



Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Homeless Services

Department of
Social Services

**Testimony of Commissioner Gary P. Jenkins
New York City Department of Social Services**

**Before the New York City Council, Committee on General Welfare
Oversight Hearing: Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in
Asylum Seekers**

August 9, 2022

Good morning, I want to thank the General Welfare Committee and Deputy Speaker Ayala for holding today's hearing. We are here to update the Committee on the ongoing work that our agencies are doing each day to support the asylum seekers arriving in New York City in unprecedented numbers. My name is Gary P. Jenkins, and I am the Commissioner of the New York City Department of Social Services (DSS), which is made up of the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). I am also joined today by Commissioner Manuel Castro, from the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) and DHS Administrator Joslyn Carter.

New York City has been, and will continue to be, a city of immigrants. We have, and under the Adams Administration, will continue to welcome immigrants from every corner of the world and ensure that however they arrive in our city they have the support they need to thrive in our neighborhoods. These are the same values that guide our work in supporting New Yorkers experiencing homelessness: values that prioritize care and compassion for our most vulnerable families and individuals.

Our city is currently experiencing a substantial increase in the number of families and individuals seeking asylum through our southern border, many from Central and South America and other regions. These individuals and families are arriving at our city's shelter intake centers with little more than the clothing on their backs. These shelter intake centers include: the Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing Intake Center, better known as PATH, for families with children, located in the Bronx; our 30th Street intake center for single adults and adult families, located in Manhattan; and, for women's intake, the Franklin Women's Intake Center located in the Bronx, and HELP Women's Shelter, located in Brooklyn.

As you well know, New York City is one of the few jurisdictions with a right to shelter, meaning that we are legally required to provide transitional housing for those seeking a place to stay, including the many asylum seekers being discussed here today. This means that we honor our legal and moral obligation and will turn no one away.

As we begin our discussion on how the Adams Administration is supporting asylum seekers that are coming to our city and seeking assistance from the shelter system, it is important to provide context on DSS-DHS and homelessness in New York City.

DHS is committed to preventing and addressing homelessness across our city. Our staff and providers employ many innovative strategies to help individuals who are in temporary shelter or are unsheltered to successfully transition to permanency. The mission of DHS is to prevent homelessness, when possible, address unsheltered homelessness, provide safe temporary shelter, and connect New Yorkers experiencing homelessness to suitable housing. We carry out this mission with care and compassion for each client and their circumstances, and these values extend and apply to the vulnerable families and individuals seeking asylum in our city.

As a right to shelter city, we remain committed to meeting our legal and moral mandates to provide temporary emergency shelter to all eligible New Yorkers. Our staff and providers also help these individuals access a variety of wrap-around services to ensure a seamless transition back to independent living and stability.

In several briefings by this Administration, we have described a significant uptick in our families with children and single adults shelter censuses over the last few months. That uptick has been largely driven by an increasing migrant population seeking asylum.

Our temporary housing services are available to all, regardless of immigration status. DHS and its contracted providers do not ask about documentation status, and instead, rely on self-reported information across our intake system. In early Summer, DHS shelter staff began noticing an uptick in asylum seekers during intake interviews. As the uptick in asylum seekers continued, DSS-DHS developed a strategy to more robustly identify these individuals while continuing to ensure their citizenship status was not disclosed.

As of yesterday, August 8, there are more than 4,000 asylum seekers who have presented themselves to our shelter intake system, which has been a driver of the approximately 10 percent increase in the DHS census since April. Approximately 100 people are applying at our intake sites per day.

Asylum seekers are a mix of families with children, adult families and single adults arriving and seeking shelter and security after a long and grueling journey to New York City from their homeland. These are unprecedented numbers, and I want to thank our staff, providers, and colleagues in government for stepping up and ensuring these families and individuals are welcomed into our system and provided with the same care and compassion we would have for any New Yorker experiencing homelessness.

While challenges have arisen, our existing system is withstanding the many stresses placed upon it, and we are serving hundreds of individuals and families in need. Our DHS teams keep these families and individuals fed, sheltered, and cared for, and, most critically, provide a place for them to stop, rest and begin to stabilize their lives.

Asylum seekers are entering shelter through DHS' existing intake facilities. For families with children, as mentioned earlier this means the PATH intake center in the Bronx. Longstanding PATH rules require that if a family presents at the PATH intake center by 10:00 PM, we are required to place the family in conditional placement by 4:00 AM. As reported by the Mayor, Commissioner Castro and myself in mid-July, four families were not assigned conditional placement by the required time. In these cases, the three families were placed by 6:45 AM and the remaining family by 11:00 AM. We are accountable for this shortfall and have taken steps to ensure this does not happen again. However, it must be emphasized that no families have been sitting for days in our intake center waiting for placement.

We look forward to continuing to support the needs of this vulnerable community and we ask that you join our efforts in calling for adequate resources to meet the needs of this moment. At the City level, we are leaving no stone unturned to support the unprecedented number of asylum seekers arriving each day. Just last week, the city announced a declaration of emergency for asylee services and shelter, which would allow us to rapidly procure services specifically designed to support this community in need. This is an interagency, all hands-on deck effort, where we will be tapping into our non-profit partners to ensure asylum seekers have access to wrap-around services, including legal support, health care and education. Moreover, we are continuing to work with our federal and state partners to access much needed financial resources to meet the rising costs of this emergency.

This landscape highlights our shelter capacity needs, a topic that I, along with my team, have testified about many times before. Given this moment of need, and the fact that we must meet our legal and moral mandates to provide shelter, we must expand and be creative in our expansion to temporarily house those seeking asylum in our city. Because we must provide shelter to all who seek it, we are looking across the five boroughs to place asylum seekers in facilities where they can find stabilization and the resources needed to acclimate to New York City and eventually move out of shelter.

As the Mayor has said, we must continuously find new locations for emergency temporary housing, and we are looking for assistance from this committee, as well as the Council at large, to find locations within your districts to shelter asylum seekers. We are all in this together, and we need your help to find and secure the necessary capacity to house this vulnerable population.

In closing, the DSS-DHS shelter system has done its job even as this unprecedented surge has stretched its resources. We continue to be a lighthouse that lights the way for so many vulnerable individuals and families who have come to New York City seeking nothing but safety. As I've said before, DSS-DHS often acts as the safety net of the safety net, and we are proud of the work that our staff have done to bring stability and safety to the thousands of individuals arriving at our doors. We are a city of immigrants, and we look forward to continuing New York's tradition of welcoming newcomers with open arms.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and we welcome any questions that you may have.

**Testimony of Commissioner Manuel Castro
New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs**

**Before the New York City Council, Committee on General Welfare
Oversight Hearing: Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in
Asylum Seekers**

August 9, 2022

Thank you, Chair Ayala and members of the Committee, for holding this hearing. My name is Manuel Castro, and I am the Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA). I am joined by Tom Tortorici, Executive Director of Legal and Support Initiatives, who will be available for Q&A.

Indeed, let me emphasize that my colleague Commissioner Jenkins and I are in full alignment with Mayor Adams's message to the nation, our state and city, and particularly to those seeking refuge in our city: "New York is a city of immigrants, and we will always welcome newcomers with open arms. Once you're here, you're a New Yorker, and the City has your back".

I want to start by highlighting MOIA's goals, as outlined in the charter. The charter explicitly notes that immigrant New Yorkers make up a large percentage of the City's total population. Three million New Yorkers, or almost 40 percent, are immigrants, and 60 percent of New Yorkers are immigrants or children of immigrants. Because of this, the wellbeing of the city depends on the willingness of immigrant New Yorkers to engage with city government. It is in this context that Immigrant Affairs is working collaboratively with city agencies, including with my colleague Commissioner Gary Jenkins and the Department of Social Services, to ensure that the newly arrived asylum seekers and immigrant families are welcomed.

I will begin by explaining how we got here and why we are seeing an influx of asylum seekers in our city. First, a large influx of asylum seekers and immigrant families coming into the United States is nothing new. Whether it was the millions of immigrants from Europe sailing to the U.S. during the 1800's and 1900's or immigrants from Latin America crossing the U.S.-Mexico border during the 1990's and most recently, the thousands of Haitian and Ukrainian immigrants landing on our shores, we have seen this phenomenon before. In fiscal 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection reported 1.7 million border encounters. In fiscal 2022, more than 2 million people have been encountered at the border through June. Encounter means

that immigration authorities are apprehending people crossing the border or asylees presenting themselves at border points of entry.

Large numbers of asylum seekers and migrants will continue to enter the United States particularly with the end of inhumane and arbitrary Trump-era policies like the Migrant Protection Protocols or “Remain in Mexico” policy and Title 42. It is estimated that approximately 6,000 to 18,000 migrant per day will be allowed to come into the United States to seek asylum and other legal relief that they are entitled under U.S. and international law.

Historically, immigrants had some connection in the United States to help them find their way to their destination, including in New York City. Even those who did not have any family or immediate employment opportunity in the U.S., like those we are currently seeing coming from Central and South America, the Caribbean, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Asian countries, naturally found ethnic communities in different cities to determine their place of settlement.

However, what is new now is the systematic diversion of asylum seekers and immigrants to New York City by external forces including by the disgusting, cruel, and cowardly actions of Texas Governor Greg Abbott who is forcibly bussing asylum seekers to our city.

Whereas before immigrants decided their own destination when they were released by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), we are now seeing that a large volume of official immigration documentation like Notices to Appear or G56 Form Call-In Letters have New York City shelters, or legal service provider locations as the individual’s official address.

Some documentation even has random office buildings or incorrect NYC addresses. How these addresses came to be included in these documents is yet to be fully determined. We continue to ask federal authorities to provide us with clarity. However, after speaking with legal service providers, other cities, and community groups, review of public reporting, and my direct experience speaking with asylum seekers at the Port Authority Bus Terminal we are getting a better understanding of the situation.

We are hearing that travel is being facilitated by an array of sources including border and Washington DC NGOs, as well as by the states of Texas and Arizona who are transporting people in buses with the purpose of sending them to New York City even when the asylum seekers did not want to come here because they have families

in other cities and states. For example, we met families who came to NYC on a bus from Texas even though their desired destinations were Maryland and Oregon.

Additionally, it is plausible that asylees are sharing these addresses through informal channels including WhatsApp and word of mouth.

From the beginning, I have been working with my colleague Commissioner Gary Jenkins, so asylum seekers are welcomed to our city. Asylum seekers have a right to be in the United States while they seek humanitarian protection. Thus, we are working to ensure the city is communicating with them in their preferred language as required by Local Law 30, have access to free legal advice through the city-funded immigration legal services providers well as health services through NYC Care which recently eliminated the six-month residency eligibility requirement.

Under the leadership of Mayor Eric Adams and Deputy Mayor Anne Williams-Isom, we are working to further address this emergency with a Center dedicated to asylum seekers to effectively respond to the needs of this community.

More work needs to be done, however. We look forward to working with the city council, state, and federal partners to secure the needed resources so we can provide the necessary support for our new neighbors as well as address the root of the problem that has diverted hundreds of asylum seekers from their families and communities.

We thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and we welcome any questions that you may have.



8/8/2022

Good morning,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of all the members of our organization.

Our areas are enduring the results of an excessive concentration of shelters. For example, the area of Nomad, comprised from 23rd to 33rd street and from 5th to 7th avenue, has 16 facilities hosting close to 3,000 mentally ill and substance addicted individuals. This is an example of how our groups are doing their fair share for other areas. And this could not be considered fair share.

Fair share was created to ensure that every neighborhood in the city was doing its duties in hosting shelters. Well, it's time that City Hall and DHS execute seriously the fair share mandate once and for all and with transparency.

We have been asking to be part of the process with no success. The fabric of our neighborhood is made of young children, schools, elderly, and elderly facilities. Many shelters hosting mentally ill individuals, substance abusers, and registered pedophiles are just next door; and during the day, they live on our sidewalks preyed on by drug dealers.

This situation poses severe problems for the quality of life in our areas because, like Mayor Adams says, "Mental illness and crime go hand in hand".

We respectfully ask you to ensure that fair share is properly implemented with transparency and that for once, you protect us, your constituency, instead of just giving us your sympathy.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mario G. Messina
President



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TESTIMONY OF:

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BROOKLYN DEFENDER SERVICES

Presented before

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

**Oversight Hearing on Long-Standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in
Asylum Seekers**

August 9, 2022

Introduction

My name is Alexandra Dougherty, and I am a Senior Staff Attorney and Policy Counsel of the Civil Justice Practice at Brooklyn Defender Services. I want to thank the Committee on General Welfare and Chairwoman Ayala for inviting us to testify today. I would like to take this opportunity to express our support for removing barriers to accessing shelter, and to accessing and using the city's voucher and rental assistance programs.

Brooklyn Defender Services (BDS) is a public defense office whose mission is to provide outstanding representation and advocacy free of cost to people facing loss of freedom, family separation and other serious legal harms by the government. We represent approximately 25,000 people each year who are accused of a crime, facing loss of liberty, their home, their children, or deportation. Our staff consists of specialized attorneys, social workers, investigators, paralegals and administrative staff who are experts in their individual fields. BDS also provides a wide range of additional services for our clients, including civil legal advocacy, assistance with educational needs of our clients or their children, housing, and benefits advocacy, as well as immigration advice and representation.

BDS' Civil Justice Practice aims to reduce the civil collateral consequences for the people we serve who are involved with the criminal, family, or immigration legal systems. The people we serve experience housing instability in a variety of ways: we defend people from eviction in housing court, provide proactive relocation assistance and benefits advocacy, and help clients navigate the

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shelter system. Our Civil Justice Practice works with clients who are entering the shelter system, as well as shelter residents attempting to secure stable housing. Through this work we see the profound challenges New Yorkers face in accessing shelter and in obtaining housing vouchers and using those vouchers to secure safe, affordable, and permanent housing.

Background

Today's hearing was prompted by the recent arrival of many asylum seekers to New York and the city's shelters lack of preparedness to assist people in need of emergency housing. Immigrant New Yorkers, including asylum seekers, face many barriers to accessing and maintaining affordable housing. This includes delays in obtaining work permits, lack of access to credit/credit reports and banking systems. These delays make it difficult for recently arrived asylum seekers to secure an apartment in NYC. While these issues have received recent media attention, the problems with the shelter intake process are endemic to the system.

I. Accessing Shelter

New Yorkers experiencing homelessness are routinely shut out of the shelter system. The screening and evaluation process at PATH, the single point of entry to the family shelter system, operated by the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS), often presents an insurmountable hurdle to families who are already facing the trauma and disruption of homelessness. The intake process has become increasingly opaque and backlogged in recent months. People we serve have reported waiting at PATH all night with their children before receiving a temporary shelter placement. One BDS client, Ms. P, was instructed by ACS to enter shelter and subsequently spent the night at PATH multiple times in an attempt to complete the intake process. Her children were forced to either stay up all night or to nap in chairs, each time without sufficient meals because DHS prohibits outside food. Ms. P felt that she had no choice but to continue to stay in a family member's overcrowded apartment, jeopardizing her ability to keep her children in her care as the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and the court system raised concerns about her housing. Ms. P's experience is not uncommon. While ACS and DHS have a clear memo of understanding that children should not have to present at PATH for a family to access shelter, it is still frequently required by PATH staff. Families are routinely found ineligible for shelter due to alleged access to housing, even when ACS has deemed the housing inadequate.

Families are further deterred from entering shelter and prematurely removed from shelter because of DHS' domestic violence screening and reporting policies. DHS' No Violence Again (NoVA) family violence screening process flags shelter applicants with any history of family violence and precludes families or couples with an alleged history of violence from being placed together in shelter. This includes families or couples with a history of a domestic incident reports or reports made to authorities, without any findings of harm or due process. A family or couple who choose to stay together, who may have engaged in services to address the underlying conflict in the relationship or have been ordered to stay together by a family court are routinely denied shelter as a family. DHS'

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NoVA policy effectively bars victims of violence entering shelter from making informed decisions about their families and who they choose to live with. This has long-term repercussions on a persons' housing stability; families who are separated in shelter are not eligible for their proper voucher size and are therefore less able to secure permanent housing.

Similarly, DHS' screening and reporting policies label individuals as victims of domestic violence who would not identify themselves as such, and therefore act as a long-term barrier to shelter. Once labeled as a victim of family or intimate partner violence, individuals are subject to permanent restrictions on their shelter eligibility and household composition. DHS creates a permanent incident report of any alleged violent incident that occurs in shelter. These reports are frequently based merely on hearsay notes from shelter staff and consist entirely of allegations of raised voices or verbal arguments. The resident often has no knowledge that a report has been made and has no opportunity to contest its content. The report then becomes a permanent record of family or intimate partner violence and will prevent the family from living together if they try to reenter shelter in the future. Rather than forcing compulsory family separation based on a history or mere allegation of violence, DHS screening and reporting policies should prioritize the preferences and choices of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.

II. Delays Accessing and Using Vouchers

Once in the shelter system, the people we serve experience extreme delays in the housing voucher screening process as well as in the apartment approval stage of the process. First, the 90-day shelter residency requirement for CityFHEPS and FHEPS—rental assistance programs that provide vouchers to help families transition out of shelter or stay in their homes—acts as an unnecessary and harmful initial barrier to permanent housing, keeping New Yorkers homeless longer. We implore the Council to hold the Adams administration to its promise of undoing this rule. Furthermore, our clients residing in shelter routinely wait much longer than the 90-day requirement to start the voucher screening process because of high staffing turnaround inside DHS shelters, shortages of housing specialists, and poor communication between DHS and shelter providers. Clients also have trouble getting overburdened shelter staff to submit housing packets to DHS in a timely manner. We have often seen our clients' paperwork sent back from the Human Resource Administration (HRA) and DHS to shelter staff because of missing paperwork or clerical errors, causing further delays. Once an individual or family receives a voucher, it can take months or even years to find an apartment. These delays significantly prolong the time our clients spend in shelter and prevent them from securing permanent stable housing.

III. Source of Income Discrimination

New Yorkers experiencing homelessness are routinely prevented from moving out of shelter and into permanent housing by rampant source of income (SOI) discrimination. Voucher holders face the herculean task of finding a landlord willing to rent to them. In addition to pervasive stigma against

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voucher holders, which is rooted in racism and disdain for people living in poverty, many landlords and brokers are fully aware of the extreme delays and bureaucratic hurdles involved with renting to voucher holders and simply refuse to do so. Although the NYC Human Rights Law protects renters against source of income discrimination, landlords widely and blatantly disregard these laws knowing they too often go unenforced. It has been well publicized that the SOI unit at the Commission on Human Rights has been understaffed for years and as recently as April had zero staff. Over the last two years BDS' Affordable Housing Specialist has worked with clients and non-profit partners to make dozens of SOI discrimination complaints to the city. Not one complaint has led to a client ending up in an apartment or any other remedy. There is a clear and pervasive belief among landlords and brokers that there will not be consequences for this type of discrimination.

The city's responsibility cannot end with issuing vouchers to eligible shelter residents. Vouchers are meaningless if they do not lead to permanent and stable housing. We strongly encourage the Council to work with the mayor to increase funding for the SOI discrimination units at both the Commission on Human Rights and HRA and to ensure that these units are adequately staffed. We particularly encourage a scaling up of the HRA Homelessness Prevention Administration's early intervention program, which has the goal of encouraging landlords and brokers to lease to voucher holders to avoid litigation. While litigation may have positive long-term benefits for voucher holders and strengthening anti-SOI discrimination enforcement city-wide, litigation alone does very little for voucher holders experiencing homelessness who need housing now.

Conclusion

BDS is grateful to New York City Council's General Welfare Committee for hosting this important and timely hearing. Thank you for your time and consideration of our comments. We look forward to further discussing these and other issues that impact the people and communities we serve. If you have any additional questions, please contact Alexandra Dougherty, Senior Attorney and Policy Counsel, at adougherty@bds.org.



Testimony
New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Tuesday, August 9, 2022

Submitted by
Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, Executive Director
The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York

Good morning Chair Ayala, Members of the Committee, Council Members. I am Msgr. Kevin Sullivan, executive director of The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York helps solve the problems of New Yorkers in need - non-Catholics and Catholics alike. The neglected child, the homeless family, the hungry senior are among those for whom we provide help and create hope. We rebuild lives and touch almost every human need promptly, locally, day-in and day-out, always with compassion and dignity. We help your neighbors as you would like to be helped if your family was in need.

Since March, Catholic Charities began seeing a steady number of migrants arriving at our South Bronx and Midtown Manhattan offices. Originally, they were mostly Venezuelan nationals, single males in their 20's arriving at our doors. We saw about 10-20 per week. Most had been bussed from Texas to NYC or Texas to DC and then NYC. At the same time, Catholic Charities offices in Harlem and Manhattan also began receiving Department of Homeland Security Notices to Appear for many migrants, but not necessarily those appearing at our doors. We've now learned that several of our offices were used by Border Patrol agents as the addresses for these migrants.

Last month the number of individuals arriving at our offices spiked to over 200 individuals/families per week. The majority continue to be from Venezuela, but we have also seen migrants from Nicaragua, Cuba, Colombia, Honduras, Brazil and Congo. I want to officially testify before this committee to the dedication of our Catholic Charities staff who in the past month have welcomed more than 1100 individuals with respect and compassion – as is the legacy of New York.

In the beginning, Catholic Charities staff had no choice but to implement an all-hands-on-deck approach to deal with the increasing numbers. We have since developed a system that includes provision of case management intakes, legal screenings and even OSHA and basic ESL services. Food, clothing and some financial assistance has also been provided to them.

These individuals all have similar stories of traveling in crude conditions, including traversing jungles and rivers. They arrive at our offices hungry, tired, confused and stripped of all personal belongings. The crisis of this past month of migrants being transported without a plan nor

preparation, by officials in Texas who proudly admitted to be intentionally “making a point.” This point is being made at the expense of those fleeing war, violence, and persecution and seeking safety in this great country.

This frustrates and angers me, and at the same time, it makes me proud to be a New Yorker.

Under your leadership, the New York City Council’s decision to hold this hearing is one clear indication of the desire of NYC to once again step up as the nearest neighbor of the Statue of Liberty to be the welcoming portal of safety, freedom and opportunity. I am proud that this administration is also recognizing the need for NYC to deal with this crisis, seeking to establish a Reception Center with respectful intake and social services, specialized shelter, immigration legal services, and access to physical and mental health and education. We, at Catholic Charities, are proud to partner with the City on these initiatives.

I want to offer a perspective that I hope we might maintain. We have a crisis in NY to which we must respond robustly and quickly. This is who we are. We need to call out this crisis and insist on the resources from the federal government to respond adequately to it. But we also need to see that with the proper resources we can handle and transform this crisis into an opportunity to continue and enhance the diversity and vibrancy of New York. We must not let the rhetoric of crisis and anger distract and paralyze us from the vigorous actions of opportunity and response that are being presented to us. We New Yorkers know how to do this. We know how to come together – government, nonprofits, and the private sector. Those seeking New York as a haven of safety and springboard of opportunity need this, as does the vibrancy and future of our City. Let us get to the task at hand and not tarry.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before you and for paying attention to this crisis.



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**Testimony of Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens
Before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Oversight: Recent Increase in Asylum Seekers and Shelter Intake Issues
August 9, 2022**

Good morning, Chair Ayala, and members of the City Council Committee on General Welfare. My name is Richard Slizeski, Senior Vice President, Office of Mission at Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens (“CCBQ”). For over 100 years CCBQ has been at the forefront of providing and caring for the most needy residents of Brooklyn and Queens. Our mission is to serve the most vulnerable New Yorkers for their basic needs. We provide critical services for the elderly, the homebound, the disabled, the hungry and the refugee and immigrant. Like many other nonprofit human service providers, we have also seen a recent increase in the influx of refugee families from Venezuela and other countries as recently as one month ago. Catholic Migration Services and the Office of Mission of CCBQ are just two of the affiliates of Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens that have been assisting this population, many of whom have arrived in New York City with only the clothes on their back.

Here is what our legal team at Catholic Migration Services has seen regarding the conditions of the recent refugee arrivals:

1. The newcomers appear to be treated differently depending on which Border Patrol officers they are confronting:
 - Some refugee families and individuals are provided Notices to Appear (“NTAs”) in immigration court, but some are not. It is unclear if those who are not given NTAs will be issued such notices later (technically they should be placed in removal proceedings and issued NTAs). This is extremely problematic and of tremendous concern because of many of the addresses are incorrect, so these refugees will never receive the NTAs mailed to these addresses and thus will miss their court hearings. As a result, they will be issued deportation/removal orders.
 - Some are paroled into the US for a few months, others for a year. Those paroled for a year can apply for work permits, but those paroled for a few months cannot.
 - Many have unfamiliar addresses on their immigration documents and report that the immigration officers are the ones who picked these addresses. In several instances, I saw the Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New York address (1011 First Avenue) as their residential address. In another instance, it was St. Mary’s Episcopal Church in West

Harlem (521 West 126th Street). One mother and daughter, who indicated at the border that they wanted to come to New York, were given 41 State Street, Albany, New York 12207 as their residential address (though this is the address of a 12-story office building) and issued Notices to Appear in immigration court in Buffalo. The woman's two older daughters were given the Catholic Charities Archdiocese of New York address and scheduled for immigration court at 26 Federal Plaza. All four are now in a New York City shelter and need to change their addresses with the immigration court; the two who are scheduled for court in Buffalo also need changes of venue.

2. The people we are seeing do not understand their immigration situation, what the documents given to them by Immigration mean, or the difference between their appointments to check-in with ICE and their immigration court hearings.
3. Many of the people we met with as recently as last week told us a similar story. They entered the United States through Texas, were placed on a bus to Washington D.C. Once they arrived in Washington, an organization put them on a bus to New York City. They are not sure who paid or arranged for these buses.
4. Those we have met have many immigration needs. These vary from them having a basic understanding of the process and their rights, to changes of address/changes of venue, to assistance with work permits (if paroled for a year), asylum, and special immigrant juvenile visas.

The Community Outreach Center at Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens has continued to serve the basic needs of the refugees, with food, clothing, and information and referrals to our food pantries and soup kitchens, as well as the New York City Shelter system. Since tracking this population, which is basically the month of July, we have provided 84 individuals and 38 children with essential services. Currently, we are averaging 10-20 refugees a day, all of them having been sent by the U.S. Border Patrol to our office at 191 Joralemon Street in Brooklyn.

CCBQ and other faith-based nonprofit providers have always been "first responders" to assist generations of New Yorkers in need of help. This recent surge of refugees arriving to our city require food, clothing, shelter, and legal assistance. This all places a great strain on our agencies and affiliates. We know that the Mayoral Administration and the City Council recognize the needs of these refugees and we urge that they help provide the resources required to assist this population.

Thank you.



Testimony on the long-term issues in New York City homeless shelters and the recent increase in migrant families
New York City Council Committee on General Welfare's Oversight Hearing

Juan Diaz, Policy Associate at Citizens' Committee for Children
August 9, 2022

Thank you, Chair Ayala, and members of the City Council Committee on General Welfare for holding today's oversight hearing on the long-term issues in New York City homeless shelters and the recent increase in asylum seekers.

Since 1945, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for policy, budget, and legislative solutions that improve child and family well-being.

New York is still recovering from the socio-economic effects of COVID-19, which have disproportionately harmed families and children of color. For over two years, families across the city have continued to struggle with the compounding effects of illness and loss of life, job insecurity and reduced income, heightened housing instability and food insecurity, and skyrocketing behavioral health needs.

Today's City Council oversight hearing brings to light what we have known for months: New York City is facing a dire family homelessness crisis, and there is an urgent need to improve policies and programs to alleviate the struggles of families at risk or suffering from homelessness.

Since the start of 2022, the number of families with children in shelter has increased dramatically, and the influx of migrant families in need of urgent housing assistance has exacerbated the homelessness crisis. The DHS-shelter system is already facing a severe lack of staffing and financial capacity. The lack of adequate affordable housing support causes deep and long-lasting harm to children and families, who make up the largest share of the city's homeless shelter population.

CCC, in partnership with the Family Homelessness Coalition, calls on the City Council and Mayor Adams to develop a plan to address the surge in family homelessness and housing insecurity in New York City by providing immediate assistance to migrant families in need, improving existing prevention programs, expanding access to affordable housing, and increasing funding for aftercare programs.



New York City's Recent Surge in the Homeless Population

Since January, the population of families with children entering DHS-shelters has increased over 10 percent. Per DHS shelter data, there were 9,810 families with children in shelter as of July 28th. Of those individuals staying in DHS shelters, 16,765 are children and 30,366 are individuals in families with children, accounting for over 60 percent of the overall population in DHS shelters. In June and July alone, close to 1,800 children entered DHS shelters.¹

There are multiple issues contributing to the rise in the family shelter population, including the end of the state's eviction moratorium, income insecurity, rising rents and eviction filings, and the lack of affordable housing. Families already in shelter have been experiencing longer lengths of stay during the pandemic.² All these issues were occurring prior to the recent influx of migrant families.

The increase in migrant families from the Southern border seeking shelter and socio-economic support calls for immediate policy and program measures to alleviate their suffering. The migration experience of undocumented children can be traumatic and leave lasting negative effects. Research has exposed the experiences of recently arrived immigrant children, who often face difficulties adjusting to a new school system, language, and culture, and often lack access to social supports. All these layers of obstacles contribute to lower educational attainment results compared to the general U.S.-born population.³ New York City must provide all available resources to recently arrived migrant children and families to support their health and wellbeing.

The City has taken an important first step to address the current crisis by declaring an emergency to secure federal resources to address this crisis, and we strongly urge other city leaders to add their voices to the call for federal funds.

¹ DHS shelter data of families with children July 28, 2022. Retrieved from the Institute Children Poverty & Homelessness database. https://www.icphusa.org/maps_infographics/number-of-families-with-children-in-nyc-dhs-shelter-2021-2022/#daily-report-from-july-28-2022-

² CCC Keeping Track of New York City's Children 2022 : Every Child Healthy, Housed, Educated and Safe. Retrieved from https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cccnewyork.org/2022/06/CCC+Keeping+Track+2022_Small+PDF+Low+Res.pdf

³ Socio-economic barriers that migrant children face in the USA. Retrieved from Adelman, H., & Taylor, L. (2015). Immigrant Children and Youth in the USA: Facilitating Equity of Opportunity at School. *Education Sciences*, 5(4), 323–344. <file:///C:/Users/13476/Downloads/education-05-00323.pdf>

Both federal and city funds must be directed to addressing the immediate needs of migrant families, as well as better support all families at risk of homelessness and those already in shelter by ensuring that all families regardless of immigration status have stabilizing support; all children in shelters have the resources they need for the start of the upcoming school year; homeless prevention and aftercare services are adequately funded; and New York is meaningfully addressing the affordable housing crisis. CCC and our partners support the following:

Address the surge of families entering shelter and influx of migrant families

- The City must first address the immediate needs of families in shelter, including immigrant families, by providing cash assistance, cleaning supplies, assistance obtaining personal identification papers, workforce supports, and domestic violence counseling and services. Qualified, trauma-informed interpreters must be supplied to families who need them. The City must also recognize the significant legal barriers migrant families are facing – including needing to travel to the state where their case will be heard – by providing multi-lingual legal assistance.
- As the new school year is around the corner, the City must also address the needs of students in shelter by ensuring migrant children are connected to health coverage, immunizations, and school benefits like meals and after school activities. Spanish language support should be provided to recently arrived migrant children, as well as internet access and school supplies.
- Because migrant families are unable to immediately qualify for any housing vouchers, City leaders must prioritize undocumented families, who face significant barriers in accessing federal supports, and ensure that they are receiving housing resources at the city level.

Increase resources for children in shelters or facing homeless for the start of the upcoming school year

- In the 2000-2021 school year, over 100,000 NYC children experienced some form of housing insecurity, including 28,000 children in shelter and 65,000 doubled up. In NYC, students living in shelters had the highest percentage of chronic school absenteeism, and only 52 percent graduated from high school in four years, 27 percent lower than the rest of the city students.⁴ The DOE must take steps to support all students experiencing homelessness and ensure their success and wellbeing.
- In many cases, children in shelters must travel long distances to attend their school. The city should ensure that all students in shelters or facing homelessness, regardless of their immigration status, have the appropriate transportation to attend school.

⁴ NYC students suffering from homelessness. Data retrieved from <https://advocatesforchildren.org/node/1875>

- The DOE and other City agencies must ensure that all children in shelter or facing homelessness have access to mental health professionals and resources to succeed in the upcoming school year. Having the necessary tools and resources will improve performance and reduce school absenteeism.
- We applaud the allocation of \$3.3 million in FY23 to hire DOE Community Coordinators to support students experiencing homelessness. The City should ensure that shelter-based peer support positions are filled and assigned before the start of the new academic year. Coordinators will be of great assistance as they will act as liaison between families, schools, and City agencies.

Increase funding and improve programs procedures for homeless prevention services

- The city must ensure sufficient funding allocation and staffing of city social services and housing agencies to ensure that the immediate needs of families facing eviction and those who are in shelter homelessness are met.
- The City should identify and hire point persons within HRA, NYCHA and HPD with whom preventive and shelter service providers can troubleshoot. Lack of timely communication between government agencies and social services providers often leads to families in rental arrears or safety net assistance disruption. The City should immediately address the rental arrears request process to make it more accessible and less complex for families at risk of eviction.
- HRA's One Shot Deals (OSD) are not always expeditious and effective. OSD requires an overwhelming amount of paperwork and strict conditions, which subsequently lead to denials and evictions when the head of household is unable to supply this large amount of information in a timely manner.

Improve the achievement of housing permanency for families at risk of homelessness or in shelter

- The City must address challenges with the personnel and financial capacity of shelter providers. There is an urgent need for expedient allocation of existing resources; expedited approval of contracts; and increasing housing resources for undocumented and mixed-status households.
- The city must eliminate administrative barriers to housing support to prevent months of delays in securing vouchers. The EHV, City Fheps and FHEPS voucher application process for families in need to relocate from shelter and into stable housing is often lengthy and problematic. The City should explore assigning additional personnel to expedite the processing and approval of all housing vouchers. The City should consider streamlining access to all housing subsidies by funneling all application processes through one system like Coordinated Assessment and Placement System (CAPS). Within NYCHA, HRA, and HPD,

consideration should be given to identifying persons that function as trouble shooters to engage with preventive and shelter services providers.

- The City must also increase access to City FHEPS by removing requirements that necessitate an eviction filing, shelter history, or income to qualify. Many families fall through the cracks of the voucher system eligibility requirements. In a city like New York, moderate income families must make problematic decisions to either qualify for a voucher or face eviction. These families should not have to make sacrifices that compromise their children's well-being.
- The City must increase investment in legal counsel to address the source of income discrimination faced by applicants and ensure that families are not pushed out of their home boroughs. Families with vouchers are often turned away by unscrupulous landlords due to their low-income or cash-assistance cases. The vouchers are their source of income; therefore, the City must provide legal assistance to enforce rules requiring landlords to accept vouchers.

Expand the City's affordable housing supply to further prevent evictions.

- Enforce the mandate to set aside at least 15% of HPD-funded housing projects for people experiencing homelessness. As the homeless population increases, the need for affordable housing makes this a priority. The City should work with federal and state agencies to expedite this process.
- Expand access to supportive housing for families with children who have been or will be evicted. Supportive housing provides the necessary support for families in need of domestic violence and very-low-income families. These families are prone to be at risk of homelessness due to lack of support from government programs.
- Ensure that city-subsidized units present income requirements that accurately reflect the needs of the city's population. Very low-income families are discouraged from applying to new or modern buildings due to the need to present required income, which makes them ineligible.
- To improve access to affordable housing, the staff capacity of the city housing workforce numbers should be addressed. Many City agencies are short staffed. Often personnel are moved to other departments, leading to a lack of knowledge and efficiency.
- City agencies must be optimized to ensure proper administering of federal housing resources, such as the Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV). The processes of applying for the voucher, searching for an apartment, and submitting the apartment application for approval takes several months. Families, brokers, and landlords eventually get discouraged and move ahead with other options.
- We urge City Council members to refrain from exercising veto powers and blocking affordable housing development.



Conclusion

The City must address the urgent needs of migrant families while also investing in solutions to address the City's long-standing challenges around family homelessness and housing affordability. We look forward to working with the City Council and the Administration to improve the well-being of children and families in New York.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Good afternoon Deputy Speaker Ayala and fellow City Council Members.

I would like you all to think about your early days as candidates and as politicians. I suspect that irrespective of where you fall on the political spectrum you entered the political arena with a core set of values that included fairness.

The Greater Harlem Coalition is here today to ask you to once again center your lens of fairness and apply it to the distribution of shelter facilities in our city. We ask this because it is simply the right thing to do and because you (and New York City) does it every day with other key parts of our city's social infrastructure. Think about the distribution of libraries. Think about the distribution of fire stations and police stations. And think about the distribution of schools. In all these cases, New York has funded and supported an equitable distribution of these facilities because we know that tragedy and injustice would result if all the fire stations or schools were packed into some communities and not others.

Shelters protect some of our city's most vulnerable individuals. By packing these shelters into communities that are already oversaturated, the Department of Homeless Services is ignoring the City Council's doctrine of fair share and exemplifying a model of egregiously poor planning that you would not tolerate if this (for example) were conducted by the Department of Education.

Our coalition is simply asking you - as city council members - to demand fairness. To demand that DHS and the city treat all communities equitably. We are asking you to renew your commitment to justice and your commitment to equity. Shelter oversaturation must end. All New York neighborhoods need to take their fair share.



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**Homeless Services United
Testimony before the NYC Council Committee on General Welfare
Oversight - Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in Asylum Seekers.
August 9, 2022**

My name is Catherine Trapani, and I am the Executive Director of Homeless Services United (HSU). HSU is a coalition of approximately 50 non-profit agencies serving homeless and at-risk adults and families in New York City. Each day, HSU member programs work with thousands of homeless families and individuals, preventing shelter entry whenever possible and working to end homelessness through counseling, social services, health care, legal services, and public benefits assistance, among many other supports.

There was already a capacity crisis in New York City's Department of Homeless Services shelter system before any migrants began entering the system in large numbers.

Towards the end of the de Blasio administration, the Department of Homeless services accelerated the closure of hotels housing families with children and cluster sites in an effort to achieve longstanding goals in their "Turning the Tide" plan. Settings such as cluster apartments which were typically plagued with poor conditions and, commercial hotels which typically lacked cooking facilities, adequate space for services and privacy for families are considered less than ideal and agency officials and advocates had long sought their closure. This capacity was shed at a time when the shelter census was declining during the COVID-19 pandemic when intakes to shelter slowed due to pandemic related stimulus and eviction protections even as move-outs from shelters were able to continue given how attractive vouchers were in the relatively less competitive real estate market.

By the time Mayor Adams took office, the end of the eviction moratorium was in sight, COVID era stimulus dollars had stopped flowing, new federal relief was not forthcoming and, people were starting to return to NYC driving up rents. The combination of the lapse in COVID era protections and supports, an increasingly expensive real estate market with pandemic era discounts ending and renters facing exorbitant rent increases making it harder for renters to keep their homes and harder for shelter residents to find new ones, a slow economic recovery coupled with inflation reducing renter buying power and, the seasonal "summer surge" where families tend to enter shelter in larger numbers when school isn't in session led to a predictable increase in demand for shelter and the census began to climb.

Still, despite these signs of increased demand, the City backed off plans to open several new shelter facilities that were already in the pipeline due to community backlash. The apparent lack of support for new shelters combined with the fiscal uncertainty for nonprofits still struggling with delayed payments and contracting coupled with increasingly onerous administrative burdens has slowed down the development pipeline significantly. The confluence of these factors caused the shelter vacancy rate to decline leaving New York City unprepared for the unexpected influx of new arrivals from the Southern border.

This type of reluctance to open shelters early in a Mayoral administration is not new. Often, new Mayors find themselves eager to advance permanent housing solutions and avoid making waves in communities prone to NIMBYism and tend to disfavor investing in emergency programs like shelters which communities regard as a stop-gap instead of an integral part of the safety net. Early in his term Mayor de Blasio made the same mistake declaring a moratorium on the construction of Tier II shelters for families only to have to reverse course when he violated the right to shelter law in 2014. The City then had to rapidly open hotel capacity, some with nefarious, untested providers who have since had to be shut down due to their abuse of the system for personal gain. Given the known risks of divesting in shelter without sustained decreases in demand and, all the signs that demand for shelter capacity would increase it has been frustrating to see sites that could have opened get derailed and canceled for political reasons, particularly knowing what we know now.

To get ahead of this crisis, the emergency procurement released by the Administration was a necessary step but, we also need to invest in a comprehensive homeless prevention, shelter and housing strategy that allows the City to have a more functional safety net that isn't forced to operate in crisis mode.

The City must create a pipeline of new shelter capacity that we can trust so we can plan for future surges and stand up the kinds of facilities with thoughtful design and proper planning our clients deserve. Local leaders need to step up and welcome shelter facilities Citywide and, we as providers need to know that the Mayor has our back when siting shelters so we can proceed with confidence.

The City must ensure mission driven nonprofit providers are prepared to respond to new demand by registering contracts and paying invoices on time and, by upholding agreements to site new shelters citywide wherever we need them. To make sure we can keep these facilities fully staffed, DHS must honor their commitments to release dollars promised in FY22 to fund retention and hiring incentives and, right-size salaries of our workforce so we can hire and retain qualified staff to work in these new facilities. If we don't take these critical steps, nonprofits may not be able to open new capacity quickly enough to meet the current need.

We must also double down on prevention to ensure we are doing everything we can in community to avoid more people entering shelter. The Office of Court Administration must work to slow down the housing court calendar to ensure every person who qualifies for legal assistance can get it and, to ensure that everyone who qualifies for rental assistance receives it prior to their being displaced. HRA must invest in the Homebase and right to counsel providers capacity until we can stem the tide of evictions and ensure caseloads are reasonable enough to ensure success in preventing evictions. HRA must also make preventive rental assistance more accessible by eliminating the DHS history requirement to qualify for City FHEPS in community, aligning income eligibility for City FHEPS with the Section 8 program allowing low wage workers who can't afford their rents to qualify and, taking steps to streamline the processing of vouchers and leases to expedite preventive and rehousing assistance.

Finally, the City must re-commit to proven re-housing strategies to make sure that those who currently live in shelters can move on quickly making space for those who may lack housing options in the near term. This means eliminating the 90-day waiting period that forces eligible households to languish in shelter for up to three months before they may qualify for rental assistance, eliminating work requirements for City FHEPS eligibility so those who lack employment are able to exist shelter as well as opening up income eligibility to low wage workers who earn too much for public assistance but too little to afford housing to qualify. The City must also combat source of income discrimination for

voucher holders in a serious way and, ease barriers to lease up by assigning expeditors to cases ensuring that someone at DSS is responsible for end to end service until a lease is signed and a client is able to leave shelter.

In the meantime, those that have come into our shelter system from the Southern border need and deserve our help. While we appreciate the idea of a dedicated center with shelter beds and related services such as those described above to receive clients seeking asylum, many are already residing throughout our shelter system and will also need help so any new investments must be distributed system-wide accordingly. HSU is also concerned that if this center opens and clients are redirected to it from traditional intake centers, it could cause confusion and some people may slip through the cracks and not connect to shelter services at all. DHS must make every effort to ensure that that everyone, regardless of where they present for help is able to connect to the services they need.

We support the City's request for federal aid to better meet the needs of this population regardless of where they present for services and want to highlight the most common service needs we have identified to date:

- Help meeting basic needs – because most of these households lack resources and do not qualify for public benefits or work, we need food, toiletries, clothing and other basics in both the immediate and long term. Food pantries were already struggling to meet the need before this crisis and shelters are not funded to provide food and other supplies to all households indefinitely, we will need budget relief to ensure everyone is taken care of in the long term.
- Legal services – applying for asylum is not a fast or easy process. We need legal experts to guide our clients and help determine if they have remedies available to them and how they should navigate the immigration process. Most legal services groups HSU has reached out to are already operating at or over capacity. More resources are necessary to ensure we can appropriately screen and refer clients to appropriate legal services and related supports.

In addition to full representation, DHS providers need help understanding how to sort out problems with mailing addresses and other errors on clients' immigration paperwork. We have received reports that clients' documents included DHS's headquarters or other wrong addresses on paperwork that may result in missed court dates or other problems. A system where clients can be guided on how to update their mailing address post shelter placement or otherwise monitor the status of their cases needs to be established so they don't miss any court dates.

- Trauma counselling – these families and individuals have suffered unspeakable trauma and will need linguistically and culturally appropriate care. Salaries for social workers in DHS shelters are well below market and we have trouble keeping these lines filled. We need additional budgetary resources to hire clinical staff across the portfolio to provide appropriate support.
- Support for children (both clinical and educational) - young people will need to be enrolled in schools and will require significant support to adjust including access to bilingual instruction and other services. The DOE needs resources to quickly assess these students, preferably before the start of school perhaps leveraging the Welcome Centers or other spaces to ensure a smooth start to the school year. This includes shelter and school-based staff to support students in temporary housing.

- Medical providers for the homeless may need support to boost enrollment in health insurance programs for children who may qualify and, may run into resource issues for those ineligible for health insurance. We must ensure they have the ability to meet the physical and emotional health needs of everyone coming through our doors.

While there is much work to be done, I want to close by noting how proud I am of the HSU community and the work that nonprofit providers are doing to care for those suffering the trauma of displacement. Our members continue to work tirelessly each day providing critical preventive, shelter and housing services to New Yorkers citywide. Thank you for the opportunity to share our experiences.

Contact:

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Testimony of Housing Works
Before
The New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Regarding
Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in Asylum Seekers.
August 9, 2022

Thank you, Chairperson Ayala, and the Committee on General Welfare, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Anthony Feliciano, and I am the Vice President for Community Mobilization for Housing Works, a healing community that provides a range of integrated medical, behavioral health, housing, and support services for over 15,000 low-income New Yorkers annually, with a focus on the most vulnerable and underserved—those facing the challenges of poverty, homelessness, HIV, mental health issues, substance use disorder, other chronic conditions, and incarceration.

Housing Works urges the Council to exercise your oversight authority to ensure that the City fulfills its obligation to meet the needs of all individuals and families experiencing homelessness in NYC, and to do so with accommodations and services that are safe, appropriate, and satisfy the City's duty of care owed to every person forced to rely on public resources to meet their most basic subsistence needs.

We are proud to live in a City that welcomes rather than shuns new immigrants and asylum seekers, and that recognizes the fundamental human right to safe shelter. So, while we support City efforts to secure available Federal funding to provide a broad range of services for asylum seekers, it is critical to remember that the City has the obligation to commit our own resources and efforts to ensure that each individual and family experiencing homelessness receives the help they seek. The right to shelter in NYC does not depend upon who you are, where you come from, or where you are going.

Housing Works fears that public back and forth on anti-immigration stunts pulled by the Governors of Texas or Arizona are providing a distraction from the more fundamental problems underlying the longstanding failures of New York City's homeless response. It is time for the Council and Administration to take decisive action to transform the City's inhumane and ineffective response to the homelessness crisis.

Since 1990, Housing Works has provided low-threshold, harm reduction housing for thousands of the most vulnerable New Yorkers living with HIV – overwhelming members of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC) NYC communities, including populations known to face multiple barriers to effective HIV care such as young Black and Latinx men who have sex with men, people of trans experience, and people dealing with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues. We have long understood that housing is healthcare, and HIV-positive residents of our over 700 units of housing consistently have an HIV viral load suppression rate of over 90%.

It was not until our work over the past two years providing COVID isolation and quarantine services for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness that Housing Works has come to deeply appreciate how awful and dehumanizing the City shelter system is, and the urgent need to transform the way homeless people are treated in New York City. We must stop criminalizing and harassing people experiencing homelessness through sweeps of the subways and violent disruption of the

encampments of those who opt for survival in public rather than entering frightening shelters. We urgently need new approaches and a new vision for what is acceptable.

Addressing homelessness of course requires substantial new City investments in housing with deep affordability, meaningful rental assistance with a single payment standard such as the City FHEPS program approved by the Council, and supportive housing units for those who need it. We must also meet the needs of the many sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness who are coping with untreated or undertreated chronic medical and/or behavioral health issues. We must stop treating mental illness and substance use disorder among low-income New Yorkers as criminal justice rather than public health issues, and instead adopt harm reduction approaches that provide every New Yorker with the safe, stable housing necessary to engage in behavioral health care, including private rooms for those struggling with mental health issues.

We must note as well the emergence of a new health threat, Monkeypox, that will require private accommodation to support isolation and the opportunity to recover in a supportive environment for people without a safe place to shelter during recovery. We are alarmed by reports that, as in the early days of COVID, people experiencing homelessness with a diagnosis or symptoms of MPOX are simply being dumped in emergency rooms regardless of whether they require hospitalization.

We have a unique opportunity to meet all these needs through hotel conversions to very low-income permanent housing and urgently needed stabilization and transitional housing – a strategy that Housing Works strongly supports but that we are concerned is being undermined by Mayor Adams’ decision to give the Hotel Trades Council authority to veto any conversion that they do not approve.

Recognizing the urgent needs of people experiencing homelessness on the streets or subways, Mayor Adams announced in May that over 1,000 new stabilization and safe-haven beds would be brought online within a year. Almost four months later only 200 beds have been added – yet the subway and encampment sweeps continue unabated.

Housing Works has worked for over two years now on plans to open an innovative new model for addressing street homelessness that would combine street outreach, a drop-in center, and private stabilization beds with onsite medical and behavioral health care – all delivered employing an evidence-based low-threshold approach that has been proven to enable persons to leave the streets, establish stability, and connect to needed care. We had secured a hotel closed by COVID in a high need Manhattan neighborhood, made the necessary alterations, and were two weeks away from opening a facility that would have provided 100 desperately needed stabilization beds when Mayor Adams pulled the plug on the project at the request of the Hotel Trades Council, an ally and supporter of his mayoral campaign. Other safe-haven and stabilization facilities have been likewise abandoned in the face of opposition from those with the Mayor’s ear.

This must stop. We are facing an emergency, lives are at stake, and New York is simply better than this.

In conclusion, Housing Works calls on the Council and the Administration to continue to be bold when it comes to addressing NYC’s unprecedented homeless crisis, through the rapid scale up of evidence-based policies and practices.

Thank you for your time. Please don't hesitate to contact me, **Anthony Feliciano**, Housing Works Vice President for Community Mobilization, with questions or additional information. I can be reached at a.feliciano@housingworks.org or 929-617-5637.

**Testimony of Yesenia Mata
Executive Director of La Colmena Staten Island Job Center**

**Before the New York City Council, Committee on General Welfare
Oversight Hearing: Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in
Asylum Seekers**

August 9, 2022

Good morning, Chair Ayala, and members of the committee on General welfare. My name is Yesenia Mata, executive director of La Colmena, an immigrant rights center committed to empowering the immigrant community on Staten Island. I am also a commissioner of the New York City's Racial Justice Commission.

Thank you for holding this hearing at a time when asylum seekers are searching for opportunities and a better life in all five boroughs, including on Staten Island. At La Colmena, we are helping asylum seekers from Venezuela and other parts of South America. For those who will call Staten Island their home, our center is there to connect them to essentials including food, and most importantly, a community.

For those who were forcibly bussed to NYC by Texas' far right governor, we will help them connect with their families in other states. La Colmena will step up as it has done time and again to work alongside the NYC Council to address the needs being highlighted at this hearing.

We are doing our part because we know the City of New York can't do this alone. The Council has been a critical ally to La Colmena. Without your support, hundreds of families would not be receiving the important, culturally competent services our immigrant communities in Staten Island need. We provide these services despite receiving constant threats against our

community, including vans with Trump flags parking in front of our center with the aim of intimidating us.

But La Colmena will continue to persevere as long as our families and community members need us. And right now, our community needs us more than ever.

Considering all these challenges and the growing needs of our immigrant families in Staten Island, La Colmena's funding is at risk as there's an effort by some to defund our center and leave us out of the NYC Fiscal Year 2023 budget.

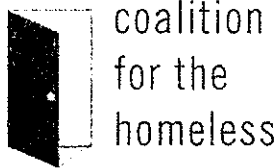
During the pandemic, La Colmena was the only immigrant rights center on Staten Island to keep its physical doors open to support essential immigrant workers and families.

We distributed 6000 meals to those who had lost their incomes, gave out more than \$1 million in emergency cash assistance, counted our immigrant neighbors during the 2020 census, and empowered day laborers to fight for their safety and wages.

Thus, we ask you, Chair Ayala, Speaker Adams, council members for your support to include La Colmena in the Day Laborer Workforce Initiative in order to receive our funding of \$615,000.

To fight against Texas' inhumane political stunt that is putting innocent lives at risk, and to push back against the hostile climate faced by those we serve, on behalf of my membership and those I come here in representation of, I urge the city Council to continue to support organizations like La Colmena.

Thank you, Chair Ayala, for giving me time to testify



Testimony of

Coalition for the Homeless

and

The Legal Aid Society

on

**Oversight: Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues
and the Recent Increase in Asylum Seekers**

before the

New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

Deborah Diamant, Director of Government Relations & Legal Affairs
Taysha Milagros Clark, Policy and Data Analyst
Coalition for the Homeless

Kathryn Kliff, Staff Attorney
Joshua Goldfein, Staff Attorney
Homeless Rights Project
The Legal Aid Society

August 9, 2022

At this critical moment, the Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare regarding long-standing shelter intake issues and the recent increase of asylum seekers in City shelters. The growing shelter census can be attributed to a number of factors, such as the typical summer surge, the end of the statewide eviction moratoria and other tenant protections, and bureaucratic hurdles that prevent timely shelter exits. While we applaud Mayor Adams' commitment that New York City will remain a sanctuary city for asylum seekers and other migrants, his conflation of the rising shelter census with a growing humanitarian crisis does nothing more than perpetuate false, dangerous rhetoric about migrants and people experiencing homelessness, and it deflects responsibility for the crisis we are facing from the City and State actors in a position to address it. No amount of scapegoating can detract from the City and State's negligence to provide for those in need. New York's homelessness crisis is an affordable housing crisis, a shelter capacity crisis, and a crisis of bureaucratic inefficiency—not a crisis caused by asylum seekers.

As the court- and City-appointed independent monitor of the DHS shelter system and counsel in the historic *Callahan*, *Eldredge*, and *Boston* cases that created the right to shelter in NYC, we are uniquely situated to inform the Council of the inaction by the City that has led to the crisis in the shelter system for families with children in particular.

To Comply with the Right to Shelter Court Orders, the City Must Ensure It Has a Sufficient Vacancy in the Shelter System at All Times

In order to comply with its obligations under New York City's right to shelter, DHS, which manages the city's primary shelter system, must plan for changes in demand for shelter placements throughout the year.

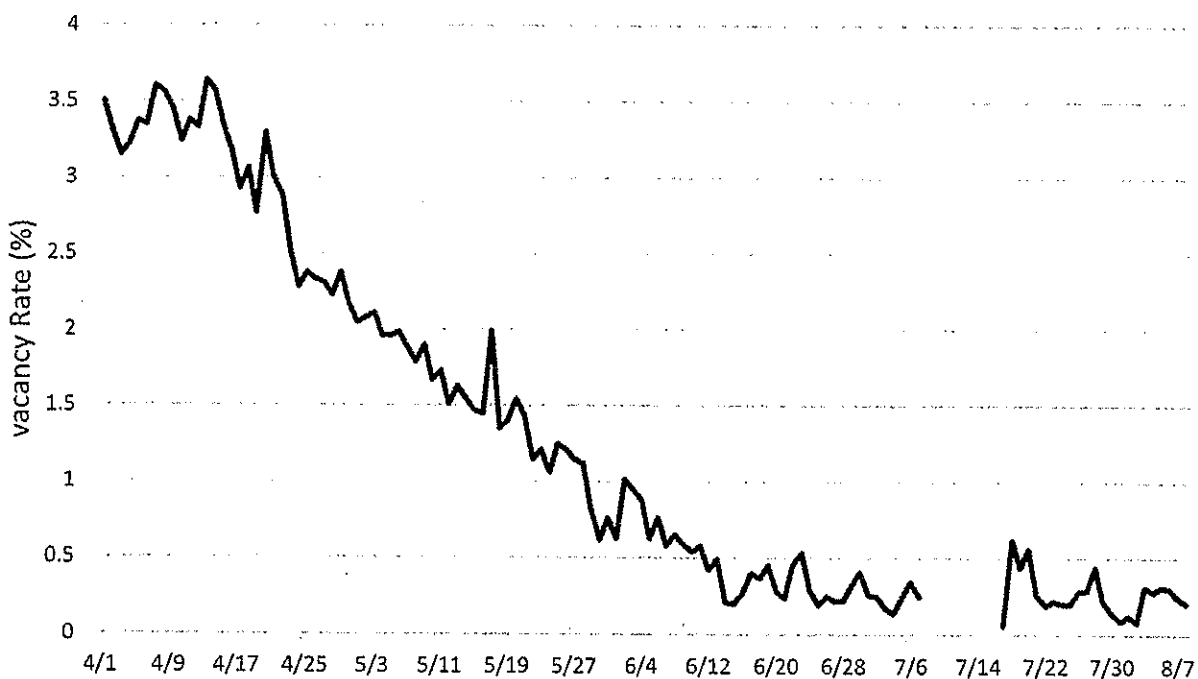
Despite the abundance of historical and current data that should have prepared the City for the current surge, DHS failed to secure adequate capacity to meet demand for shelters by families with minor children. April 2022 began with a vacancy rate of 3.5 percent for shelter units available to service this population; by the end of May 2022, the vacancy rate had fallen precariously low – below 1 percent. The vacancy rate for shelter units available to serve families with children has remained below 1 percent each night since June 3, 2022, dipping to 0.14 percent on July 4th and below 0.1 percent (fewer than 10 vacant units) on three days since mid-July, even as DHS has opened new hotel-based shelters for families with children. This shockingly low vacancy rate limits the flexibility DHS needs at all times to place families in shelter units that can accommodate their disabilities, and are close to their children's school or in a borough where the family is able to safely distance from an abuser or trafficker.

The current surge in the need for shelter beds was entirely predictable. For decades, it has been well established that there is increased demand for shelters for families with children during the summer months. In addition, as has been noted in the press, owing to the end of COVID-19-focused protections for tenants, evictions have increased each month of this calendar year, and there is a shortage of lawyers to represent tenants in Housing Court.¹

¹ Brand, David. NYC Evictions Have Increased Every Month This Year. July 26, 2022. Available at <https://citylimits.org/2022/07/26/nyc-evictions-have-increased-every-month-this-year>.

It is important to note that the shelter vacancy rate is not only a function of demand. Supply of shelter units has been artificially limited by cynical NIMBY groups and the elected officials who enable them, who oppose every attempt by the City to open new sites to serve New Yorkers who have lost their homes, even when doing so would enable the City to replace aging and inaccessible capacity with modern, ADA-compliant purpose-built sites. Families have also been forced to stay in shelters longer than necessary, further tying up potentially available space, as access to permanent housing has been needlessly limited by staffing shortages and rule changes in subsidy programs that are supposed to help people exit shelters. Finally, the City's failure to enforce laws barring source-of-income discrimination has limited the options of shelter residents who are relying on rental vouchers to find permanent housing, further reducing the shelter vacancy rate.

DHS Families With Children Shelter System Vacancy Rate
 April 1, 2022, through August 8, 2022



Source: Department of Homeless Services (DHS has not reported data for July 8, 2022, through July 16, 2022)

As soon as we detected that the shelter vacancy rate had fallen to a dangerously low level, we reached out to the City to express our concern and demand action. On July 11, 2022, before the media began reporting on the issue, the Coalition for the Homeless wrote to DHS Administrator Joslyn Carter and Department of Social Services (DSS) General Counsel Martha Calhoun, copying DSS Commissioner Gary Jenkins, to request the agency's plan to address the capacity crunch. In particular, the Coalition asked how DHS would prepare for the typical influx of families who enter the shelter system in the summer months, between school years.

DHS leadership met with the Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society on July 14th and admitted that capacity in the shelter system was too low and that the optimal vacancy rate

across all three DHS shelter systems is 5 percent. At that time, they also claimed that one issue contributing to increased demand was migrant and asylum-seeking families coming to NYC from the southern border.

During the July 14th meeting, DHS leadership informed us of imminent shelter openings and agreed to send us their plan to ensure sufficient capacity in the shelter system for families with children moving forward. **As of August 8th, we have not received the plan.** However, DHS has notified us when new shelters for families with children have opened since that meeting. To date, from July 11th, the day we sent an email to DHS asking for a plan, through August 8th, DHS has told us that seven new shelters opened for families with children, accounting for a total of 832 additional units. **Nonetheless, the vacancy rate in the families with children system was only 0.21 percent on August 8th.**

On July 19th, Mayor Adams called a press conference at which he chose to blame asylum seekers coming to NYC from Latin America as the root cause for this increase in demand for shelters. At that time, he did not divulge that the City had already run out of beds and, in violation of the law², left families with children to sleep overnight in the waiting rooms of City offices. These violations only came to light when journalists and the homeless families themselves informed us of the situation.

The City has failed to offer any evidence to support its contention that the surge of applicants this summer is primarily due to asylum seekers who recently crossed the border. In a July 21st press conference, City Hall offered three different totals of recent arrivals in the shelter system – 2,800, “almost over 3,000,” and 3,000 – and only DSS Commissioner Jenkins acknowledged that the number is an estimate. In an August 1st press statement, the Mayor claimed that 4,000 asylum seekers had entered the shelter system since late May 2022. Despite requests by us and numerous journalists, the City has yet to disclose any data underlying these “estimates.” Using the daily census data provided by the City to the Coalition for the Homeless, we have been unable to reconcile these claims and require more data from DHS to understand the extent of the increased demand.

A reason that it is difficult to reconcile the numbers provided by the City to the press is that **the City’s own publicly available DHS Daily Report is not consistently updated and available.**³ Despite the City’s own admission that the numbers of families at PATH have increased and that some have been provided with overnight placements, the Daily Report has not indicated how ~~many families have been given overnight placements. Further, DHS is required to send the~~ Coalition for the Homeless a daily capacity and census report for the family shelter system. DHS failed to timely provide – or did not provide at all – this report to the Coalition for multiple dates in July. The agency has yet to even provide us with formal notification of the violations at PATH that it only admitted to once we discovered it.

Regardless of how many thousands of individuals have come to apply for shelter in DHS offices this summer, the numbers offered by the administration, to the extent they can be verified by any

² NYC Admin. Code § 21-313 and *Boston v. City of New York*, Index No. 402295/08.

³ Local Law 57 of 2018 requires that “every weekday, Monday through Friday, [DHS] shall post on its website a shelter census report for the prior calendar day immediately preceding such weekday, excluding holidays.”

data, represent a net increase in the total number of people sleeping in DHS shelters after taking into account many factors in addition to asylum seekers. These factors include the annual summer surge of families with children, newly evicted individuals and families, households without housing because they cannot afford to renew leases with skyrocketing rents, and individuals reentering society via the prison-to-shelter pipeline that brings as many as half of those released to NYC from State prisons directly into shelters, among others. The shelter census is also inflated because of the City's failure to assist shelter residents in moving into permanent housing due to staffing shortages, lack of source of income discrimination enforcement, bureaucratic delays, and years of inadequate investments to build desperately needed, deeply subsidized, affordable housing.

The dozens of migrant families we have spoken with at PATH have arrived in NYC with the assistance of various charitable and faith-based organizations. Mayor Adams' claims in July that the governors of Texas and Arizona were sending migrants by the busload to NYC in a coordinated effort were simply not true (and were contradicted by statements made by the governors themselves until August 5th⁴). Mayor Adams' July statements served as a distraction from the real issue: DHS failed to properly monitor its capacity for families with children.

Monitoring of the PATH Intake Office for Families With Children Following the City's July 2022 Violations of Local Law and Court Order

The City is required by NYC Administrative Code § 21-313 to

maintain a facility open for intake twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to accept and process applications for shelter from families with children. Any family with children seeking shelter who is still in the process of applying as of ten o'clock in the evening on the day such family sought shelter shall be provided temporary shelter placement for that night. The following morning the family shall return to the intake facility to complete the application process. The department shall arrange transportation for the families to and from the temporary shelter placement.

This local law directs that a family who arrives by 10 p.m. to PATH must be given an "overnight" placement in order to finish the intake process the following day. A family in this position should be counted on the DHS Daily Report in the "Families Placed in Overnight Accommodations" section. They are not to be overnighed a second or more nights, and instead should receive a "conditional" placement where they can begin to stabilize while their eligibility determination is made. As part of an eligibility determination, DHS considers whether the applicants constitute a family and whether they have other housing options available. Should a family be found ineligible, they have a right to an agency conference at PATH conducted by a DHS attorney or to request a State fair hearing. Should a family need to reapply during the

⁴ Early on August 5th, Governor Abbott of Texas issued a statement that his government had begun sending migrants directly to NYC, even if the city was not the individual's or family's intended destination, and that the first bus would arrive later that morning at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. This development, while cruel and exploitative of people who have already suffered so much during their journey to the U.S., is largely a predictable response to Mayor Adam's original false accusations.

pandemic, they are not required to return to PATH and instead can call PATH to reapply, and all appointments and assessments will be performed telephonically.

On July 20th, we began hearing from reporters and clients about the capacity issues at PATH. During a July 21st meeting with DHS leadership, two days after Mayor Adams' premature claims that the Texas and Arizona governors were busing new arrivals to NYC, **DHS admitted it failed to give shelter placements to four families who arrived prior to 10 p.m. on the night of July 17th and instead left them to sleep on chairs and the floor at PATH** (in violation of local law). DHS' census report showed **six vacant units** on that date (and a barely registerable **vacancy rate of only 0.06 percent**). DHS acknowledged that they failed to tell us about the violation and promised it would not happen again. While DHS has maintained that no additional violations have occurred, we are aware of multiple families who arrived at PATH prior to 10 p.m. and also ended up sleeping in the building following the July 17th violations. On those nights, the line to get to the front desk at PATH was so long when these families arrived that DHS did not record their arrival until after 10 p.m., even though they were in the building hours before the deadline.

The delays in processing the applications of families with children at PATH have been compounded by an insufficient number of Spanish-speaking staff. DHS staff have acknowledged to us that the additional time required to process these cases using translation services was as great a factor in their inability to move people through the building as the alleged increased volume of asylum seekers. On our most recent visit to PATH, we found that DHS had brought in contracted interpreters to address this shortfall, which had significantly improved the situation.

Processing time has also been prolonged by the agency's inexplicable failure to follow its own procedure to allow reapplicant families to submit applications from their shelters. Instead, shelter and PATH staff have been telling some migrant families that they must return to PATH for appointments or to reapply, in violation of COVID-19 protocols, and further increasing traffic and delay in the building. While some recent migrant families do not have access to phones, the staff at their shelters should be providing them access to a phone so they do not have to return to PATH.

In a letter memorializing our July 21st conversation, we urged DHS to defer parts of the eligibility screening process for applicants who are recent arrivals in the United States in order to shorten the intake process at PATH and to quickly connect families with a shelter placement. ~~DHS own policies preclude them from investigating addresses outside of the United States if a family is seeking asylum, so as not to endanger the family or jeopardize the family's immigration status.~~

Our July 21st communication further memorialized our data requests, including the number of families who arrived after 10 p.m. and spent the night in the PATH office, data that should be reported in the DHS Daily Report; the poor shelter conditions, such as unclean overnight placements without air conditioning, reported by families we met at PATH; and DHS' admissions about the difficulty they are experiencing in helping clients move out of shelters and into permanent housing.

After we learned that the City had violated local law by failing to provide at least four families with immediate shelter placements on the night of July 17th, forcing them to sleep in the PATH office despite their arrival before 10 p.m., we increased our visits to PATH to speak with families seeking shelter placements and learned that the City's violations extended beyond that one night. What we found the week of July 18th was an agency unprepared for the additional demand, even though DHS leadership told us they had increased monitoring of their capacity at least two months earlier.

A family like those four on July 17th who arrived before 10 p.m. and were not given conditional or overnight placements, should be counted in the "Families w/children at PATH Overnight (pre 10PM)" section of the DHS Daily Report. The information contained in the DHS Daily Report is not fully archived on the City's Open Data website. Anecdotally, we do not recall the last time we saw a figure entered into the "Families Placed in Overnight Accommodations" and "Families w/children at PATH Overnight (pre 10PM)" section that was greater than zero.

Legal Aid and the Coalition have visited PATH on nine days since the City violated local law and the *Boston* stipulated judgment on July 17th. While we did not meet more families who arrived before 10 p.m. and were forced to sleep at PATH rather than in overnight placements, we did observe many families sleeping in the building, which is not a usual practice and not the type of welcome we want new arrivals or longtime New Yorkers to experience in the shelter system. Some families were inappropriately placed in "overnight" placements multiple nights and others arrived at 10 p.m. or later and had to sleep in the building. It was also not uncommon to come across a family who had to wait the better part of a day to be transported to an overnight placement, like one family The Legal Aid Society met who arrived at PATH before noon on July 20th but was not given an overnight placement until about 4 a.m. on July 21st. The long lines we observed leading into PATH caused some families to be checked-in much later than they arrived, with some incorrectly being considered a post-10 p.m. arrival.

Further, the lack of Spanish speaking staff significantly delayed processing times at PATH and limited the ability of some clients to receive subsequent assistance via telephone, in violation of Local Law 30 of 2017 that requires interpretation and translation services in the city's most common languages. On July 22nd, The Legal Aid Society met a family who tried to reapply via telephone, a practice encouraged by DHS during the pandemic, but they were hung up on after they requested a Spanish-speaking interpreter. The lack of services via telephone in Spanish caused clients to unnecessarily return to PATH and contribute to the overcrowding.

The Coalition met a family on July 26th who not only had been overnighed multiple nights, in violation of local law, but they were also forced to share their overnight placement when another family keyed into their unit at 3 a.m. The other family slept in the living room and they remained in the bedroom.

We found that families typically had to wait a few hours late at night before a bus arrived to bring them to their overnight placements. This led to families sleeping for only a few hours before they had to return to PATH to continue the intake process. During a July 27th visit, the Coalition learned that the bus arrived twice very early that morning, around 1 a.m. and 4 a.m.

This infrequent bus service caused at least one family to pay their own way to their overnight placement so they could get much needed rest sooner rather than later.

By August 3rd, we began to observe improvements at PATH, including fewer and fewer families sleeping there. The new presence of contracted Spanish-speaking interpreters on multiple PATH floors certainly helps to make the intake process more efficient.

Despite these improvements, DHS is without an effective way to track a family's arrival time at PATH, which makes the data in the DHS Daily Report unreliable. DHS is also not consistently informing families that they do not have to return to PATH to reapply and can use the phone system instead. Likewise, DHS has not yet streamlined the intake process for migrant families, who do not have extensive housing histories in the United States for DHS to investigate.

As summarized here, our visits to PATH since July 21st demonstrate efforts undertaken by DHS to improve the intake process following the public airing of the City's violation of local law and the *Boston* stipulated judgment. However, a return to "normal" at PATH is not ideal. "Normal" at PATH requires families with children to wait long hours, if not a second day, to complete the intake process. The more people are unnecessarily forced to return to PATH, the greater the crowds and demands on a limited workforce. Prior to the current crisis, the Coalition and The Legal Aid Society met with DHS leadership and made several recommendations to improve the intake and application process, and we look forward to hearing from DHS about when they will take action to implement our recommendations and reduce the trauma families experience at the shelter system's door.

Intake Issues That Predate the Current Crisis: Lack of Accessible Capacity and Overall Low Eligibility Rates in the Shelter Systems for Families With Children and Adult Families

Lack of Accessible Capacity

While this hearing is focused on issues at PATH and the abysmal vacancy rate in the shelter system for families with children, the Council should be made aware that DHS is also struggling to maintain accessible capacity for clients with disabilities in all three DHS shelter systems. Following the City's decision last year to cease using the vast majority of the hotels that had been used as shelters for single adults, allowing them to socially distance during the pandemic, DHS lost a significant portion of its accessible capacity and is now struggling to fulfill reasonable accommodation requests for ADA-compliant bathrooms, air-conditioned sleeping rooms, in-unit refrigerators, and placements close to shelter residents' medical providers, which are often located in or near Manhattan. In general, the current shelter infrastructure and design is too often inaccessible for people with disabilities, including individuals with psychiatric disabilities who find the congregate nature of many single adult shelters challenging to manage and thus often end up on the streets or in the transit system.

Some of the hotels recently opened as part of the shelter system for families with children are very old and lack the infrastructure to support air conditioning. The lack of appropriate climate-controlled shelter capacity can exacerbate serious health conditions such as asthma, epilepsy, and allergies, and are particularly risky for people who have difficulty regulating their body temperatures, such as those taking psychotropic medications. An analysis of DHS shelter

residents in November 2019 determined that nearly 30 percent of those sleeping in DHS shelters had a disability or medical condition that required access to air conditioning, with nearly 50 percent of adult families requiring air conditioning. This summer, the Coalition has heard from many clients who find it particularly difficult to sleep in DHS shelters without air conditioning in sleeping areas, especially those clients assigned to congregate shelters. As the planet continues to warm, DHS must modernize and provide more accessible, barrier-free, climate-controlled shelters.

Low Family Eligibility Rates

The eligibility determination process requires homeless families seeking shelter to provide documentation of every place they have stayed over the past two years (for families with children), or over the past year (for adult families). This is particularly challenging for families who were sleeping doubled-up in the apartment of friends or family or unsheltered for some period after losing their home, and in fact, the vast majority of homeless families are denied shelter for bureaucratic reasons related to a lack of documentation that is simply unavailable or impossible for them to obtain. City workers investigate the prior addresses to assess whether the family could return to one of their past residences. Families are frequently denied shelter when intake workers incorrectly determine that the family has other options, or fail to accept that a previous host (the “primary tenant”) refuses to permit the return of a homeless family. Although the City does provide families with “conditional” shelter placements during the eligibility process, repeated ineligibility determinations exacerbate stress and instability for homeless families encountering these obstacles.

Many homeless families are caught in a grueling cycle of applying and reapplying for shelter when they are incorrectly found ineligible. The monthly average shelter eligibility rate (the percentage of applicants found eligible) has plunged in recent years, dropping to a record low 23 percent for families with children in the first half of Fiscal Year 2022. Similarly, only about a quarter of adult families applying for shelter each month are found eligible.

In June 2022, 4 percent of homeless families with children and nearly 22 percent of homeless adult families found eligible for temporary housing had to submit six or more applications before they were finally deemed eligible – proof that they were incorrectly found ineligible on multiple prior applications.

While the City has implemented some helpful changes during the pandemic, such as exempting minor children from having to accompany their parents to the PATH intake center and allowing families whose applications are denied to reapply without being forced to leave their temporary shelter placements, further reforms are needed to end the inhumane and persistent practice of “churning” eligible applicants.

Recommendations

- **Ensure Proper Capacity Planning.** Part of the City’s legal obligation entails planning for additional capacity so that shelter placements remain immediately available to homeless individuals and families, which also allows DHS to more quickly respond to the needs of individuals and families who require transfers within the system due to safety

issues or poor shelter conditions. This planning includes having sufficient capacity for all shelters – **DHS leadership agrees that the vacancy rate for each shelter system should never fall below 5 percent.** When nearing this figure, the City must use all resources available to create and open up additional capacity. All municipal shelters should provide safe, clean, accessible, appropriate, and dignified accommodations. Part of the reason why some individuals are unsheltered despite NYC’s right to shelter is because they have been in the DHS shelter system and found that it did not meet their needs. The City must redesign shelters to provide what people want, need, and deserve – private, accessible, and low-barrier single occupancy rooms – until those individuals are able to move into permanent housing.

- **Significantly Increase Investments in Affordable Housing.** The City must radically increase its investment in deeply subsidized, affordable housing to create at least 6,000 new apartments per year for homeless households and an additional 6,000 new apartments per year for households with extremely low incomes. For context, throughout the eight years of the de Blasio administration, the City financed only about 2,100 units per year on average for homeless households and just 4,100 units per year for extremely low-income households, consisting primarily of preservation units rather than newly constructed units. The prior administration’s refusal to align their housing plan with the reality of mass homelessness meant that near-record numbers of New Yorkers languished in shelters and on the streets at the same time Mayor de Blasio touted the record production of allegedly affordable housing. The City must learn from the mistakes of the prior administration by significantly ramping up the production of housing for homeless and extremely low-income New Yorkers so that shelters exist as short-term housing options only and individuals and families can readily move into permanent housing.
- **Help People Move Out of Shelters.** For the shelter census to decrease, we must also be mindful that people need to exit shelters more quickly than people enter them. In order to have timely shelter exits, the City needs to not only invest in permanent, affordable housing, but also ensure that there is sufficient staff capacity to process housing packages and fight against source of income (SOI) discrimination. If all three of these factors are not concurrent, then the system will inevitably continue to lag as it already does.
- **Expansion of Subsidies.** As noted in The Legal Aid Society’s testimony to the Council’s Committee on Housing and Buildings from July 1, 2022, the City should implement the following action items to expand access to housing subsidies:
 - **Streamline the CityFHEPS review process.** This may include changes like:
 - requiring DHS reviewers to review an entire package for mistakes before sending it back to the shelter provider for corrections;
 - making it easy for shelter providers to communicate by telephone and email with DHS reviewers to discuss resolving issues with a package;
 - reducing the number of rounds of review for each package so that DHS must only review a package once;
 - reducing the amount of paperwork required;
 - correcting and approving packages with minor clerical errors, like an address that says “street” instead of “place”; and

- providing automatic email notifications with package updates.
 - **Set clear benchmarks for approving CityFHEPS packages.** DHS should set clear goals for move-out times for each application, and ensure that it meets those goals in facilitating moves.
 - **Re-train shelter staff.** DHS should track how long contracted shelter providers take to facilitate move-outs. Shelter providers that are the source of repeated delays must be intensively retrained.
 - **Approve apartments that pass inspections.** If an apartment passes a CityFHEPS inspection, the tenant should presumptively be permitted to move in, regardless of whether DHS has approved all the paperwork. Unless an apartment has not passed an inspection within 45 or 60 days, a tenants' package should be automatically approved and HRA should prepare checks to the landlord.
 - **Reevaluate the three-month shelter requirement.** While a prudent needs assessment is appropriate, 90 days is far too long for residents to have to remain in shelters before they can be eligible to receive a voucher and this benchmark does not appear to serve any purpose.
 - **Extend CityFHEPS vouchers** to those who do not receive public assistance.
 - **Waive the work requirements** for people who receive public assistance.
 - **Provide vouchers to those without eligible immigration status** by either deeming them eligible for CityFHEPS or accessing alternative funding sources.
 - **Eliminate the utility deduction** to allow tenants to rent apartments at FMR.
 - **Eliminate the rent reasonableness requirement** to ensure tenants are not unfairly prevented from renting apartments at or below FMR.
- **Help Pass “Good Cause” Eviction Legislation.** The City should place additional focus on working with the State to pass “good cause” eviction legislation while simultaneously investing in housing. Protecting unregulated tenancies from record-breaking rent hikes and unwarranted evictions is crucial to preventing more New Yorkers from becoming homeless as evictions continue to rise in the wake of the end of the statewide eviction moratorium earlier this year. Good cause eviction legislation is sensible, and fair to landlords who can still seek an eviction when a tenant has not paid rent or is causing a nuisance, or when a landlord wants to reside in the unit.
 - **Support New Arrivals to NYC.** To support new arrivals to NYC, the City must connect people to resources including food, economic support, interpretation and translation services, and legal counsel. In tandem with providing supports to new arrivals, the City should work with the Department of Education to make sure that newly arrived school-age children are timely enrolled for the 2022-23 school year and connected to the resources they need to learn.

Conclusion

We thank the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify on this vital topic, and for the Council's dedication to addressing the crisis of mass homelessness in New York City.

About The Legal Aid Society and Coalition for the Homeless

The Legal Aid Society: The Legal Aid Society (LAS), 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. This dedication to justice for all New Yorkers continues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State, and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of more than 2,000 attorneys, social workers, paralegals, and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, LAS provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

LAS'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 LAS'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, LAS's law reform representation for clients benefits more than 1.7 million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

The Legal Aid Society is uniquely positioned to speak on issues of law and policy as they relate to homeless New Yorkers. The Legal Aid Society is counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless and for homeless women and men in the *Callahan* and *Eldredge* cases. The Legal Aid Society is also counsel in the *McCain/Boston* litigation in which a final judgment requires the provision of lawful shelter to homeless families. LAS, in collaboration with Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, LLC, filed *C.W. v. City of New York*, a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of runaway and homeless youth in New York City. Legal Aid, along with institutional plaintiffs Coalition for the Homeless and Center for Independence of the Disabled-NY (CIDNY), settled *Butler v. City of New York* on behalf of all disabled New Yorkers experiencing homelessness, and Legal Aid is currently using the *Butler* settlement to prevent DHS from transferring disabled homeless New Yorkers to congregate shelters without making legally required reasonable accommodations. Also, during the pandemic, The Legal Aid Society along with Coalition for the Homeless continued to support homeless New Yorkers through litigation, including *E.G. v. City of New York*, Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure WiFi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New York*, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court

to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.

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 and at-risk New Yorkers each day. The Coalition advocates for proven, cost-effective solutions to address the crisis of modern homelessness, which is now in its fifth decade. The Coalition also protects the rights of homeless people through litigation involving the right to emergency shelter, the right to vote, the right to reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities, and life-saving housing and services for homeless people living with mental illnesses 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, scalable solutions and include: Permanent housing for formerly homeless families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS; job-training for homeless and low-income 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, which usually distributes 800 to 1,000 nutritious hot meals each night to homeless and hungry New Yorkers on the streets of Manhattan and the Bronx, had to increase our meal production and distribution by as much as 40 percent and has distributed PPE and emergency supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, our Crisis Services 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. In response to the pandemic, we are operating a special Crisis Hotline (1-888-358-2384) for homeless individuals who need immediate help finding shelter or meeting other critical needs.

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 single adults, and the City has also authorized the Coalition to monitor other facilities serving homeless families. In 2017, the Coalition, fellow institutional plaintiff Center for Independence of the Disabled – New York, and homeless New Yorkers with disabilities were represented by The Legal Aid Society and pro-bono counsel White & Case in the settlement of *Butler v. City of New York*, which is designed to ensure that the right to shelter includes accessible accommodations for those with disabilities, consistent with Federal, State, and local laws. During the pandemic, the Coalition has worked with The Legal Aid Society to support homeless New Yorkers, including through the *E.G. v. City of New York* Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure WiFi access for students in DHS and HRA shelters, as well as *Fisher v. City of New*

York, a lawsuit filed in New York State Supreme Court to ensure homeless single adults gain access to private hotel rooms instead of congregate shelters during the pandemic.

Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group,
Oversight - Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake
Issues and the Recent Increase in Asylum Seekers,
Before the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

August 9, 2022

Deputy Speaker Ayala, Council Members, and staff, good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Committee on General Welfare on long-standing shelter intake issues and the recent increase in asylum seekers. My name is Deborah Berkman, and I am the Coordinating Attorney of the Shelter Advocacy Initiative at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG).

NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers experiencing poverty or in crisis combat economic, racial, and social injustices. We address emerging and urgent needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, financial empowerment, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community partnerships. We aim to disrupt systemic racism by serving clients, whose legal and financial crises are often rooted in racial inequality.

The Shelter Advocacy Initiative at NYLAG provides legal services and advocacy to low-income people in and trying to access the shelter system. We work to ensure that every New Yorker has a safe place to sleep by offering legal advice and representation throughout each step of the shelter application process. We also assist and advocate for clients who are already in shelter as they navigate the

transfer process, seek adequate facility conditions and resources for their needs, and we offer representation at fair hearings.

NYLAG also houses the Immigrant Protection Unit (IPU), a unit I work collaboratively with. Dedicated to social justice, the IPU provides New York City's low-income immigrant communities with comprehensive and multifaceted consultations, direct legal representation, legal clinics and an array of educational workshops and presentations. The IPU provides a wide range of immigration legal services including citizenship, adjustment of status, VAWA, U-visas, asylum, removal defense and many other areas. Through its services, the IPU seeks to broaden and improve access to quality legal representation and, through an integrated approach to immigration, to address the social welfare needs of New York's low-income immigrant communities. The cornerstone of the IPU's outreach, education, and advocacy efforts is to empower and help New York's immigrant communities to overcome their unique hardships.

I have worked with numerous single adults and families trying to access the Department of Homeless Services ("DHS") shelter system. In recent weeks, there has been a major influx of single adults and families fleeing violence in Venezuela and Colombia seeking shelter in New York City. On their journeys, they have experienced horrors too numerous to count, and when they arrive in New York City, they are most often re-traumatized by DHS' intake and eligibility process. Based on my experiences working with them, I appreciate the opportunity to offer the following comments.

a. Families Fleeing Horror in their Native Countries are Subject to Mistreatment By DHS

In recent weeks, numerous families who have recently sought asylum in the United States from Venezuela and Colombia have contacted me for shelter advocacy. All of them have traveled great distances, much of it on foot, to escape the unspeakable horrors they face in their home countries. All of them have waited extreme lengths of time at the DHS intake center for families with minor children, called the PATH family intake center, before they were assigned a shelter, some of them sleeping there for days. All of them report very few employees at PATH who speak Spanish or are willing to use an interpreter or language line (instead, they speak to them in English, which they do not understand). All of them report appalling conditions at the shelter they have been assigned, including a lack of water and diapers, and staff who subject them to harassment, mockery and racial slurs.

One NYLAG client, Ms. M., was forced to flee Colombia with her husband and two small children because an aggrieved business associate of her brother's had threatened to set her street vendor business on fire and murder her and her children. The family had a harrowing journey through Mexico during which they were robbed of all their money and Ms. M had to run with her children strapped to her body so they would not be separated. When the family reached the United States border, Ms. M. and her husband were separated and sent on separate planes to New York City. When reunited at the New York airport, an airport staff member found Ms. M. crying with her malnourished children, one of whom had a fever, and sent her to the PATH intake. Ms. M. and her family slept in the PATH intake office for two nights on chairs

before they were finally assigned to a shelter. Once in shelter, staff refused to provide her with formula for her baby or soap for the family to bathe. One time, when Ms. M. asked the staff for diapers for her baby, she was told that she should go to work and buy them herself. Ms. M. reports that such comments are a routine part of her life at the shelter.

Similarly, when NYLAG client Ms. Y and her husband and son arrived in New York after an agonizing journey, they spent three days and two nights sleeping in chairs at the crowded PATH intake center. They report that no one at PATH spoke or understood Spanish and they were given very little information about the intake process. Ten days after they were finally sent to a shelter, they were then told they had been found ineligible and had to go back to the PATH intake center to reapply. They were not informed they could do so over the phone, so they spent another 16 hours at the PATH intake center before being reassigned to the same shelter. At that shelter, Ms. Y reports that she was often not provided with drinking water, particularly at night. She also reports that most of the staff does not speak Spanish and does not try to get a translator when speaking to her, and that staff insensitively ask her for her green card every day (which she does not have, and she has told them she does not have).

Another NYLAG client, Ms. V., left Colombia with her baby because her family was being hunted down by a drug cartel in her hometown. Ms. V's husband is a police officer and he stopped one of the cartel's drug shipments. Ms. V's family moved to a number of locations in Colombia and the cartel continued to find them. Ms. V.

determined that she could not risk her son's life by staying in Colombia and she was forced to leave without her husband. She made her way to the United States Border by plane and then on foot and took a raft with her baby across the Rio Grande/Bravo River. Once they arrived at the PATH intake center, Ms. V. and her baby slept there in a chair for one night before they were assigned a temporary shelter placement. The shelter frequently fails to provide diapers or sufficient water, which is particularly problematic as Ms. V.'s baby is malnourished from his journey and without sufficient water, she cannot nurse him. Ms. V. was found ineligible for shelter for failing to report to an appointment that she did not know had been scheduled for her. This misunderstanding caused her and her baby to have to return to PATH and wait again to be reassigned shelter, and then to have to move rooms when she was reassigned to the same shelter.

Another NYLAG client, Ms. B., and her husband and two children fled Venezuela because of extremely dangerous conditions. It took them approximately two months to get to the United States through Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. Much of that journey was traversed on foot and by boat or raft through the jungle. While in Colombia they were targeted with gunfire repeatedly by the Colombian Coast Guard but managed to pacify them with money. When Ms. B.'s family finally reached the United States, a church bought them plane tickets to New York City, and, upon arriving, they applied for shelter at the PATH intake center. The family was forced to sleep on chairs at PATH for four nights until they were given a shelter assignment. Ms. B. reports that at her current shelter, she is

often not given diapers and only intermittently provided drinking water, and is mocked and harassed by staff.

NYLAG client Ms. P., her husband and their five children had a similarly torturous journey from Venezuela and eventually were given a temporary placement in a DHS shelter. However, a few days after being placed there, they were awoken at 1:00 AM and told they had to leave by staff who had been hostile to them since their arrival. They were not given written or oral notice of why they had to leave, nor any information on how they could reapply. This family wandered the streets in over 90-degree heat with their five children from 1:00 AM until 1:00 PM the next day, when I found them and sent them back to PATH to reapply for shelter. Upon returning to PATH, they found out that they were incorrectly ejected from shelter and that the staff had taken it upon themselves to eject the family. Ms. P.'s family continues to face harassment from the staff at the shelter and is frequently subjected to xenophobic comments.

The client stories I have shared have much in common: a traumatic danger-filled journey to escape life threatening conditions in their home country, being forced to stay at a PATH intake center for extended periods of time waiting for shelter placement, xenophobic treatment once the family enters shelter, and insufficient water and supplies within the shelter. DHS must immediately ensure that all families are promptly processed through PATH and families should not have to sleep there overnight or over multiple nights. Moreover, all shelters must have adequate Spanish-speaking staff or available translation services, and they must

provide sufficient food, water and crucial supplies such as diapers. Finally, staff must be trained on cultural competency and aggression toward shelter residents must be immediately rectified.

b. Urgent Immigration Assistance and Counsel Needed

NYLAG is grateful to have been at the table in several conversations with city agencies and other providers these past several weeks regarding this emergent situation. We are also grateful to the city and DHS for dedicating resources to a City Sanctuary Intake Facility to address the emergency needs of families.

In addition to the substantial social service needs, recently arrived asylum seeking families are also in need of urgent immigration assistance and counsel. Many of these families are being placed on a quickly moving dedicated immigration court docket, with hearings scheduled just weeks after their arrival to the U.S., giving them insufficient time to seek assistance and prepare their asylum claims. We have seen families who arrived to the U.S. in late July already scheduled for final hearings in early November. It is unclear why they are not being processed through the new, more generous asylum practices, and if they are being afforded their full due process rights. Further, it is concerning that many of the notices of hearings are being sent to non-governmental organizations and shelter addresses prone to change, with little hope of actually reaching the families to notify them of their court dates.

NYLAG clients benefit from our office's ability to provide holistic representation. For recently arrived asylum-seeking families, we address their immediate legal needs, such as access to shelter. We also screen them for public

benefits eligibility, including health care, and provide advocacy and representation at administrative fair hearings to access and maintain these benefits. With adequate resources, NYLAG's IPU could screen for immigration relief and potentially provide representation. We have several other practices that can help address the host of civil legal needs that this vulnerable population faces. Unfortunately, we lack the capacity to serve all clients that come through our intake.

NYLAG requests that the City Council and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs dedicate new funding and programmatic support to legal service providers and community organizations who have already stepped in to address this urgent need. New York City welcomed displaced Ukrainians who arrived in New York in the immediate aftermath of Russia's invasion, and who continue to seek refuge in the U.S., and provided both emergency and longer-term support to triage legal issues, offer cash assistance and social services, and articulated a welcoming message. To do any less for asylum-seeking families from other areas of the globe would be shameful. Our city has a robust legal and social service network adept at responding to emergent issues and providing culturally and linguistically competent services to vulnerable populations. We ask that the City Council respond with parity to this crisis as they have to others.

c. The Intake Eligibility Process for Family Shelter Itself is Traumatic for all Clients

It is very likely that when families find themselves homeless, they have already experienced very real trauma, including trauma stemming from the sudden

or gradual loss of one's home.¹ Moreover, many people experiencing homelessness, particularly women, become homeless after experiencing physical and sexual abuse and its consequent psychological trauma.² Most of my clients report that the application process for family shelter only exacerbates this trauma.

In New York City, the application process for family shelter is extremely onerous. Families must provide a complete history of all the places they have lived for the last one to two years, as well as third-party contacts to verify that the family actually lived in those locations (this may be an impossible feat for asylum-seeking families, many of whom have been traveling for months). If the verification contacts provided do not answer the phone, or DHS cannot speak with them within 10 days, then the client is found ineligible for shelter for “not cooperating” with the investigation and the family must reapply for shelter. Prior to COVID-19, when families applied for shelter, every family member had to be present for the 10-20 hours the initial application took.

Reapplying for shelter entailed restarting the process from the beginning by having the family return to the intake site and spend another 10-20 hours completing a new application for shelter, typically identical to the prior application, and then waiting on-site for a new temporary shelter placement³. Prior to COVID-19, this happened frequently to my clients, and, for some families, they would have to return

¹ *Homelessness as Psychological Trauma*, Lisa Goodman, Leonard Saxe (1991)

² *Id.*

³ While children technically did not have to be present for subsequent applications, because the applications took so long children most often had to come along, as their parents would not be able to leave the intake process to pick them up at school.

to the PATH intake center every 10 days for months before DHS could verify their housing history. In fact, most applications for family shelter are denied. In August of 2021, almost 10% of families with children who were found eligible for shelter had previously submitted six or more applications. And in that same month, only 23.5% of applications for family shelter were deemed eligible. Each of the families that submitted these applications was subjected to substantial administrative churn, the impact of which I will discuss later.

While state regulations mandate some of the eligibility investigations, if DHS performed them in a different way (for instance, complying with its duty to assist the applicant in obtaining necessary documentation), the process would be much more efficient, and it would allow eligible homeless families to obtain shelter and stability more expeditiously. The current approach of investigating every aspect of our clients' applications for shelter, and the repeated denials necessitating reapplication is extremely traumatic for these struggling families and a waste of government resources. If a family was not, in fact, homeless, they would not seek to enter the shelter system. Single adults do not have to go through onerous eligibility determinations to ensure that they are actually homeless, and families should not either.

d. If Eligibility Verification Is Deemed Necessary, Families Must Be Permitted to Reapply from Within Shelter

During COVID, intake rules have been relaxed so that after the initial application for shelter, families can reapply over the telephone from their temporary placement, so they do not constantly have to be physically displaced. In the past,

reapplication required leaving the temporary placement. DHS says this is only a temporary easement during COVID. This policy must be codified to reduce the disruptive impact on families seeking shelter.

Prior to COVID, those families who had to reapply for shelter every 10 days were the lucky ones, as they were awarded new 10-day placements and did not need to sleep outside. In contrast, if a family was found ineligible because DHS determined that a past address had enough room to house them, and the primary tenant at the address did not provide what DHS deemed a “reasonable justification” for failing to take them in, DHS would find the family ineligible for shelter because they had an alleged “available housing option.” DHS makes such a finding even when it is informed by the primary tenant that the applicant family is not permitted to stay there. In this circumstance, DHS would not provide another emergency conditional placement to the applicant for 30 days. As a result, prior to the pandemic, homeless families (even those with small children) were left to sleep on the street, in hospital emergency rooms, or on the subway. This policy caused families to be without shelter, a condition that was always dangerous, even prior to COVID. During COVID, these families have been allowed to reapply from within shelter and are not prohibited from getting a new emergency placement. This humane policy change must also be codified to prevent children from once again having to sleep on the street.

e. The Cycle of Application, Denial, and Reapplication Causes Homeless Families Considerable Harm

Even when a family is permitted to re-apply from within shelter, they still experience significant harm from repeatedly being found ineligible. Because the circumstances underlying the shelter applications have not changed, families must still reapply for shelter (from within shelter), often to be found ineligible again, approximately every 10 days. Families become entrenched in a continuous cycle of application, denial, and reapplication. This cycle of application, denial, and reapplication causes considerable harm even absent children being forced into street homelessness.

First, homeless families know that the current policy of allowing them to reapply from within shelter is not permanent and that it can be reversed at any time. These families live in fear of the date that they will be thrown out to live on the street.

Second, the application process (which takes place every 10 days) is time consuming and often emotionally fraught, exacerbating an already traumatic experience for homeless families. For each application and reapplication, a family is required to provide a “two-year housing history” listing each address where the family has lived during the prior two years and contact information for the third-party owner or primary tenant at each address. In cases where a family has been street homeless, the family is required to account for their whereabouts for each day during the prior two years, primarily by providing statements from witnesses who observed the family “living” at those locations, such as an automobile, subway car or public park. DHS attempts to contact, or re-contact, each owner, primary tenant, or

witness in connection with each application or reapplication. Repeated calls by the DHS can negatively impact a homeless family's relationships with family and friends. In cases where a family has left an address due to conflict at the premises, outreach from DHS can worsen the situation. In other cases, those who have housed a homeless family in the past or provided witness statements may feel irritated or harassed by repeated calls and visits from DHS and simply decide not to cooperate in the future.

Third, families who are deemed ineligible for shelter are not eligible for the programs that assist homeless families transition to permanent housing (particularly the City FHEPS rental assistance supplement). Without this assistance, families are unlikely ever to gain the means to leave the shelter system and thus the ineligibility finding effectively traps them in the shelter system. This is particularly problematic because life in a shelter takes an enormous toll on the wellbeing of a homeless family. Most often families will not be placed near family support or in a familiar neighborhood. Children are often required to commute for hours or transfer to new schools, and family members must travel long distances on public transportation to continue treatment with trusted doctors and therapists. Periodic shelter transfers render it impossible for a family to achieve stability by establishing roots and becoming part of a community and are particularly destabilizing for children.

The goal of all families in the shelter system is to transition to the stability of permanent housing which is almost impossible without a finding of eligibility. DHS must assist clients to obtain documentation needed to prove eligibility, and DHS must

not find families ineligible because a third-party has not provided a “reasonable justification” for refusing to house the family.

f. DHS Single Adult Intake Process Is Also Traumatic and Prevents People Experiencing Homelessness from Accessing Shelter

The intake procedure to enter DHS Single Adult shelter can take up to two days, with most of that time spent waiting in crowded waiting rooms. Clients are told if they leave, they will need to start the process over again. Often clients report not being fed and thus unable to take essential medications. Clients report that staff at intake centers are verbally aggressive and demeaning towards shelter applicants. Clients with disabilities are often not accommodated, particularly those with mental health disabilities. Many of my clients report that DHS police officers at intake centers are physically aggressive (and a few clients report having been beaten by DHS police officers). Some clients experiencing street homelessness are willing to enter congregate shelter if they could participate in the intake process over the telephone, but DHS will not allow this.

Several aspects of the intake process need to be changed: 1- all intake staff must be trained in trauma-informed practices and de-escalation, 2- clients should be given timed appointments between which they can leave the intake center, 3- clients who self-identify as having disabilities should be awarded immediate presumptive provisional accommodations (without medical documentation) so they can get through the intake process, 4- telephone intake must be offered, and 5- clients should be offered food and drink on demand during the intake process, not only at specific times.

We thank the Committee on General Welfare for the work it has done to facilitate services for vulnerable New Yorkers, and for taking this opportunity to continue to improve the conditions for our clients. We hope we can continue to be a resource for you going forward.

Respectfully submitted,

New York Legal Assistance Group



Safety
Net
Project

Testimony of Karim Walker
Homeless Outreach Worker and Organizer
Safety Net Project

Oversight - Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in Asylum Seekers
Tuesday, August 9th, 2022

For the first seven months of his time in office, Mayor Adams has, regrettably, continued many of the worst parts of Mayor de Blasio's disastrous legacy on homelessness: Broken Windows oriented homeless "services" and policing, closure of hotels that had been safely sheltering individuals with disabilities, and continued churning at PATH, where the denial rates of families applying for shelter are still extremely high.

As of June, some 68% of applicant families at PATH were denied, more than fifty percent of families who were eventually found eligible for shelter had to apply more than once, and more than thirty percent of families eventually found eligible had to apply three or more times¹

Crucially, the administration has also sent a message to landlords that discrimination based on source of income – the leading reason our clients cannot exit municipal shelters – can continue unchecked. They sent this message through their decision not to seriously invest in lawyers to challenge discriminatory landlords in court, while cutting one of the two City departments responsible for challenging this pervasive problem.

Similar to the de Blasio administration, particularly in its second term, the Adams administration has put public relations far above people's needs. This has shown up clearly in the Mayor's approach to street homelessness, where the City's PR team provides virtually meaningless numbers to score headlines while being unable to answer the most basic questions (for example, what percentage of people from the underground and above-ground sweeps are entering and staying in shelters?). As we found when the de Blasio administration routinely provided misleading and dishonest information to the public regarding homelessness, an increased focus on PR over substance correlates closely to cruelty toward those most in need.

City Hall's failure to address the homelessness crisis adequately has come back to haunt the Adams administration. As we have seen in this crisis, it is far less about meeting people's needs than PR spin that the public must deal with, and which homeless people must survive. When families sleep overnight in PATH, the public doesn't need a press conference of baseless statements justifying a crisis the City knew full well was coming and did not prepare for. The crisis was brewing for months as the DHS census increased and people have not been able to exit shelter. Shelter capacity is at crisis levels in no small part because the Adams administration has not taken the necessary steps to ensure people can get out of shelter and into homes.

Migrants find themselves being used as political pawns by a vicious Texas governor, but also by a Mayor who wants to blame them for a crisis his and prior administrations have failed to address. Showing up at Port Authority to do photo-ops with vulnerable, exhausted people who are coming off 3-day bus rides isn't good homeless policy, it's just another day of spin from City Hall.

In NYC, the problems with shelter intake are not new but are longstanding. Single adults applying for shelter in NYC are often shuffled into crowded congregate shelters, without being offered the option of dignified private rooms or Reasonable Accommodations to meet their health needs. Additionally, after the de Blasio administration closed thousands of rooms that were providing people with safe, private shelter options, the Adams administration continued with this approach, closing additional hotels in Manhattan earlier this year. Reports have already surfaced of migrants showing up to shelters and leaving because of conditions inside, or simply feeling lost as they've been thrown into the four winds of the 30th Street Intake center with little guidance and no support.

It is in this context that many people – not just migrants - make the decision to stay on the street, where they are then harassed and targeted by frequent police sweeps with outreach teams that provide a rubber stamp to the harassment.

¹ Per Local Law 37 data

There is a clear and direct connection between politicians' treatment of people fleeing Latin America and trying to survive without homes, and those from New York City who are routinely cast as 'other' and pushed around by government officials because they have no home to go to. In both situations, politicians have used these individuals, who are merely trying to survive, as opportunities for political gamesmanship and headlines. In both cases, their survival needs have largely been unmet.

The clear solution is for the City to get serious about housing for homeless New Yorkers no matter where they come from. Across the five boroughs there are more than 60,000 homeless people in one or other shelter system, but more than double the number of vacant residences. While the city currently spends about \$3,600 per person monthly for a cot in a shelter, for a fraction of that, we could give an unsheltered individual an apartment, and the privacy and dignity that come with it. Our failure to do so puts people's lives and well-being in jeopardy by allowing them to languish in shelters that are often ill-equipped, especially in the middle of one ongoing pandemic and the early stages of another.

Statement from Susan Lee at New York City Council General Welfare Committee Hearing on Aug 9, 2022

RE: Oversight—Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in Asylum Seekers

Good morning members of the City Council. My name is Susan Lee and I am the founder of the Alliance for Community Preservation and Betterment. I am a life-long New Yorker and currently reside in City Council District 1.

This fiscal year budget allocated \$2.4 billion to homeless services. Median rents are reaching record highs and evictions will increase. While we need to assist New Yorkers who rely on the shelter system, we must, at the same time, hold shelter providers accountable. I strongly urge the NYC Comptroller's Office audit these shelter providers.

New Yorkers need responsible government and strong leadership to implement policies to get homeless individuals off the streets and into shelters with wraparound services. With New York's right to shelter law, we are obligated to provide shelter to migrants bussed from Texas. At CB4 meeting on July 27th. CM Bottcher said that his office received a call from the city notifying him about placing 600 border families in various Times Square hotels in the coming weeks. This is in addition to the Travel Inn, now housing 100 men and the Skyline Hotel, now housing 210 homeless families (a huge percentage of families are asylum seekers who come from the border). The Alliance is concerned that hotels in Council District 1 will be used to house these border families with little to no notification to the public as in the case with the hotels in CM Bottcher's district.

Our group inquired about the status of former hotel at 231 Grand Street, and CM Marte office responded on August 2nd, "We have not been informed about any activity at 231 Grand St in regards to providing housing for immigrants. As you have heard earlier this year, 231 Grand St is no longer going to move forward as a shelter. It is currently not being used as a hotel, so it's not even a possibility for people to stay there. Any updates we receive would of course be shared with the community." I sincerely hope that there will be public engagement when hotels in our community are used for asylum seekers or homeless individuals.

UNLOCK NYC

To: [redacted] re
From: JESSICA VALENCIA, UNLOCK NYC
Date: August 9, 2022

Subject: Written testimony regarding resources for refugees living in homeless shelters and speaking out about the plight that these individuals and families are facing.

To whom it may concern:

My name is Jessica Valencia, and I am writing on behalf of Unlock NYC, the organization for which I work. Unlock NYC is a tech nonprofit led by women who have experienced housing discrimination as a result of our rental assistance vouchers. Our free mobile tools help New Yorkers record phone calls and create a paper trail when landlords/brokers illegally turn them away. Recently, we have also begun providing resources for refugees living in homeless shelters and speaking out about the plight that these individuals and families are facing.

My colleague and I were canvassing outside HRA's 14th Street office in Manhattan when we encountered newly arrived refugee families who requested food assistance because the shelter they were staying in did not have a food pantry. In the absence of any other food source, they were forced to consume food scraps from the trash. Our first meeting to find resources for refugee families was on July 29, and we began working with these families shortly thereafter.

In both families, there were children ranging in age from 2 to 11 years old. In a country with so much wealth, it is disheartening to hear that we are not capable of providing humans with even the most basic needs. With a quick Google search, my colleague and I found the church of Ascension. When we reached their front door, we explained the dire circumstances to their staff. They packed food from their pantry for the families and paid for their transportation back to their shelter in Brooklyn. Their kindness and generosity were the only ray of hope these families had seen since they had arrived in this country.

The experience they had at ICE detention centers was far from ideal. Several families have told me that they have encountered xenophobic treatment, and one family was even denied medical access to their 2 year old toddler when he developed a fever. When the mother requested medication after his medication had been discarded by ICE agents, they responded that no one had instructed them to come to the United States. Regardless of your stance on immigration, no human being, especially a child, should be denied medical care.

As they arrived in NYC with nothing but the clothes on their backs, their trauma did not end there. There is no indication that the shelters where these families are staying provide any resources for them. During the past two weeks, we have worked with over fifteen families. In addition to generous donations from the community, especially those from Park Slope who have shown love to these families, have made it possible for us to provide groceries, clothing, toiletries, toys, and cell phones to these families through their donations. The fact that our community is able to give them a warm welcome to these families is inspiring; however, it is appalling that no assistance has been provided by the shelter or government officials.

The response I have received from various council member offices, assemblywoman offices, including our very own Brooklyn President Antonio Reynoso, has been mediocre over the past two weeks. As I failed to mention, the shelter is located in Williamsburg, the same neighborhood where our Brooklyn president grew up. There is no doubt that some of you find it very easy to criticize Mayor Adam's administration. However, what are you doing for your community in your capacity as council members? Would you really say that you are out there in the trenches helping the community? I want to emphasize that although it is very helpful that so many community members have offered to donate in some way, our government officials have fallen short of their duty. As far as your legacy is concerned, the fact that you call yourself a sanctuary city is an embarrassment.

My testimony concludes with my most concerning experience to date. My partner and I dropped off groceries and baby clothes on Sunday, August 7 to the shelter. The groceries were meant to feed over six families. As families headed downstairs to pick up their grocery bags, they were stopped by security. The families were informed verbatim that such a large amount of food is not permitted. While standing outside the doorway, my husband inquired as to what the problem was. As a result, the security officer called the supervisor and informed him that the families would not be permitted to bring their groceries upstairs. As my husband was recording, he pulled out his phone and started recording. Upon realizing that my husband was speaking English, the supervisor changed her tone of voice. As he held the phone, my partner asked her, "So you will not allow these families to bring their food with them?"

She responded that this was not the case, and the food could be brought up. As most of the people at the shelter have children, and we are experiencing a heat wave at the moment, my partner also inquired about the lack of air conditioners at the shelter. According to the supervisor, the air conditioners are stored in the basement, but there is

not enough manpower to install them. There is one aspect of all of this that is particularly troubling: the lack of empathy on the part of these employers towards these families. Having been through hell and back, it is simply incomprehensible that they cannot provide these families with the basic necessities. At the same time, we are prohibited from providing assistance. It is disgraceful for the administration and City Council to even refer to New York City as a sanctuary city. This is because they profit from the suffering and pain of others while pretending they care about their livelihoods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jessica Valencia". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Valencia
Head of Communications, Unlock NYC
Jessica@weunlock.nyc

Morgan Ortiz's Testimony
for the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
on Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in Asylum Seekers

Thank you to Chair Ayala and the esteemed members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Morgan Ortiz, and I'm the Assistant Vice President of Transitional Housing at Win, New York City's largest provider of shelter and services to families with children experiencing homelessness. I've previously served as a Program Director and licensed clinical social worker at Win since 2017.

In the five years I've worked at Win, I've had the privilege of getting to work with and know many of the homeless families who call Win home. While their background and reasons for entering shelter are unique, one experience that all families do share is the PATH intake process -- and to describe it as "hellish" would be kind.

The families that are in need of shelter are often facing the toughest moments in their life. In my professional opinion as a social worker, forcing these families to go through the current PATH system is only adding to their trauma. I have had families talk to be about they feel like giving up and even taking their own life because of the incredibly frustrating process.

The PATH process is incredibly grueling and is not designed to put the client's needs first. It takes families an immense amount of time to pull together all the necessary documentation to share with PATH. But I've seen and experienced firsthand that PATH workers will claim to not have received any files from clients or Win, therefore re-starting the 10-day eligibility clock over again and making the intake process very lengthy. I have seen this intake process go on for a couple months up to one year for failure to provide documentation that we repeatedly shared with DHS. This is not only cruel and frustrating, but it also delays a family's search for a permanent home. When families are in shelter under a "conditional placement," their caseworkers must delay a search for a voucher for permanent housing because clients are required to live in one shelter for a certain period of time to be eligible.

The problems with PATH go beyond just paperwork. As currently designed, PATH is incredibly disruptive to families' lives. Each time a family must restart the intake process, they are called back to PATH for additional interviews at any time of the day -- whether that's 9AM on a school day or 9PM on a weekend night. Win families -- which are often composed of women and their children -- must pick up everything and report back to PATH to wait for hours on end while their futures are in the balance. This is incredibly nerve-wracking for our parents to not know if they will go back to the shelter they came from, or if they must relocate to a new shelter -- all while

trying to keep their children calm, happy, and occupied while they wait for hours. And after waiting for hours at PATH, I've seen parents having to move into a new shelter with toddlers at 1 or 2AM in the morning.

One mom I worked with had just gotten her kids settled at a school in Brooklyn, only to be called back into PATH and moved to a new shelter in the Bronx. How are our kids expected to thrive in school if DHS repeatedly moves them because of their chaotic PATH processes? Children are resilient, but forcing them to move, make new friends and get to know their new teachers is disruptive and damaging to their growth. The intake process is only adding to the trauma that homeless kids have already experienced.

The stories I've shared today are only the tip of the iceberg. Clients have made it clear time and time again that the PATH process is frustrating, traumatic, and dehumanizing. These are our neighbors, but the intake process treats them like they are criminals for being homeless. We must reform PATH to ensure our clients' needs come first.

Thank you.

**Testimony of Win (formerly Women In Need, Inc.)
for the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
on Long-standing NYC Shelter Intake Issues and the Recent Increase in Asylum Seekers**

Thank you to Chair Ayala and to the esteemed members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to offer testimony.

I'm speaking today on behalf of Win, New York City's largest provider of shelter and services to families with children experiencing homelessness. Win operates 14 family shelters and nearly 400 supportive housing units across the five boroughs. More than 4,800 people call Win 'home' every night, including 2,700 children. Every one of the families in Win shelters, had to first go through the Prevention Assistance and Transitional Housing Center (PATH).

Since January 2022, Win has seen a 14 percent increase in the number of homeless families with children, driven primarily by the expiration of pandemic-era rental protections and skyrocketing rents. As the number of homeless families continues to spike, more and more are being subjected to PATH's grueling intake process. PATH is the city's front door to the homeless shelter system, but for the families who experience it, it is not a welcoming environment. Rather than being met with safety and support, families undergo experiences that can cause fear and retraumatization. To be blunt, the current intake process is shameful. But with the implementation of common-sense reforms such as establishing PATH navigators, creating appointment times, making COVID exceptions permanent, and training all PATH workers in trauma informed care, DHS could significantly improve the experience of families.

I'd like to spend some time outlining the current process.

First, families must travel to PATH. After enduring the trauma of losing their home and with nowhere else to turn, families must make the trek to the central intake center in the Bronx. For families coming from Staten Island, East New York, and other neighborhoods far from the Bronx, just getting to PATH can mean hours on public transit with their most precious belongings and small children in tow.

Second, parents and children spend an entire day in waiting rooms and meetings, and do not leave the facility for fear of missing their turn and having to restart the process. Waiting rooms are crowded with tense, anxious adults who are in the midst of the terrible crisis of homelessness and needing to seek shelter. Some may be suffering from untreated mental illness. It's a chaotic environment made worse by the lack of customer service and support.

Third, all families must move from PATH worker to PATH worker to undergo assessments, fill out forms, provide documentation, and tell and retell their history. The intake process is supposed to determine eligibility for shelter and services. But there's a blanket assumption that families seeking help may be trying to criminally deceive DHS. PATH workers called "Fraud Investigators" scrutinize a family's history as they tell and re-tell it, attempting to prove that they are not in fact homeless. This assumption of fraud creates an adversarial environment that exacerbates an already traumatic experience. One Win parent who went through PATH put it bluntly "it's like you're in Jail, like they're a police officer and you're a criminal."

Finally, families are given conditional shelter placements while DHS determines if a family is, in fact, homeless. Families may need to provide additional information and attend follow-up appointments at

PATH during the ten days that DHS has to determine eligibility. If the investigation ultimately results in an ineligible finding, families normally must pack up and leave the shelter placement they were provided on a conditional basis while an investigation was being conducted. Although this requirement is currently waived due to COVID, DHS has not committed to permanently allowing families to reapply from their conditional placement. If DHS lifts the waiver, families found ineligible after 10 days will have to leave their conditional shelter and go directly back to PATH, where they begin the application process again and are provided another conditional placement.

As bad as the process is to go through once, the reality is that most families are forced to repeat it. DHS frequently forces families to go through the process multiple times – before eventually finding families eligible for shelter. City data shows that in November 2021, a shocking 62 percent of families had to apply more than once before being found eligible and 31 percent had to apply more than 3 times.ⁱ According to the comptroller’s audit report released earlier this year, one family had to reapply 38 times before eventually being found eligible for shelter.ⁱⁱ

The city has both a moral and legal obligation to provide homeless families with shelter. Yet, the current intake system at PATH is failing families by creating an unwelcoming environment riddled with unnecessary barriers. The city needs to reduce the barrier of entry into shelter and help families successfully complete applications the first time.

There’s a number of reforms that could produce fixes.

First, the City must create a system that allows families to pre-schedule appointments or be assigned an appointment time upon arrival. This would reduce disruption, allowing families to tend to their other responsibilities rather than needlessly wait at PATH and make the process more efficient for DHS staff.

Second, the City must create a team of PATH Navigators, who would serve a customer-service role at PATH and provide every family with standardized, clear information about the steps, meetings, and documentation necessary to apply for shelter.

Third, the City should reduce the amount of documentation families are required to provide to help reduce the burden on families. One big change would be to reduce the housing history requirement from two years to one.

Fourth, the changes DHS made in response to the pandemic to reduce interactions at PATH should be made permanent. Families — especially those with minor children — need stability, which cannot be obtained when they must pack up and move their belongings every 10-days, or worse, are forced to sleep outside because the city denies their application. Children should be in school, with childcare, or at age-appropriate activities – spared from the stress of the intake process. Exempting minor children from going to PATH with their parents and permitting families to reapply for shelter from their conditional placements allow families to manage the process more easily.

Fifth, DHS needs to improve staff training to ensure that staff understand the impact of trauma on the population they are serving, and how to better assist families coming to them for help. Before stepping foot into PATH, most families have already experienced trauma — often because of long-term housing instability, domestic violence, and/or poverty. Yet PATH – the very center designed to help vulnerable families – can be retraumatizing, with Win families describing their treatment at PATH as punitive and

dehumanizing. Every worker at PATH, including DHS contracted security firms, must receive training in trauma informed care and services to protect families and children from retraumatization.

Homelessness in New York City has been at crisis levels for decades, and although there was a slight dip during the pandemic, the expiration of pandemic-related rental protections and skyrocketing rents indicate that the trend is heading quickly in the wrong direction. The city must be prepared for additional families coming through PATH and must reduce the barriers to entry for families so they can spend less time applying for shelter and start the incredibly challenging process of finding a way out into a permanent home.

ⁱ Bhat, S., & Velasquez, J. (2022, January 30). *Three in four family shelter applications rejected in 2021, setting record*. The City. Available at: <https://www.thecity.nyc/2022/1/30/22909663/family-shelter-applications-rejected>
ⁱⁱ New York City Office of the Comptroller. (2022, February 9). *Audit report on the department of homeless services' determination of temporary housing benefits for families with children*. Available at: https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/DHS_MG20_070A.pdf

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Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: Aug 9, 2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Susan Lee

Address: Thomas St NYC NY 10013

I represent: 8 Alliance for Community Preservation & Betterment

Address: 1413 Ave T Brooklyn NY

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Milton Pérez

Address: New Lots Ave Bk, NY by way of Bx PR

I represent: Myself

Address: _____

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Yesenia Mata

Address: 774 Port Richmond Ave

I represent: La Colmena

Address: 774 Port Richmond Ave

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Date: 8/9/22

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Name: Karim Walker

Address: 123 William Street

I represent: Safety Net Project at UJC

Address: _____

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Date: 8/9/22

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Name: Magalie Bonhomme

Address: 2262 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd

I represent: homeless shelter residents

Address: 2262 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd

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Name: Kathryn Kliff

Address: 199 Water St. New York, NY 10038

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: _____



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Name: Commissioner Manuel Castro

Address: 253 Broadway 4th Fl NY, NY

I represent: NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Address: ll

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Date: 8/10/22

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Name: Tom Tortorici

Address: 253 Broadway NY, NY - MOVA

I represent: NYC Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

Address: ll

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Date: 8/9/22

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Name: Joslyn Carter

Address: _____

I represent: Administrator, Department of Homeless Services

Address: _____

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Date: 8/7/22

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Name: Gary P. Jenkins

Address: _____

I represent: Commissioner, Department of Social Services

Address: _____

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Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Commissioner Zachary Iscol

Address: Commissioner, New York City

Emergency mgmt
I represent: NYC Emergency Management

Address: _____

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(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lymaris Albors, CEO

Address: Acacia Network

I represent: _____

Address: _____

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in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Monsignor Kevin Sullivan

Address: 1211 First Ave

I represent: Catholic Charities - Archdiocese of

Address: New York

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Name: Catherine Trapani

Address: _____

I represent: Homeless Services United

Address: _____

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