

New York City Youth Services Committee Hearing on Proposed Resolution No. 1227-A

Testimony of John Welch, Program Director Safe Horizon Streetwork Lower East Side

February 26, 2009

Good Morning, I am John Welch, Program Director at Streetwork Lower East Side, a program of Safe Horizon, which is a victim assistance agency serving people impacted by violence in all parts of New York City. I would like to thank Council Member Fidler for being a fierce advocate for the homeless young people of New York City and the Youth Services Committee for hearing my testimony today.

Streetwork operates two daytime drop-in centers, providing support and comprehensive services to homeless people ages 14 - 24. These services include concrete supports: food, clothing, laundry facilities and showers as well as counseling, case management, legal advocacy, mental health and medical services, and street outreach, among many other services. We also operate two short-term emergency shelter programs, 36 beds in all. The beds in these programs are always full and waiting lists have risen to about 100 per day in our 30-bed program and 45 a day for our 6 bed program for younger kids. We have seen a 30% increase in client visits to our two drop-in centers from 2007 to 2008 and are seeing on average 140 people per day between the two sites. At the same time funding cuts have forced us to eliminate 3 case managers and 2 supervisors at our drop-in programs and to cut mental health services in half.

Part of the reason Streetwork is overwhelmed with new clients at a time when budgets are eroding is that current runaway and homeless youth laws cap service eligibility at age 21, and therefore there are far fewer programs and many fewer beds available to absorb what appears to us to be an increase in homeless youth on the streets in the past year. Streetwork set its age limit at 24 long ago to address the obvious service gap produced by ending youth services at 21. The changes proposed in Resolution 1227-A recognize that homeless youth are not just kids who are temporarily on the outs with families or are having difficulty following rules at home, but are people with multiple and complex problems that usually started very early in their lives, problems that *can* be adequately addressed, but will not be resolved sufficiently for them to become independent by 21 or report to adult service programs used by older people.

Streetwork youth, at 21, are both like and unlike more mainstream 21-year-old New Yorkers. They are like them in that they are struggling to make it in one of the most expensive cities in the world while still young and in need of support; unlike them in that they are doing so with no connection to any trustworthy adult whose couch they could safely sleep on if nothing works out, and no history of receiving adequate consistent care from any adult while growing up. They are like them in that they would rather surround themselves with friends their own age than be among older people; unlike them in that, when things haven't worked out for them by age 21, they are expected to report to prison-like adult shelters full of older people, many of whom try to exploit them. Like their more mainstream counterparts, homeless youth are developmentally wired to prioritize friendships, romances, sexuality, exploration of self and others, and testing their

abilities and limits, sometimes to the detriment of practical future planning. They are unlike them in that any safe community or context in which these normal pursuits could be shaped by caring adult guidance, or tempered by reminders of the need to deal with the practical realities is yanked away at 21.

At 21 most of *our* kids are just *beginning* to be able to think in a future-oriented way and to plan their lives realistically as they struggle to assimilate and accept all that has happened to them as children. These are people who have not had childhoods, meaning they have not experienced a minimum of emotional and physical safety that would allow them to internalize the basic sense of power over their own lives that most people develop by 21, despite their many difficulties. Almost all homeless youth have suffered repeated early trauma and need the extra time and support to develop. Many Streetwork clients get housed and work their way into the mainstream economy before they age out of Streetwork but almost none do so before 21. Those who do are the few whose childhood trauma was less severe or who had high levels of support through trauma.

Ending services at 21 invites involvement in street life and the street economy, and this is a danger not only to our young people, but to public safety, especially in these economic times when the city will be losing resources to deal with unsupported young people living their lives on the streets, in parks, in Starbucks, on rooftops, in the subway system, in stores with cheap computer access, in Penn Station, etc. To change service eligibility to 24 will let homeless young adults make their mistakes in our shelters and drop-in centers and not on the streets because, at 21, homeless young people will not be reporting to adult

service programs that do not feel welcoming to them, but they will be reporting to the streets.

Another realistic and positive change proposed by Resolution 1227-A is the relaxation of the 24-hour staffing requirement in RHY shelters. While 24-hour staffing is the gold standard we would all love to live by, there 3800 homeless youth in New York City alone on any given night according to Empire State Coalition's 2007 homeless youth survey, made possible through the support of the City Council, and these young people need easy access to nighttime beds first and foremost. To continue to insist on 24 hour staffing is to deny the emergency nature of youth homelessness. Loosening this requirement will allow us to stretch our budgets to take care of the most basic needs first and to cooperate with other providers who may offer services our programs cannot.

Thank You for Listening.



Oversight: Federal and State Legislative Issues Regarding Runaway and Homeless Youth
Proposed Resolution Number: 1227A
Testimony: James Bolas

My name is James Bolas, and I am the Director of Education at Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services and the Chair of the NYC Association of Homeless and Street-Involved Youth Organizations

Thank you for holding these hearings and for letting me testify at this hearing. As many of you know, Empire State Coalition is the only coalition of homeless youth agencies in New York City and New York State. Though we do not provide direct services to homeless youth in NYC, we impact the lives of these youth by providing professional development specific to the needs of the hundreds of professionals serving homeless youth. Whether through our public education, or coalition development or through our public advocacy forums and skill-based trainings, Empire State Coalition works to positively impact city, state and federal policy in order to insure homeless youth are safe, healthy and prepared. At Empire State Coalition, we understand that adolescence is a time of a person's life that doesn't come with a definite begin and end date. Adolescence is about moving from concrete to abstract thought. Our charge as youth workers is to help that young person move through this developmental process. We believe that for many youth adolescence goes beyond the age of 21. As a representative of the National Council for Youth Policy, we believe that this is a condition of homeless youth in our nation. And as the US representative of the International Society of Mobile Youth Work I know that this presents as a global condition as well.

In 2007, with the support of the City Council we conducted a survey of homeless youth in NYC. This was the first of its kind in over 20 years. With the participation of non-profits serving homeless youth in NYC, we were able to gather a deeper understanding of the state of homeless youth in our city. Though this wasn't a headcount of homeless youth, per se, we were able to extrapolate that each night there are at least 3800 youth that are homeless in NYC. Of the 1000 youth we surveyed over a 6 week period, we found that the average age of the youth was 20 and that the average age of a young person first leaving home was 16 years old.



I've been working with homeless youth and the agencies who serve them for over 21 years.

In 1988 at The Streetwork Project I began running the city's first HIV outreach and prevention program. In the late 80's we understood that homeless youth do not stop being adolescents at the age of 21. We found that adult homeless services did not meet the needs of a 22 year old or, for that matter a 24 year old. In many cases it put them in danger.

Through our therapeutic process and case management, we understood that youth who are homeless spent their adolescence compensating to survive and, as a result, were arresting their development process. At their holiday and birthday parties, we found these youth from 16 to 24 responding to gifts of stuffed animals in the same childlike way as someone who was 10 years younger. This is why we at Empire State Coalition, support Resolution 1227A.

With all the youth programs throughout NYS, we see this condition. It is not one that is only unique to NYC. This is a condition of homeless youth throughout our country. From Buffalo, Schenectady, Poughkeepsie and Binghamton to LA, Chicago, Minneapolis and Miami, homeless youth are all confronted by an arrested development grounded in the need to survive on the streets.

Oftentimes, a young person begins to come into their developmental identity at a later age than a young person coming from a supportive living environment. Many homeless youth enter their 20's and begin to see the reality of their situation. Unfortunately, the eligible age for full access to Transitional housing is often cut short due to the laws of federal age requirement. So a young person who, after spending time being moved from shelter to street to shelter, finally finds themselves ready to structure their lives, and if a space is available, goes into a Transitional Living Program. However, the young person who is finally ready at age 21, doesn't get the full benefit of the 18 months allowed by federal and state RHY regulations for transitional living and are discharged to adult services where they are not effectively served. This then can cause them to revert to their past behavior where they often leave adult services and are back on the street; begin to move more rapidly into chronic adult homelessness. This is why we believe that just because a young person turns 21 doesn't mean they should be abandoned by adolescent housing services and that they be allowed to stay in Transitional programs for the fully deserved 18 months, regardless of how close they are to turning 21 when they enter Transitional services. At Empire State Coalition understand that not all homeless youth are ready to jump directly from 28 days in an Emergency Shelter



to the more structured environment of an 18 month Transitional Living Program no matter what age they are.

I have been a Director at Empire State Coalition since 1994. Since then, I have provided professional development to youth workers on working effectively with homeless LGBTQ youth. The data from our 2007 survey also confirmed that approximately 30% of homeless youth confirmed being Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual and that 5% identified as Transgender. We have known this for years and this number is confirmed by a recent national survey of LGBTQ youth. We all know that even with the limited changes in societal perception, for various reasons there are still many families who are unable to sufficiently support an adolescent who is coming into the self-identification of their sexual orientation. This natural self-realization combined with the behavior of adolescent development becomes an all too common excuse for youth to be thrown out onto the streets, or forced to run away in order to avoid physical or sexual abuse. We have been talking about the needs of LGBTQ homeless youth for as long as I've been in this field. At Empire State Coalition, we believe that it is finally time for our government to officially recognize that at least one-third of these youth identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender or, in many cases of adolescence, are Questioning their sexual identity as a natural step in their adolescent self-identity.

Empire State Coalition regularly speaks with homeless youth and the agencies who serve them on a daily basis. We keep an ear to the ground in regards to the policies, regulations and trends that directly or indirectly impact their lives. By "their", we mean both the youth and the professionals who serve them. In many cases we recognize the needs of the adolescents because the professionals and agencies who serve them speak up and identify the trends and conditions that these youth face. So we make changes for the youth, but often leave the functionality of the agencies out of the equation. It often feels

as though the public funders and the regulations established do not understand that there are professionals serving these youth. The regulators do not seem to take into consideration the reality of the fiscal and organizational needs required to keep an agency that provides shelter, drop-in or outreach afloat in this economy. An agency cannot effectively be run by volunteers, we have seen that tried and fail. We also know that an economic stimulus package isn't going to immediately change the available staff needed to be at a housing



program for 24 hours when the youth are either at work or school. It's a waste of funding and takes staff away from other services and work on behalf of the youth the program serves.

We know from years of experience that this 24 hours of staffing is not something that's necessary. These agencies' finances are already tightened and with a threat of voluntary homeless youth services funding being lumped together with mandatory services into statewide block grants, and cuts in the funding, they'll be virtually asphyxiated. Public funders point toward foundations and, as a result of economic malfeasance, foundations are either closing their doors or putting the programs they used to support in an unspecified holding pattern. By easing up on the City's 24 hour Transitional staffing certification requirements, which goes beyond the State or Federal requirements, we are able to effectively provide support to the youth most in need of it, when they are at our programs.

Many programs have the desire and the models to provide services to homeless youth. With over 3800 homeless youth and only 300 shelter beds, we need to look at the ways and means to make more shelter and housing available. We know that housing for homeless youth in NYC is limited, and we know that it's not affordable! So between lack of affordability and limited community support for the development of emergency housing, programs wanting to serve homeless youth are additionally challenged by the State certification process. At Empire State Coalition, we understand the need for standards of care and for regulations and certification. We don't want youth sleeping in dangerous settings and we understand the need for professional skill development for effectively serving these youth. But we need to accept the reality that in order to effectively set up a homeless youth program an agency, however large or small, needs to be given some leeway in the form of start up grants in order to effectively meet the comprehensive State regulations.

Empire State Coalition has over 30 years of history of advocating and meeting the needs of homeless youth in New York State and as someone with over 20 years of working with homeless and street-involved youth and the committed programs that house and counsel them, we offer our continued commitment to these programs and the youth and young adults they serve so that they may become safe, healthy and prepared for adulthood and a life off of the streets. I thank you for allowing me the time to testify today and if you have any questions or concerns about any of my comments, please feel free to let me know.

**Testimony by Karen Remy
Director of Mental Health and Personal Development
The Door – A Center of Alternatives, Inc.**

**Hearing before the Council of the City of New York
Youth Services Committee**

**Federal and State Legislative Issues Regarding Runaway and Homeless Youth
Proposed Res. No, 1227A**

**New York City
Friday, February 27, 2009**

First, I would like to thank City Council for the opportunity to speak today in support of Resolution No 1227A, related to Federal and State legislative issues regarding runaway and homeless youth.

Since 1972, The Door has provided comprehensive services for young people at a single site, free of charge, and confidentially in a youth-centered environment. The Door has a long history and extensive experience with New York City's population of disconnected young people, including homeless and runaway youth, and is known for developing innovative programs that meet their specific needs. Runaway and homeless youth, as well as LGBTQ youth, parenting youth, young people in the foster care or juvenile justice systems, and other young people at high risk of becoming homeless have always been included in significant numbers in The Door's membership. Over 11,000 young people from all over the city came to The Door in 2008. Of those, 7028 young people were new enrollees. 9% of new members at The Door reported that they currently were homeless or in foster care, though the percentage who are at-risk for homelessness is much higher. 13.4% of new members identified as LGBTQ during intake (a percentage which likely underestimates the actual number of LGBTQ young people at The Door) and another 5% had

children, largely under the age of 3. In addition, 8% reported that they had experienced violence at the hands of someone they lived with or cared about.

The Door's experience clearly indicates a need to provide services to young people well beyond the age of 21. Of the 11,000 young people served by The Door in 2008, 13% were between 20 and 21, and 12 % were over 21, in total representing to one quarter of The Door's membership. These young people come to The Door often having experienced years of multiple system failures and from families coping with intergenerational poverty, substance abuse, and mental health issues. At The Door, over 50% of members aged 20 and over access The Door's mental health services department, which provides, among other services, crisis services for at-risk and homeless young people including: counseling, intensive case management, emergency meals and clothing, referrals to other Door programs, and referrals to partner agencies for housing assistance and substance abuse treatment.

Over the past eight years, government funding for innovative programming to provide critical youth services, including education and work readiness, has diminished substantially, instead becoming increasingly restrictive and limited in scope. Young people who are finally able to access services require substantial time and support in order to become self sufficient, a process which for a 20 year old will often take much longer than 12 months. Taken as a whole, our experience at The Door demonstrates a compelling need to decrease strict eligibility requirements around program participation, increase the maximum eligible age for services to at least 24 and to align measures regarding length of stay for youth in transitional living programs to correspond with the achievement of milestones that demonstrate independent living skills and self sufficiency rather than the calculation of their 21st birthday.

The Door has developed special expertise in addressing the needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered and Questioning Youth. We are currently in the third year of a contract for discretionary funding through DYCD which supports a Door outreach team providing outreach services, mediation, and harm reduction to young people at the Christopher Street Piers (Pier 45). This program originated as a result of research The Door was tasked with conducting in 2005 on the youth who congregate at the Pier and in the West Village area. The purpose of the assessment was to get a better sense of who the youth are, where they come from, what services they receive or need, and other variables affecting the activities of these young people. In 2008, The Door completed a survey of LGBTQ young people accessing one of our popular programs. Results indicated that 22% were marginally housed; 17% had moved 2-3 times in the previous year; 5% reported having moved more than five times in the previous year. Our survey did not address the quality and appropriateness of those who reported not moving in the previous year. The Door frequently refers LGBTQ young people in crisis to emergency shelters catering to the general homeless youth population, where anecdotally we can attest that they are at greater risk for harassment and violence as a result of their sexuality. The majority of homeless LGBTQ youth we serve choose to survive on the streets (often through prostitution, thereby placing them at escalated risk for HIV infection) and in other inadequate and unsafe conditions rather than to experience violence and abuse in the shelters. Clearly, this demonstrates a compelling need to change shelter guidelines pertaining to LGBTQ youth.

The Door's firmly believes that implementing the changes proposed in Resolution 1227A is vital to providing the most effective and meaningful level of service to homeless and runaway youth in New York City.

NYC City Council
Youth Services Committee
February 27, 2009



Green Chimneys Children's Services: NYC Division
Foster Care and RHY Programs for LGBTQ Youth
Division Director, Theresa Nolan
tnolan@greenchimneys.org

Agency/Division Background:

The NYC Division of Green Chimneys operates both foster care and homeless youth residential programs for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth, with a total of 66 beds. 46 of these beds are foster care programming (Gramercy Residence, AOBH, SILP) and 20 of them are runaway/homeless youth (RHY) beds. These 20 RHY beds are divided between 2 transitional programs for LGBTQ RHY, our federally funded TLP and our DYCD funded TIL.

Both RHY programs focus on preparing youth for healthy, self-sufficient adulthood within 18 months. In this time frame, the focus for each young person is on employment and education, with accompanying life skills training, which has an intense focus on budgeting/saving. Operating from a positive youth development philosophy, the programs focus on preparing youth for healthy, self-sufficient adulthood, or in some cases to return to family homes.

We have operated foster care programs in NYC since 1983 and opened our first RHY program in NYC in 2000.

We are appreciative of the work of Councilmember Lew Fidler and the Youth Services Committee regarding addressing the issue of youth homelessness in New York City. We support the Resolution that is one of the subjects of today's hearing and would like to highlight 3 areas that are of particular importance to our programming.

A major concern we have with the State OCFS regulations for RHY Residential settings is the required gender segregation. Our program is a scattered-site model, in which all residents have their own bedrooms and we focus on serving the homeless LGBTQ youth population. For this type of setting, the separation of males and females does not seem appropriate and in fact can often create more complications. Not only does it create opportunities to address dating issues among roommates (which take away from more productive uses of staff time), it also limits the availability of beds to potential residents. A mixed gender setting does not completely remove any possibility of dating among roommates, but it does greatly decrease the frequency of this and allows us the flexibility of placing youth more immediately. Youth in need of a bed have been made to wait for the appropriate gender bed to be available rather than be placed in an open bed in the "wrong" gender apartment. Not only does this seem silly, but it is a waste of resources. Common sense has taught us that a mixed gender setting is a great model for an LGBTQ youth program. This also does not "pigeon-hole" a transgender youth or a gender non-conforming youth. A mixed gender setting acknowledges that youth may identify a variety of ways and does not elevate gender or sex as the most important factor in receiving housing. **We recommend**

that the State regulations allow for an agency to request non-segregated settings and that each site be evaluated for this individually.

A major concern we have with the NYC DYCD requirements for TIL operation is the mandatory 24 hour staffing. We have operated a federal program for the last 9 years under a model of no onsite staffing. Youth are placed in apartments within the community and assigned staff make visits to each apartment to ensure safety and the following of basic program rules.

Developmentally, many youth in this age group are ready for less supervision and actually act out when given too much supervision. On the other hand, there are youth who are still in need of supervision at this age for a variety of reasons. Operating both models has given us the privilege of flexibility in placing youth who need supervision and youth who need less supervision in the appropriate apartment setting. We recognize that some youth may require a higher level of supervision while developing independent living skills. Additionally, the personnel expenses use up a majority of our TIL budget while we are limited in other vital resources for the youth. TIL programming could be a much richer experience if this money was used in other ways or even to open additional beds, rather than absorbing so much funding on staffing. **We recommend that DYCD allow for flexibility of TIL program models, so that individual agencies can propose to operate the model best fit for their population.**

Youth in our programs are not always ready to “graduate” when they turn 21 and youth that enter the program with less than 18 months until their 21st birthday have truncated lengths of stay. These 2 issues address the age limit of RHY programs. There is a high demand for services for youth post-21st birthday and these young adults are very vulnerable when fighting their way through the adult shelter system. New York City is a nearly impossible place to support yourself when you are 21, have a GED, and have a minimum wage job. This makes youth just past 21 very susceptible to becoming homeless again and increases risk for substance abuse, high risk sexual behaviors, and assault. Youth that enter TILs when they are 20 are given only until they turn 21 rather than the full 18 months to stabilize and prepare for independent living. **We recommend that the age limit of RHY program be increased. If the age limit cannot be increase, we recommend that an 18-month stay be guaranteed regardless of 21st birthday.**

Additionally, I would like to express concern over the Governor’s proposed Block Grant. This proposal would severely limit the availability of programming in NYC and has already caused devastation with our colleague’s programs upstate. My fear is that we will see an influx of youth coming into NYC as a result of decreased (and in some cases, eliminated) programming in other parts of New York State. The alternative is that crime, substance abuse, and other social ills may increase in other counties. Youth homelessness is an issue in rural areas as well as urban, and they often have fewer resources.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge that RHY programs are extremely vital to decreasing the number of youth on the streets and youth that are living in unsafe situations. Not every youth on the street is saved and not every youth that enters a program moves on to an “ideal” living situation. But we often hear from youth long after they have left our program that they are grateful for what they learned while with us and that they are doing well. None of us can survive completely on our own; we all need a support network. RHY programs give these youth healthy, dependable support networks that help them move into adulthood with a little more hope.



***TESTIMONY TO
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
YOUTH SERVICES COMMITTEE
Oversight: Federal and State Legislative Issues Regarding Runaway and Homeless Youth
Proposed Res. NO. 1227-A***

February 27, 2009

I would like to thank the Youth Services Committee for providing this opportunity to testify here today. My name is Nancy Downing. I am the Director of Advocacy for Covenant House New York.

For nearly 35 years, Covenant House New York has been serving homeless, runaway and at-risk youth. We are the nation's largest, privately funded, non-profit adolescent care agency serving this population.

We applaud Council Member Lewis Fidler and the Youth Services Committee for proposing Resolution No. 1227-A, calling on the U.S. Congress and the NYS Legislature to amend Federal and State Runaway and Homeless Youth Acts in a number of critical areas.

We support the call to increase the maximum eligible age for runaway and homeless youth from 21 years to 24 years old and the call to calculate the maximum length of stay in transitional living programs independent of a youth's 21st birthday. We believe both of these provisions are critical to ensuring the transition from adolescence/young adult to becoming independent, responsible and productive adults. Recent studies of human development and brain development indicate that certain decision making centers of the brain are not fully developed until the mid-20s. In addition, runaway and homeless youth typically have not experienced positive, adult role models in their early life further impairing and delaying the

development of good decision making skills. By increasing the maximum eligible age to 24 years, we can provide these vulnerable young people with a safe and supportive environment within which to make decision making mistakes without dire impact, while at the same time providing them with the opportunity to develop and practice the skills to make more appropriate, independent decisions.

Given the current economic climate, limited government funding, and reduction in private donations that many runaway and homeless youth service providers are experiencing, we would not support a revision in state or federal law that mandates the provision of services to age 24 years, but rather, we support allowing programs to use city, state and federal funding to provide services to runaway and homeless youth up to age 24 years.

We support the recognition of LGBTQ runaway and homeless youth, who comprise up to 1/3 of the runaway and homeless youth on our streets and in our shelters. We believe that this recognition will help to ensure proper training of staff and provision of services to this vulnerable population of young people.

We likewise support the call to ease the 24 hour staffing requirement for residential programs and the provision of start-up grants for State certification application during the pendency of the application, particularly in light of the current economic situation.

We believe that supervision and support services are necessary, however, the 24-hour staffing requirement is overly restrictive on youth who are learning to become independent, overly burdensome on programs particularly during this time of economic hardship, and is not a necessity for either the safety of the youth in the program or the general public as has been demonstrated by past experience of programs that had not been required to provide 24 hour staffing.

Further, when the economic circumstances of our city, state and country improve we hope that additional financial focus will be given to providing runaway and homeless youth service providers with the increased funding needed to more fully address the needs of the under 24 runaway and homeless population. We sincerely appreciate Council Member Fidler's and the Youth Services Committees continued support and ardent advocacy for our most vulnerable children. Thank you.

Homeless Youth Services

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Testimony of MCCNY Homeless Youth Services: Proposed Resolution No. 1227-A
Federal and State Legislative Issues Regarding Runaway and Homeless Youth

MCCNY Homeless Youth Services is entering its sixth year of service to LGBTQ homeless and runaway youth. In that time, our staff has joined a growing body of support for massive reform to the policies regarding runaway and homeless youth (RHY). MCCNY Homeless Youth Services and its staff are fully supportive of Proposed Resolution No. 1227-A and ask that policy makers at both state and federal levels respond swiftly to the urgent problems highlighted in the proposal.

First, the age of eligibility for services under Federal and State runaway and homeless youth law is currently 21. From its inception, our agency has recognized that this is not only an unrealistic limitation, but it essentially abandons young people who have not had an appropriate amount of time to break free from the cycle of homelessness. The largest agencies in New York City that serve homeless and runaway youth, are required to discontinue services with youth once they turn 21, which puts young people back out on the streets often times forcing them to throw away any progress they have made to start all over. In our experience, runaway and homeless youth must be given a reasonable amount of time to navigate the vast array of services designed to end homelessness and stabilize their lives. Our agency works with youth up to the age of 24, and often times we are overwhelmed with clients who have been discharged from various agencies due to the strict '21 and under' policy.

MCCNY Homeless Youth Services is an emergency shelter and drop-in program and so we are dependent on other programs and services to provide our clients with longer term transitional housing. We therefore feel the effects of the current policy that disregards a young person's need for a full 18 months in transitional independent living programs if the client's birthday falls before the completion of that time period. Clients who leave our program for transitional independent living housing, often return to us when they have reached their 21st birthdays because they were not given the full 18 months usually allocated to establish proper housing. We assert that this is an unnecessary and easily repaired problem. By allowing a client a full 18 months, without abruptly cutting off services on the date of their birth, the system can ensure youth are given the full opportunity to access the services they need to end their cycle of homelessness. Otherwise, the policy is ignoring the reality of securing stable housing and forcing agencies to prematurely discontinue service to homeless youth based on arbitrary data.


Currently, in order to receive any state or local funding RHY programs must be OCFS certified. While this restriction was intended to ensure consistent regulations among RHY facilities, its unintended result is that new agencies are unable to apply for desperately needed funding in order to become OCFS certified and


ease the strain on other agencies that are unable to keep up with demand for services. MCCNY Homeless Youth Services is not in a financial position to make the required changes necessary to meet OCFS standards, which prevents us ever having the opportunity get certified and apply for funding that could expand our services to meet the demands of our population. However, if policy was amended to allow funding for start-up grants to agencies currently waiting to be OCFS certified to meet the demands required for state and local RHY funding, many struggling agencies including ours could avoid closing their doors. Our community cannot afford to lose programs catering to runaway and homeless youth, and in fact, the current trend foretells that more will need to open soon in order to avoid a deeper crisis of homelessness.

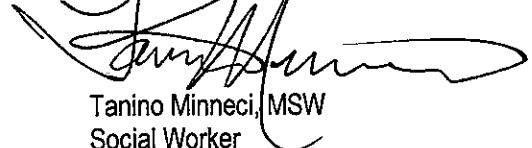
Finally, the issue of recognizing the unique challenges of LGBTQ runaway and homeless youth in Federal and State policies is of special importance to our agency and to the community at large. It is a vast disservice to all homeless youth to ignore the fact that those youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender often experience challenges that need to be addressed specifically. According to The New York 2007 Homeless Youth Survey conducted under the direction of the Empire State Coalition of Youth and Family Services, 28% of those surveyed identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual and an additional 11% were unsure or uncomfortable answering. Of those surveyed, 5% specifically identified as transgender. These numbers are a wake-up call that among the homeless youth community, LGBTQ youth represent a disproportionately high number. It is irresponsible to ignore these youth or to assume their struggles are being appropriately addressed. MCCNY Homeless Youth Services is insistent that LGBTQ youth are identified in public policy so that the needs of these young people can finally be addressed with the urgency that is required to keep them safe.

Addressing these issues is essential to the success of programs helping to end the cycle of homelessness for runaway and homeless youth. MCCNY Homeless Youth Services remains dedicated to this population and will continue to advocate for policies on the state and federal level that serve their interests and promote their safety and well being. Therefore, we give full support to Proposed Resolution Number 1227-A and work in cooperation with agencies and policy makers to see that these issues are addressed in a timely and assertive manner.


The Reverend Pat Bangardner, Pastor
Metropolitan Community Church of New York


William Morán-Berberena
Executive Director
MCCNY Charities


Lucky S. Michaels
Program Director
MCCNY Homeless Youth Services


Tanino Minneci, MSW
Social Worker
MCCNY Homeless Youth Services

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 1227A
 in favor in opposition

Date: 2/27/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nancy Downing, Dir. of Advocacy

Address: _____

I represent: Covenant House

Address: 460 W. 41st St., NY, NY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: 2-26-09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: John Welch

Address: 240 N. 5th St. #1 Brooklyn, NY 11211

I represent: Safe Horizon Streetwork

Address: 33 Essex St NYC 10002

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: PAUL SEALY

Address: 400 GRANT AVE. BROOKLYN N.Y. 11208

I represent: SCD FAMILY OF SERVICES

Address: 400 GRANT AVE, BROOKLYN N.Y. 11208

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 1227 A

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/27/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Charles Taylor

Address: 446 W 36 St.

I represent: MCCNY HOMELESS YOUTH SERVICES

Address: Charles Taylor

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. ~~1227 A~~ Res. No. 1227 A

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/27/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lucky Michaels

Address: ~~446 West 36 St~~ 700 KENT ST. 32 Brooklyn

I represent: MCCNY HOMELESS YOUTH SERVICES

Address: 446 WEST 36TH ST. NEW YORK, NY 10018

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

in favor in opposition

Date: 2/27/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOEY LOPEZ

Address: _____

I represent: ALI FORNEY CENTER

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 1227A
 in favor in opposition

Date: 2.27.09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Bolas

Address: 278 DeVoe St. #1 NY, NY 11211

I represent: Empire State Coalition

Address: P.O. B. 25312 Bklyn, NY 11202-5312

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. 1227A
 in favor in opposition

Date: 2/27/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Karen Remy

Address: 555 Broome St NYC

I represent: The Door

Address: 555 Broome St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: 2/27/09

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Theresa Nolan

Address: 257 Flatbush Bklyn, NY

I represent: Green Chimneys

Address: 79 Alexander Ave. Bx, NY

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