

**Testimony of Joslyn Carter, Administrator
Department of Homeless Services**

**Before the New York City Council General Welfare and Education Committee
Oversight - Support for Homeless Students**

October 11, 2017

I would like to thank the City Council's General Welfare and Education Committees and Chairs Stephen Levin and Daniel Dromm for giving us this opportunity to testify today about the Department of Homeless Services and our work specific to students. My name is Joslyn Carter and this summer I was appointed by the Mayor to serve as the Administrator for the Department of Homeless Services. I look forward to getting to know you and working together in this new role after thirteen years working at DHS.

Over the past four decades, the shelter system was built up in a haphazard way to meet the needs of homeless New Yorkers. Since the 1980s, the face of homelessness substantially shifted from the largely single adult population struggling with justice system involvement, mental health challenges, substance use disorders and inconsistent employment to what we see today – 70% of those in shelter are families, and 34% of the families with children in shelter have a working adult in them. As of October 6, 2017 our Census included 22,987 children. Of these children, 14,548 are aged 3-18, and in school as of October 4, 2017.

The Mayor's plan to end the use of all cluster sites and commercial hotel facilities and replace them with a smaller number of high-quality borough-based facilities will reduce the number of Department of Homeless Services' facilities by 45 percent across New York City. Our goal is to maintain a vacancy rate to ensure the flexibility we need to implement a more equitable, borough-based system that takes into account the individual needs of the children and adults we must shelter. The plan's guiding principle is community first: giving homeless New Yorkers, who come from every community across the five boroughs, the opportunity to be sheltered closer to their support networks and anchors of life, including schools, jobs, health care, family, houses of worship, and communities they called home, in order to more quickly stabilize their lives.

Prevention at PATH and Family Intake

In June, Department of Social Services Commissioner Banks provided comprehensive testimony concerning the process by which families enter and move through the DHS system, beginning with family intake at DHS's Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH) Intake.

To briefly review: Upon arrival, reception staff members inquire about the family's reason for coming to PATH and are engaged by PATH social workers to provide crisis counseling, mediation services, and referrals to community-based resources as an alternative to shelter. Along with HRA Homeless Diversion Unit (HDU) caseworkers, and Homebase offices, these Social Workers identify services to assist families in retaining or securing independent housing without having to enter shelter including family mediation, legal services, HRA emergency grants, and rental assistance.

In City Fiscal Year 2016, the PATH intake center handled applications from nearly 18,000 unique households – numbers which have remained steady since 2013. In addition to HRA's Homelessness Diversion Unit, co-located at PATH is HRA NoVA ("No Violence Again"), Department of Education (DOE) family assistance liaisons, Administration for Children's Services (ACS) liaisons and a contracted medical provider, The Floating Hospital. DHS's partnerships with our sister agencies are important to holistically respond to the needs of our clients.

For example, ACS staff stationed at PATH conducts a nightly clearance of all families with children who present at PATH to apply for temporary emergency shelter; matches are then provided to DHS identifying families with open ACS cases. DHS staff members also learn of ACS involvement through the standardized intake interview, where a family has the opportunity to self-disclose this information. Additionally, shelter staff has access to information fields in the DHS CARES system that identifies a family's ACS involvement.

When PATH staff members learn of a family's ACS involvement through these means, they contact ACS staff on-site at PATH or the ACS staff assigned to the family to inquire further regarding the family's housing needs and to assist with service continuity.

Recognizing that supporting students extends beyond both the classroom and schoolyard, we've improved our collaboration with the Department of Education so that we are identifying and troubleshooting families' unique needs, including their special education requirements and transportation options as well as needing to register children for school and relaying information to families in real time.

In partnership with the DOE, we created and now maintain the DHS's first-ever comprehensive daily digital data feed of all school-aged children in shelter to improve DHS/DOE's information sharing to ensure the educational needs of families experiencing homelessness are met as immediately and effectively as possible. This feed is updated every day to include new students entering shelter and any status changes for current families (i.e. change in shelter or transition to permanent housing). The feed provides real-time information on specific families' needs based on shelter location and current schools to our two agencies.

Upon arrival at a shelter, families are assigned a case manager in CARES, the DHS system of record. The case manager meets with the family to address any immediate needs and makes appropriate referrals. During this time, there are specific discussions with clients that focus on the needs of

children within the household, including school enrollment. The case manager refers the client to the Department of Education (DOE) family assistants or the DOE Students in Temporary Housing borough contact.

We have also worked closely with the DOE to improve transportation options for students across the system. And beginning the week before the first day of school this year, DHS provided families applying for shelter at PATH Intake with MetroCards to ensure they have a transportation option immediately to get to school, including those families who may ultimately be determined ineligible for shelter.

We believe training is a key element to increasing awareness and collaborations among stakeholders. Trainings are provided throughout the year to engage the schools and shelter community. For instance, last year, PATH staff conducted several trainings to DOE Attendance Teachers and arranged several tours for DOE staff to visit PATH. Also, DHS participates in the citywide annual McKinney-Vento Workshops facilitated by the New York State Education Department (SED) and the New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYS-TEACHS) at Advocates for Children for NYCDOE schools.

Shelter Placement

In the FY17 MMR, we reported that during FY17, there was a decline in the percentage of families with children who were placed in shelter according to the youngest school-aged child's school address.

DHS makes every effort to place families at shelter locations that correspond to the youngest school-aged child's school address, but due to constraints in shelter capacity this is not always possible. And this is exactly why the Mayor's Turning the Tide plan envisions an approach to shelter that focuses on placement close to a family's community.

As we continue to implement our new borough-based approach, we will be able to create the necessary capacity to address need. Further, implementing this borough-based approach allows us to prioritize placement for those families from the community where the facility is located and then for families from the surrounding area and borough. Since the announcement of Turning the Tide, we have opened or announced the opening of 8 new shelters, 4 of which serve families with children. These facilities will soon be giving households, including families with children, an opportunity to stabilize their lives nearer to their existing support networks. The closer proximity to schools will be particularly beneficial for families whose children continue to attend schools in the communities they last called home: often, they must now commute long distances, sometimes across multiple boroughs to remain in those schools.

Social Workers in Shelters

In addition to DHS' close partnership with DOE, DHS has also taken important steps to improve educational stability and enhance access to opportunity for those students residing in shelters. Because our guiding principle is community, we believe it is critical to offer homeless New Yorkers the opportunity to be sheltered closer to the essential anchors of life, like schools, in order to stabilize their lives.

Moreover, DHS acknowledges the unique needs of children experiencing homelessness and the fact that they need wrap-around services.

In 2015, the Mayor and the First Lady announced ThriveNYC to guide the city towards a more effective and holistic system to support the mental well-being of New Yorkers, especially those among us who are most vulnerable. This included significant investment to support our families in shelter.

As part of this initiative, we have expanded the staff resources needed to help our clients. We have hired over 180 Client Care Coordinators who are Licensed Master Social Workers deployed in shelters to work with families as they navigate multiple systems and cope with the stressors and anxiety associated with homelessness.

Client Care Coordinators work to enhance the delivery and coordination of services to families with children in shelter, which includes identifying and responding to the needs of students. With a goal of strengthening the overall permanency outcomes for families with children in shelter, Coordinators are working to promote and model best practices for shelter social service provider staff, and improve linkages to mental health and community-based services. They are also tasked with increasing the ability of shelter social services staff to address mental health issues in a culturally and linguistically sensitive manner that incorporates strength-based, family-driven and youth/child-guided care. I also would like to note that the agency issued a new LGBTQI Policy in April of 2017, which includes directions for shelter staff and providers on how to follow up on many common LGBTQI issues, including placement concerns, medical needs such as gender-affirming health care, and where to reach out for mental health counseling and support.

Through our partnership with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), we are focusing on early interventions. This initiative will support families with children ages zero to three who have disabilities or developmental delays. The goal of the Early Intervention Program is to support families in helping their children learn and develop, as well as helping families understand their children's strengths and abilities, using everyday activities to help their children develop. DHS provides shelter staff and clients with the information and tools needed to apply, as well as provide direct technical assistance where needed, via workshops and trainings. It is worth noting that through coordinated outreach efforts with DOHMH, Early Education enrollment rates have doubled for enrollment in Pre-K.

Child Care in Shelter

As part of the 90-day review of homeless programs and resulting reforms, the City examined all aspects of the services provided to families in shelter. During the summer of 2016, the City convened a Task Force on Child Care and Day Care in Homeless Shelters to examine child care services available to homeless children and develop recommendations. The Task Force includes the Department of Homeless Services (DHS); the Department of Social Services/Human Resources Administration (DSS/HRA); the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH); the Administration for Children's Services (ACS); the Department of Education (DOE); and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). In the fall of 2016, the City conducted a system-wide review of drop-off child care programs. Our Task Force members visited shelters across the five-boroughs, and, as a result of these visits, recommended that the city create a new permit category in the New York City Health Code regulating on-site drop off child care programs in family shelters in order to be able to consistently enforce and regulate standards that assure child safety and sufficiently mitigate the risk of harm. Developed in partnership with DOH/BOH/ACS and service providers, the proposed regulations for this new permit category were adopted by the Board of Health in early September.

Following that, last month, we announced that, together with our partners in government and partners in providing social services, we finalized regulations to enhance drop-off child care at shelters for families with children, implementing more effective standards to ensure this programming is high quality across the board. These additional regulations will improve drop-off care by enhancing on-site staffing and strengthening health, safety, and physical space guidelines. With these regulations, we are adding training in child development and standardizing staff-to-child ratios, increasing that ratio for infants and toddlers so that homeless children receive the attention and supervision they deserve in drop-off childcare settings. And we are also establishing strict expectations for physical spaces, including health and safety standards, like window guards and sprinklers, to ensure that drop-off childcare spaces are appropriate and our young clients are safe. These are the same standards applied to regulated day care programs throughout New York City — we should provide no less to homeless children.

Currently, there are 37 sites operating drop-off childcare programs in shelter and an additional 8 sites that operate on-site DOHMH licensed day care. These are separate business entities from the shelter programs. There is one site that operates both drop-off childcare and licensed full-time care.

DHS, in conjunction with the NYC Children's Cabinet, NYC Department of Education, NYC Service and with book donations from Scholastic Inc. also developed a pilot literacy program in family shelters. As a result, 30 shelter-based libraries have been created featuring reading materials to school age children (K-12) residing in shelter, serving over 2,000 families.

Additionally, in partnership with the New York, Queens and Brooklyn Public Libraries, the shelters have been linked to the nearest library branch for book loans. The public libraries also provide

reading, story time, library card drives and read aloud activities at the shelter-based libraries. Introducing our shelter families and children to the beneficial programs Public libraries have to offer leads them to view libraries as a vital community resource they can rely on after exiting shelter.

The Shelter-based Libraries received the 2016 Library of Congress Literacy Award Best Practice Honoree in recognition of our innovative approach to providing literacy services to homeless children and their families.

Legislation Before the Committee

As the committees consider this package of legislation, we want to provide some initial feedback. We look forward to working with the Council to ensure that the bills align with the good work currently underway so as to not duplicate resources and to ensure appropriate outcomes for our clients.

Intro 1714-2017 - The bill would establish an educational continuity unit at PATH and every shelter applicant (family with children) would be offered an opportunity to meet with such unit while applying for shelter.

Currently at PATH, we have DOE staff onsite from 8am to 8pm, Monday through Friday who distribute education and transportation guides to families. However, PATH is not the only opportunity for families to obtain information concerning the educational needs of their children. For families that are losing their homes and entering into the shelter system the intake process at PATH can be a completely overwhelming and stressful process for adults and children. We do not believe that PATH is the ideal location for parents to absorb critical information about their child's education and future. At all shelters, families have assigned case workers who are able to address the educational needs of the children in a more comfortable setting. This dialogue with families is ongoing and included in their individual Independent Living Plan (ILP). We believe this is a more appropriate DHS intervention to address the needs of students in temporary housing as case managers are able to work with the client in an ongoing way.

Creating such a unit at PATH would be a duplication of efforts already occurring at shelters.

Intro 1497-2017 - The bill would require DOE to publish an annual report concerning students in temporary housing including DYCD and HRA administered housing.

This bill among other things will require the Department of Education to report on metrics provided by the Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration. Paragraph 2 would require disaggregated reporting on the number of students residing in all city-Administered shelter including those in HASA and Domestic Violence shelters, reporting on the number of students in each of these programs may present privacy and confidentiality concerns.

The bill further requires the department to report on the rate of placement of students residing in shelter operated by DHS in the student's school of origin and borough of origin. We currently report through the MMR the percentage of families placed in the shelter services system according to their youngest school-aged child's school address.

Intro 0572-2014 - The bill would require the department of homeless services to post daily shelter census data by borough.

DHS currently posts a daily census report on our website, which includes the total shelter census broken down by adults and children, and further disaggregated, by type of shelter. We also report on the number of families reporting temporary housing at PATH and Adult families requesting temporary housing at AFIC. There are a number of operational challenges that we have in this kind of real-time reporting and we are prepared to work with the Council on the best way to address the Council's concerns as the bill is reviewed. We remain committed to providing useful and transparent reporting on our shelter census and look forward to working with the Council towards that shared objective.

Thank you and I welcome your questions.



**Department of
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Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Testimony of the NYC Department of Education
on Support for Students in Temporary Housing and Intro No. 1497**

Before the NYC Council Committees on Education and General Welfare

October 11, 2017

Good morning Chairs Dromm and Levin and Members of the Education and General Welfare Committees here today. My name is Elizabeth Rose and I am the Deputy Chancellor for Operations at the New York City Department of Education (DOE). I am joined by Lois Herrera, Chief Executive Officer of the Office of Safety and Youth Development (OSYD). Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the DOE's work to support students in temporary housing (STH) and Intro No. 1497.

Supporting STH is a top priority for the Mayor and the Chancellor. Under this Administration, we have taken significant strides in both identifying and supporting our STH, and we have partnered with the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) and other City agencies to help ensure educational continuity, stability, and success for this student population. We recognize that STH are among our most vulnerable students and experience challenges through no fault of their own. We know that, for many of them, school is a vital source of stability. To this end, we provide additional academic, health, and mental health supports and services through school-, district-, borough-, Central-, and shelter-based staff, and invested an additional \$10.3 million to support STH. While we are pleased by the progress made in recent years, we recognize there is much more work to be done, and we thank the City Council for its partnership on this issue.

As you are aware, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires school districts to take action to remove barriers to enrollment, attendance, and success in school attributable to homelessness. Chancellor's Regulations (CR) A-101 and A-780 outline the DOE's obligations to ensure that these students receive the extra supports they need.

Under McKinney-Vento and, accordingly, DOE regulations, a student in temporary housing is defined as one who:

- lives in emergency or transitional housing; or
- shares housing due to loss of housing or economic hardship ("doubled-up"); or
- lives in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate housing; or
- is unaccompanied; or
- lives in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or bus or train stations; or
- has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations.

During the 2016-17 school year, 105,133 New York City public school students were covered under McKinney-Vento, 35,067 of whom were identified as living in a shelter at some point during the course of the school year. A student's housing status is identified in several ways. All parents are given a Housing



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Questionnaire at the time of enrollment in a new school and/or when they report a change of address. In addition to the Housing Questionnaire, we have established, in collaboration with DHS, a modern, efficient data sharing system, through which DHS sends a detailed, daily report to DOE about every school-age child living in DHS shelters. This data allows DOE to quickly identify students in shelter and is further shared with our shelter- and school-based staff, our Office of Student Enrollment (OSE), Office of Early Childhood Education, Special Education Office, and the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) to provide appropriate interventions and supports.

Once students are identified, they are assured of the following rights:

- To attend school regardless of where they live for the duration of their homelessness;
- To choose to remain at their school of origin, where they attended before they became homeless, or to transfer to another school for which they meet the school's eligibility and enrollment criteria. To the extent feasible, a student shall be kept in the school of origin, unless this is contrary to the wishes of the student's parent;
- To immediately enroll in a school even if the family is unable to provide proof of residency, immunization, and/or previous school records at that time, and to have a grace period of 30 days to compile the necessary documentation;
- To receive free school meals;
- To receive free transportation to school and school programs; and
- To receive comparable services and programs as offered to other students in the school.

Within the DOE, OSYD's Office of Students in Temporary Housing coordinates our agency-wide and inter-agency approach to supporting STH and their families. All schools are required to publicly display posters informing parents of their rights under McKinney-Vento and CRs A-101 and A-780. As part of its Youth Development Consolidated Plan, each school must assign an appropriate staff person to serve as their school's STH school-based liaison to track the STH population and provide interventions and support services. All STH school-based liaisons are required to attend an annual professional development session in the late fall in collaboration with New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYS TEACHS). Also, school districts with high STH populations participate in the STH School Based Liaison Institute that provides enhanced professional development and training. In addition, each school is required to allocate a portion of its Title I funding to serve STH students with a range of academic and non-academic supports.

The DOE has 10 STH borough-based Content Experts who supervise and support 117 shelter-based Family Assistants. The Content Experts support family shelters within their respective boroughs to ensure that mandated services are provided, and that supplementary educational and counseling services such as tutoring, homework help, test preparation, post-secondary planning, mentoring, and individual and group counseling are readily available to students and families. They also provide training for shelter- and school-based staff in order to foster understanding of the law and to share best practices, offer family workshops where students and their families can identify with one another and discuss issues they face.

Our Family Assistants are the primary DOE point of contact for shelter-based students and families. Family Assistants identify and interview all shelter-based students and families, inform them of their educational



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rights, and play an integral role in ensuring the delivery of services. In collaboration with the STH Content Expert, Family Assistants monitor the attendance of STH, work with families to improve student attendance, assist in recruiting the parents of STH for activities intended for them, and refer students to extended day activities.

At PATH, DHS's intake center in the Bronx, DOE staff are available to speak with parents, answer questions about education, and provide information about student's rights while homeless. DOE added additional staff at PATH, now providing coverage on Monday through Friday from 8:00am – 8:00pm. DOE created a new education guide this summer for students in shelter, and this guide is now distributed at PATH and in shelters.

Over the past two years, we implemented several new initiatives aimed specifically to support STH. The first, Bridging the Gap, places full-time social workers trained in trauma-informed practice in elementary schools with high STH populations. This program included 32 elementary schools in the 2016-2017 school year. At these schools, social workers worked directly with 4,910 STH providing individual counseling services, group counseling services, and crisis interventions. This year, the program has been expanded to 43 elementary schools.

We also established the Afterschool Reading Club, or ARC, a literacy program staffed by DOE teachers. ARC provides reading enrichment three days a week to students in grades K-5 at 18 DHS shelters. The program includes reading instruction and activities, homework help, and weekly arts programming to encourage literacy skill development. Students in the program are given new books each week to keep. Participating sites also received libraries with over 700 titles each.

Through a partnership with the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, the Office of Community Schools provides intensive supports to STH as well. In the second year of the grant, these initiatives are scaled across all 227 Community Schools with a particular focus on the 22 Community Schools with the highest rates of STH. This partnership has brought concrete supports such as innovative data supports that allow CBO and school staff access to real time data to identify STH students and track attendance; targeted resources such as clothing, laundry pods, hygiene kits, and over 2,000 new backpacks with school supplies as well as a summer youth employment, a mentorship program and quarterly professional development for principals and community school directors.

We also put in place new health and mental health services aimed to support the needs of STH. Approximately 60 schools with high populations of STH received free vision screenings. As a result of this effort, 28,452 students were screened, and 4,777 students were provided with free glasses. An additional school nurse has been hired to provide more intensive case management and clinical care at 10 school campuses with large populations of STH. As part of the Citywide THRIVE initiative, the Offices of School Health and Community Schools have a team of clinicians that either provide direct service or work with schools to develop mental health resources where students can be referred for service as needed. The team works in 62 schools where there are high numbers of STH. Lastly, approximately \$20 million has been allocated to the current Capital Plan to construct school-based health centers at schools with high STH populations. Four such health centers are currently under construction and are planned to open in fall 2018.

We have also increased support to families in shelters regarding all admissions processes. Over the past school year, OSE trained DHS and DOE shelter and school-based staff on Pre-K, kindergarten, middle



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school, and high school admissions, and launched a text message campaign so that families can receive text message alerts regarding admissions processes and due dates. OSE also invited approximately 4,000 eighth grade STH to targeted support centers at the Citywide High School Fair and the Brooklyn and Bronx Borough High School Fairs. In addition, families of roughly 1,300 incoming pre-K and kindergarten students in Districts 9, 10, and 12 in the Bronx and District 19 in Brooklyn were invited to district-based elementary admissions information sessions. As a result of these efforts, 47 percent of students in shelter applied to Pre-K, up from 38 percent in the prior year, and application rates for students in shelter increased for Pre-K, kindergarten, middle school, and high school admissions. Now in the second year of this initiative, the DOE continues to expand these supports.

To support students with disabilities living in temporary housing, DOE recently updated its Special Education Standard Operating Procedures Manual, to include new guidance specific to students in temporary housing, particularly around the special education evaluation and IEP review process. In addition, we have provided guidance for Supervisors of Psychologists to ensure they are expediting annual reviews and evaluations for STH. Last spring, Committees on Special Education (CSE) / Committees on Preschool Special Education staff provided special education overview sessions to DOE's shelter-based staff in each borough to ensure that this staff can successfully support students with disabilities residing in shelter. We also provide workshops for guardian/parents to help them gain a better understanding of the IEP process.

As you are aware, we launched a major new transportation initiative for students in grades K-6 who reside in the DHS shelter system last year. The initiative offers yellow bus service to an additional 5,000 students with pick-ups from 478 bus stops near DHS facilities and drop offs to over 1,000 schools. STH who prefer travelling on their own are still eligible for a full-fare MetroCard, and the parents of students in pre-k through sixth grade are also eligible for free MetroCards of their own to accompany their child to and from school.

The DOE also works collaboratively with other NYC agencies to address the needs of STH. We work with the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and DHS to help families find and enroll in EarlyLearn programs, which provide full-day, full-year early care and education for children from six-weeks to 5-years-olds. As the DOE plans for the transition of the EarlyLearn program from ACS to DOE, we will continue to work with DHS and other partners to ensure the needs of our youngest children in shelter are being met. We connect students who reside in Department of Youth & Community Development shelters with referrals for alternative programs and educational services, such as TASC and Learn to Work programs. Additionally, we conduct professional development on STH youth in collaboration with Human Resources Administration's (HRA) Domestic Violence shelters and we are currently working with HRA in order to seamlessly address the needs of students residing in Domestic Violence shelters.

I will now turn to the proposed legislation. Intro No. 1497 requires DOE to publish an annual report on students in temporary housing. While we support the goal of the legislation to provide transparency around STH, we have operational constraints that limit our ability to report on student transportation. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Council to ensure that the reporting requirement align with what we currently capture in our reporting systems.



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We know we still have work to do and will continue to work closely with DHS and other agencies to provide additional services. Thank you for your time today. We look forward to our continued work with the City on this important issue.



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Testimony of Liza Pappas
Education Policy Analyst, New York City Independent Budget Office
To the New York City Council Committees on Education and General Welfare
On Support for Homeless Students

October 11, 2017

Good morning Chairpersons Dromm and Levin and members of the City Council. My name is Liza Pappas. I am an education policy analyst at the New York City Independent Budget Office, where I have conducted the agency's research on the issues faced by students in temporary housing—with a particular focus on students in the city's homeless shelter system. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

In IBO's report [*Not Reaching the Door*](#) we looked in depth at the multilayered challenges temporarily housed students encountered in getting to school in school years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. The number of students facing these challenges has grown since we issued our report. According to Department of Education statistics, last school year, 105,133 students spent at least some part of the year in temporary housing, a 5 percent increase over the prior year.

For students and their families living in the shelter system, just getting to school often proved daunting as they faced long commutes and other transportation difficulties, competing demands on their time from other city agencies, along with the transitory nature and stress of life in a shelter. As a result, students who were identified as spending at least some part of the school year in the shelter system had average daily school attendance rates well below those of students in permanent housing or those doubled-up in the homes of friends or family.

While the average attendance rate for students living in shelters increased a bit in 2015-2016, the most recent school year for which we have data, their attendance rate remains well below that of students in permanent housing or who were doubled-up. In 2015-2016, the overall attendance rate for students in the shelter system was just over 82 percent compared with over 90 percent for students who were permanently housed or doubled-up. Students in the shelter system had lower attendance rates at every grade level. A table showing attendance rates by grade and housing situation for school years 2013-2014 through 2015-2016 is attached to my testimony.

Students residing in the shelter system also had substantially higher rates of chronic absenteeism, which the Department of Education defines as students who are absent 10 percent or more of the school year—the equivalent of missing 18 or more school days. While the rate of chronic absenteeism among students living in shelters edged down in school year 2015-2016, nearly 62 percent were chronically

absent from school—more than twice the rate for their permanently housed and doubled-up peers. Rates of chronic absenteeism were highest in the early and high school grades. I have attached a table to this testimony that shows rates of chronic absenteeism by grade and housing situation for school year 2013-2014 through 2015-2016.

As an IBO report released this past April observed, students living in shelter tended to be concentrated in a relatively small number of city schools. In 2011-2012 there were 61 schools that served a population where more than 10 percent of students were identified as living in shelters. In school year 2015-2016 there were 155 schools (roughly 11 percent of 1,475 traditional public schools that year).

In our research, school staff overwhelmingly stressed that budget resources have been short of what is necessary to provide comprehensive and coordinated counseling, attendance outreach, and family engagement services. Since then, the city has begun to provide some resources specifically targeted to students living in shelters.

In January 2016, the city announced that all children in shelters enrolled in grades K-6 would be guaranteed busing to any school they attend if the distance from the shelter to the school is more than a half-mile and if parents so desire; the estimated annual cost was \$24 million. For the second year in a row, the city allocated \$10.3 million in educational support for students living in the shelter system. This year funds that had supported 10 attendance teachers were shifted to expand the Bridging the Gap social worker program to 10 additional schools, bringing the program to a total of 43 schools. In addition to school-based social workers, the fiscal year 2018 funds support after-school programs, special enrollment application processes, and technology to better connect Department of Education family assistants with schools, shelters, and families.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Average Attendance Rate by Housing Type, by Year									
	2013-2014			2014-2015			2015-2016		
	Permanent	Doubled-Up Shelter		Permanent	Doubled-Up Shelter		Permanent	Doubled-Up Shelter	
		Up	Shelter		Up	Shelter		Up	Shelter
K	91.8%	89.5%	80.7%	92.2%	90.4%	81.1%	92.6%	90.6%	81.9%
1	93.1%	90.9%	82.8%	93.4%	91.8%	83.1%	93.7%	92.0%	84.0%
2	93.6%	91.7%	84.3%	94.1%	92.6%	85.0%	94.3%	92.9%	85.6%
3	94.1%	92.2%	85.5%	94.4%	93.2%	86.0%	94.8%	93.5%	86.9%
4	94.3%	92.7%	86.2%	94.7%	93.6%	86.3%	95.0%	93.9%	87.1%
5	94.3%	92.9%	86.3%	94.8%	93.8%	86.9%	95.1%	93.9%	87.5%
6	93.9%	92.6%	84.4%	94.5%	93.4%	85.5%	94.8%	93.7%	86.5%
7	93.5%	91.9%	83.9%	94.0%	92.8%	84.3%	94.5%	93.2%	85.2%
8	92.2%	90.9%	81.7%	92.8%	91.8%	82.5%	93.3%	92.5%	83.7%
9	85.6%	85.5%	68.8%	86.9%	86.3%	68.1%	87.6%	86.2%	70.3%
10	84.9%	85.7%	70.2%	85.8%	85.6%	70.3%	86.7%	86.6%	72.3%
11	88.1%	87.6%	74.9%	89.2%	87.7%	75.6%	89.3%	87.5%	75.5%
12	83.8%	81.2%	71.9%	84.5%	82.4%	73.3%	85.1%	83.1%	73.8%
All	90.9%	90.2%	81.0%	91.6%	91.0%	81.3%	92.0%	91.3%	82.4%

NOTE: Excludes PreK students as well as students attending charter schools. Students with no attendance data were also excluded.
New York City Independent Budget Office

Chronic Absenteeism Rates by Housing Type, by Year									
	2013-2014			2014-2015			2015-2016		
	Permanent	Doubled-Up Shelter		Permanent	Doubled-Up Shelter		Permanent	Doubled-Up Shelter	
		Up	Shelter		Up	Shelter		Up	Shelter
K	29.0%	41.7%	73.7%	26.8%	37.9%	73.6%	26.1%	36.8%	72.3%
1	22.3%	34.0%	70.0%	21.2%	30.5%	63.8%	20.3%	30.9%	66.4%
2	19.7%	30.8%	65.5%	17.9%	26.2%	62.4%	17.6%	26.0%	60.6%
3	17.5%	26.8%	60.7%	16.4%	23.0%	58.9%	15.2%	22.9%	56.1%
4	16.7%	25.5%	59.3%	15.3%	20.7%	58.7%	14.9%	20.9%	55.3%
5	16.5%	23.7%	55.9%	14.9%	19.8%	55.5%	14.1%	19.9%	53.4%
6	18.3%	26.6%	58.6%	16.6%	21.1%	56.7%	15.4%	20.8%	53.8%
7	20.2%	28.4%	58.3%	18.0%	24.0%	57.2%	16.5%	22.7%	53.8%
8	24.3%	29.3%	62.2%	21.8%	27.6%	59.2%	20.3%	25.5%	56.1%
9	35.5%	39.2%	72.7%	32.4%	35.3%	71.5%	30.9%	36.7%	69.1%
10	39.9%	39.4%	73.4%	37.8%	39.1%	71.4%	36.5%	37.8%	70.3%
11	33.2%	34.3%	64.7%	30.4%	34.9%	64.4%	30.5%	34.9%	65.8%
12	46.3%	48.9%	71.2%	44.5%	47.3%	70.8%	44.1%	48.3%	71.5%
All	26.6%	32.6%	65.2%	24.6%	29.1%	63.8%	23.7%	28.8%	61.7%

NOTE: Excludes PreK students as well as students attending charter schools. Students with no attendance data were also excluded.
New York City Independent Budget Office

TESTIMONY OF THE UNITED FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE and THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

REGARDING SUPPORT FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

OCT. 11, 2017

Good afternoon, and thank you Speaker Mark-Viverito, Councilman Dromm, Councilman Levin and members of these two committees. We appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today, and we value our ongoing partnership with the City Council on this and other important issues.

We support the bills you are considering here today – Intro 0572, Intro 1497 and Intro 1714. These bills require additional reporting on the number of homeless children and families, and require that families be provided information about the rights of homeless children with respect to school enrollment and transportation.

We believe additional reporting will help raise public awareness about the plight of homeless children, and the result will be more New Yorkers involved in a solution.

Our schools are faced with a complicated problem in how to provide support for homeless children. With nearly 23,000 students going to sleep in a city shelter tonight, it's also disturbingly common. Sadly, school is often the only source of continuity in their lives, so we take our responsibility to these children very, very seriously.

As educators, we are acutely aware of the barriers that our homeless youth face, as well as the effect these barriers have on their ability to learn and have a meaningful experience in school. Homelessness also, not surprisingly, has an impact on a student's emotional well-being.

For families operating close or below the poverty line, it doesn't take much to upend their finances and stability and leave them struggling for food and shelter. Each of these students has a story, and many endure extreme situations. The family may have been evicted after a parent lost a job. A guardian may become critically ill and be unable to work. A grandparent may have died. Perhaps a parent has been jailed, or is struggling with a dependency issue. Perhaps domestic violence has forced a parent to flee with the children. And for every situation we can envision, a hundred others exist.

You can never lose sight that these children are at a fragile place in their lives. Imagine you're 7 years old and you don't know where your next meal is coming from or where you will sleep that night. No child should ever have to endure that kind of psychological burden, and it often manifests itself in school as attendance or behavioral issues.

A child desperate for attention and seeking help may skip classes or act out in class. Without proper timely support, these issues can escalate into bigger problems such as suspensions or dropping out entirely, not to mention alcohol or drug abuse, and, in some cases, suicide.

Not only are our schools attempting to address basic needs such as food and clothing but we provide these children crisis counseling and medical care. The safety net we create within a school has to reach far and wide because these students need stability and a steady stream of assistance.

PS 398 in Brooklyn is one of many schools tackling these issues head-on every day by providing a warm and welcoming environment. The day begins with teachers and the principal greeting the children as they arrive. A building-wide initiative provides these students with their school supplies, plus clothing, coats and even toothbrushes and toothpaste. Homeless students are also given top priority in after-school programs, including those earmarked specifically for students in temporary housing run by the Friends of Crown Heights and the Afterschool Reading Club (ARC). Students there receive hot meals and homework assistance.

What's more, FoodBank's "CookShop" program is given to students and their parents or caregivers as a way to not only promote healthy eating and nutrition but also provide a solid meal. A partnership with NYU's Parent Corps during the fall and spring helps parents develop positive social and emotional skills, and the school also offers GED and ESL classes in the mornings and evenings. These and many other initiatives are part of PS 398's comprehensive approach, and taken together, these programs are a lifeline for families that desperately need one.

At PS 47 in the Bronx, the staff has gone well beyond the usual food distributions, holiday feasts and backpack giveaways. These days, their parent coordinator directly connects with first-time parents in shelters to walk them through the enrollment process and other school-related initiatives, while also giving parents some personal attention.

Schools including Gotham Collaborative High School in the Bronx and PS 15 in Manhattan have become creative by creating in-school laundry rooms for parents. A simple solution to a complicated problem: How to care for your clothing without access to a washing machine and dryer. Furthermore, it brings the parents into the school, engaging them, which is what we want to do with all parents.

We're grateful that our schools can count on many amazing partners in this work including the Coalition for the Homeless, and Women In Need (WIN), both of which provide comprehensive support to their partner schools.

Other problems abound when a student does not have a permanent home or financial security. They come to the classroom hungry. They're probably exhausted from getting up early to travel a long way to school. Getting a solid night's sleep in a shelter is difficult; Doing homework there, sometimes next to impossible. Educators must understand and respond to their needs. Remediation and tutoring would be easy if these students came to us well rested and well fed.

Our members — classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, therapists and nurses— are primary advocates for these children. These educators create a warm, safe positive experience for all children and are an incredible source of emotional assistance.

The entire staff, of course, needs to an awareness about and sensitivity toward these children. Professional development helps staff understand the needs of these children. Principals can ensure that these students are placed in the appropriate classroom settings and have access to counselors and other trained professionals.

The DOE can work with principals to make sure the school itself has the proper resources and is properly staffed with school counselors, social workers and psychologists. After school and evening programs can provide a much-needed respite, and the DOE can ensure those programs are in place as well. Breakfast, lunch and dinner programs can ensure these children are getting the proper nutrition. As important, we must help these children with the special transportation they need to continue attending one school and not bounce around a borough or the city.

Our community learning schools are perhaps best equipped to do this important work. They have layered additional programs, services and targeted supports on top of their programming. What's more, community schools are designed to support not just the child, but the whole family with classes for adults, weekend programs for adults and children, health clinics for the family and a multitude of other family-oriented programming.

The community school directors who manage resource programming in our community schools play a key role in creating those links, by developing programs with food banks, after-school program providers and community health resources. The stronger the links and a stable atmosphere can help these at-risk children experience less stress and focus on their schoolwork.

At the International School for Liberal Arts in the Bronx -- one of the UFT's community learning schools -- the philosophy is to "meet parents where they're at." This led the school to become an official Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for the school community and the very first public high school to offer a permanent food pantry and distribution center. Partners such as Dunkin Donuts and J.P. Morgan Stanley have helped the school distribute hundreds of chicken meals not only to all the families in the school, but seven other collaborating schools. The International School for Liberal Arts is also part of the

Tiered Engagement Network (T.E.N. Network) which means the school is a referring agency for social services to partnering service providers in the local community.

Another CLS school, Manhattan's PS 30, benefits from support at holidays from the faith-based community in which it is located. As a result, the school and community partners provide emergency meal kits, snacks and full meals to the neediest families during holidays and holiday gifts to students, as well. The school works with New York Cares to provide winter clothing, coats and blankets. The teachers there credit strong ties with community organizations and CBOs that help bridge these gaps and help the students.

With the financial support the City Council provides to the Community Learning Schools Initiative, you help homeless children every day. We thank you for that support. Your assistance helps these children better cope with an uncertain future and the hand they were dealt.

Bottom line: We can make a difference in the lives of these children and schools can do their part with the proper support. We can help them eat, dress well, handle stress, enjoy school and succeed. But cooperation and collaboration are key. We all must work together to help these children by making sure we know who they are, where they are and what they need. Then, of course, we must provide the funding for the appropriate resources and staff required. When schools are given the means to help, school can take the appropriate road to help these students.

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Testimony of

Stephanie Gendell, Esq.
Associate Executive Director
For Policy and Government Relations
Citizens' Committee for Children

Before the

New York City Council
General Welfare Committee and Education Committee

*Oversight Hearing: Support for Homeless Students
And
Int. 572-2014; Int. 1497-2017; Int. 1714-2017*

October 11, 2017

Good morning. My name is Stephanie Gendell and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Advocacy at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 74-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would like to thank General Welfare Chair Stephen Levin, Education Chair Danny Dromm and all of the members of the General Welfare and Education Committees for holding today's oversight hearing on support for homeless students. In addition, we thank Council Members Crowley, Salamanca and Levin for introducing 572-2014, 1497-2017, and 1714-2017 respectively, as well as all of the co-sponsors of these pieces of legislation. We greatly appreciate the City Council taking a closer look at the education of New York City's homeless children and taking steps to improve outcomes for these students.

The situation for families with children in the shelter system remains dire. Last week, there were over 23,000 children living in the DHS shelter system and over 2,500 homeless children in the other city shelter systems. Homeless families with children comprise nearly 70% of the City's shelter system. Many of these families needed to apply for shelter eligibility numerous times, cycling through PATH intake, before being found eligible for shelter. Once found eligible, these families remain in shelter for an average of over 413 days- well over a year. Only half of the families in shelter are even placed in Tier II shelters that were created to provide shelter to homeless families, with the remaining families living in cluster sites and hotels. Many families are placed far from their communities of origin, including jobs, schools, child care, health care, child welfare preventive service programs, families and other support systems.

We know that housing instability causes stress and trauma for families and children. The data and research on the experiences of homeless children paint a disturbing picture regarding the well-being of the record numbers of homeless children, even in the best of circumstances. Homelessness creates risks to the physical and emotional well-being and educational success of children. For example, children experiencing homelessness have an increased risk of illness compared to children who are not homeless: they suffer from four times as many respiratory infections, five times as many gastrointestinal infections, and twice as many ear infections.¹ Additionally, they are four times as likely to suffer from asthma and have high rates of asthma-related hospitalizations.² Homeless children also suffer disproportionately from food insecurity, as they are twice as likely to go hungry as non-homeless children, and, due to these nutritional deficiencies they are at an increased risk of obesity.³

Being homeless has also been demonstrated to be harmful to children's emotional well-being. Homelessness causes traumatic disruptions in the lives of children, who, in addition to losing their homes, experience loss of their friends and community, sense of security, routines, possessions, and privacy.⁴ Homelessness also makes families more vulnerable to other forms of

¹ The National Center on Family Homeless, *The Characteristics and Needs of Families Experiencing Homelessness*, Dec. 2011. Available at: <http://www.familyhomelessness.org/media/306.pdf>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, *Facts on Trauma and Homeless Children*, 2005, at page 2. Available at:

http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/promising_practices/Facts_on_Trauma_and_Homeless_Children.pdf

trauma, such as witnessing violence, physical or sexual assault, and abrupt separation from family members.⁵

The impact of homelessness can also be devastating to a child's education because it often causes disruptions that impact their attendance and academic performance. For many children in shelter, however, school and early education programs could provide a structural consistency in their lives; however, students in NYC homeless shelters have the highest rates of absenteeism.⁶ In school year 2013-2014, only 34.3% of homeless children had "good attendance", as compared to 73.5% of the students not in temporary housing.⁷ This data are from a school year when approximately 65.4% of families found eligible for shelter were placed in the borough where the youngest child attended school,⁸ but this key city benchmark has worsened.

Despite a policy to place homeless families in the borough where the youngest child was attending school, the most recent Mayor's Management Report shows that in Fiscal Year 2017 DHS only accomplished this for 50.4% of families. This is down from 51.8% in FY16, 52.9% in FY15, 65.4% in FY14, 70.5% in FY13 and is well off the target of 85%.⁹ Please note that this measurement is merely about the BOROUGH of origin, as even when a family is placed in the same borough it could be far from the school of origin. As outlined in tremendous detail in the IBO's October 2016 report, *Not Reaching the Door*, homeless children struggle to get to school and are often chronically absent.¹⁰ This is causing irreparable harm to children.

CCC appreciates both the complexity and the magnitude of the family homelessness crisis in New York City. We know that the de Blasio administration has made significant investments in addressing the crisis including creating the LINC rental assistance program, expanding HomeBase and legal services to prevent eviction, adding social workers to Tier II shelter sites, and committing to create 90 new shelters so that cluster sites and hotels can be phased out and families can be placed in their home borough when safe and appropriate.

The magnitude of the family homelessness crisis and the devastating impact it can have on children is what led CCC to partner with Enterprise and New Destiny to co-convene a Family Homelessness Task Force (FHTF). Together, with about 40 other organizations, we brainstormed recommendations to promote and enhance the well-being of homeless families and those at risk of becoming homeless. Our report and recommendations focused on a number of

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ In 2013-2014 school year, 31.9% of students in shelters were chronically absent (absent 10-20% of the school year) and an additional 33.9% were severely chronically absent (absent > 20% of the school year). Independent Budget Office, *Not Reaching the Front Door: Homeless Students Face Many Hurdles on the Way to School*. October 2016.

<http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/not-reaching-the-door-homeless-students-face-many-hurdles-on-the-way-to-school.pdf>.

Fiscal Year 2014 Mayor's Management Report, Department of Homeless Services.
http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2014/2014_mmr.pdf

⁷ "Good attendance" is absent less than 10% of the school year. Independent Budget Office, *Not Reaching the Front Door: Homeless Students Face Many Hurdles on the Way to School*. October 2016. <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/not-reaching-the-door-homeless-students-face-many-hurdles-on-the-way-to-school.pdf>

⁸ <http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2016/dhs.pdf>.

⁹ Mayor's Management Report Fiscal Year 2017, Department of Homeless Services.

<http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2017/dhs.pdf>

¹⁰ Independent Budget Office. *Not Reaching the Door: Homeless Students Face Many Hurdles on the Way to School*. October 2016. <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/not-reaching-the-door-homeless-students-face-many-hurdles-on-the-way-to-school.pdf>

key issues, including education for homeless students. This testimony includes the relevant recommendations from the Task Force report.¹¹

In short, we are urging the City to reorient the shelter system and the education system to be more proactive about helping homeless families with school-aged children. For the most part, these children are New York City public school children and the school system must redouble its efforts to ensure these children are both getting to school and then having their needs met so that they are able to learn.

There are several systemic barriers to educational continuity for homeless children. For many, the most significant issue impacting school attendance is placement in a shelter far from the school they were attending before entering the shelter system. Resolving this placement issue, through the Mayor's long term plan (Turning the Tide) will go a long way toward helping many families and will make the transportation arrangement tasks more manageable for City staff.

Unfortunately, this will take time. Additional systemic issues include:

- Many staff assisting homeless families with educational issues do not work evenings, weekends or summer months. This includes both staff at the PATH intake center and DOE Students in Temporary Housing (STH) Family Assistants helping families placed in shelters.
- Few families are informed of their right to keep children in their school of origin, or about the availability of transportation, how to arrange it, and who can help them, when they first enter the shelter system.¹²
- The Department of Education (DOE) provides bus service only for K – 6 students who have been found eligible for shelter. **This does not cover students during the ten-day conditional approval period (or longer, if the family must apply for shelter more than once).**¹³ In fact, the transportation arrangement process does not begin until after the family is found eligible.
- Bus service is not available to children in prekindergarten, middle school or high school (unless the child has a special need).
- While bus service is being arranged, families can request a weekly MetroCard from the DOE Family Assistant, at their shelter placement, or at a DOE borough office, but these already stretched parents must return **each week** to get a new card.
- There are not nearly enough staff on-site at shelters to support families with educational issues. There are approximately 115 DOE STH Family Assistants and eight DOE STH Content Experts helping parents troubleshoot education issues for over 23,000 school-aged children in temporary housing. These staff do not work during the summer, even though there is often an increase in families entering the shelter system in the summer months, and their assistance is particularly necessary prior to the start of the school year.

¹¹ Prioritizing Homeless Children and Their Families (2017)). <https://www.ccnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Family-Homelessness-Task-Force-Recommendations-Full-Report-June-2017-FINAL.pdf>

¹² The Department of Education currently has two staff members assigned to PATH, but neither works at night, on weekends, or during the summer. We believe Int. 1714-2017, which creates an educational continuity unit at PATH intake, will go a long way towards addressing this issue. CCC's support for this legislation is discussed later in the testimony.

¹³ For most families, the conditional approval process lasts 3-5 weeks.

- There is no strong management, accountability structure, or feedback mechanism for these staff, often leaving them struggling to resolve issues for families, or unaware of the education-related issues with which families in shelter are contending. Without a formalized management structure, there is no quality assurance/improvement mechanism nor manager focused on addressing systemic change for repeat barriers.

Recommendations:

- **Make the educational success of homeless students a city priority.**

Ensuring that New York City's homeless school children are receiving the education they need and deserve will require a multi-agency commitment, led by DOE. Issues related to shelter placement, transportation, IEP service continuity, and additional support services are critical and in some instances complex. To better address these issues, the City needs to make an intentional effort to increase attendance, decrease the time for transportation to be arranged, and ensure homeless children are supported with whatever additional services they might need including IEP services, tutoring and/or mental health services. Strong leadership and commitment to this issue will make a tremendous difference.

- **Pass Intro. 1714-2017, a local law to amend the administrative code of the City of New York, in relation to an educational continuity unit**

This legislation, being discussed as part of today's hearing, would be a tremendous victory for homeless students. We are so grateful to Council Member Levin for introducing this legislation. We strongly urge the City Council to pass, and the Mayor to sign, Local Law 1714-2017.

Specifically, this law would require that any temporary housing intake facility have an educational continuity unit, which would:

- Have staff available during evening and weekend hours, in addition to regular business hours;
- Meet with shelter applicants to discuss the education of any school-aged children, including school access and educational continuity rights;
- Begin the process of arranging transportation and/or enrolling in a new school for any school-aged children;
- Inform shelter applicants of early childhood education options including subsidized child care, child care vouchers, and pre-kindergarten
- Inform shelter applicants of the ability to screen children for early intervention services; and
- Provide shelter applicants written information on homeless students' rights, which shall, at a minimum, include an explanation of students' rights pursuant to the McKinney-Vento homeless assistance act and include contact information for relevant staff at the department of education.

This legislation, which addresses some of the key concerns and recommendations from our Task Force Report, would have a tremendous impact on the lives of countless students. Talking to parents about education starting at intake will help families learn their options before they are placed, address their questions, alleviate concerns, and show how important resolving education issues is to the City.

Our one suggestion is to amend this legislation to also require the education continuity unit be staffed during the summer. In addition, we would suggest that all families with school-age children be required to meet with the educational continuity unit at the intake office(s)—so long as the unit is properly staffed so that this did not make the intake process take longer.

- **Increase the number and educational background of educational specialists available to help families year-round at their shelter sites and ensure staff have adequate supervision and accountability measures.**

All families in a shelter placement, regardless of whether it is a hotel, cluster site or Tier II, should have access to an educational specialist. Specifically, every Tier II shelter should have an educational specialist and, until cluster sites and hotels are eliminated, there must be enough educational specialists for these staff to regularly visit each hotel and cluster site to which they are assigned.

The City should increase the number and the qualification of the staff who are available to help families with educational issues and ensure that these staff and the STH Program Staff have a management structure with clearly articulated roles and expectations as well as a data-driven accountability system that provides for the identification and resolution of individual and systemic issues. It is critical that educational assistance be available year-round, including during the summer months. In addition, it is critical that the STHs have the training and background to provide the necessary assistance. We therefore suggest that instead of hiring paraprofessionals for this position that the City hire MSWs or others with similar qualifications.

- **Improve and expedite transportation for homeless school children.**

First, the City should provide transportation to elementary school children during the eligibility process. At a minimum, staff should begin the transportation arrangement process during this time so that this process that on average lasts 3-5 weeks is not time lost. The City should also provide monthly MetroCards (rather than weekly) for families awaiting transportation arrangements. We also believe the City should be arranging busing (rather than just MetroCards) for the children attending pre-k programs.

- **Pass legislation that requires the City track and report more data with regard to educational continuity for homeless students**

Currently, the City provides very limited data with regard to educational continuity or outcomes for homeless students. Specifically, the Mayor's Management Report includes data on the percent of families placed in the borough where the youngest child attends school prior to entering shelter and the average attendance rate.

Intro. 1497-2017, a local law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of education to report on students in temporary housing, seeks to address this.

CCC fully supports the intent of this law. We are a bit concerned that some of the requested data might be unavailable or overly cumbersome. That said, we urge the City Council to pass, and the Mayor to sign, legislation that requires data to be reported with regard to

educational continuity (% of students who remain in their school of origin), the number of days it takes to arrange for transportation to be arranged, absenteeism/attendance, and graduation rates.

Local Law 142 of 2016, which was enacted in 2016, is an educational continuity law regarding children in foster care. Given that the City Administration for Children's Services has been able to produce the educational stability data requested in that bill, perhaps this law could be a good model for this similar issue for homeless students (plus a data element related to the time to arrange transportation.)

- **Baseline and add funding for social workers in schools with a high number of homeless students.**

For the past two years, the administration has included one-year funding in the budget for school-based social workers in schools with high numbers of homeless students. This year, there are 43 social workers in this Bridging the Gap program. We urge the administration to baseline this funding to make this role permanent and increase funding so that the top 100 schools can participate.

- **Ensure homeless students have access to the services they need to be able to learn**

In addition to all the pressures of being a student in New York City, homeless school children also face the additional stressors of housing instability, alongside the stigma of homelessness. Many of these children have experienced trauma and are living in shelter environments that are not nurturing or supportive. Over a quarter of these children are living in hotel rooms, and many lack access to kitchen and laundry facilities. A significant number of these children had IEPs in place prior to becoming homeless and may be attending a school that does not have the services he/she needs and is entitled.

The City, including DOE, DHS, HRA and DYCD, must work together to ensure these students have the supports in place these children need to be able to learn and succeed. This includes access to all services included in IEPs, as well as tutoring, clean uniforms and mental health services when needed.

In conclusion, CCC is grateful to the City Council for its commitment to homeless children. We look forward to working together to finalize these important pieces of legislation and to improving educational outcomes for homeless students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education and Committee on General Welfare

Re: Support for Students who are Homeless

October 11, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about support for students in temporary housing. My name is Randi Levine, and I am Policy Director at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For more than 45 years, AFC has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. We are proud to house NYS-TEACHS, the New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students, which works on several thousand cases each year regarding the educational needs of students in temporary housing in New York.

Yesterday, we released new data showing that, during the 2016-2017 school year, 104,088 students in New York City district schools were identified as homeless – a five percent increase from the previous year. In other words, one out of every ten students in New York City schools is homeless. The number of children and youth experiencing homelessness in NYC is twice the size of the entire Boston Public School system.

In New York City, students in temporary housing have worse educational outcomes than their permanently housed peers across a number of measures. Outcomes are particularly bleak for students living in shelters in New York City—38,000 students in 2016-2017. For example, during the 2015-2016 school year, 53% of students living in shelters were absent on 20 or more school days—missing the equivalent of *one month* of school, only 15% of third through eighth grade students living in shelters scored proficiently in reading and only 12% scored proficiently in math, and 10% of middle and high school students living in shelters were suspended from school.

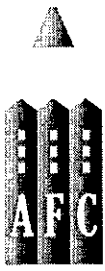
Over the past few years, the City has taken several considerable steps to help students living in shelters.

- **Yellow Bus Transportation:** The City began offering yellow bus service to every kindergarten through sixth grade student living in shelter, making it easier for students to stay in their original school when they enter or transfer shelters.
- **Pre-K Enrollment:** The City launched an interagency task force that has worked to increase pre-K enrollment among children living in shelters, offering a pre-K seat

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this year to every four-year-old child living in shelter whether or not the family applied.

- **Support for Students Living in Shelters:** For the past two years, the City has invested \$10.3 million per year to support students living in shelters. This initiative includes funding for 43 Bridging the Gap social workers to work with students living in shelters in elementary schools with high numbers of these students, initiating after-school literacy programs at shelters, and holding enrollment events at shelters to assist families with applying to schools.
- **Community Schools Pilot:** The DOE has selected 22 community schools to get additional support to serve students in temporary housing at those schools, including a mentoring program, interventions to reduce chronic absenteeism, and social services.

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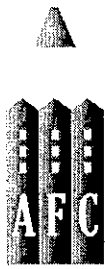


barriers to school access and school success. Many children will attend schools that do not have a Bridging the Gap social worker, and social workers based at shelters can work more closely with parents. Currently, there are approximately 117 DOE Family Assistants who work in shelters and are primarily responsible for conducting intakes with families, giving basic information about education, and distributing Metrocards. The Family Assistants are not required to have a college degree or any formal training in social work or education. They are not a substitute for trained social workers who could provide the social-emotional support and advocacy that this population needs.

Given all of the challenges faced by students living in shelters, the DOE should hire shelter-based social workers to provide intensive case management focused on children's education. Using a strengths-based, family-centered, trauma-informed approach, these social workers should help students and families address barriers to education and navigate the school system, including enrollment, attendance, transportation, school applications, special education services, school suspensions, and early childhood education.

Integrate Education Information into the PATH Intake Process: The City should ensure that all families receive information about their options regarding education when they apply for shelter at PATH. When families enter shelter, they need information about their options to keep their children in their original school or transfer them to a school in their new neighborhood and information about transportation services. Furthermore, state law requires local social service districts to assist parents in choosing a school within two business days of shelter entry. Given the number of families who are being placed in hotels or other facilities with no DOE staff on site, it is important to incorporate this discussion into the PATH intake process. However, currently, only two DOE staff members work at PATH, and they are not there at night or on weekends. Furthermore, no other PATH staff is tasked with sharing school selection information with families. As a result, for most families, education is not addressed at PATH.

To this end, we thank Council Member Levin for his leadership in sponsoring Intro. 1714, which would require PATH to have an educational continuity unit. We support the bill and have attached some recommendations to help strengthen it, ensuring that staff are not only available to parents to discuss education at PATH, but that education become an integral part of the PATH intake process. Every family who participates in the shelter intake process at PATH should meet with a staff member trained in education who can share information about school selection options and transportation.

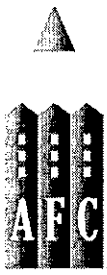


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- Provide busing for Pre-K/3-K students: The City should make yellow bus service available to 3-K and Pre-K for All students living in shelters to help ensure they can stay in their early childhood education programs when they enter or transfer shelters.

Spearhead Coordinated Attendance Effort: Given the rates of chronic absenteeism among students living in shelters, the City should spearhead a coordinated effort to increase attendance. The City should use a data-driven, strengths-based approach that tasks key staff with generating and disseminating regular attendance reports and tasks key staff at schools and shelters with monitoring the attendance of students living in shelters, addressing barriers to regular school attendance, and rewarding success.

Increase Access to Early Childhood Education: The City should continue working to increase participation in early childhood education programs among children living in shelters. The City has made impressive efforts to increase pre-K enrollment among children living in shelters, using a data-driven, interagency, targeted approach. The City should continue this work and replicate it to help children younger than four years old enroll in high-quality early childhood education programs, such as 3-K, Head Start, and EarlyLearn. We are pleased that the City has started this work. Furthermore, shelter-based social workers should receive training in the conduct of developmental screenings of young children, the requirements to refer young infants and toddlers suspected of having developmental delays or disabilities to the Early Intervention program, the preschool special education process, and best practices for supporting families in applying to and enrolling their children in high-quality early childhood education programs. In addition, the City should change EarlyLearn eligibility rules to make all children who are homeless automatically eligible for EarlyLearn programs.

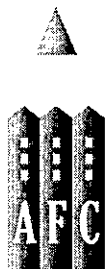


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Pass Data Reporting Bills: Finally, we support Intro. 572 and Intro. 1497 and have attached recommendations for strengthening these data reporting bills.

Given the increasing number of students in temporary housing in NYC and the scope of the barriers they face to academic success, a sustained effort with high-level leadership and an infusion of resources is necessary. We thank Council Members Dromm and Levin for holding a hearing on this important topic. We look forward to working with you to better serve the growing number of students who are homeless in New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Testimony to be delivered to the New York City Council Committee on Education and Committee on General Welfare

Re: Support for Students who are Homeless

October 11, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about support for students in temporary housing. My name is Randi Levine, and I am Policy Director at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC). For more than 45 years, AFC has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds. We are proud to house NYS-TEACHS, the New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students, which works on several thousand cases each year regarding the educational needs of students in temporary housing in New York.

Yesterday, we released new data showing that, during the 2016-2017 school year, 104,088 students in New York City district schools were identified as homeless – a five percent increase from the previous year. In other words, one out of every ten students in New York City schools is homeless. The number of children and youth experiencing homelessness in NYC is twice the size of the entire Boston Public School system.

In New York City, students in temporary housing have worse educational outcomes than their permanently housed peers across a number of measures. Outcomes are particularly bleak for students living in shelters in New York City—38,000 students in 2016-2017. For example, during the 2015-2016 school year, 53% of students living in shelters were absent on 20 or more school days—missing the equivalent of *one month* of school, only 15% of third through eighth grade students living in shelters scored proficiently in reading and only 12% scored proficiently in math, and 10% of middle and high school students living in shelters were suspended from school.

Over the past few years, the City has taken several considerable steps to help students living in shelters.

- **Yellow Bus Transportation:** The City began offering yellow bus service to every kindergarten through sixth grade student living in shelter, making it easier for students to stay in their original school when they enter or transfer shelters.
- **Pre-K Enrollment:** The City launched an interagency task force that has worked to increase pre-K enrollment among children living in shelters, offering a pre-K seat

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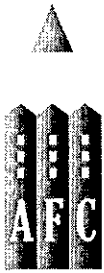
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this year to every four-year-old child living in shelter whether or not the family applied.

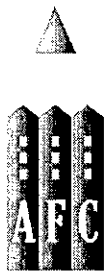
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We are very pleased that Chancellor Carmen Fariña identified addressing the needs of students who are homeless as one of her priorities for this school year. As such, the City should ensure there is high-level leadership on this issue and an infusion of resources to address barriers to school success for students who are homeless. Importantly, the City needs to work across agencies and across divisions of the DOE to develop coordinated and coherent plans to assist students who are homeless in a number of ways, including combatting chronic absenteeism, connecting students with academic intervention services and mental health services, ensuring that students with disabilities are evaluated and receive the services to which they are entitled, and strengthening access to a variety of DOE programs and post-secondary options. We will be making additional recommendations to the DOE in the coming weeks to this end. In the meantime, here are some important steps that the City should take.

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To this end, we thank Council Member Levin for his leadership in sponsoring Intro. 1714, which would require PATH to have an educational continuity unit. We support the bill and have attached some recommendations to help strengthen it, ensuring that staff are not only available to parents to discuss education at PATH, but that education become an integral part of the PATH intake process. Every family who participates in the shelter intake process at PATH should meet with a staff member trained in education who can share information about school selection options and transportation.

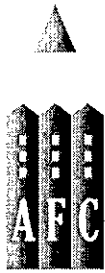


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Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Comments from Advocates for Children of New York on Intro. 1714

Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) thanks Council Member Levin for his leadership in introducing this bill. We strongly support the idea of integrating information about education into the PATH intake process and have advocated for this policy for a number of years. We appreciate that this bill addresses early childhood education in addition to school-aged education. We are also grateful that the bill discusses early intervention services for young children with developmental delays and disabilities. Children who are homeless disproportionately miss out on these services. We have some recommendations for making the bill as effective as possible based on our experience working with students and families who are homeless.

Our primary recommendation is to make a discussion about education part of the intake process at PATH for every family, rather than providing families with the option of meeting with staff to discuss education. All families with children enrolled in school need to know what their school options are, what school their child can attend upon shelter placement, and their transportation options for getting to that school. As such, education should be treated just like any other required part of the intake process. In addition to the policy reasons for discussing education with families at PATH, there is also a legal basis. State law requires local social service districts to assist parents in choosing a school within two business days of shelter entry. Given the number of families who are being placed in hotels or other facilities with no DOE staff on site, incorporating this discussion into the PATH intake process would help ensure that the City is meeting its legal obligation.

We are providing our suggestions below in track changes.

Int. No. 1714

By Council Member Levin

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to an educational continuity unit

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 3 of title 21 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 21-318 to read as follows:

§ 21-318 Educational continuity unit. a. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following terms have the following meanings:

Intake facility. The term “intake facility” means the location where families with children apply for temporary emergency housing with the department, such as the prevention assistance and temporary housing facility, or a successor entity.

Shelter applicants. The term “shelter applicants” means families with children in the process of applying for emergency shelter with the department at an intake facility.

b. ~~The intake process at a~~Any intake facility shall ~~discuss~~~~have an~~ educational continuity information ~~unit~~with all shelter applicants as part of the intake process. ~~The ability to meet with such unit during the process of applying for shelter shall be explained and offered to all shelter applicants.~~Such discussion shall include: ~~The responsibilities of the educational continuity unit shall include, but not be limited to, the following:~~

~~1. Staff availability during evening and weekend hours, in addition to regular business hours;~~

~~21. Review of Meet with shelter applicants to discuss~~the educational rights of any preschool-aged and school-aged children, pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as established by sections 11432 and 11433 of title 42 of the United States Code, including school access and educational continuity rights ~~with all shelter applicants;~~

~~2. Providing shelter applicants written information on homeless students’ rights, which shall, at a minimum, include an explanation of students’ rights pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as established by sections 11432 and 11433 of title 42 of the United States code.~~

~~33. Contacting appropriate department of education staff to B~~begin the process of arranging transportation and/or enrolling in a new school for any school-aged children;

44. Informing shelter applicants of early childhood education options including subsidized child care, child care vouchers, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten for shelter applicants with children younger than 5 years old;

65. Providing shelter applicants with children younger than 5 years old with a copy of the developmental milestones and information about how to ~~Informing shelter applicants of the ability to screen~~ refer children for evaluations for early intervention services and preschool special education services; ~~and~~

6. Provide shelter applicants written information on homeless students' rights, which shall, at a minimum, include an explanation of students' rights pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as established by sections 11432 and 11433 of title 42 of the United States Code.

7. Informing shelter applicants of the services offered by the department of education staff located at the intake facility and how to contact the department of education staff located at the intake facility, and

8.

e. Any information ~~Provided to~~ shelter applicants ~~the by the educational continuity unit shall include~~ contact information for relevant staff at the department of education, including the Students in Temporary Housing Content Experts.;

c. Staff of the intake facility conducting the educational continuity discussion with shelter applicants shall be knowledgeable about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and related State and local laws and policies on the educational rights of students who are homeless, as well as knowledgeable about early childhood education programs, and shall be provided with training at least annually on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and related State and

local laws, ~~and requirements on~~ the educational rights of students who are homeless, and early childhood education programs.

Comments from Advocates for Children of New York on Intro. 1497

Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) supports the idea of having the NYC Department of Education report annually on information regarding students in temporary housing. This information can help as we advocate for policies to reduce barriers to a high-quality education for students in temporary housing. We have several recommendations to help strengthen the bill and make it as useful as possible. We are suggesting these recommendations below in track changes.

Int. No. 1497

By Council Members Salamanca, Johnson, Levin, Cohen and Menchaca

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of education to report on students in temporary housing

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. The administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new chapter 10 to title 21-A to read as follows:

Chapter 10. Reporting on Students in Temporary Housing

§ 21-1000 Definitions. For the purposes of this chapter, the following terms have the following meanings:

School of origin. The term “school of origin” means the school that a child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled as defined in section 11432(g)(3)(I) of title 42 of the United States code.

Sharing the housing of others. The term “sharing the housing of others” means individuals who have reported to the department that they are living with other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason as established by section 11434Aa(2) of the United States code.

Students in temporary housing. The term “students in temporary housing” has the definition found in section 11432Aa(2) of the United States code.

§ 21-1001 Students in temporary housing. a. Not later than November 1, 2017, and no later than November 1 annually thereafter, the department shall submit to the council and post online a report regarding information on students in temporary housing for the preceding school year. Such report shall include, but not be limited to, the following information:

1. The total number of students in temporary housing disaggregated by school **and community school district.**

2. The disaggregated number of students residing in shelters operated by the department of homeless services, the department of social services/human resources administration, the department of youth and community development and the department of housing preservation and development.

3. The number of students known to be sharing the housing of others.

4. The rate of placement of students residing in shelters operated by the department of homeless services in the student’s **community school district** of origin and borough of origin.

5. The total number of requests received by the department of homeless services for a transfer of shelter to be closer to the school of attendance.

6. Total number of students in temporary housing receiving **full fare** metrocards **and the total number of students in temporary housing receiving reduced fare metrocards.**

7. Total number of students in temporary housing receiving busing.

8. Minimum, median, average and greatest length of time transpired **between the date the student’s family applied for shelter at the Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing**

(PATH) intake center and the scheduled start date for to arrange-busing for students living in shelter in temporary housing.

We suggest deleting #9. We believe it is very important to measure how many students are being placed in shelters in their community school district of origin. This information is captured in #4 above. However, it is burdensome and difficult to report on an individual student's travel time to school. In addition, we do not think this provision will produce valuable information. There are students in temporary housing who receive busing to their zoned schools and have very short travel time. There are also students in temporary housing who are committed to staying in their original school even though it is very far away. Given these scenarios and others, we worry that different situations will skew the results and that this information would be difficult to analyze and to use to craft effective policy solutions.

9. Minimum, median, average and greatest length of travel time between shelter and school for students in temporary housing receiving busing.

We suggest deleting #10 because individual community school districts do not apply for McKinney-Vento funding. Rather, the New York City Department of Education, as the local educational agency, applies. All community school districts receive this funding.

10. For each of the following funding programs: the mckinney vento homeless assistance act as established by sections 11432 and 11433 of title 42 of the United States code and title I of the elementary and secondary education act as established by section 6333 of title 20 of the United States code:

(a) number of community school districts applying for funding; and

(b) number of community school districts receiving funding.

We support the concept of requiring the DOE to report on academic measures for students, such as absenteeism and grade retention. To make the data as useful as possible, it is important to have not only this information for students in temporary housing in general, but for students living in shelter specifically. Currently, students living in shelter have far worse academic outcomes than students in other temporary housing situations (e.g., sharing the housing of others) and far worse outcomes than permanently housed students. Furthermore, policy solutions for students housed in city-funded shelters may be different from policy solutions for students in other temporary housing situations. Therefore, it is important to understand outcomes for students living in shelters. In addition, in order to understand how students in temporary housing

are performing, it is important to be able to compare their performance to students living in permanent housing and to the entire student population.

Therefore, we recommend listing in subdivision (a) the various data points that the Council wants to collect and listing in subdivision (b) the various categories of housing status by which the data should be disaggregated. The structure we are recommending below is based on Local Law 59, requiring the DOE to provide a demographics report.

We are also suggesting several additional categories of data based on our concerns about educational outcomes for students in temporary housing. For example, during the 2016-2017 school year, the DOE reported that there were *only* 35 children experiencing homelessness who had preschool Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Thus, we recommend adding the number of students with preschool IEPs to the data being reported.

911. (a) For each community school district and citywide, the number and percentage of students who: receiving funding pursuant to a program listed in paragraph 10:

(1a) percentage of students residing in temporary housing;

(2b) attended one school, two schools, or three or more schools within the school year transfer rate of students in temporary housing;

(3e) missed 20 or more school days during the school year attendance rate of students in temporary housing;

(4d) were retained in the same grade at least one time retention rates of students in temporary housing; and

(5e) dropout rate of students in temporary housing were assigned a dropout code by the department;

(6) graduated high school in four years, five years, or six years;

(7) had school-aged individualized education programs (IEPs) disaggregated by grade level and in total;

(8) had preschool individualized education programs (IEPs);

(9) were English language learners (ELLs);

(10) completed the third through eighth grade New York state English language arts examination, disaggregated by performance level;

(11) completed the third through eighth grade New York state mathematics examination, disaggregated by performance level;

(12) were enrolled in Pre-K for All; and

(13) were enrolled in 3-K for All.

(b) The data provided pursuant to subdivision (a) shall be disaggregated by:

(1) students living in shelter;

(2) students who are sharing the housing of others;

(3) students in temporary housing;

(4) students who meet the federal eligibility criteria for the free and reduced price lunch program and live in permanent housing;

(5) students who live in permanent housing; and

(6) all students.

b. No information that is otherwise required to be reported pursuant to this section shall be reported in a manner that would violate any applicable provision of federal, state or local law relating to the privacy of student information or that would interfere with law enforcement investigations or otherwise conflict with the interests of law enforcement. If a category contains between 1 and 5 students, or contains an amount that would allow the amount of another category that is five or less to be deduced, the number shall be replaced with a symbol.

§ 2. This local law takes effect immediately.

Comments from Advocates for Children of New York on Intro. 572

Advocates for Children of New York appreciates the City Council's efforts to require the Department of Homeless Services to post daily shelter census data online. To make this information even more useful, we suggest adding a few data points regarding the shelter placements of school-aged children.

First, it would be helpful to know the total number of families with school-aged children placed in shelter.

Second, it would be helpful to know the number and percentage of families with school-aged children who are placed in a shelter in the borough where the youngest school-aged child attended school prior to shelter placement. DHS tracks this information and includes it in the quarterly DHS Data Dashboard, available at <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dhs/about/stats-and-reports.page> . However, it would be very useful to have this information on a more regular basis.

Third, since boroughs are large, it would be extremely helpful to know the number and percentage of families with school-aged children who are placed in a shelter in the community school district where the youngest school-aged child attended school prior to shelter placement. DHS collects this information and, in the past, publicly reported this information in the quarterly DHS Data Dashboard. However, currently, DHS publicly reports only the percentage of families placed in the *borough* where the youngest child attends school (see https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dhs/downloads/excel/dashboard_dictionary_fy_2012.xlsx). Given the importance of school stability for children and the City's goal of placing more families who are homeless in their communities, DHS should report on shelter placements in the community school district where the youngest school-aged student attended school.

We are suggesting language in track changes below in line with these recommendations.

Int. No. 572

By Council Members Crowley, Cabrera, Eugene, Gentile, Koo, Miller, Johnson, Cohen, Cornegy, Mealy, Mendez, Maisel, King, Vallone, Constantinides, Menchaca and Ulrich

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to requiring the department of homeless services to post daily shelter census data by borough.

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter 3 of title 21 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 21-316 to read as follows:

§ 21-316 Daily census data. a. Definitions. For the purposes of this section, the following

terms shall have the following meanings:

1. "Adult" means any person who is eighteen years of age or older;

2. "Adult families" means families comprised of adults and no children;

3. "Adult Family Intake Center (AFIC)" means the intake facility where adult families must apply for shelter with the department;

4. "Borough of origin" means the borough within New York City in which the child is enrolled in a public school at the time the shelter placement is made.

54. "Children" means people under 18 years of age;

6. "Community school district of origin" means the community school district within New York City in which the child is enrolled in a public school at the time the shelter placement is made.

75. "Drop-in centers" means city-administered facilities that provide single adults with hot meals, showers, laundry facilities, clothing, medical care, recreational space, employment referrals and/or housing placement services, but not overnight housing;

86. "Faith-beds" means city-administered facilities that provide overnight housing to individuals, are affiliated with one or more religious groups, and receive client referrals through organizations under contract with the department;

97. "Families with children" means families with adults and children, couples including at least one pregnant woman, single pregnant women, or parents or grandparents with a pregnant individual;

8. "Outreach" means the efforts by the department to encourage street homeless individuals to move from the streets into shelter;

910. "Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing (PATH)" means the intake facility

where families with children must apply for shelter with the department;

110. "Safe havens" means city-administered facilities that provide low-threshold, harm-reduction housing to chronic street homeless individuals, who are referred to such facilities through a department outreach program, without the obligation of entering into other supportive and rehabilitative services in order to reduce barriers to temporary housing;

121. "Shelter" means temporary emergency housing provided to homeless adults, adult families, and families with children by the department or a provider under contract or similar agreement with the department;

132. "Short-term housing for veterans" means city-administered facilities that provide short-term housing for people who actively served in the United States military;

143. "Single adult" means individuals without an accompanying adult or child.

b. No later than January 1, 2015, and daily thereafter, the department shall post on its website a daily shelter census report for the prior calendar day. All information provided in such report shall be disaggregated by borough. Such report shall include but not be limited to the following information regarding individuals in shelter each day:

1. The total number of individuals, including the number of adults and the number of children;

2. The number of single adults, including the number of single men and the number of single women;

3. The number of families with children, including the number of adults in such families with children, the number of children in such families with children, and the total number of individuals comprising such families with children;

4. The number of adult families in shelter, including the number of individuals

comprising such adult families;

5. The number of families with school-aged children enrolled in New York City schools at the time of shelter placement;

6. The following information, disaggregated by families placed in conditional shelter placement and families found eligible for shelter:

(a) The number of families with school-aged children placed in shelters located in the community school district of origin of the youngest school-aged child;

(b) The percentage of families with school-aged children placed in shelters located in the community school district of origin of the youngest school-aged child;

(c) The number of families with school-aged children placed in shelters located in the borough of origin of the youngest school-aged child;

(d) The percentage of families with school-aged children placed in shelters located in the borough of origin of the youngest school-aged child;

7. The total number of requests received by the department of homeless services for a transfer of shelter to be closer to the school of attendance.

85. The following information on family intake centers, including but not limited to:

(a) The number of families requesting temporary housing at PATH;

(b) The number of adult families requesting temporary housing at AFIC;

(c) The number of families placed in overnight accommodations; and

(d) The number of families with children at PATH overnight;

96. The following information on single adults, including but not limited to:

(a) The number of drop-in center clients served;

(b) The number of individuals in a drop-in center overnight;

(c) The number of individuals in faith-beds;

(d) The number of individuals contacted through outreach;

(e) The number of individuals placed through outreach;

(f) The number of individuals utilizing safe havens; and

(g) The number of individuals in short-term housing for veterans; and

107. The total number of available beds for single adults or shelter units for adult families and families with children.

§ 2. This local law shall take effect immediately upon its enactment into law.

AV
LS 2681
11/5/2014

Testimony of
Coalition for the Homeless
And
The Legal Aid Society

On

Oversight: Support for Homeless Students

Presented before

The New York City Council
Committee on Education
Committee on General Welfare

Giselle Routhier
Policy Director
Coalition for the Homeless

Beth Hofmeister
Staff Attorney
The Legal Aid Society

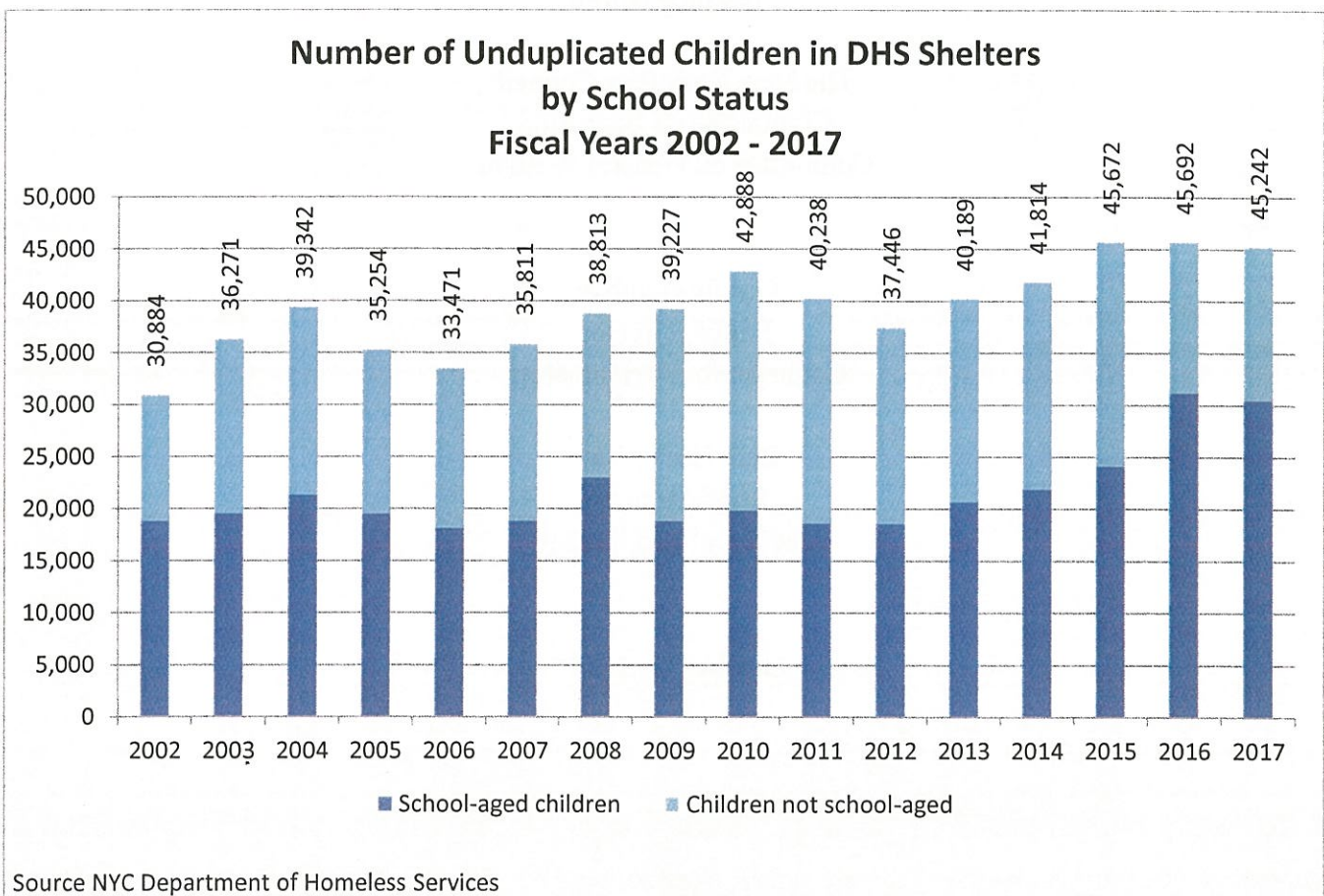
October 11, 2017

The Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council Committees on Education and General Welfare regarding support for homeless students.

Background: Homeless Children and Students in New York City

New York City is currently facing an unprecedented homelessness crisis. There are currently over 60,000 men, women, and children sleeping each night in the City’s municipal shelter system, including nearly 23,000 children. The number of children who spent at least one night in a DHS shelter over the course of the year was over 45,000 in fiscal year 2017. Although the number of children in DHS shelters has levelled off the past three years, the number of school-aged children has grown since 2015. For the past two school years, there were over 30,000 school-aged children who spent time in DHS shelters.

According to the New York State Education Department, 111,562 New York City public and charter school students were homeless during the 2016-17 school year, including those living in shelters, doubled up, or unsheltered– the highest number since data collection began.



Homeless Students in Shelters: Steps the City Must Take

In addition to undergoing the trauma of homelessness, homeless students and their families face many school-related challenges while living in shelters. These challenges include, but are not limited to, being placed in a shelter far from their current school, missing school days because of required appointments, long commutes to and from school, and uncertainty about the permanency of shelter placements. These challenges are even more pronounced for students with special needs and also have ripple effects on parents, including exacerbating risks for job loss and engagement with child protective services. Moreover, many parents may not know the extent of their child's rights as a student in temporary shelter. Individually and combined, these challenges make it harder for children to focus on school. Many academic studies have confirmed that homeless students are more likely than their housed peers to fall behind in school and experience health and developmental problems stemming from homelessness.

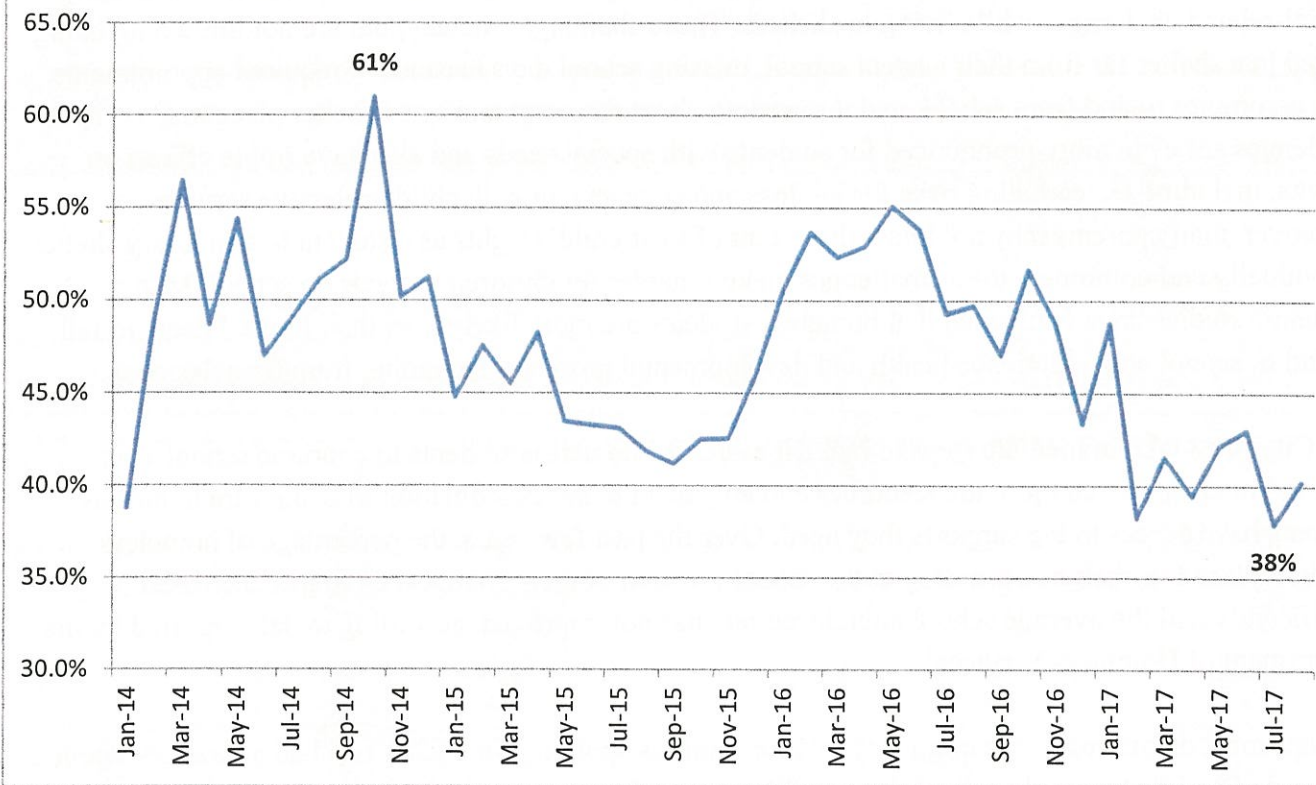
The City must take immediate steps to make it easier for homeless students to continue school with minimal interruption and provide resources and engage in better coordination to make sure homeless students have access to the supports they need. Over the past few years, the percentage of homeless children placed in shelters according to the school location of their youngest child has decreased significantly and the average school attendance rate has not improved, according to data reported by the Department of Homeless Services¹.

Perhaps most disturbingly, the eligibility rate for families applying for shelter reached a new low under Mayor de Blasio's tenure this past July: Just 38 percent of families with children applying for shelter were found eligible. Moreover, 43 percent of these families had to submit more than one application before ultimately being found eligible. The application process is often the most traumatic and daunting period for homeless families because it is filled with stress and uncertainty. It is not uncommon for children to miss a significant amount of school during the application process, which at a minimum lasts ten days, but can go on much longer for families who must submit multiple applications.

Lastly, the City still requires children to be present when their family first applies for shelter at the PATH intake office in the Bronx, often forcing them to miss school to do so. There is no reason for children to be at PATH, a crowded and tense facility that offers no services to support them during their visit. If the City needs to verify the identity or well-being of a family's children, it could consult their teachers or the shelter case workers. Children should not miss school so that DHS can easily confirm that they exist.

¹ NYC Mayor's Management Report, Department of Homeless Services (2017).

**Percentage of Families with Children Found Eligible for Shelter
2014 - 2017**



It is clear more needs to be done to address the wellbeing and educational needs of homeless students. Specifically, the Department of Homeless Services and the Department of Education must:

1. Implement a less onerous shelter intake process in which applicants are assisted in obtaining necessary documents and recommended housing alternatives are verified as actually available and pose no risks to the health and safety of applicants;
2. Revise the shelter intake process so that homeless children are totally excused from appearing at PATH so that they do not have to miss school in order to be present when the family applies for shelter;
3. Place families in shelters near their child's school at the outset of the application process, to minimize commutes and school transfers and to avoid shelter transfers that may further disrupt schooling;
4. Transfer any families that have long school commutes to a closer shelter facility;
5. Place additional DOE staff at PATH. These additional staff members should provide families with information on school selection, school transportation options, and the rights of students with special needs. These staff members should also have the ability to process busing requests, assist students and families to fill out DOE Residency Questionnaires, write letters of excused absence, and disseminate Metrocards. DHS staff should also assist with these duties when DOE staff cannot be made available;

6. Eliminate or minimize the placement of families with school-aged children in commercial hotels;
7. Continue enhanced funding for busing for homeless students; and
8. Expand after-school programming for students in shelters.

The best solution to helping homeless students in temporary housing maintain engagement in school is to transition families to permanent housing as quickly as possible. We therefore urge the City to immediately increase access to permanent affordable housing for homeless families. Specifically, the City must double the number of homeless families placed in NYCHA apartments from 1,500 per year to at least 3,000 per year. Only through the provision of sufficient permanent, affordable housing resources can we begin to reduce the number of homeless children and families in New York City.

About Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society

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.

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 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.



FOR THE RECORD

**Testimony of Cathy Kim
Program Director
Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.**

**To the New York City Council
Committee on General Welfare
Hearing on Intro 1714**

October 11, 2017

My name is Cathy Kim and I lead the Vulnerable Populations program for Enterprise Community Partners, a non-profit affordable housing organization that has worked to create and preserve affordable housing here and nationwide for over 30 years. Thank you, Chair Levin and the members of the City Council Committee on General Welfare, for the opportunity to comment on Intro 1714.

At Enterprise, we greatly value the stabilizing force of home. We also appreciate the destabilizing impact that losing a home has and the impact of homelessness on a child's physical and emotional well-being, especially for small and school-aged children. This is why Enterprise partnered with Citizens' Committee for Children and New Destiny Housing to co-convene a Family Homelessness Task Force. Together with 40 organizations, we generated a body of recommendations to promote and enhance the well-being of homeless families and those at risk of becoming homeless.

For many children in shelter, school and early education programs could provide a structural consistency in their lives; however, students in New York City homeless shelters miss out on this stabilizing force as they have dramatically higher rates of absenteeism than their non-homeless peers. In the 2013 – 2014 school year only 34.3% of homeless children had "good attendance" as compared to 73.5% of students not in temporary housing. This can be very disruptive to a child's education because absenteeism, often caused by a lack of transportation to school, ultimately affects academic performance.

For this reason, it is important that the city's shelter system and education system work together to ensure the continuity of education for homeless school-aged children. To this end, we strongly urge the City Council to pass, and the Mayor to sign, Intro. 1714, which would require the creation of an educational continuity unit at any intake facility, to provide information to families with children applying for shelter. This legislation, which addresses some of the key concerns and recommendations from our Task Force Report, would have a tremendous impact on the lives of countless students. Talking to parents about education starting at intake will help families learn their options before they are placed, address any questions, and hopefully lead to solutions that will ensure children can continue to regularly attend their school.

To make Intro. 1714 even more effective, we recommend amending the legislation to require that the educational continuity unit also be staffed during the summer, and not just during the school year, so that school-aged homeless children are set up to succeed as soon as the school year begins.

In addition to this, we urge the city to work to:

- 1) Ensure homeless students have access to services they need so they can learn, including increasing the number of educational specialists available to help families year-round at their shelter sites and ensuring staff have adequate supervision and accountability measures. This service should be available to all families whether they are in a Tier II shelter, a hotel or a cluster site and it should be available year-round, to help ensure educational success.
- 2) Improve and expedite transportation options so that elementary school children are provided with transportation during the eligibility process. If this is not possible, then those families awaiting transportation arrangements should be issued a monthly (NOT a weekly) Metrocard.

Passing this legislation would demonstrate the city's commitment to ensuring that all of the city's children, regardless of whether or not they have stable housing, have a fair shot at a good education. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify on these important priorities. And thank you to the Committee for your efforts to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to a stable home and connection to opportunities.

**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: Carol David

Address: HRA Office of DV

I represent: Assistant Deputy Commissioner

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: 10/11/17

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joslyn Carter

Address: DHS

I represent: DHS Administrator

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: Lois Herrera

Address: _____

I represent: NYC DOE OS-ID

Address: 57 Chambers St. NY, NY 10007

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Rose

Address: _____

I represent: NYC DOE - Division of operations

Address: 52 Chambers St. NY NY 10007

**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: Katherine Marshall Polite

Address: _____

I represent: NYC DOE

Address: 52 Chambers St. NY, NY 10007

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/11/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Beth Hofmeister

Address: _____

I represent: The Legal Aid Society w/ Coalition for the Homeless

Address: 199 Water 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. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: Oct 11, 2017

Name: LIZA PAPPAS (Temp Housing)
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: NYC Independent Budget Office

Address: 110 William St.

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: 10/11/17

Name: Giselle Rauthier
(PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 129 Fulton Street, NY, NY 10038

I represent: Coalition for the Homeless

Address: 129 Fulton Street, NY, NY 10038

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Randi Levine

Address: _____

I represent: Advocates For Children of New York

Address: 151 W. 30th St, NY, NY 10001

◆ 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. Education & Homelessness Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 10/11/2017

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Grant Cowles

Address: _____

I represent: Citizens' Committee for Children

Address: _____

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