johnson and Council Member Salamanca.

Finally, DYCD is supporting the applications of runaway and homeless youth for supportive housing, including one of the first New York City 15/15 Supportive Housing programs operated by the Jericho Project.

I will now address the pre-considered bills on today's hearing agenda. We greatly appreciate the productive conversations we have had recently on these bills. We welcome the opportunity to meet with the Council sponsors after today's hearing to further discuss the bills, and other ways to partner to better provide services to this population.

As I stated at the September hearing, while the State law amendments to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act authorize municipalities' Youth Bureaus the option to expand services for 21 to 24-year olds, the State has not provided funding to support the program expansion. **I want to emphasize that while we whole-heartedly support the intent of these bills, the Administration cannot implement these measures before identifying adequate funding sources.**

I also want to restate a fundamental concern about the Council's proposals that we shared at the last hearing. Under State law, DYCD and other Youth Bureaus throughout the State have been given the authority to create a comprehensive plan for providing services, for runaway and homeless youth. This discretion from the State is limited, in that we must obtain State OCFS approval for our plan, and service providers must comply with OCFS regulations. The State law gives DYCD more discretion than these bills would allow, and thus we remain concerned that they do not align with the State legislative and regulatory framework that entrusts responsibility for these programs with localities' Youth Bureaus.

I will now offer comments on each of the pre-considered bills on today's agenda.

Pre-considered 39 (formerly Intro. 1706), sponsored by Council Member Torres, relates to runaway and homeless youth services for homeless young adults. We acknowledge that homeless young adults are a vulnerable population in need of the highest quality services available. DYCD is working in partnership with DHS and HRA to improve services for homeless young adults, including the more streamlined process to access adult shelter services that I mentioned earlier in my testimony. The City is also increasing the number of supportive housing units for young adults. In order to expand current runaway and homeless youth residential programs to homeless young adults, there are various factors to consider.

Provider capacity: Expanding residential programs to serve homeless young adults would be a substantial new effort for existing runaway and homeless youth providers. DYCD would need to identify which current providers and/or new providers could potentially serve homeless young adults. Such providers would need to be assessed not only for their willingness to expand programs, but also their expertise and experience to support a new population. Critical in this process is an assessment of whether providers would be able to find and gain site control of an affordable location to open a residential program site. And of course, contracts would need to be procured following the city's procurement rules.

Currently, on any given day, DHS serves approximately 2,200 young people ages 21 to 24, including approximately 800 single adults and approximately 1,400 single female heads of households with children. We project that the population seeking services would likely be even larger, as there are young adults not currently known to DYCD, DHS or other City agencies who would be newly eligible. To even serve a portion of the eligible youth ages 21 to 24, it is our preliminary estimate that we would need to more than double the existing number of DYCD funded shelter beds.

Fiscal impact: The total costs need to be finalized, due to a few reasons. For example, we have not yet fully developed a model specific to these populations (singles 21 to 24 and pregnant and parenting women). As a point of comparison, the cost of the recent expansion of beds for 16 to 20-year-olds was approximately \$5 million dollars per 100 beds, along with identifying 5 new and certifiable sites.

Programmatic issues: DYCD is committed to maintaining the coordinated system we have developed over the past three years and to ensure that new services would not negatively impact the progress we have made for 16 to 20-year-olds. Expanding our services to young adults would therefore require we consider the appropriate mix of sites serving different age ranges, and what those age ranges should be. It is our position that services for 21 to-24-year-olds should be separate and additional to current residential services. We must also consider what modifications to the program would be made for homeless young adults. For example, additional employment or educational services, specialized medical and mental health care, and support services for pregnant and parenting young adults will be needed.

Finally, we have only started to monitor the new maximum length of stay, and don't know how it will impact bed availability. While this Administration will triple the number of beds available by 2019, we must ensure that younger, more vulnerable youth have access to those beds.

We would also recommend that the effective date of Pre-considered 39 be modified to January 1, 2019. For any expansion to occur, we would need time to identify providers and procure new contracts. The modified date also aligns with the FY 2019 City budget process.

Pre-considered 1288 (formerly Intro 1700), sponsored by Speaker Johnson, requires DYCD to develop a capacity plan to provide shelter to all runaway and homeless youth who request shelter and provide data regarding the demographics of runaway and homeless youth. Any plan that we develop, would need to address various factors on how best to expand services: provider capacity, fiscal impact, and program design. The plan would also need to detail how we work with many city agency partners to serve runaway and homeless youth; and incorporate findings from the access to youth shelter report, that the Council passed in late December.

We support the idea of summary data to assess youth needs. To produce a report in compliance with this bill, DYCD would rely on providers to enter this substantive data into a data collection system. As such, we would like the chance to review the specific categories of the required report with the City Council and providers. Together, we can finalize the categories that should be collected.

Pre-considered 1116 (formerly Intro 1699), sponsored by Council Member Gibson, relates to the maximum length of stay for runaway and homeless youth in residential services. We agree with the goals of this bill. I advocated for this change to the OCFS Commissioner beginning in 2014, soon after I began as DYCD Commissioner. On January 2, 2018, DYCD issued guidance to providers indicating that the length of stay was increased to the maximum of 120 days for crisis services programs, and 24 months for transitional independent living programs.

That said, we are concerned that Pre-considered 1116 offers less discretion than State law and would limit DYCD's ability as New York City's Youth Bureau to implement future changes to length of stay requirements, if that should ever be in the best interests of serving youth.

Moving forward, Mayor de Blasio and DYCD will continue to build on the tremendous progress we have made over the past four years, to better meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth. We greatly appreciate the City Council's support and interest in ensuring that runaway and homeless youth have quality services that meet their needs. We look forward to continuing to engage with the Council on these well-intentioned bills and to working together to improve the lives of our City's vulnerable young people.

Thank you again for the chance to testify today. We welcome your questions.



OFFICE OF THE BROOKLYN BOROUGH PRESIDENT

**City Council
Committee on Youth Services
Testimony of Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams
Tuesday, February 13, 2018**

Good morning Chair Rose and members of the City Council Committee on Youth Services. Let me begin by congratulating you, Madame Chair, on your appointment to head this critically important committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on these three bills that can have a major impact on the lives of Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) in our city. While this administration has made important efforts to address homelessness in New York City, there are still far too many young people without a place to call home due to abuse, neglect, and violence, and that is an unacceptable situation.

I want to lend my strong support to all three bills on today's agenda. However, I want to emphasize Council Member Torres' bill, Pre-Considered Intro 39. In 2016, the State Legislature passed the statewide "Raise the Age" bill I sponsored with Assembly Member Weinstein and State Senator Savino, raising the age that youth may remain in youth shelters to age 25. This change will have groundbreaking impact on youth access to services, but the City has yet to implement this change. In fact, earlier this year, the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) wrote providers to indicate that our great City would not be allowing our homeless youth to remain in youth shelters past their 21st birthday. There is no legitimate reason for failing to raise the age here in New York City. RHY are often homeless due to abuse and sexual assault and those affected are disproportionately lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth. The State has met this challenge by raising the age so that RHY can access assistance in a safe, age-appropriate facility. Pre-considered Intro 39 will require DYCD to make this change. These are vulnerable young people in need of refuge. We cannot with good conscience continue to delay protecting 21-24 year-olds.

The fact is that with every passing day, 21 year-olds age out of our youth shelters. Nothing could be crueler than having our City wish a happy birthday to them by returning them to homelessness and street life. That is why just this past week Speaker Corey Johnson and I wrote to DYCD

Commissioner Bill Chong demanding that the City immediately implement a moratorium on these discharges, allowing youth in DYCD shelters to remain in those shelters upon their 21st birthday while we resolving this discrepancy. Pre-considered Intro 39 would do that and I urge its immediate passage.

I also support Pre-Considered Intro 1288, sponsored by Speaker Johnson, which would require the proper collection and reporting of data regarding our homeless youth population. Understanding the issues faced by these at-risk young people and the extent to which these issues are being properly addressed is vital to understanding how we best assist RHY.

In addition, extending the permissible time of stay for youth in both emergency and transitional living programs so that each young person can receive all necessary services is imperative. I support Council Member Gibson's Pre-Considered Intro 1116.

The effort to assist young people who have been left to our streets, often driven from their homes, aged out of foster homes, and left to fend for themselves has to be a priority not only for government but for our society. Proper shelter programs with proper services saves lives, money, and is simply the right thing for us to do.

I would be remiss if I did not also thank all of our youth advocates and providers — in particular the New York Coalition for Homeless Youth and the Campaign for Youth Shelter — for all of the help and assistance they have given to my office and to the people of this city as well as acknowledging and thanking all of the young people who are here today to testify and support these bills.



The Door – A Center of Alternatives, Inc.
121 Avenue of the Americas, NY, NY 10013
(212) 941-9090 | www.door.org

FOR THE RECORD

February 13, 2018

Testimony before the New York City Council

Runaway and Homeless Youth Oversight Hearing

Sarah Meckler, LCSW
Assistant Director of Special Populations, The Door

Good morning, and thank you for this opportunity to testify regarding these important laws pertaining to Runaway and Homeless Youth in New York City. My name is Sarah Meckler, Assistant Director of Special Populations at The Door, and I oversee the largest drop-in program for RHY in the 5 boroughs. The Door is a large multi-service youth development agency providing a full range of integrated services at a single site to approximately 10,000 New York City youth between the ages of 12-24 each year. Last year we served over 1,900 homeless youth through our drop-in program.

I want to thank the Council Members who brought forth this legislation to expand RHY services and express my overall support for the legislation. Access to shelter has expanded considerably for homeless youth over the last two years, but there is always more that can be done to improve the system. The Door supports any law that ensures that runaway and homeless young adults have a right to safe and appropriate youth shelters. The Door also applauds DYCD's directive to extend the length of stay for youth who are placed in crisis shelters and transitional housing, as well as the Council's law to support that directive. In addition, The Door also supports raising the age of young adults that can be placed into youth shelters, but only if there is sufficient funding and resources to back up this massive expansion of the youth shelter system. As a program that serves 21-24 year-olds, we see firsthand the devastation they face when they are forced to leave the youth shelter system. However, it is of great importance that we don't just give lip service to these important initiatives without providing the amount of funding and planning needed to make these laws a reality. All three of these laws could create a huge bottleneck of young adults unable to access emergency shelter if additional beds are not online prior to these expansions.

I would like to outline some of our current data from our Drop-in program so the committee can get a sense of where we are currently at and also potentially how many more beds and other support services would be needed to support these laws. Starting in June of this year, the Drop-in team at The Door started collecting data on how many young people in our program, ages 18-21 (minors currently have a right to youth shelter so we were not tracking this age group), were able to obtain emergency shelter on the day they were requesting it. We started tracking it ourselves, as we believed there was no efficient and accurate system-wide tracking in place. For the period of June 2017-September 2017, 45% of the youth (ages 18-21) requesting emergency shelter, were not able to get placed that night. After our previous testimony from September's hearing, I am happy to report, we were able to meet with DYCD and work out an improved system to be able to make emergency placements in transitional program when the crisis beds were full. This reduced the number of youth not getting placed down to 33% in October and 22% in November. With the addition of the Sheltering Arms Overnight Drop-in program and Crisis Shelter opening in November, the numbers of youth not getting placed decreased to 0% in December and 3% in January. This is a tremendous improvement and something we have never even come close to achieving since our Drop-in program opened 10 years ago. However, we are still finding that an average of 21% of 18-21 year-olds have to be placed in an overnight drop-in because all the crisis shelters are full. While the addition of the overnight drop-in has been an extremely valuable program which significantly reduced the numbers of youth without any type of placement, it is not a shelter and should not be counted as

such. For 16-21 year-olds, I would still strongly recommend that DYCD prioritize the opening of crisis shelters with the additional beds that were already approved. Furthermore, it is important to note that 74% of the youth who had to go to an overnight drop-in program because all crisis shelters were full, were heterosexual males, so the city should keep that demographic gap in mind when opening new shelters, releasing new RFPS and awarding new contracts.

As you can see, while the situation has much improved for 16-21 year-olds, we are still not at a place where every youth who needs a shelter bed, gets a shelter bed. Raising the age and extending the length of stay would most definitely cause this already precarious improvement to decline again, unless additional funding is attached which can sufficiently address the needs of the 21-24 year-old population. Just at The Door alone, we served 425 homeless youth ages 21-24 last year. If you take The Door as a sample population, that could mean at least a 22% increase in beds and services if the right to shelter for 16-24 year-olds goes into effect. This is still an important step to take towards our goal of eliminating homelessness for all of New York City's youth, but we must do it the right way with enough resources to support the population.

In addition, we must take a serious look at the small portion of the homeless youth population that continuously get kicked out of youth shelters due to behavioral incidents, many due to mental health and substance abuse related issues. Advocates have been saying for years that we need specialized housing for youth that have more needs and have been unsuccessful in a typical youth shelter setting. These specialized settings need many more resources than a typical shelter in order to provide the type of intensive mental health and substance abuse support needed for some youth to be successful in their placement. While the addition of Thrive funding for mental health support has been wonderful, it doesn't even come close to providing sufficient funds to cover this type of intensive and specialized program. It is difficult to see this small handful of youth at our Drop-in Center who get kicked out of every single youth shelter and then have nowhere to go but the streets or the DHS system. We must do better for this vulnerable population and come together to figure out a better way to serve them. We must also provide sufficient funding to Drop-in programs because these are the programs that pick up the pieces and assist these youth after they have been kicked out of their housing programs or have aged out of the youth shelter system.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony and for all your hard work on behalf of the homeless youth of New York City. In conclusion, I commend this visionary legislation and hope that City Council supports it and is able to allocate enough resources to make it a reality.

Sarah Meckler, LCSW
Assistant Director of Special Populations
The Door



Testimony of

**Jamie Powlovich
Executive Director
Coalition for Homeless Youth**

Before the

**The New York City Council
Youth Services Committee**

On

Preconsidered Int. Nos.: In relation to runaway and homeless youth services for homeless young adults, In relation to time frames for runaway and homeless youth shelter services, and In relation to shelter for runaway and homeless youth

February 13, 2018

Introduction

Good morning. My name is Jamie Powlovich, and I am the Executive Director of the Coalition for Homeless Youth (CHY), also known as the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services. CHY has advocated for the needs of runaway and homeless youth (RHY) for nearly 40 years. The coalition is comprised of 60 providers of services to homeless youth across New York State, including 29 members in New York City. Our members include providers that are directly contracted to provide services to RHY as well as agencies that intersect with the RHY population within the larger scope of their work.

I would like to thank Chair Rose and the members of the Youth Services Committees for holding today's oversight hearing regarding the three preconsidered RHY bills. I would also like to thank Speaker Johnson for his ongoing commitment to the needs of young people experiencing homelessness, and Councilmembers Gibson and Torres for introducing pieces of legislation being discussed today. The original five RHY bills that were introduced last session are the most comprehensive set of reforms to services for homeless youth that we have seen in decades. The Council is truly showing what a city that cares for its most vulnerable youth can look like. CHY is in full support of these bills, and we are eager to see the life-changing impact that these important pieces of legislation can have, once passed.

Background

New York City has never adequately supported the needs of homeless young people or the providers that serve them. Although under the current Administration many positive steps have been made, we are still only touching the surface of meeting the need. Runaway and homeless youth, as a population, are young people between the ages of 16 and 24 who have unique developmental needs and often fall between the cracks of the State's child welfare and adult homeless systems. The Department of Community Development (DYCD) contracts with various social service agencies to provide short-term crisis shelters, transitional living programs, drop-in centers and street outreach programs which offer food, shelter, case management, mental and medical health care, educational and vocational programming, legal services, programs for young mothers and a plethora of other services. Many homeless young people have previous experiences of trauma and with the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems.¹ A large percentage of youth have had both positive and negative experiences in foster care,² many lack a high school diploma or employment,³ and all have experienced neglect by the systems and adults that were supposed to support

¹Covenant House. 2014. "Homeless Youth - What We Know..." Available at: <http://ny.covenanthouse.org/homeless-youth-what-we-know>; Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services. 2008. "A Count of Homeless Youth in New York City." Available at: http://www.citylimits.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/HomelessYouth.pdf.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

them and guide them into adulthood. For too long providers have struggled to meet the needs of the homeless youth in New York City with insufficient resources. Although the actual current number of homeless youth in NYC is unknown, a 2007 study by CHY and Columbia University estimated that on any given night there are 3,800 homeless youth sleeping on the streets of New York City.⁴ However, there are currently only 575 beds to offer them⁵.

Under Mayor Bloomberg, there were 253 RHY beds in the DYCD portfolio. Prior to Mayor Bloomberg leaving office, Legal Aid Society sued NYC for a right to shelter for homeless youth.⁶ Shortly after the lawsuit was filed, DYCD expedited the addition of 100 new crisis beds outside of the traditional RFP process, raising the number of beds to 353. In January 2016, Mayor de Blasio announced that he was adding 300 youth beds over three years,⁷ which will bring the total number of RHY beds to 753. CHY commends DYCD for the work that they have done to bring new beds online. There are currently 575 beds online (309 TIL and 236 Crisis), with an additional 206 that have been contracted, but are not up and running yet. This will bring DYCD only 2 beds shy of their target goal⁸. Although this is a success, CHY continues to have concerns about the lack of attention that has been given to ensure that the DYCD portfolio has an adequate number of crisis beds, and hopes that of the remaining 206 beds that are yet to be up and running, that at least half are crisis.

Although providers have reported that the needed increase in beds has resulted in a significant reduction in monthly turnaways, DYCD has still not shown that it is able to provide beds for all youth seeking shelter. On the ground, agencies are still left in the heart-wrenching position of having to turn away youth who are seeking services due to lack of capacity. When a bed in a youth shelter is not available, providers are forced to refer youth to adult homeless shelters that are not developmentally appropriate, do not provide the comprehensive wraparound services offered by RHY programs and put the young person at risk of exploitation and physical risk. Additionally, youth continue to be reluctant to go to adult shelters out of fear, and not feeling confident that their needs will be met. Instead, many youth who are unable to access services spend their nights on the streets, in abandoned buildings or riding the subways, or risk sexual exploitation in order to gain a place to stay.

⁴Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services. 2008. "A Count of Homeless Youth in New York City." Available at: http://www.citylimits.org/images_pdfs/pdfs/HomelessYouth.pdf.

⁵ Email correspondence with Department of Community Development, dated 2/12/18

⁶ A copy of Legal Aid's complaint can be found online here: <https://www.scribd.com/document/197344657/Legal-Aid-Society-Complaint-Re-Homeless-Youth>

⁷ Mayor's announcement can be found online here: [http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/032-16/mayor-de-blasio-dyed-commissioner-chong-hra-commissioner-banks-enhanced-services-to#/0](http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/032-16/mayor-de-blasio-dyed-commissioner-chong-hra-commissioner-banks-enhanced-services-to#/)

⁸ Email correspondence with Department of Community Development, dated 2/12/18

Being forced to live on the street puts youth at risk of experiencing violence, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. In a 2013 study by Fordham University and Covenant House New York, approximately one fourth of surveyed homeless youth either fit the federal definition of human trafficking or at some point felt they had no choice but to trade sex for food, money, or shelter.⁹ The trafficking survivors explained how pimps and other traffickers often take advantage of the thinly-stretched RHY shelter system, by informing youth that the shelters are full and offering a place to stay which will eventually lead to exploitation and trafficking.

Another critical population over-represented within NYC's homeless youth is LGBTQ people. Nationally, only 5-7% of all youth identify as LGBTQ, but the proportion of homeless youth who identify as LGBTQ is as high as 40%¹⁰. Compared to other homeless youth, LGBTQ youth are more likely to be sexually or physically assaulted, more likely to be harassed, robbed, or become victims of hate crimes, and more likely to be forced into survival sex or sexual exploitation.

Without access to basic needs, such as food, clean clothes, and a consistent place to sleep, a young person facing homelessness is less likely to pursue or complete their education, less likely to find and sustain employment, and less able to maintain stable mental and physical health. CHY recently completed a three-year research study with NYU on the Impact of RHY programs on homeless youth and their effectiveness across the state. The study shows how effective RHY programs are at changing the trajectories of youth away from crime, chronic homelessness and public assistance and toward success and self-sufficiency, employment, and education along with building individual skills and increasing supportive relationships¹¹.

Current Legislation

CHY is in full support of all of the three preconsidered bills under consideration today, and strongly encourages the council to pass them all. If passed they would have a positive impact on the lives of countless homeless young people, and would put NYC in a better position to truly address the current crisis of youth homelessness.

⁹ <http://www.covenanthouse.org/sites/default/files/attachments/Covenant-House-trafficking-study.pdf>

¹⁰ Durso, L.E., & Gates, G.J. (2012). *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Service Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth who are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute with True Colors Fund and The Palette Fund.

¹¹ Gwadz, M., Freeman, R., Cleland, C.M., Ritchie, A.S., Leonard, N.R., Hughes, C., Powlovich, J., & Schoenberg, J. (2017). *Moving from crisis to independence: The characteristic, quality, and impact of specialized settings for runaway and homeless youth*. New York: Center for Drug Use and HIV Research, NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing.

Councilmember Gibson and Council Speaker Johnson's Bill In relation to time frames for runaway and homeless youth shelter services (Extending the Time Limits)

This bill would align local law with the recently amended New York State RHYA by extending the lengths of time for which runaway youth can remain in crisis shelters and homeless youth can remain in TIL shelters. Effective January 1, 2018, DYCD implemented the extended length of stay for both crisis and TIL programs. However, by passing this bill, the proposed extended time limits will become law, protecting young people by giving them a more realistic timeframe to work on their goals and find stability.

Councilmember Torres' and Council Speaker Johnson's Bill In relation to runaway and homeless youth services for homeless young adults (Raise the Age)

This bill would allow NYC to adopt the changes to NY State law that allows municipalities to opt into serving RHY up to their 25th birthday. This is something that both youth and advocates have been advocating for, for years. NYC should opt-in to serve 21-24 year olds in the DYCD system, where they will get more age appropriate support, in smaller homelike environments.

Council Speaker Johnson's Bill In relation to shelter for runaway and homeless youth (Capacity and Reporting)

The version of this bill that was introduced last session would have granted youth the right to shelter in the DYCD system, if passed. The version that is now up for consideration no longer does that. As written, this bill is a reporting bill that would require DYCD to report annually on the demographics and characteristics of the RHY population. This is important for two reasons. 1. It would create a system in which DYCD must share its data in a more transparent way. 2. It would gather needed data to work towards creating a RHY system that meets the size and needs of the population of youth experiencing homelessness. CHY hopes that the information that would be required under this bill will be used to inform a future bill that will grant youth the right to shelter as proposed initially. In order to work towards this outcome, we recommend that Council include a time frame that would require the City to follow through on its obligation to serve all homeless youth.

Recommendations

As was previously stated, CHY supports all the legislation currently under discussion, but would also like to highlight some additional recommendations. They are as follows:

1. Funding for Capital Costs

DYCD currently does not support programs in capital costs. Our members report that the primary barrier to them increasing their bed capacity is lack of capital funding. In FY16, DYCD did in fact

contract some crisis beds to a well-established RHY provider. However, the agency had to pull out of the contract prior to opening due to being unable to afford a physical space to house the program with the amount DYCD was offering. DYCD needs to better support programs in obtaining the funding necessary to bring new beds online.

2. Balancing the System

As outlined above, the current RHY system has more TIL beds than crisis beds. This is a problem. Currently there is no established process for young persons to go from the streets into vacant TIL beds, which tend to be higher-threshold and have tighter eligibility criteria, without going through crisis beds first, or having a provider advocate to DYCD on their behalf. DYCD must assess its current system and take into consideration maintaining a balanced system when awarding future contracts.

3. Housing Resources

Almost 2 years ago the current Administration committed to giving youth access to rental subsidies. Despite testimony that this would be in place by the end of 2017, it has still not happened yet. This delay by the city is having a negative impact on countless homeless young people who continue to have almost no resources to aid them in exiting homelessness.

4. Housing Specialists

Unlike in DSS shelters, or in the foster care system, DYCD does not fund its programs to have housing specialists. As anyone who has done frontline work with folks experiencing homelessness knows, housing specialists and case managers hold very different positions, and this is even more the case given how discriminatory New York City's rental market is to those with subsidies. To ensure RHY successfully transition to their own apartments with rental subsidies, DYCD needs to award new funding to providers to hire housing specialists. This position would support residents in successfully obtaining safe, long-term housing and exiting homelessness.

5. LGBTQ-competency

New York City must ensure that all service providers interacting with RHY are trained in LGBTQ competency. This is something that has already been implemented at ACS and DHS. DYCD needs to follow suit.

6. Increased mental health supports

While the THRIVE funds have started to provide desperately needed resources for therapists and psychiatric support to help youth understand and process their experiences, gain access to needed medication, and provide evaluations for necessary resources like supportive housing, the simple reality is that the limited funds made available are still not enough to provide the kind of comprehensive services that many homeless youth need.

Conclusion

CHY is grateful to the City Council for its ongoing commitment to runaway and homeless youth. We look forward to our continued work together to finalize these important pieces of legislation and to improve the city's runaway and homeless youth services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

Testimony of

The Legal Aid Society

and

Coalition for the Homeless

on

Preconsidered Introductions: In relation to runaway and homeless youth services for homeless young adults, In relation to time frames for runaway and homeless youth shelter services, and In relation to shelter for runaway and homeless youth.

prepared for submission to

The New York City Council
Committee on Youth Services

by

Beth Hofmeister
Staff Attorney
Homeless Rights Project, The Legal Aid Society

Giselle Routhier
Policy Director
Coalition for the Homeless

February 13, 2018
New York, New York

Introduction

We would like to thank the Committee on Youth Services and Committee Chair Deborah Rose for providing us with an opportunity to be heard concerning the preconsidered introductions regarding services for runaway and homeless youth (RHY). We must also thank Council Speaker Corey Johnson and his staff, whose hard work and commitment to this vulnerable population are steadfast and ongoing. Additionally, we applaud the Council for its continued commitment to supporting this underserved population.

Basic RHY Demographics

As we discussed at length at an oversight hearing on September 28, 2017, runaway and homeless youth are generally defined as unaccompanied young people who have run away or been forced to leave home and now reside in temporary situations, places not otherwise intended for habitation, or emergency shelters. The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act defines the population as being between 12 and 24 years of age. As of April 2017, New York State redefined RHY to be anyone under the age of 25 and changed other portions of New York's Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, thereby laying the groundwork for two bills passed last session and the package before the Council today.

It is notoriously difficult to accurately count the number of runaway and homeless youth in New York City, and this difficulty is a substantial barrier to the provision of adequate shelter and services. The only government-sponsored youth count is organized around the City's Point in Time (PIT) count,¹ which takes place on a mid-winter night. Providers and advocates have long argued that the PIT and youth counts miss substantial portions of RHY. Reasons for this vary from arguments that the definition of RHY does not include significant parts of the population, such as those couch-surfing or engaging in survival sex, to arguments that youth experiencing homelessness have an ability to blend into the fabric of the City. Although not the subject of this hearing, both the PIT and related youth count serve as an inadequate snapshot of homeless youth on a particular day rather than a census of youth with unstable housing situations who are in need of City services. This is an issue that should be examined in future Council hearings.

Nationally there has been some significant progress on evaluating the number of homeless youth. Near the end of 2017, Chapin Hall, an independent policy research center at the University of Chicago, produced a sobering report called *Voices of Youth Count*. Anyone who knows a youth who has experienced homelessness knows the information contained in the report to be true; however, the details are still staggering. Results show that *1 in 10 young adults ages 18 to 25 have experienced homelessness in some form in a one-year period.*² We have attached the one-page summary of the study to our testimony for further reference.

By our most reliable estimates, roughly 3,800 youth in New York City are homeless, and the city does not have nearly enough shelter beds—crisis or transitional independent living (TIL)—to serve this population.³ As of February 12, 2018, the Department of Youth and Community

¹ The City's PIT count is called the HOPE Count and the 2018 HOPE Count occurred on Monday, January 22, 2018.

² Chapin Hall of the University of Chicago, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*, November 2017, at http://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ChapinHall_VoYC_1-Pager_Final_111517.pdf.

³ Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, *The New York City Association of Homeless and Street-Involved Youth Organizations' State of the City's Homeless Youth Report*, 2009.

Development (DYCD) has contracted 751 beds to be opened through Fiscal Year 2019, while 309 TIL beds and 236 crisis beds are currently open and available to RHY. This is certainly an improvement over four years ago, when there were just 253 beds. However, it is still woefully insufficient to serve the number of RHY in New York City, especially considering that only 20 of those new beds are for crisis shelter.

As is the case with so many other marginalized and system-involved populations we work with, youth of color and LGBTQ/TGNC youth are vastly overrepresented in the RHY population. Chapin Hall reports that Hispanic, non-white youth have a 33% higher risk for homelessness and Black or African-American youth have an 83% higher risk.⁴ Unmarried parenting youth have a 200% higher risk for homelessness.⁵ These results are consistent with prior New York City Youth Count numbers. In 2015, 44% of respondents to NYC's Youth Count survey were Black, 24% were Latino, and 17% identified as two or more races.⁶ Although the 2016 and 2017 Youth Count reports do not break out the percentages of respondents in the same manner, both reports indicate a similar breakdown.⁷ Similarly, LGBTQ youth become homeless at a significantly higher rate than the adolescent population as a whole and are vastly overrepresented in the RHY population. Chapin Hall's study indicated that LGBT youth have a 120% higher risk for homelessness, which is consistent with a 2012 report by the NYC Association of Homeless and Street Involved Youth Organizations that shows that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and questioning youth make up 25-40% of the homeless youth population in NYC and other large cities,⁸ compared with 3-6% of the general population.⁹ In addition, the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services presented census data showing that 5% of homeless youth identified as transgender and another 18% were unsure or chose not to answer the question about gender identity.¹⁰ According to the City's own 2015 Youth Count, almost 60% of youth living in shelters or transitional living facilities, 50% of youth in unstable housing, and 30% of unsheltered youth identified as a sexual orientation other than straight.¹¹ Many homeless youth are also immigrants, and like their older counterparts, face additional challenges in accessing services and permanent housing, especially in the current political climate. Immigrant RHY cannot apply for financial aid and often cannot work legally, making it all the more difficult to stabilize.

Causes of Youth Homelessness

In 2013, a comprehensive survey by the New York City Coalition on the Continuum of Care shed important light on the causes of youth homelessness. The top reasons for homelessness at that time were reported as "fighting frequently with parents" (34%), being "kicked out" of the home (31%), "physical, mental or sexual abuse" (34%), "neglect or [a] parent not meeting basic

⁴ Chapin Hall of the University of Chicago, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*, supra.

⁵ Id.

⁶ http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/youth_count_report_2015.pdf

⁷ http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/youth_count_report_2016.pdf;
http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/youth_count_report_2017_final.pdf

⁸ Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, *The New York City Association of Homeless and Street-Involved Youth Organizations' State of the City's Homeless Youth Report*, 2009.

⁹ http://news.gallup.com/poll/182051/san-francisco-metro-area-ranks-highest-lgbt-percentage.aspx?utm_source=Social%20Issues&utm_medium=newsfeed&utm_campaign=tiles.

¹⁰ Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, supra.

¹¹ http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/youth_count_report_2015.pdf

needs” (26%), unwillingness to “live by parents’ rules” (20%), and parental use of drugs or alcohol (20%).¹² Anecdotally, these statistics are reflected in the stories we hear from clients with whom we work daily and are distinct from the reasons adults become homeless. Often the choice to leave home is a survival strategy in and of itself. Remarkably, youth experiencing homelessness demonstrate incredible fortitude and resilience in overcoming trauma, routine discrimination, and incredible systemic barriers.

Youth Experiencing Homelessness

By definition, RHY are disconnected from the very support systems that are intended to support adolescent development into adulthood, such as their families and schools. Even before a young person is considered runaway or homeless, they have likely experienced trauma. This trauma is only exacerbated each day they experience homelessness.

While it is difficult to explain all of the ways in which youth experience homelessness in New York City, there are common threads. Not surprisingly, homeless youth in New York face myriad dangers, obstacles, and simply frightening circumstances as they navigate the city trying to survive. Survival often involves entry into the street economy. Many homeless youth are pressured to trade sex for a place to sleep or shower, and about one-third to half of these youth exchange sex for money, food, or a place to stay.¹³ Many are victims of sex trafficking.¹⁴ These dangers expose them to a significantly heightened risk of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.¹⁵ For runaway or homeless youth with serious substance abuse issues, which often stem from the very chaotic and traumatic family histories that drove them to homelessness, options are limited. Programs are often abstinence based, and many of these youth need treatment, support, and time before they are able or ready to quit.¹⁶ RHY are at high risk of involvement with the juvenile or criminal justice system due to their homelessness.¹⁷ The lack of stability can also impact their ability to continue with school, or find and maintain employment.¹⁸ For these reasons, access to meaningful healthcare, including access to quality mental healthcare, and related services is particularly crucial for RHY. Despite the many challenges they face, RHY exhibit a common desire to be self-sufficient and yearn for the tools and ability to be successful in that pursuit. Because they do not share many of the characteristics of chronically homeless adults, it is critical to provide youth-specific shelter and services that increase their ability to achieve self-sufficiency.

Chapin Hall’s study also confirmed what previous research and anecdotal experience has shown: The longer a young person is homeless, the more difficult it is for them to rise out of this

¹² Lance Freeman and Darrick Hamilton for the New York City Coalition on the Continuum of Care, *A Count of Unaccompanied Homeless Youths* in New York City, November 19, 2013.

¹³ Meredith Dank et al. The Urban Institute, *Surviving the Streets of New York: Experiences of LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YSWW Engaged in Survival Sex*, February 2015; Marya Viorst Gwadz et al., *The initiation of homeless youth into the street economy*, 32 *Journal of Adolescence* 357, 358 (2009).

¹⁴ Ric Curtis et al., *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in New York City* (September 2008), available at http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/CSEC_NYC_Executive_Summary.pdf.

¹⁵ Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, *supra*.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ See generally *Id.*; Dank, et al., *supra*; Youth Justice Board, Center for Court Innovation, *Homeless Not Hopeless: A Report on Homeless Youth and the Justice System in New York City*, June, 2017.

¹⁸ Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, *supra*.

experience and “contribute to stronger families, communities, and economies.”¹⁹ The report continues to support the idea that housing solves homelessness: “to exit homelessness permanently, youth require housing and support services tailored to their unique developmental needs,” and youth-specific shelter and services for which we have long advocated provide this opportunity.²⁰

Crisis and TIL Bed Availability

The City has put forth more resources over the last few years to increase the number of beds that are available to RHY aged 16-20, but it still has a long way to go. Notably, all but 20 of the beds that have been added to the DYCD-funded RHY shelter system are transitional independent living (TIL) beds, which don’t address the need for short-term crisis placements as a pivotal initial placement. As providers and youth confirm time and again, while the situation has improved significantly, there are still not enough crisis beds for RHY, and homeless youth are turned away. There is not a reliable or standardized system in place to count youth who are turned away in their attempt to access emergency shelter, which is why the Council’s passage of the reporting bill last session will be instrumental in furthering our understanding of the nature and number of resources needed.

While in crisis shelter, homeless youth are eligible to apply for TILs. TILs are DYCD-funded residential facilities intended to assist homeless youth transition to independent living. Although DYCD will place some youth directly into TILs upon entry into shelter, usually the TIL application process requires an applicant to submit a mental health evaluation, and requires youth to demonstrate that they are either enrolled in school or employed. These longer-term housing options are intended to help youth who have stabilized in crisis shelter settle into smaller, more home-like environments where, with support, they can develop the ability to be self-sufficient before aging out or timing out back into the community.

It is also important to note that while we often describe the need for RHY beds, the reality is that the services surrounding the youth in the beds are what truly make these programs valuable. Many service providers in New York City go above and beyond what is required of them by State law, and task themselves not only with providing a place for young people to sleep, but also providing crucial resources, referrals, and support to these young people in need.

The Positive Impact of Specialized Services for Runaway and Homeless Youth

In 2017 a groundbreaking white paper was released by the Center for Drug Use and HIV Research at NYU Rory Meyers College of Nursing in collaboration with the Coalition for Homeless Youth. The purpose of the underlying study was to build upon a foundation of other research and over a three-year period to examine a diverse group of RHY service providers and assess the effectiveness of these programs.²¹ One of the most significant findings of the study is that high-quality RHY programs not only meet basic requirements, but “address higher order relational, psychological, and motivational needs... fostering a sense of resilience among RHY”

¹⁹ Chapin Hall of the University of Chicago, *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*, November 2017, at http://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ChapinHall_VoYC_1-Pager_Final_111517.pdf.

²⁰ Id.

²¹ Gwadz, M., et al., *Moving from crisis to independence: The characteristic, quality, and impact of specialized settings for runaway and homeless youth*, supra.

and providing long-term benefits to a youth's functioning.²² In short, well-funded, high-quality RHY programs make a positive impact on a youth's ability to stabilize and successfully transition from crisis to independence. While more research is needed to evaluate the long-term benefits of RHY services, understanding that these programs make a proven difference to the youth they serve gives further support to why we are here pushing for the passage of this package of legislation.

Support for the Package of Proposed Legislation

Every one of the three preconsidered introductions under consideration today would, if passed, have a meaningful and positive impact on the lives of New York City's runaway and homeless youth. For this reason, we strongly urge the Council to pass them all. It is worth noting that some of these laws would not be possible without last spring's amendments to the State's Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), which provide, among other things, that municipalities may elect to expand their RHY systems to serve youth up to age 24, and that runaway youth may stay in crisis shelter for up to 120 days.²³ While we understand the current Mayoral administration may support some of these initiatives, including already allowing an extension in stays, we believe it is still imperative for the Council to pass the entire package to ensure that RHY will have access to these life-saving services in the long term and regardless of who is in office.

Councilmember Gibson and Council Speaker Johnson's Bill In relation to time frames for runaway and homeless youth shelter services (Extending the Time Limits)

This bill, which contains identical language to Int. No. 1699 proposed last session, would serve to align local law with the recently amended New York State RHYA by extending the lengths of time that runaway youth can remain in crisis shelters and homeless youth can remain in TIL shelters.²⁴ The current shelter time limits create an untenable cycle in which RHY are often unable to work quickly enough to make suitable living arrangements and are regularly discharged from shelters back to the streets. These proposed extended time limits are an important step toward allowing the shelter system to genuinely support our young people as they work to emerge from the system no longer homeless, rather than to perpetuate that cycle. The State has recognized this reality, and the City should formally do the same with this legislation.

Councilmember Torres' and Council Speaker Johnson's Bill In relation to runaway and homeless youth services for homeless young adults (Raise the RHY Age)

This bill would allow NYC to take advantage of the changes to NY State law that allow municipalities to opt into serving RHY up to their 25th birthdays. Not only have youth and advocates pushed for this change for years, but an expert consensus has emerged regarding adolescent brain development, establishing that the prefrontal cortex of the brain—which largely governs impulse-control, judgment, and planning—generally does not mature until well after the teenage years. In fact, research demonstrates that the brain undergoes a “rewiring” process that is not complete until approximately 25 years of age. The Supreme Court itself has recognized this

²² Id. at 16.

²³ The amendments also continued to affirm that there are no time limits on homeless youths' length of stay in crisis shelter.

²⁴ It is worth noting that increasing the crisis shelter deadline extension for runaway youth will also help homeless youth because, although the statute does not set a time limit for homeless youth, DYCD and its providers use the same deadline for all youth using a crisis bed, whether runaway or homeless.

reality.²⁵ In keeping with what we know about brain development, the amended RHYA provides that municipalities seeking State funding may include “homeless young adults”— defined as homeless persons age 21 to 24 -- within their plans for serving runaway and homeless youth. New York City should opt to serve 21-24 year olds as homeless young adults, separate and apart from the DHS system. These young people, much like their younger homeless counterparts, are not like older homeless people: they are homeless for different reasons, they cope with and experience homelessness differently, and they need different services and supports in order to emerge from homelessness as healthy, self-sufficient people. While 21-24 year olds are not children or even teens, in many important respects they are also not yet adults, and the system should treat them accordingly.

We must note that the language of this bill should be adapted to make clear that the burden of providing these services does not rest solely on the providers themselves, but rather that DYCD is obligated to provide services for this population through its contracts with RHY providers and in accordance with New York City and State laws. The current language could be interpreted to place this obligation on providers and we suggest the Council adjust it to make it clear the obligation rests squarely on DYCD’s shoulders.

Council Speaker Johnson’s Bill In relation to shelter for runaway and homeless youth (Capacity and Reporting)

This language varies the most from Int. No. 1700, which was introduced last session. Although the bill language in its current form would still require DYCD to report annually on the demographics and characteristics of the RHY population, the report on capacity is a change from prior language. Reporting requirements such as these not only foster transparency and accountability, they are the means by which NYC will understand who these young people are and what they need. Without an accurate and regularly updated picture of this population, the City cannot serve them well. This bill will begin to provide a sense of who is using the system and will broaden reporting requirements, as has been done previously for other shelter systems in NYC. Also, this bill will ensure that youth who are trying to access shelter services will be able to do so. As stated above, the bill language should be clear that DYCD is tasked with providing the required reports, rather than the providers.

The Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless have a well-established history of fighting for our marginally housed and homeless clients. As advocates who have sued the City of New York to ensure a right to shelter for various New Yorkers—including RHY—we are disappointed to see that the current bill language has removed an obligation on the City to provide youth-specific shelter and services to all runaway and homeless youth. It is without question that meaningful capacity planning is integral to the success of service expansion, and requiring the City to use its newly imposed reporting to develop a plan to provide shelter to all

²⁵ See *Graham v. Florida*, 560 U.S. 48, 68 (2010); *Miller v. Alabama*, 132 S. Ct. 2455, 2464 n.5 (2012) (“The evidence presented to us in these cases indicates that the science and social science supporting Roper’s and Graham’s conclusions have become even stronger. See, e.g., Brief for American Psychological Association et al. as Amici Curiae 3 ([A]n ever growing body of research in developmental psychology and neuroscience continues to confirm and strengthen the Court’s conclusions’); *id.*, at 4 (‘It is increasingly clear that adolescent brains are not yet fully mature in regions and systems related to higher order executive functions such as impulse control, planning ahead, and risk avoidance’); Brief for J. Lawrence Aber et al. as Amici Curiae 12–28 (discussing post Graham studies).

runaway and homeless youth who request such help is an incredible step toward adequately serving this important part of our community. However, we strongly encourage the Council to include language that would ensure such a plan would be implemented within a time frame that would require the City to follow through on what we believe is its legal obligation to serve all homeless youth, and that implementation needs to happen as soon as possible. To do so would be a powerful statement in support of the thousands youth who wish to stabilize and thrive.

Lack of Permanent Housing for RHY

While it is not the direct focus of this hearing, we would be remiss not to mention how crucial it is for RHY to have access to meaningful permanent housing options. Other than some limited supportive housing units, youth leaving the RHY shelter system do not have access to any of the long-term housing resources afforded to individuals leaving other NYC shelters. RHY in youth shelter do not have access to a NYCHA priority or housing vouchers such as LINC. While the City and State administrations have explained that they are working on including RHY in the housing plan and voucher eligibility in the future, that has not yet materialized. Until this population has access to permanent, affordable housing, they will truly be unable to fully realize their potential as self-sufficient members of our city. Both the Chapin Hall study and the report completed in collaboration with NYU and the Coalition for Homeless Youth underscore the critical importance of providing actual permanent housing options to this population, and that must happen without further delay.

Conclusion

Thank you again to the committee for looking so closely at a number of issues facing our runaway and homeless youth. We strongly encourage you to pass all of the bills before you with the suggestions included in our testimony above, and are happy to answer any questions.

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 1,100 lawyers, working with some 800 social workers, investigators, paralegals and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, the Society provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program. With its annual caseload of more than 300,000 legal matters, The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients

than any other legal services organization in the United States. And it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession.

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

The Legal Aid Society is uniquely positioned to speak on issues of law and policy as they relate to New York City's runaway and homeless youth. Each of our three practice areas routinely interacts with the RHY population. 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. Recently Legal Aid, 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. Legal Aid's Juvenile Rights Practice provides comprehensive representation as attorneys for children who appear before the New York City Family Court in abuse, neglect, juvenile delinquency, and other proceedings affecting children's rights and welfare. Last year, our staff represented approximately 34,000 children. Last year, the Society's Civil Practice provided free direct legal assistance in more than 48,500 cases and legal matters through neighborhood offices in all five boroughs, and 23 specialized units, of which the Homeless Rights Project is one. Our Criminal Practice handles over 220,000 trial and post-conviction cases a year, some of which arise out of arrests predicated on our clients' homeless status. Our perspective comes from daily contact with children and their families, and also from our frequent interactions with the courts, social service providers, and State and City agencies.

In addition to representing many thousands of children, youth, and adults each year in trial and appellate courts, we also pursue impact litigation and other law reform initiatives on behalf of our clients. On December 30, 2013, The Legal Aid 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 RHY in New York City. The lawsuit seeks to establish that young people in New York have a right to youth-specific shelter, and to remedy (1) the City's consistent failure to provide an adequate number of shelter beds for RHY, (2) its routine discharge of youth from crisis shelters before permanent housing has been secured, and (3) its longstanding failure to provide reasonable accommodations or mental health services to RHY with disabilities. 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. No youth should languish on the street while relegated to a shelter waiting list or be discharged from shelter due to arbitrary time limits. In addition, we seek to ensure that youth discharged from shelter are provided with due process prior to any ejection from shelter. All five of the bills at issue today would bring us closer to these goals, by giving youth more time in crisis shelter to secure other housing, by fostering transparency and accountability in service provision, by streamlining the intake and assessment

process between DYCD and DHS, and by providing young adults aged 21-24 with age-appropriate services.

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

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

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

Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America

National Estimates

Foundational evidence for understanding the scale, scope, and urgency of youth homelessness in America.

Adolescence and young adulthood represent a key developmental window. Every day of housing instability and the associated stress represents a missed opportunity to support healthy development and transitions to productive adulthood. Voices of Youth Count gives voice to young people across our nation who lack the necessary supports to achieve independence and make their unique contributions to our society.

Through multiple methods and research angles, Voices of Youth Count sought to capture and understand the voices and experiences of thousands of young people. While the deprivation of housing stability was the common thread in Voices of Youth Count research, the stories of youth homelessness—and the opportunities for intervention—rarely centered on housing alone.

Every experience, every youth, was unique. Their experiences ranged widely in duration, sleeping arrangements, safety, and circumstances. With the data gained through Voices of Youth Count, we can better understand the challenge so that we can develop more effective policy and practice.

Missed Opportunities: National Estimates summarizes the results of the Voices of Youth Count national survey that estimates the percentage of United States youth, ages 13 to 25, who have

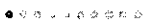
experienced unaccompanied homelessness at least once during a recent 12-month period. The survey captured homelessness experiences broadly, including couch surfing in addition to arrangements like sleeping on the streets, in cars, or in shelters.

Until now, one major challenge to putting solutions in place has been the lack of credible data on the size and characteristics of the youth population who experience homelessness and a way to track how this population changes over time. Without credible numbers and deeper understanding, it has been difficult for the nation to develop a well-resourced and tailored response to address this hidden problem in our communities.

Voices of Youth Count, in this and future briefs over the coming year, will speak to the evidence while seeking solutions. **No more missed opportunities.**

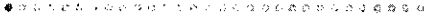
RESULTS SHOW

1 in 10



young adults ages 18 to 25 endures some form of homelessness in a year. Half of the prevalence involves couch surfing only.

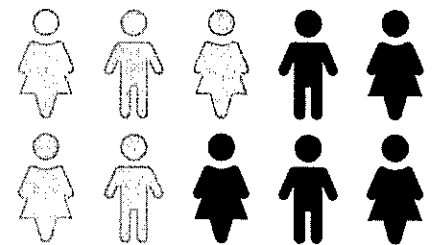
1 in 30



adolescent minors ages 13 to 17 endures some form of homelessness in a year. A quarter of the prevalence involves couch surfing only.

Rates of youth experiencing homelessness were similar in rural and nonrural areas.

	Youth 13-17	Young Adults 18-25
Household prevalence in urban counties.	4.2%	9.6%
Household prevalence in rural counties.	4.4%	9.2%
Population prevalence in urban counties.		
Population prevalence in rural counties.		



About half of the youth who experienced homelessness over a year faced homelessness for the first time.

Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness



346%

Youth with less than a high school diploma or GED had a 346% higher risk

120%

LGBT youth had a 120% higher risk

162%

Youth reporting annual household income of less than \$24,000 had a 162% higher risk

33%

Hispanic, non-White youth had a 33% higher risk

83%

Black or African American youth had an 83% higher risk

200%

Unmarried parenting youth had a 200% higher risk





moving victims of violence from crisis to confidence

**Testimony of
Larissa Lozada and Michael Polenberg
Safe Horizon, Inc.**

Oversight: Runaway and Homeless Youth Legislation

Int. 1288, Int. 1116, Int. 39

Committee on Youth Services

Hon. Debi Rose, Chair

New York City Council

February 13, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding runaway and homeless youth services in New York City. My name is Michael Polenberg, and I am the Vice President of Government Affairs at Safe Horizon. I am joined by my colleague Larissa Lozada, Assistant Director of Outreach at the Streetwork Project of Safe Horizon. Safe Horizon is the nation's leading victim assistance organization and New York City's largest provider of services to victims of crime. Safe Horizon's mission is to provide support, prevent violence and promote justice for victims of crime and abuse, their families and communities.

My testimony today will focus on three pieces of legislation that will enable runaway and homeless youth to have greater access to shelter and the supportive services that they need to transition to independence. Safe Horizon supports the passage of Int. 1288, Int. 1116, and Int. 39.

The Streetwork Project

A cornerstone of our agency's work is the Streetwork Project, which since 1984 has provided shelter, showers, hot meals, therapy, service linkage, safer sex supports, case management, and more, in a therapeutic harm reduction community serving homeless youth ages 16 to 24. What first began as an intervention targeting rising youth homelessness in Times Square has grown to serve 16,000 youth across Manhattan every year through:

- two drop in centers (one in Harlem and one on the Lower East Side of Manhattan),
- a citywide mobile outreach team, and
- an emergency overnight shelter.

The impact is significant: the young people who come through our doors make up a vibrant, creative, and strong community, one which affirms, celebrates, and amplifies the voices of youth of color, queer and trans youth, immigrant youth, parenting youth, and others who have historically been marginalized and unseen.

Streetwork services are tailored to meet the diverse needs of young people in New York City. Over the past year, Streetwork has accomplished the following:

- made more than 14,000 outreach contacts;
- assisted 1,000 clients at its two drop-in centers;
- provided 93 young people with a safe place to sleep at its overnight shelter;
- placed 94 clients in permanent supportive, transitional, or long-term housing;
- served 70,000 meals, including 35,000 home-style hot meals and 25,000 pantry meals to go
- connected 105 clients to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); connected 101 clients to Medicaid, 15 clients to Supplemental Security Income (SSI); offered ongoing benefits case management throughout the enrollment process;
- addressed mental health needs of 271 clients through on-site psychiatric care including psychiatric evaluation, medication management, diagnosis, and crisis intervention; and
- facilitated weekly on-site medical care for clients through partnerships with Callen-Lorde Community Health Center's Health Outreach To Teens (HOTT) and the New York Children's Health Project mobile medical units. These providers offer general medical care as well as testing for HIV and other sexually-transmitted infections.

Streetwork's programs are structurally designed to address the needs of homeless youth who are trauma survivors. Streetwork uses a combination of evidence-based approaches including client-centered practice, trauma-informed care, and a holistic harm reduction approach that assesses for risk, harm, and safety continuously with the knowledge that these young people need consistency, a stable environment, and caring adults to support their stability and healing.

State of the Problem

Homelessness among young people in the United States is a serious and pervasive social issue. Reputable estimates indicate that up to 1.7 million minors across the country experience homelessness over the course of a year.¹ Federal data, which includes street-level counts and shelter head-counts, estimates that on a single night in January 2016 there were 35,686 unaccompanied homeless youth, with the vast majority of this number comprised of young people 18-24 years old. Individuals in New York City (NYC), which hosts the largest sheltered homeless population in the United States, made up nearly 5.6% of the national total of unaccompanied youths 18-24, and more than 22.8% of parenting youth in the same age range.

Homeless youth are exceedingly vulnerable to trauma, sexual exploitation, disease, and violence. Studies estimate that at least half of homeless youth have experienced abuse² and that homeless youth have had traumatic experiences; many meet criteria for a posttraumatic stress disorder diagnosis.³ Abusive households, poverty, and familial rejection due to sexuality or gender identity are known factors contributing to youth homelessness. High percentages of homeless young people are involved in survival sex, the drug economy, or gangs.⁴ Studies show that large proportions of homeless lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ) youth, in particular, have had recent involvement in survival sex. Without access to safe shelter and ongoing supportive services, remaining on the streets is their only option. These young people will face increased risk for poor behavioral and health outcomes.

Barriers to Service

Homeless youth encounter barriers that make it difficult to access services. Because they are not consistently part of youth-oriented social support systems, (e.g. schools, church groups, families) street involved youth have little or no opportunity to develop the practical, emotional and interpersonal skills they need to succeed in schools, job, housing and other programs. Services for this population are also disjointed as NYC's services for homeless youth cross multiple

¹ Martha R. Burt. 2007. "Understanding homeless youth: Numbers, characteristics, multisystem involvement, and intervention options." Testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support. <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/47046/901087-Understanding-Homeless-Youth-Numbers-Characteristics-Multisystem-Involvement-and-Intervention-Options.PDF>

² Stephen W. Baron. 2003. "Street youth violence and victimization." *Trauma, Violence and Abuse* 4(1), p. 22-44.

³ Kimberly Bender et. al. 2010. "Factors associated with trauma and posttraumatic stress disorder among homeless youth in three U.S. cities: The importance of transience." *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 23(1), p. 161-168. Carolyn F. Wong, Leslie F. Clark & Lauren Marlotte. 2016. "The impact of specific and complex trauma on the mental health of homeless youth." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 31(5), p. 831-854

⁴ Robin Petering. 2016. "Sexual risk, substance use, mental health, and trauma experiences of gang-involved homeless youth." *Journal of Adolescence* 48, p. 73-81.

government agencies, each having different criteria for eligibility. As a result, many young people often do not know about resources available to them. For instance, while the general population can access a healthcare provider with insurance, homeless youth are often detached from insurance and disproportionately without access to a stable healthcare source.⁵ In addition, many homeless youth have had profoundly negative experiences with service agencies, which are mostly geared towards an older adult population. As a result, many tend to avoid these systems.

Finally, because homeless youth disproportionately experience behavioral health problems, and because many traditional social service programs are geared towards an older adult population, programs are not structured to take into consideration the unique developmental needs of young adults. These programs often have rules that homeless youth struggle to manage. In turn, many young people find themselves discharged or banned from programs without alternative options available to them.

In summary, homeless youth contend with many conditions that make them vulnerable to a broad range of exploitation. Because of the trauma they endured in the child welfare system and/or abusive families, as well as their involvement in high-risk activities, they are unlikely to seek help from government agencies or traditional social services. Unfortunately, without the support of family or service providers, it is difficult for many to stabilize and improve their lives. Therefore, it is imperative that all young people within the RHY population have access to effective youth centered programming. This includes separate facilities which include shelter and drop-in centers that sensitively engage these young people throughout their process while providing a safe and non-threatening environment as they work their way towards stability.

Int. 1288-2018: Right to Shelter

As noted, runaway and homeless youth need stability in order to progress through their next stages. Research has recognized a housing first approach as a best practice in helping to stabilize individuals coping with a wide range of life struggles. However, there continues to be a gap in service regarding meeting the needs of youth needing shelter. We commend the de Blasio Administration for recognizing the need for more beds and prioritizing shelter beds for youth by increasing the number of beds over the next several years. Unfortunately, there still continues to be a shortage of beds available for runaway and homeless youth in New York City.

We are aware that there might be multiple factors contributing to the delay of getting new beds online, including the financial cost of start-up. Shelter providers already know that the financial cost can be high. Currently, the City does not provide capital cost to assist with start-up of shelter beds. Given already costly real estate prices, and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services' strict regulations towards certification which in many cases often requires major reconstruction to meet licensing regulations, this poses significant financial barriers as organization are not always able to absorb the cost based upon current contract amounts.

Young people deserve the right to shelter and should not be denied this right based upon contractual financial limitations. That is why we are supporting the passing of Int. 1288, which we

⁵ J. Mackelprang et al. 2015. "Predictors of emergency department visits and inpatient admissions among homeless and unstably housed adolescents and young adults." *Medical Care* 53(12), p. 1010-1017.

hope will require the City to invest more resources and ensure that there is adequate shelter to meet the needs of runaway and homeless youth.

Int. 39-2018 and Int. 1116-2018: Amend services for runaway and homeless youth to age 25 and extend length of stay in crisis shelter

Our recent shelter data shows that over 46% youth who came into our crisis shelter were thrown out of their homes and abandoned by family, and 69% were away from home for more than a period of 30 days. The average length of stay was 31 nights. More staggering data indicates that majority of our youth (42%) arrive from homeless system and upon discharge 40% return to the homeless system.

As noted previously, New York City made up 5.6% of the national total of unaccompanied youths ages 18-24, and more than 22.8% of parenting youth. The majority of young people who access Streetwork Programs are between the ages of 21 to 24 years old; 56% at our Lower East Side Drop In and 67% at our Harlem site. This means that a significant number of youth experiencing homelessness and in need of critical services are not eligible for support from Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) services as youth become ineligible for services upon their 21st birthday.

Currently, the length of stay in crisis shelter is 30 days, and youth have up until their 21st birthday to have achieved stable living situations and employment. Based upon the conditions referenced above identifying contributing factors to youth chronic homeless, youth require more time to address the multiple issues they are facing. Data from DYCD shows that young people who use these 30-day youth shelters often remain in a cycle of instability. In fiscal year 2016, less than one percent of those discharged from youth crisis shelter beds moved into their own apartments. About 18% of those discharged, moved along the local continuum from crisis shelter to a transitional independent living (TIL) bed. More than half of those discharged either went right back into a crisis bed (29.7%) or were unaccounted for (23.5%).

The above statistics serves to illustrate the instability that young people experience when they are not afforded long-term support. Youth need more time, as navigating multiple systems and addressing barriers can be a lengthy process for both youth and the advocates that work with them. For example, we know that supportive housing is a key resource for some homeless youth—and Streetwork has documented expertise in successfully placing disabled homeless youth in these units. However, this value resource has become hard to access due to a mixture of declining unit availability, provider-based eligibility criteria, and tenant preferences. In all, the process for accessing supportive housing takes at least a year, on average. There is also a subset of homeless youth who have challenges managing higher threshold services such as TILS, who need longer term crisis shelter that can continue to address their unique needs. When youth have limited time in shelter with a goal toward stabilization, they are at a disadvantage.

Stabilization does not happen in 30 days. The result is a high percentage of chronically homeless youth cycling between the streets and crisis shelters without ever accessing long-term shelter. Many end up in the streets where they face the likelihood of resorting to high-risk behaviors for survival, thus decreasing their chances for success and healing. We know from our experience

working with this population that young people need more consistency and time as they work towards self-sufficiency. For the reasons that we mentioned earlier, we urge the Council to pass Int. 39 and Int. 1116 increasing age of eligibility for crisis shelter to 25 years old and increase the length of stay to 60 days, at minimum.

Thank you for your ongoing support of Safe Horizon's work, and for your work to support the needs of runaway and homeless youth. We are happy to answer any follow up questions.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH SHELTER

February 12, 2018

Mayor of the City of New York, Bill de Blasio
Commissioner of Department of Youth and Community Development, Bill Chong
New York City Council Members

Re: Youth Shelters for 21-24 year olds

Dear Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Chong and the Members of the New York City Council,

We, the undersigned, call upon you to immediately implement in New York City the new state regulations which permit localities to allow homeless youth to access youth shelters and transitional housing programs through their twenty fourth year, rather than continuing to force them out on their twenty first birthday.

For a number of years, the goal of raising the youth shelter age has been a cornerstone of our New York City LGBT Community's efforts to protect homeless LGBT youth. We have advocated for this change because the current mechanism for sheltering young adults does not work for most LGBT youths in the 21-24 age group, who fear violence and harassment in the adult shelter system, thus forcing many to sleep in the streets and subways and even to resort to survival sex.

In 2010, Mayor Bloomberg assembled a Commission to study the needs of homeless LGBT youth, and to make recommendations as to how the city should better protect them. The report, which was released and promoted by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development, endorsed raising the youth shelter age, both because of the recognition of a growing body of research which demonstrates that young adults' brains continue to develop through their mid-twenties, and because of the significant developmental traumas homeless LGBT youths are subjected to because of family rejection and violence. The Commission's Report called on the state to amend the regulations to allow youth shelters to serve youth through their twenty fourth year, and for New York City to provide 200 youth shelter beds for LGBT youths through their twenty fourth year.

Our community and our youth put a great deal of effort into advocating for the state regulations to be changed, and now that our efforts have succeeded, it is imperative that the City respond to the needs of the most vulnerable young people in our LGBT community and honor the report it released, by allowing the age to be raised, and making the appropriate shelter beds available.

New York City will not fully succeed in the goal of becoming a safe and supportive environment for homeless LGBT youth until the age is raised. Thank you for your attention to this matter of urgent concern.

Sincerely,

THE CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH SHELTER

Individuals

Allen Roskoff
Bill Shea
Brendan Fay
Frank Salvaggi
Johnny Velour
Krisha Stone
Jevon Martin
Marti Gold Cummings
Peter Staley
Sasha Velour
Steve Ashkinazy

Organizations

ACT UP
Ali Forney Center
Brooklyn Community Pride Center
Congregation Beit Simchat Torah
Destination Tomorrow
GMHC
Hetrick-Martin Institute
Housing Works
New Alternatives
Princess Janae Place
Queerocracy
The Pride Network
VOCAL-NY

Political Clubs

Hell's Kitchen Democrats
Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club
Stonewall Democratic Club



460 West 41 Street, New York, NY 10036 • 212-613-0300

Testimony to the New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
Committee on Youth Services

Int. No. 1699

Int. No. 1706

February 13, 2018

Good morning. My name is John Sentigar and I am a member of the advocacy team at Covenant House New York, where we serve runaway and homeless youth, ages 16 to 24. I would like to thank the Committee on General Welfare and the Committee on Youth Services for the opportunity to testify today on Int. Nos. 1699 and 1706, which, if passed, will greatly improve services to some of New York City's most vulnerable young people: runaway and homeless youth (RHY).

Covenant House New York (CHNY) is the nation's largest, non-profit adolescent care agency serving homeless, runaway and trafficked youth. During this past year, CHNY served over 1,600 young people in our residential programs, and through our drop-in center and street outreach efforts. On a nightly basis, we provide shelter to approximately 200 young people, including pregnant women and mothers with their children, LGBTQ youth, and commercially sexually exploited youth and trafficking survivors. Our youth are primarily people of color and over a third of our youth have spent time in the foster care system. Many of our youth have experienced abuse or neglect at the hands of parents or other caregivers, and a disproportionately high percentage of our youth struggle with the pervasive impacts of trauma, mental health issues, and substance abuse. We provide young people with food, shelter, clothing, medical care, mental



460 West 41 Street, New York, NY 10036 • 212-613-0300

health and substance abuse services, legal services, high school equivalency classes and other educational programs, and job-training programs. All of these services help young people overcome the trauma of abuse, homelessness, and exploitation and move toward stability.

We strongly support Int. Nos. 1699 and 1706 in order to better serve the needs of runaway and homeless youth. These important bills address long-standing barriers that prevent youth from fully accessing the help they desperately need and we are grateful to the City Council for the introduction of these bills.

1. Extending the Length of Stay for Runaway and Homeless Youth

We want to recognize and applaud DYCD's pledge to extend the contracted length of stay in shelter to 60 days with a possible 60-day extension. Currently, however, New York City law does not mandate this extension. We are concerned that without a law in place in New York City, future administrations could potentially revert back to serving youth for only 30 days with a 30-day extension. 30 days is simply not enough time to fully address the needs of a young person in crisis and transition them to more stable housing. Most of our youth have experienced trauma at the hands of parents, pimps, and other adults or from living on the streets. The current length-of-stay limits hinder a young person from being able to heal from this trauma because they immediately must begin the process of searching for more stable housing in order to survive. It is difficult to focus on healing from trauma, finding a job, or addressing mental health and substance abuse issues when a young person's primary focus becomes where he or she is going to live after 30 days. There are also other barriers well outside of a young person's control that conflict with the current length of stay limits. For example, it often takes a full 30 days just to



460 West 41 Street, New York, NY 10036 • 212-613-0300

help a young person replace their birth certificate, Social Security card, state identification card or other documents that were lost or stolen due to being homeless—documents that are necessary for a young person to find employment and housing. For young people with more severe mental health issues who qualify for supportive housing, the current time limits are even more problematic due to long waiting lists at supportive housing sites. The result of the current length of stay limits is that RHY shelters, such as CHNY, are forced to discharge youth before they are ready to leave, which interrupts the progress a young person has made at a particular program. These youth often go to another youth shelter but when there are no beds available, youth are plunged back into homelessness because they fear the adult shelter system and would rather couch surf, live on the streets, or engage in survival sex—exchanging sex for shelter—and some become victims of human trafficking. This bouncing back and forth between various environments completely disrupts a young person’s progress and perpetuates the cycle of homelessness.

Therefore, extending the length of stay to a possible 120 days would greatly help stabilize young people and improve their chances of escaping homelessness. This increase would allow young people the time needed to heal from trauma and then begin the process of finding employment, continuing their education, and finding stable housing, without having to turn to multiple shelters or return to the streets.

2. Extending the Age of RHY Programs to Include Youth Up to Age 25

Currently, city and state-funded RHY shelters may only serve youth under age 21. It is heartbreaking when we are forced to discharge a young person from our crisis shelter on their



460 West 41 Street, New York, NY 10036 • 212-613-0300

21st birthday. We frequently receive calls from young people over age 21 seeking shelter and it is painful when we are forced to tell them there is nowhere for them to go except the adult shelter system. Science has taught us that a young person's brain continues to develop until they are 25 years old, and that 21 to 25-year-olds have different needs from older adults. Federal funding for homeless youth already allows programs to serve youth up to age 25 because they recognize that homeless young adults need age-appropriate services. While the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) does provide shelter to youth over age 18, young people must first go through the intake and assessment process at shelters with older, chronically homeless adults, who often have more severe mental health and substance abuse issues. As with 18 to 21-year-olds, 21 to 25-year-olds still often fear entering the DHS system due to this intake and assessment process and also because sometimes there are not available beds in the youth-specific shelters. The result is that when these youth are too old for RHY shelters they couch surf when they can, but otherwise may turn to the streets or survival sex to survive.

Therefore, we support New York City taking a stand for these homeless young adults by allowing them to remain in RHY shelters until their 25th birthday in order to access age-appropriate services. While we are very much in support of this change, we want to emphasize the need for additional funding in order to adequately serve this new population.


In conclusion, the passage of these bills would provide incredible support to runaway and homeless youth, and homeless youth adults. We appreciate that advocates, City Council, and DYCD are all in agreement that every runaway and homeless young person deserves a bed in a youth shelter. However, while we are in full support of these bills, it is imperative that sufficient



460 West 41 Street, New York, NY 10036 • 212-613-0300

funding is available to ensure every youth seeking help can be served in a DYCD shelter.

Finally, we would like to thank The Committee on Youth Services for holding today's hearing, and a special thank you to Speaker of the New York City Council, Corey Johnson, for the introduction of these bills and for being a champion for our youth. We thank the entire New York City Council for their support in the fight against youth homelessness as the passage of these bills would make New York City a leader in supporting runaway and homeless youth.



Craig Hughes, LMSW
hughes.crai@gmail.com

The New York City Council
Committees on Youth Services

February 13, 2018

Hearing RE:

1. Preconsidered Int. In relation to runaway and homeless youth services for homeless young adults.
2. Preconsidered Int : In relation to time frames for runaway and homeless youth shelter services.
3. Preconsidered Int.: In relation to shelter for runaway and homeless youth.

Testimony Sections

- Haphazard Interventions: p. 2-4
- A Background on Municipal Indifference: p. 4-5
- Who are New York City's Homeless Youth?: p. 5-6
- Framing The Issue: The City Needs to Focus on Resources: p. 6-8
- Current Resources: p. 8-10
- Gaps in Resources: p. 10-12
- NYC's Policing Strategy Harms Homeless Youth: p. 12-13
- Current Legislation: p. 14-15
- Additional Needs: p. 15-16
- Appendices: p. 17-20

Thank you, Chair Rose, and members of the committee on Youth Services, for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Craig Hughes and I am a social worker and researcher who focuses on homeless youth matters here in New York City. I am testifying in support of each of the resolutions up for discussion today, though with particular concern on the matter of a right to shelter for RHY, which I unequivocally support.

Like many others, I am exceedingly appreciative of Chair Rose's decision to bring a hearing so quickly on RHY matters – it is a welcome change – as well as Speaker Johnson's serious and established commitment to *finally* seeing-through legislative changes desperately needed to meet the needs of New York City's runaway and homeless youth (RHY) population.

As I will discuss below, I do not exaggerate in stating that Chair Rose, CM Torres, CM Gibson and Speaker Johnson have the chance to make historic change by intensely focusing on legislation that increases and improves the resources available to RHY right now. With that, I must note that enthusiasm is tempered due to a change in language in one of the proposed bills, which in its new form removes explicit support for a right to shelter for RHY. The right to shelter for RHY should not be a point of compromise – it should be the starting point of discussion.

This testimony addresses the three bills, but also aims to provide some important context to City policies as they relate to RHY, and goes on to make recommendations for needed resources.

Haphazard Interventions

In beginning my testimony I'd like to give an anecdote from my own recent experience. This anecdote is minor, but it may help to illustrate the haphazard way the De Blasio administration has sought to aid homeless youth who survive on City streets. While working for a local agency, a colleague reached out to me because a young person, seeking services through a social service program elsewhere in the City, was trying to access an RHY bed and having difficulty. Unfortunately, the City has no sufficient central hotline or centralized emergency intake system for RHY beds. Rather, the policy is that a City official holds a cell phone and will take calls if a provider is having a difficult time finding a bed.

Late last year, in testimony before the Council, a City official with DYCD testified to the following process for placing a homeless young person:

We've put in place so many different steps for youth to get beds. [...] If they are in need of a bed and they're having difficulty, they can call me, and I make sure that that youth is placed in a bed. So these are steps that we've put in place for all of our programs in terms of making sure that no youth is without a bed on any given night. Now whether the programs take advantage of these particular steps that we've put in place, that's something we have to work with them on to make sure that they do it better. But the thing is that we've put in place systems so that any youth at any given time can be placed in a bed. And that's giving my number out, which they can call me... [CM Levin requests phone number] [...] The number is, everybody's ready? 1-

646-457-2705. And this phone works even when I'm on vacation where it can be accessible, so that I can communicate with my staff to make sure that they are doing their jobs assisting all of our providers get beds for any youth.¹

Except, on the afternoon I am referencing, the official with the phone was home sick (as I later found out via email from the Deputy Commissioner). Before finding that out, I called the cell phone number mentioned above from both my work phone and my personal cell phone – but only a voicemail answered. I also called various numbers in DYCD's RHY unit – no one answered. I sent emails to DYCD's Deputy Commissioner and the official who testified to holding the relevant cell phone. Email and calls went unanswered until nearly two hours later – a second email I sent was only returned after I emailed the same DYCD officials and informed them that I had contacted Legal Aid about the issue; it took approximately 14 minutes to get an answer to my emails at that point. Suddenly, a City official was dispatched to find the young person a bed. Clearly we all get sick, and City officials are extremely busy by nature of their work. However, since City policy – as outlined in testimony above – is that this is the route through which a bed can be found if someone is experiencing difficulty, clearly this policy is insufficient.

This past weekend, while writing this testimony, I called the City's "Youth Connect" hotline – a toll-free number published on their website that purports to connect youth to resources. I work late, so it was about 1:00am on Saturday. This was the message I heard when I called:

Welcome to Youth Connect, the resource and referral service for New York City youth, families and community-based organizations at the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development [...] We are currently closed. If you are in need of a shelter and are under the age of 21 or are feeling stressed or in crisis please call the National Runaway Safeline at 1-800-786-2929 where someone is waiting to listen to your concerns and connect you to a network of resources. If you're looking for information on DYCD services please visit our website at nyc.gov/dycd, or call us during normal business hours 9am-5pm Monday through Friday. And be sure to follow Youth Connect [online]. [...] If this is an emergency please hang up and call 911. ... Thank you for calling, your call is being directed to 311.

What is that message saying? Well, first, someone seeking youth shelter is out of luck. Secondly, if they are in crisis they can hang up and call a national hotline. It is saying a lot of other things – but it is certainly not saying, "if you need a bed, here is a bed." Clearly a business-hours-only hotline and an individual carrying a cell phone is not a sufficient intervention for linking homeless youth to youth-specific beds. Realistically, this is the smallest possible resource allocation the City could make, other than making no resource allocation. The entire functionality of an entry-point into youth shelter should not be subject to typical City business hours, or whether an official is home sick. But this is what happens.

¹ This testimony is available in the City Council's public hearings archive – hearing held by General Welfare and Youth Services, September 28, 2017, relevant testimony at 01:27:00-01:29:00. The "steps" DYCD testifies to are in the aforementioned footage. Online: <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=561550&GUID=B882F073-069C-4DD5-9247-39B478339099&Options=info&Search=>

With that example in mind, I also want to start my testimony with a more general point. It is important to note that, historically, the bar has been set remarkably low for expectations of what RHY resources will be made available. Accordingly, even meager improvements and expansions are often taken as reasonably scaled interventions, particularly by City officials. Celebration of the work done by the City in recent years – as crucial as that expansion of resources has been – should be placed in context to the scale of the need. If that is our point of comparison, then it is certainly no time to be self-congratulatory.

A Background of Municipal Indifference²

Runaway and homeless youth (RHY) have never been given sufficient resources in New York City. Since the current homeless crisis began in the late 1970s homeless youth have typically been the last attended to, and the least served. Their marginalization within the safety net can be seen in the City's proactive efforts not to acknowledge their very existence.

Going back to the early 1980s, City official's butted heads with advocates on how many RHY walked our streets. Officials tended to argue that the numbers were unknown or small, and advocates tended to argue they were in thousands.³ During the 1990s, the Giuliani administration commissioned an estimate of the size and needs of the RHY population, hiring well-known RHY and AIDS researcher Michael Clatts to conduct the study. When Clatts returned his data, with an estimate of some 20,000 homeless youth in New York City, officials suppressed the report – refusing to allow its release to the public. Findings were later leaked to reporters and related articles were subsequently published in the *New York Times*, the *Village Voice* and elsewhere.⁴ The Bloomberg administration wasn't much more interested in acknowledging the needs of these young people. Throughout the latter's tenure, advocates fought back against the administration's constant use of homeless youth resources as a sort of political football in budget negotiations.⁵

While the City Council helped fund the most reliable, realistic and respected study on the number of homeless youth, the Bloomberg administration never put up resources to match that need.⁶ By the end of the Bloomberg administration, New York City had approximately 250 beds in its youth continuum, overseen by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD).⁷ It was only upon the end of his tenure that the Bloomberg

² This background information has also been stated in previous testimony to the Council.

³ See for example: Sheila Rule, "City Failing to Aid Homeless Youths, Study Says," *New York Times* 9/25/1983.

⁴ On this see: Tina Rosenberg, "Editorial Observer; Helping Them Make It Through the Night," *New York Times* 7/12/1998, at: <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/12/opinion/editorial-observer-helping-them-make-it-through-the-night.html>; David Kihara, "Ask, Don't Tell," *The Village Voice* 8/17/1999, at: <https://www.villagevoice.com/1999/08/17/ask-dont-tell/>

⁵ On this see Citizens Committee for Children's statement during the last year of the Bloomberg administration: "Council Members, Youth, Providers and Advocates Rally for Runaway and Homeless Youth Services" released 6/19/2013. <https://www.cccnewyork.org/press/releases/council-members-youth-providers-and-advocates-rally-for-runaway-and-homeless-youth-services/>

⁶ That study was coordinated by the Empire State Coalition for Youth and Family Services (now the Coalition for Homeless Youth) and estimated that 3,800 youth were homeless in New York City on any given night, with 1,600 in some variation of street homelessness. For further information please see NYCHY's website at: <http://www.nychy.org/>

⁷ On RHY services during the Bloomberg administration, see the Independent Budget Organization's report: *City Spending for Runaway and Homeless Youth Grows Steadily* released August 2010, <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/rhyaugust122010.pdf>. For 2013 DYCD data, see the Mayor's Management Report for that year, p. 134: http://www.nyc.gov/html/ops/downloads/pdf/mmr2013/2013_mmr.pdf

administration baselined RHY funding in the annual budget.⁸ Mayor Bloomberg ended his tenure leaving Mayor De Blasio the largest crisis of housing and homelessness since modern homelessness began.⁹ Two days before Mayor Bloomberg left office, Legal Aid sued him for a right to shelter for homeless youth.¹⁰ That case, to the dismay of many, remains unsettled more than four years into the current administration. It's conceivable that the piecemeal approach the City has taken to providing a bare minimum of resources for RHY is an effort to avoid settling that same suit.

During the Democratic primary debates in 2013 a moderator asked a very difficult question: what funding would a given candidate, under no circumstances, cut? Mayor De Blasio's answer shocked many of us serving and advocating for homeless youth: he would never cut services for runaway and homeless youth.¹¹ At no point had RHY matters been a focus of any mayoral candidate during the election season – in fact the population remained invisible even in discussions of the contemporary homeless crisis. Hopes were raised among advocates, providers and homeless young people. Unfortunately, the performance of the De Blasio administration summarily lackluster. While the Mayor has added desperately needed beds, the administration has not met, by any reasonable measure, the needs of this exceedingly vulnerable population. The legislation proposed today targets a few of the gaps in RHY services and policies under the De Blasio administration. However, it does not propose a right to shelter for RHY. *Accordingly, the proposed legislation falls drastically short of meeting the needs of many of New York's most vulnerable young people.*

Last year Governor Cuomo signed changes into RHY law that allowed for two major shifts in current policy.¹² First, in accord with federal definitions, the legislation changed the age that young people could receive services as homeless youth, from 20 to until their 25th birthday.¹³ Secondly, the legislation increased the amount of time young people could spend in crisis beds to 120 days and in transitional beds to 24 months. Part of the reason this legislation passed without significant pushback at the local level is because it gave municipalities the ability to opt-in on the change of age and length of time in RHY programs. Since the passage of this legislation, DYCD and Mayor De Blasio have – with significant pressure – extended the length of stay, though this is not yet written in law, which a proposed bill under consideration today addresses. The administration has not increased the age of youth shelter – it should do so immediately.

Who Are New York City's Homeless Youth?

⁸ Latonia McKinney & Kenneth Grace, "Hearing on the Fiscal 2015 Preliminary Budget & the Fiscal 2014 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report Department of Youth and Community Development" 03/10/2014. <http://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2014/07/fy2015-youth.pdf>

⁹ Andrea Elliott's report in the *New York Times*, entitled *Invisible Child*, is perhaps the definitive statement on this matter, <http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/invisible-child/>

¹⁰ A copy of Legal Aid's complaint can be found online here: <https://www.scribd.com/document/197344657/Legal-Aid-Society-Complaint-Re-Homeless-Youth>

¹¹ Video of that debate is here: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?314616-1/new-york-city-mayoral-democratic-primary-debate&start=4876>. Mayor De Blasio's comment can be found at 01:30:20.

¹² "Governor Cuomo Announces Passage of the FY2018 Budget," 4/10/2017.

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-passage-fy-2018-state-budget>

¹³ On how the federal government sees homeless youth needs and services see the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness's paper entitled "Criteria and Benchmarks for Achieving the Goal of Ending Youth Homelessness". https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/Youth_Criteria_Benchmarks_FINAL.pdf?

A study released in November of last year by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago found that approximately 10% of young adults experience homelessness during a given year. Older studies, from approximately 20 years ago, estimated that up to 406,000 young people age 18-24 were homeless over a given year. There is good reason to believe that youth homelessness is increasing.¹⁴ Additionally, the aforementioned numbers do not include youth under 18 years old, which would substantially increase these figures.

Research shows that NYC's homeless youth are primarily youth of color. For example, CIDI's 2015 survey of New York City homeless youth found that respondents were overwhelmingly youth of color – 4% of the respondents identified as white, while the vast majority identified as black or Latino. The same study found that about 49% of respondents identified as male and 46% identified as female. Studies show that between 30%-40% of homeless youth in New York City identify as LGBTQ.¹⁵ CIDI's 2015 study found that 10% of unsheltered homeless youth in New York City identified as transgender or as another gender outside of a M/F gender binary; nearly nine percent of “unstably housed” youth – homeless youth in various overnight situations – identified as transgender or as another gender outside of a M/F gender binary.¹⁶

In 2017, New York City's sheltered homeless youth ages 18-24 years old – that is, young people in emergency or transitional beds – comprised approximately 10.5% of the national 18-24 year-old unaccompanied and sheltered homeless youth population. New York City was home to nearly 29% of homeless 18-24 years olds who were parenting across the nation. In 2017, New York City was home to 71% of New York State's 18-24 sheltered homeless youth population. Approximately 84% of New York State's homeless 18-24 year old parents resided in New York City.¹⁷ We don't have a reasonably sound estimate of the number of young people living in some variation of street homelessness – the closest we have is the 2008 Empire State (Coalition for Homeless Youth) study, now a decade old.

Framing The Issue: The City Should Focus on Resources and Clarify Numbers

A significant reason for the De Blasio administration's failure to adequately assist RHY is its embrace of a problematic philosophy that focuses more on “uncover[ing] reasons for family conflict” and relationships within the families of homeless young people than in providing them resources to access stability and exit homelessness. For example, the City's 2017 plan to the State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) explains a guiding philosophy of DYCD's RHY programming:

¹⁴ See the report, entitled *Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America*. http://voicesofyouthcount.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/ChapinHall_VoYC_NationalReport_Final.pdf. In 2007 testimony, well-known homelessness researcher Martha Burt cited studies that found 1.7 million youth, age 12-17, experience homelessness in a year. Burt also cited data that estimated 170,000 18-19 year olds and 236,000 20-24 year olds experience homelessness over the course of a year. See: Martha R. Burt (2007). “Understanding homeless youth: Numbers, characteristics, multisystem involvement, and intervention options.” Testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support. <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/47046/901087-Understanding-Homeless-Youth-Numbers-Characteristics-Multisystem-Involvement-and-Intervention-Options.PDF>

¹⁵ See the 2013 NYC RHY study data, p. 7 : <https://shnny.org/images/uploads/2013-NYC-Homeless-Youth-Report.pdf>; also see the 2010 report by the NYC Commission on LGBTQ Runaway and Homeless Youth: http://www.nyc.gov/html/om/pdf/2010/pr267_10_report.pdf

¹⁶ New York City Center for Innovation Through Data Intelligence. *2015 Youth Count Report*. http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/youth_count_report_2015.pdf

¹⁷ This data is available by comparing HUD's point-in-time reports by specific CoC: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/coc-homeless-populations-and-subpopulations-reports/>

With regard to program services, DYCD expects providers to apply a range of strategies to attempt to achieve family reunification or improved family relationships. Case management services with youth that include such strategies are available from initial placement into crisis shelters, as well as in TIL programs and the drop-in centers. In each setting, follow-up services (communication and referrals) are provided after discharge for up to 90 days.

In the course of undertaking in-depth, comprehensive assessments, case managers at DYCD-funded RHY providers are expected to uncover reasons for family conflict and identify individuals, inside or outside the family, who could be potential sources of support for the youth in the future. Funded programs should also offer support and reassurance to increase confidence and make youth feel safe if they want to reach out to family members. In counseling sessions and psychosocial or life skills workshops, staff can facilitate discussions about common causes of family strife and why parents impose rules, model behavior through role play with participants, and highlight the benefits youth may gain by staying connected or reconnecting with family members. In some circumstances, they may also be able to act as mediators between the youth and their families.¹⁸

While some of this may be beneficial to some young people, the decision to focus more on repairing family relationships than on helping homeless youth access stabilizing resources – e.g. housing subsidies, priority access to public housing, benefits assistance, job placement – leaves many RHY stuck in homelessness.

For reasons unclear, DYCD tends to overplay the success of reuniting RHY with families. For example, in the 2017 data reported in the annual Mayors Management Report (MMR), DYCD makes the ambiguous claim that 77% of youth in crisis shelters were “reunited with family or placed in a suitable environment from crisis shelters.” However, data produced by DYCD in response to FOIL requests tells a different story – one that raises serious questions about how DYCD is drawing its conclusions in the public presentation of its system.

According to the FOIL'd data on crisis discharges from 2017, a total of 333 – of 3,444 – duplicated-discharges from crisis beds were reunited with family (“returned home”). DYCD's MMR data reports that 88% of youth discharged from TIL beds in FY17 were “reunited with family or placed in a suitable environment from Transitional Independent Living (TIL) centers.” However, FOIL'd data shows that only a total of 68 – of 445 – duplicated discharges from TIL beds returned home.

According to MMR Indicator definitions, DYCD defines the above categories (“reunited with family or placed in a suitable environment” from TIL or crisis beds) as the following: “The percent of youth, served through the Department's Runaway and Homeless Youth Program [crisis or transitional] shelters, who make the transition to independence or return to their families.”¹⁹ This definition makes DYCD's numbers even more confusing. What does DYCD

¹⁸ Data from the 2017 City plan, submitted to OCFS, released via FOIL to the author.

¹⁹ See the definitions of the MMR Critical Indicators used by DYCD here:
http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2017/dycd_idf.pdf

define as "a transition to independence"? For example, in 2017 the highest number of discharges from crisis shelters, according to DYCD's own data, are youth who go back into crisis shelters; the second highest number of discharges were categorized as "Unknown/Self-discharge" (Please see Appendix 2 at the end of this testimony for the data provided via FOIL from DYCD).

While both approaches are probably helpful – although it should be noted that many RHY do not seek to "reunite" with their biological family, and many continue to be close with their biological family, though unable to reside with them for varied reasons – the City's ongoing decision not to invest in RHY access to permanency resources, and to reduce its conceptualization of youth homelessness to a matter of family conflict, has not resulted in many RHY exiting homelessness. Providing access to resources and investing in expanded resources to help young people access benefits systems, living wage jobs, and permanent housing may have the outcome of helping young people exit homelessness. Providing resources for case managers to actually assist young people with these processes is desperately needed.

Current Resources

1. Beds

As of September 2017, the Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) youth continuum had 525 functioning beds.²⁰ As of September 2017 there were an additional 128 beds awarded, many of which were pending final authorization to open. Of the 653 total beds, 417 (64%) are TIL beds and 236 (36%) are crisis beds. Many of these beds are sub-population specific, including beds exclusively for LGBTQI-identified clients, young mothers and children, and some beds for young women involved in the sex trade. These beds include many of the initial beds that have come since 2016, when Mayor De Blasio announced his plans to add an additional 300 beds. Upon addition of all 300 beds, DYCD's continuum will total 753 shelter slots for all homeless youth in New York City. Under current rules, including recent changes, DYCD crisis beds allow for a 60-day stay with the possibility of another 60-day stay if DYCD approves a request from a shelter provider. TIL beds allow for stays of up to 24 months.

2. Drop-Ins

In addition to shelter beds, New York City funds drop-in centers in each borough. In Manhattan there is one 24-hour drop-in, which provides services exclusively to LGBTQI youth. In Queens a 24-hour drop-in also recently opened. The remainder of currently-running youth drop-ins are open at varied hours, but no other drop-in centers are open 24 hours.²¹

3. Outreach

New York City funds two late-night street outreach programs, which are administered by a single agency. DYCD has reported that in FY16 it served 11,737 RHY via Street Outreach

²⁰ This data was released to the author in a FOIL request and is attached in Appendix 1 – I have reduced the spreadsheet data to population-served, number of beds, and functional status.

²¹ A listing of currently running drop-in centers and their hours is available here:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dycd/services/runaway-homeless-youth/borough-based-drop-in-centers.page>

programs in FY16.²² DYCD-funded and other municipal outreach teams are not formally connected to each other. Providers often point out that youth-specific outreach has impressive competency with engaging homeless youth while other homeless outreach programs are not particularly adept at engaging this population.

4. Housing

There are some housing resources available to homeless youth relying on DYCD resources. For youth suffering from serious and persistent mental illness who are chronically homeless, at any given time a young person may be able to access a supportive housing unit constructed via the NY/NYIII agreement.²³ In April of 2017, the administration announced plans to provide RHY relying on DYCD resources with access to local rental subsidies (e.g. LINC).²⁴ The administration has not yet provided this access. When asked, the City (questionably) laid most blame on the State for holding up approval for reforms to the City's rental subsidies, stating:

The City is committed to this goal. We have been working with HRA and incorporating feedback from DYCD-funded providers..As part of the process to make this opportunity more widely available, the subsidy overall is being streamlined. Considerations for homeless youth in DYCD-funded programs has been written into that process which is currently at the State for approval. There will also be a city process, and additional coordination to flag individual eligibility within our data systems.²⁵

Only a marginal number of youth aging out of foster care are placed into public housing (NYCHA) units, and homeless youth reliant on the DYCD resources do not have priority access to public housing.²⁶ Homeless youth reliant on the DYCD resources do not have access to Section 8 resources, with the exception of a marginal number who access Section 8 aid through supportive housing. Homeless youth reliant on the DYCD still do not have access to local rental subsidies. Simply put, most RHY have virtually no way to sustainably exit shelter or street homelessness.

5. Mental Health Services

Under the current administration, and through New York City's Thrive NYC initiative, there has been an increase in funding for mental health services through DYCD programs.²⁷ New York City has provided both shelters and drop-in centers some funding for mental health assistance, which providers have used to fund therapists and psychiatrists for medication aid and evaluations to be in used for supportive housing access.

²² See the FY16 Mayor's Management Report, p. 221;

http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2016/2016_mmr.pdf. Unfortunately, the MMR 2017 report did not include updated data.

²³ Information on supportive housing resources available to homeless youth can be found on the Supportive Housing Network's website: <https://shnny.org/learn-more/what-is-supportive-housing/youth-programs>.

²⁴ See the outcome of the 90-day review conducted by HRA Commissioner Steven Banks and the De Blasio administrations report *Turning the Tide*.

²⁵ Email correspondence with Deputy Commissioner Susan Haskell, dated February 9, 2018.

²⁶ In a FOIL request sent to NYCHA (FOIL #1031317), the authority responded that "A diligent search revealed a total of 900 individuals with NO priority were granted access to NYCHA-administered apartments from 1/1/13 to 11/20/16."

²⁷ For a useful set of reports and data on mental health services available to youth through Thrive NYC and provider experiences with available resources, please see the testimonies from City Council's 4/6/2017 hearing, available: <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=5115245&GUID=550F2842-7FE1-415B-997F-A820C5842CAC>

Gaps in Resources

How Many Homeless Youth Are There?

While it is important to note that some work has been done to grant RHY resources, applause should be tempered by the vast scope of the youth homeless crisis and, given that, how little the City has really embraced young people on our streets. This begins with simply acknowledging the number of homeless youth sleeping in desperate situations across the five boroughs. Advocates have long argued that the current administration's efforts to tally homeless youth has been overwhelmingly under-resourced and questionable in methodology.²⁸ Because of problematic methodology decisions and a refusal to seriously invest in a counting effort, New York City's main social service research arm, the Center for Innovation Through Data Intelligence (CIDI), has found itself arguing that there are less than 150 street-homeless youth on a given night in New York City.²⁹ Numbers like these, which impact the resources made available for this population, are outrageous on their face. And if they are used to determine needs in capacity planning, the resulting capacity plan would start from a point of absurdity. The 2008 count of RHY, funded in part by the City Council, estimated that on any given night 3,800 homeless youth were homeless in New York City. Since 2008's financial crisis, homelessness in New York City has substantially increased.³⁰ There is ample reason to believe that the number of homeless youth, like the rest of the homeless population, has also increased. Given the deep reluctance on the part of the administration to conduct a realistic population count, the City Council should again fund a serious count of RHY using a methodology far more practical and realistic than that currently by the City, particularly in its HOPE effort.

Shelter Beds

For homeless and runaway youth under 21 years old, youth-specific crisis beds are a lifeline. These beds help young people get off the streets or out of abusive situations, and into a warm place where they can eat a hot meal, sleep in a warm bed and engage with youth-competent social service providers. The City's decision to implement an extension on the stay in crisis shelters and TIL's was desperately needed. As importantly, the current age-restriction – which means that young people under age 21 must leave the DYCD system upon their 21st birthday – pushes many young people out of helping services before they can truly get the most from them. Data released by the City showed that in FY2017, 30% of discharges from crisis shelters went back into a shelter, while 23% simply disappeared. Twenty-three discharges – total, *not* percent – were of young people moving into their own apartments.³¹ Approximately 12% of young people moved from crisis shelter into some formulation of "Other Residential Care/Supportive Housing." Even if we assume

²⁸ For a critical assessment of the Bloomberg administration's efforts please see James Bolas, "City Must Show That Street Homeless Youth Count," *City Limits* 07/25/2013. For a critical assessment under the De Blasio administration please see Craig Hughes, "City's Efforts to Tally Homeless Youth Won't Add Up," *City Limits* 01/23/2017.

²⁹ See, for example, CIDI's report entitled "New York City Youth Count Report 2016"

http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/cidi/downloads/pdfs/youth_count_report_2016.pdf

³⁰ One only need look at the City's annual point-in-time count report submitted each year to HUD. The sheltered-homeless data is reliable, but the unsheltered data is based on deeply problematic methodology. The Emergency Shelter data for 2016 showed 66,800 individuals, while the Emergency Shelter data for 2017 showed 69,805 individuals. For 2016 see: https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_NY-600-2015_NY_2016.pdf. For 2017 see: https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/reportmanagement/published/CoC_PopSub_CoC_NY-600-2017_NY_2017.pdf

³¹ It is of note that the FOIL'd numbers are duplicated, so this could include, in theory, the same young person more than once. Given the very small number, the author is assuming this does not include the same young person more than once.

violently and acutely.³³ A relatively recent pronouncement regarding turnstile jumping is particularly illustrative of how the Mayor's policing philosophy impacts the lives of homeless young people.

A recent *New York Times* article quoted Mayor De Blasio as stating: "A lot of people who commit fare evasion and the police encounter have a lot of money on them." De Blasio continued, "I think I have a lot of validity on the question of income inequality and how we fight it, but you never heard me say, you know, open up the gates of the subway for free. That's chaos." Mayor De Blasio's comments ring remarkably tone-deaf and inaccurate in regards to homeless young people.

A 2015 training manual by the Association of Pro Bono Counsel has a section for lawyers serving RHY in its most recent manual focused specifically on transit violations because of the significant connection between RHY survival and access to public transit.³⁴ A decisive study discussing the matter, published by the Urban Institute, stated the following:

The vast majority of offenses for which the youth were arrested and charged were similar to those reported by the young woman quoted above: quality of life crimes (e.g., jumping the turnstile, carrying open containers, and trespassing) and other misdemeanors (e.g., marijuana possession, shoplifting, and violating a court order). More often than not, these crimes were associated with the young person being homeless or impoverished and not having the resources to, for example, pay for subway fare or access stable and safe housing.³⁵

As recent research by the Community Service Society has made so clear, and as organizers and activists in New York City have been stating for years, targeting those who jump the turnstile is a matter of the intersections of racism, class oppression, heterosexism and policing philosophy.³⁶ Homeless youth, particularly youth of color and LGBTQI youth, often find their way into contact with the police, jails and courts in part because of policing that targets crimes of poverty. It is also important to note that many cisgender and straight-identified homeless young people – particularly youth of color – also experience police engagement due to crimes of poverty, like turnstile jumping. Turnstile jumping, or "fare evasion," is only one example of many that could be given to show how the police targeting of survival crimes brings homeless young people into interactions with the criminal justice system.

³³ An important study that provides context for understanding homeless youth and New York City's policing practices is Kristina Gibson, *Street Kids: Homeless Youth, Outreach and Policing New York's Streets*, NYU Press, 2012. Also see the Center for Court Innovation study, completed by the Youth Justice Board: *Homeless not Helpless: A Report on Homeless Youth and the Justice System in New York City*. The report was published in 2017 and is available at https://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/documents/YJB_Report2017.pdf

³⁴ The Association of Pro Bono Counsel. 2015. *New York City Homeless Youth Legal Assistance: Training and Clinical Manual*. https://www.apbco.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/08905_APBCO_digital-version_11_links.pdf

³⁵ Meredith Dank et al. 2015. *Locked In: Interactions with the Criminal Justice and Child Welfare Systems for LGBTQ Youth, YMSM, and YWSW Who Engage in Survival Sex*. <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/71446/2000424-Locked-In-Interactions-with-the-Criminal-Justice-and-Child-Welfare-Systems-for-LGBTQ-Youth-YMSM-and-YWSW-Who-Engage-in-Survival-Sex.pdf>. Quote is found on page 34.

³⁶ The Community Service Society report is entitled *The Crime of Being Short \$2.75: Policing Communities of Color at the Turnstile* and is available at http://ghftp.58547.nexcesscdn.net/803F44A/images/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/Fare_Evasion_FINAL_10_6_17_smaller.pdf

Current Legislation

It seems important to note from the outset how disappointing it is to see that Speaker Johnson has dropped language in a preceding and similar bill (Int. 1700), which would have implemented a right to shelter for RHY.³⁷ While Speaker Johnson initially called for a right to shelter – Int. 1700 simply stated: “The department shall provide shelter services to all runaway and homeless youth who request such shelter from the department” – the bill language has now been rewritten for the new bill being considered today, and now mandates that “the department shall develop and submit to the speaker of the council and post on its website a plan to provide shelter services to all runaway youth and homeless youth who request such shelter from the department...” This is a full backtrack from a bill calling for a right to shelter.

Additional comments on each bill are below:

- **Preconsidered Int: In relation to time frames for runaway and homeless youth shelter services** (CM Gibson & Speaker Johnson). This bill extends the length of time that RHY can stay in shelters (crisis and transitional). The City has recently implemented an extension of shelter-stays. However, this should be written into law to prevent any changes that may come with budget woes or future administrations that are hostile to welfare expenditures and unsupportive of homeless services.
- **Preconsidered Int.: In relation to runaway and homeless youth services for homeless young adults** (CM Torres & Speaker Johnson). This bill increases the shelter-access age through 24 years old. Youth-specific shelters are more attuned to the needs of homeless youth than the adult shelter system is. The adult shelter system's diversionary model is particularly problematic in regards to supporting young people. Decisively, to ensure providers are not tasked with the City's job, language in the bill should be explicit in ensuring that DYCD is responsible for providing the necessary resources, and not providers. Given that at least one DYCD official has publicly stated they do not support raising the age of RHY shelters unless there is additional money, there is reason to be concerned that this vague language could put this demand on providers rather than DYCD. DYCD's budget should be increased to ensure this need can be met.
- **Preconsidered Int.: In relation to shelter for runaway and homeless youth** (Speaker Johnson). This bill would require necessary reporting by DYCD. However, the language should be made clearer in various sections. A guidepost for considering changes to the reporting would be the use of the categories found in Appendix 2, which shows the way DYCD currently breaks down this data. Some specific edits to this language should include:

1: The “service needs of the current population” should explicitly state public benefits such as SNAP, Medicaid and cash assistance; youth accessing DSS's WeCare program for individuals with limitations in work; youth receiving, or in

³⁷ Text from the original bill is available at: <http://legistar.council.nyc.gov/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=3147851&GUID=BC48FC36-29E2-4693-A01F-305BCBD12A50>

application or appeals processes for disability benefits; youth needs for legal support, whether criminal or civil.

2: DYCD already reports on much of this data (see, for example, appendices below) but does not voluntarily make it public and does not de-duplicate it in ways that are easily understandable. Further, the reporting options for discharge-types are confusing in combination – for example, the "Other Residential/Supportive Housing Category." This section should explicitly state that this data should include unduplicated individuals by discharge-type. This section should expand its discharge categories to include other shelter systems beyond DHS. This section should include a separate category for supportive housing, and ideally by supportive housing type.³⁸

This bill would also request DYCD to develop and design a capacity plan. However, this is a far cry from a right to shelter, and given the City's refusal to invest in a realistic count of RHY, this kind of bill language is not likely to result in the necessary resource allocation.

This bill language does not mandate the City to provide age-appropriate shelter on demand. The language in the bill relies on the use of Section §21-404 of the City's Administrative Code, which specifies data contours for a forthcoming and ongoing report of youth shelter access and turnaways. While this information is decisive for planning, it does not provide sufficient information from which to develop a comprehensive and sufficient capacity plan. To adequately develop a capacity plan there will need to be some sense of the number of RHY in the City. Unfortunately, the City only accepts its own – remarkably austere, problematic, and entirely questionable – data on that matter.

As mentioned above, the City chooses not to invest in an accurate count of homeless young people, so we cannot expect that any capacity plan relying on DYCD's – or DHS's (HOPE) – numbers will result in a realistic resource allocation. We can expect that relying on current City methodologies and numbers will result in an insufficient resource allocation for RHY, continuing many of the same issues that underlie this hearing. A right to shelter for RHY is necessary to ensure that a young person is never turned away from a safe place to sleep.

Additional Needs

While I testify in strong support of the legislation currently under discussion, there are additional needs for resources targeted to the RHY population that are not yet being legislated. Some key needs are as follows:

- **Investment In Shelter Placement Mechanisms:** As discussed at the beginning of this testimony, the City has a haphazard and remarkably insufficient system in place for helping RHY access a bed on demand. One immediate step the City should implement is a 24-hour hotline solely for the purpose of connecting RHY to outreach, beds, and other crisis resources.

³⁸ Many of the supportive housing units in New York City are for particular population categories – e.g. individuals with serious/persistent mental illness or youth aging out of foster care etc. For information on this see: <https://shnny.org/learn-more/looking-for-housing/supportive-housing-in-new-york-city>

- **Housing resources:** New York City must provide RHY with resources to exit youth homelessness before it becomes chronic adult homelessness. These resources include access to local rental subsidies and equitable and fair access to supportive housing for those who are eligible (e.g. the City should end its facilitation of creaming by providers, and providers should be prevented from creaming). This would also include priority access to NYCHA and Section 8 subsidies. Additionally, New York City must fund housing specialists in all RHY facilities to ensure that youth have housing assistance at every turn. Currently, the City is awaiting state approval of its proposal to change its rental aid programs, which DYCD has stated will include RHY. However, the details are unknown and there is reason to believe, from previous statements by City staff, that this language will only include youth in DYCD shelters. These resources should be made available through DYCD drop-in centers, where many older RHY access assistance.
- **Assistance with benefits:** New York City must provide RHY with resources for navigating and advocating with the public benefits programs. This includes funding services for attaching RHY to Medicaid, SNAP and cash assistance where needed. As importantly, the City must provide assistance for attaching RHY to local and federal disability programs.
- **LGBTQI-competency:** New York City must ensure that *all* services providers interacting with RHY are trained in LGBTQI competency. Thorough competency in serving LGBTQ youth must be reinforced for every program and all City personnel engaging RHY.
- **Additional mental health supports:** While the Thrive NYC Program has assisted with some resources for RHY, there is a significant need for an increase in mental health services provided to RHY. This includes an increased number of therapists and psychiatrists funded by the City to engage this population.

Thank you for listening to my testimony. I look forward to any questions you may have.

Appendix 1.
DYCD RHY Beds as of September 2017 (part 1)

Contract Status	Type of site	# of beds funded	# of beds awarded	# of beds open	Borough	Date Site Opened	Anticipated Date for Site Opening	Specialty
Online	Crisis	24	24	24	Manhattan	9/1/17		MALE & FEMALE
Offline: Awarded Contract	TL	20	20	0	Brooklyn	Anticipated	1/1/18	TBD
Offline: Awarded Contract	TL	12	12	0	Queens	Anticipated	12/1/17	TBD
Offline: Awarded contract	Crisis	20	20	0	Manhattan	Anticipated	12/1/17	TBD
Online	TL	12	12	12	Brooklyn	12/1/17		TRANSGENDER
Online	TL	5	5	5	Bronx	6/5/17		MALE
Online	TL	20	20	20	Bronx	7/12/17		FEMALE
Online	TL	20	20	20	Brooklyn	7/12/17		MALE
Online	TL	2	2	2	Brooklyn	6/5/17		MOTHER/CHILD
Online	TL	20	20	20	Brooklyn	9/18/17		FEMALE
Online	TL	10	10	10	Staten Island	10/30/15		MALE
Online	TL	12	12	12	Staten Island	10/30/15		MALE
Online	TL	6	6	6	Brooklyn	10/30/15		TRANSGENDER
Online	TL	19	19	19	Queens	4/22/16		MALE
Online	TL	8	8	8	New York	10/23/15		FEMALE
Online	TL	12	12	12	New York	10/30/15		LGBTQ
Online	TL	7	7	7	Far Rockaway	1/8/16		MALE
Online	TL	19	19	19	Bronx	4/1/16		MALE
Online	Crisis	75	75	75	Manhattan	Prior to 2011		MALE & FEMALE
Online	Crisis	39	39	39	Manhattan	Prior to 2011		MALE & FEMALE
Online	Crisis	22	22	22	Manhattan	Prior to 2011		MOTHER CHILD
Online	Crisis	24	24	24	Bronx	Apr-16		MOTHER & CHILD

Appendix 1.
DYCD RHY Beds as of September 2017 (part 2)

Online	Crisis	6	6	6	Brooklyn	Prior to 2011		LGBTQ
Online	Crisis	6	6	6	Brooklyn	Prior to 2011		LGBTQ
Online	Crisis	20	20	20	Brooklyn	Prior to 2011		LGBTQ
Online	TL	8	8	8	Bronx	Prior to 2011		FEMALE
Online	TL	8	8	8	New York	Prior to 2011		MALE
Online	TL	6	6	6	New York	Oct-15		LGBTQ
Online	TL	6	6	6	New York	Oct-15		LGBTQ
Online	TL	12	12	12	Bronx	Prior to 2011		FEMALE & MOTHER CHILD
Online	TL	7	7	7	Staten Island	Prior to 2011		MALE
Online	TL	8	8	8	Brooklyn	Prior to 2011		FEMALE
Online	TL	12	12	12	Jamaica	Prior to 2011		ALL
Online	TL	20	20	20	Brooklyn	Prior to 2011		MALE
Online	TL	25	25	25	Brooklyn	Prior to 2011		MOTHER CHILD
Online	TL	18	18	18	Brooklyn	Prior to 2011		MOTHER CHILD
Online	TL	7	7	7	Queens	Prior to 2011		MOTHER CHILD

659 577 525

Appendix 2.

DYCD RHY Discharges, FY2017³⁹

FY17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	FY17
# Days/Month	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
Crisis					
Number Discharged	933	880	796	835	3,444
Total Number returned home	104	79	74	76	333
Living with Friends/Relatives	30	22	31	18	101
Own Apartment	6	7	4	6	23
Discharged to TIL Program	166	146	160	147	619
Discharged to Crisis Shelter	245	278	200	231	954
Adult Homeless Shelter	6	11	13	11	41
Correctional Facility	5	12	1	1	9
Hospitalization	11	17	16	9	53
Non DYCD Crisis/TIL	11	3	16	1	31
Unknown/Self Discharge	233	167	155	229	784
Other adult(not friend/family)	12	45	10	28	75
Other Residential Care/Supportive Housing	114	103	126	78	421

FY17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	FY17
# Days/Month	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	TOTAL
TIL					
Number Discharged	129	114	101	101	445
Total Number returned home	22	20	11	15	68
Living with Friends/Relatives	20	31	23	24	98
Own Apartment	13	17	18	9	47
Discharged To TIL Program	14	4	4	5	27
Adult Homeless Shelter	4	20	10	10	44
Correctional Facility	3	0	1	0	4
Hospitalization	0	2	1	1	4
Runaway Crisis Shelter	25	18	15	16	74
Non DYCD Crisis/TIL	4	3	2	5	14
Unknown/Self Discharge	20	6	13	14	53
Other adult(not friend/family)	1	1	2	0	4
Other residential care	3	3	1	2	9

³⁹ Please note that in the original data provided by DYCD, category 'Non-DYCD Crisis/Til' in FY17-Q3 had an incorrect formula of some sort that caused a problem in processing for Excel. Accordingly, the figure of '0' for one of the months is possibly inaccurate.

Appendix 3.
Thrive NYC RHY Services FY2018

Department of Youth & Community Development RHY Mental Health Awards

Total funded \$2,262,000.00

DROP IN CENTERS				
Provider	Description of Service	Contract Period	Drop-In only Projected #	Total MHE
The Door	Ongoing crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	100	\$ 50,000.00
Project Hospitality	Psychiatric evaluation and ongoing crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	110	\$ 50,000.00
Cardinal McCloskey	Psychiatric evaluation and ongoing crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	90	\$ 50,000.00
SCO	Psychiatric and medication management along with ongoing crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	91	\$ 50,000.00
Safe Space	Ongoing crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	130	\$ 50,000.00
Safe Horizon	Ongoing crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	43	\$ 50,000.00
			564	\$300,000.00
CRISIS SHELTER				
Provider	Description of Service	Contract Period	Number of	Total MHE
Inwood House	Crisis and case management; referrals to outside psychiatric providers	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	24	\$ 86,400.00
Covenant House	Team to conduct mental health assessments, and provide ongoing group and individual therapy.	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	136	\$ 489,600.00
Safe Horizon	Crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	24	\$86,400
Ali Forney (9294)	Psychiatric evaluations; crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	32	\$ 115,200.00
			216	\$ 777,600.00
TRANSITIONAL INDEPENDENT LIVING SHELTER				
Provider	Description of Service	Contract Period	Number of	Total MHE
Ali Forney (5 sites)	Psychiatric evaluation; crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	42	\$ 151,200.00
CORE Services (3 sites)	Psychiatric evaluation; crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	64	\$ 230,400.00
GEMS	psychiatric evaluation, group therapy sessions and meditation	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	8	\$ 28,800.00
Diaspora Community Services	Psychological evaluation and ongoing crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	7	\$ 25,200.00
Good Shepherd	Individual counseling, group and family therapy	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	16	\$ 57,600.00
The Children's Village (Victory)	Psychological evaluation and ongoing crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	12	\$ 43,200.00
Project Hospitality (3 sites)	Psychiatric evaluation; crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	29	\$ 104,400.00
Rachel's Place	Cognitive behavioral group therapy to enhance coping skills	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	8	\$ 28,800.00
SCO (6 sites)	Psychiatric evaluation; crisis and case management	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	111	\$471,600.00
Sheltering Arms (Safe Space)	Yoga, art therapy, staff development, and a nurse to provide wellness workshops to youth	7/1/17 - 6/30/18	12	\$ 43,200.00
			309	\$ 1,184,400.00

Update: 10.31.17

As I'm shifting from mad to sad

I'm realizing that the idea of having and to have had

Puts people in a peculiar place.

It allows you to put on this mask of class,

You'll never really meet me where I'm at if you can't understand where I'm from.

I've called soft spots on park lawns safe for sleeping,

While you complain about the ac/heat in your house, or home,

I question what those things are like

I wonder about the idea of home,

As I schlep everything I've ever owned from subway to bus,

To the street and all over again for two months and a half.

This 24 year old didn't know if he was going to make it.

Days that I couldn't let my hunger, weakness, or mental illness get the better part of me.

I'll be 25 in 85 days.

Every day is a sense of panic that not even my bravest metaphor could chip at a comparison,

This cannot be the example we set for our youth in 2018.

That profit is greater than the people that provide it.

I'll tell you about something thing the Ali Forney Center has given me and that is security in a Community that I would've otherwise not known existed,

They are my personalized family

Because you can bet your behind that if I was hungry someone had my back,

In a world where my lgbt+ body has been marginalized,

Where many others like me fight day in and day out to either be who they really are or cover it all up just for survival,

I ask again is this where we leave off in 2018?

My name is Alexander Rey Perez,

And after today I have 84 days until my 25th birthday.

I'm not excited, I don't have plans to celebrate, to be very transparent I'm terrified.

Please consider raising the age. If not for my story, but maybe for the about 700 21-24 year olds that received service at the Ali Forney Center last year.

Thank you.

Good morning. First I would like to thank the council members for allowing me to speak here today. My name is Arthur Sullivan and I have been a Community Organizing student with Ali Forney Center since September 2017. I have been privileged to work with engaging, thoughtful, and inspiring youth every single day who have always been and ought to be the voice and the heart of this movement.

At the end of the day what we're asking for is simple but has a much larger impact than folks, like me, who have never experienced homelessness can truly imagine. I can't speak to that experience. But I can talk about what twenty-one felt like for me.

At twenty-one, I just came out as transgender. Even with my family's expressed support I struggled to accept myself and be publicly transparent with my identity. I had just finished my undergraduate degree. All throughout my life I had been told that my primary focus should be my education and was supported through that. According to our 2017 data, 47% of youth who came to AFC last year aged 21 and older. That's approximately 700 clients trying to access 20 privately-funded emergency beds for a stay of 30 - 90 days. Our waiting list for those beds is approximately six months long.

It's important that we remember those numbers are people. A lot of our youth come to AFC as the first space that they're allowed to be their full self. Imagine trying to access affirming services and community of people who will love and support you for who you are and not in spite of it. Imagine being told that because of your age you are ineligible for the majority of our housing services and you will have to wait

Hello Everyone , My name is Travii Bonilla I am 21 will be 22 in April and I am here today to testify on behalf of myself and others facing similar tribulations of experiencing homelessness. There are not many things that I fear in this world, however for a long time turning 21, an age where I should be finding myself, figuring out my career or furthering my education, was a very real fear of mine.

I'm not sure if any of you have gone through this situation, but I urge you to be empathetic of what myself and my peers are fighting for. We live in a world already fueled by cruelty, hate, greed, and selfishness. Having a place to stay and access to services for young folks is quite frankly a matter of life and death. The nonprofit Institute for Children Poverty and Homelessness released research, which relied on data of high schoolers in New York City collected by the Centers for Disease Control in its 2015 Youth Risky Behavior Survey. Homeless teens are three times more likely to attempt suicide than housed teens, at 20 percent versus 6 percent, the report found. This is critical in realizing young folks in this pivotal time of their lives, who don't have access to services will grow into young adults, 21-25 with traumas not treated and a lack of understanding in regards to how to prosper in life. We are the future of this city and our nation. The city is always talking about its adult homeless population, but is it not logical to recognize that if we curve the amount of youth experiencing homelessness their will be a direct impact on the future amount of adults experiencing homelessness. We are young folks with our entire lives ahead of us, we just need some support and assistance in our time of need. I pose this question to you all, think back on an issue you may have faced in your youth, could you have gotten through that time without the help of someone? I thank you for allowing me this platform and i again urge you to do the right thing, everyone deserves a warm place to lay their head at night and a place to grow and prosper to their full potential. Thank you.



HOMELESS SERVICES UNITED
446 W. 33RD STREET, 6TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10001-2601
T 212-367-1562
www.HSUnited.org

**Testimony of Homeless Services United before the City Council Committees on Youth Services
February 13th, 2018**

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

As the organization that represents the non-profit DHS homeless shelter organizations, HSU has great interest in policy changes that impact homeless services delivery to our clients and to ensuring that our missions, staff, and programs are providing the most compassionate, effective, and efficient services to transform lives from homelessness to being stably housed. It is our belief that every person experiencing a housing crisis deserves access to high quality care and receives the support they need to overcome homelessness. Homeless young people are no exception. In fact, it is imperative that programs with specialized services to meet the unique needs of our youth such as DYCD supported drop-ins, outreach and shelter programs are appropriately resourced so that the young people they serve can achieve stability and not simply “graduate” to an adult homeless system not explicitly designed to meet their needs.

As such, we support this package of legislation, which will have the effect of better tracking the needs of homeless youth so we can better understand what it will take to effectively serve them as well as ensure that young people can remain in age appropriate shelter through age 24. While we recognize the need for a comprehensive assessment of the number and needs of our runaway and homeless youth, we urge the City to not await the creation of a Capacity Plan to provide sufficient units of specialized DYCD shelter and services to meet the need. By conservative estimates, 3,800 young people are homeless in the City every night, desperately try to find a safe place to sleep. They are often forced to resort to the subway, to trade sex for shelter, or wind up bouncing from “couch to couch” while awaiting an available shelter bed that feels safe.

Recognizing that young adults still have complex needs when they’re 21, this legislation will allow young people through age of 24 to stay in specialized DYCD shelters for additional time to address their housing and service needs.

We would like to note that in order for these bills to have their intended impact, it is essential that sufficient funding be allocated to DYCD so that the resources they need to accommodate longer lengths of stay are in place, particularly since raising the age of eligibility through 24 will also mean that more young people would qualify for specialized service.

We are pleased that this administration has been largely supportive of the goals of this package of bills and encourage the Council to move them forward such that regardless of which way the political winds may blow in the future, young people will be able to access these vital services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**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: Commissioner Bill Chong
Address: _____

I represent: Dy CD
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: Asst Comm Randy Scott
Address: _____

I represent: Dy CD
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: Depy Comm Susan Haskell
Address: _____

I represent: Dy CD
Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: Feb 19 2012

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kate Ragochop

Address: 410 W 40th St NYC NY 10018

I represent: New Alternatives

Address: 410 W 40th St NYC 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: 2-13-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Arthur Sullivan

Address: 49 Wedgewood Ln Westbury NY

I represent: Ali Forney Center

Address: 521 W 125th St NY NY 10027

**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: 02/13/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Charles Whitehorn

Address: 910 East 9th St Apt 3F # 10009 NY

I represent: Attorney/Theatre of the Oppressed

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: Michael Rubenberg + Larissa Lozada

Address: _____

I represent: Safe Horizon

Address: 2 Lafayette St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jamie Powlowich

Address: 860 W 41st St NY, NY 10036

I represent: Coalition for Homeless Youth

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/13/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Beth Hofmeister Girelle Routhier

Address: _____

I represent: Legal Aid Society Coalition for the Homeless

Address: 199 Water Street 129 Fulton Street

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. Pre Intros Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/13/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Sentiggr

Address: 460 W 41 St NY NY 10036

I represent: Covenant House New York

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: Kevin Fidler for BP Eric Adams

Address: Board Hall

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: Carl Siciliano

Address: 224 W 35th Street NY NY

I represent: All. Forney Center (Executive Dir)

Address: 321 W 125th St. NY NY

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. 1706 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/13/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Travii Bonilla

Address: 321 W 125th Street NY, NY 10027

I represent: The Ali Forney Center

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 1706 Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/13/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexander Roy Perez

Address: 321 W 125th St, NY, NY 10027

I represent: Ali Forney Center

Address: 321 W 125th St, NY, NY, 10027

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 2-13-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sarah Moore

Address: ~~555 Broome St~~ 80 Winthrop St. BK, NY

I represent: The Door

Address: 555 Broome St. NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: 02/13/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ramon Leclerc

Address: 225 E 57th Street New York

I represent: New Athletics

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: 02-13-18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alexander Jacobs

Address: 419 W 47th St NY NY 10018

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: Craig Hughes

Address: NY NY

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 02/13/2018

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Norma Felisbino

Address: 202 W. 24th St. New York.

I represent: Chelsea Foyer

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/13/18

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Judy Fernandez

Address: 202 W 24th St

I represent: Chelsea Foyer

Address: 202 W 24th St

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