



**Testimony of Molly Wasow Park, Commissioner
New York City Department of Social Services**

**Before the New York City Council, Committee on General Welfare
Department of Social Services Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearing
May 16, 2025**

Good morning. I want to thank Deputy Speaker Ayala and the members of the General Welfare Committee, as well as Chair Brannan and the members of the Finance Committee for holding today's hearing and for the opportunity to testify about the Department of Social Services' (DSS) Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Executive Budget.

(Slide 1) My name is Molly Wasow Park, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Social Services. DSS is made up of both the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS), so accordingly I am also joined by my colleagues, DHS Administrator Joslyn Carter, and HRA Administrator Scott French, as well as DSS First Deputy Commissioner Jill Berry, and DSS Chief Program, Performance, and Financial Management Officer, Richard Johns. Collectively we represent the approximately 14,000 hardworking staff who dedicate their lives to supporting New Yorkers living at or below the poverty line.

(Slide 2) Today I will provide an overview of the FY26 executive budgets for both agencies, and highlight the programs and services supported by those resources.

(Slide 3) DSS is the largest local government social services agency in the country, comprised of the Human Resources Administration (HRA) and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS). Under the consolidated management structure and the shared mission of DSS, HRA and DHS provide a seamless and integrated continuum of client services to approximately 3 million New Yorkers every day. Our efforts to create a path to sustainability for low-income New Yorkers are rooted in the following three pillars: 1) Streamlining Access to Social Services; 2) Addressing Homelessness and Housing Instability; and 3) Creating Economic Stability. We will refer back to these three pillars throughout our presentation.

(Slide 4) First, I will provide an overview of the DSS/HRA and DHS FY26 executive budgets.

(Slide 5) DSS/HRA is dedicated to fighting poverty and income inequality, providing essential benefits including cash assistance, nutrition and food programs, public health insurance, employment and transportation services, as well as access to housing, homelessness prevention and emergency assistance. DSS/HRA helps more than three million New Yorkers annually through the administration of more than 15 major public benefit programs, with a budgeted headcount of approximately 12,000.

The FY25 budget for DSS/HRA is \$13.4 billion, including \$10.5 billion in City funds. The majority (over 80%) of the HRA City tax levy budget is earmarked for benefits that the City administers on behalf of New York State. Almost 97% of the DSS/HRA City funded budget provides direct benefits and support to New Yorkers including: 1) Cash Assistance (CA) benefits for which benefit levels and eligibility rules are set by State law and regulation; and 2) Medicaid which includes homecare, managed care, mental health, substance use services, and hospital care is also administered by the State. The City pays a portion of Medicaid costs out of city tax levy representing 60% of the DSS/HRA city funded budget. DSS/HRA sends these funds directly to the State to be used along with other State and federal funds to pay medical providers and managed care plans; and 3) of the remainder, 16% goes to Public Assistance, 13% to rental assistance and homeless prevention, 3% for Administration, 2% for legal services, and 2% for HASA, and 1% each for Employment Services, the Community Food Connection (CFC), and Domestic Violence Services (DVS). HRA also administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for 1.8M clients. These benefits are federally funded (about \$5B a year) do not flow through our budget but they represent another critical benefit that HRA is mandated to provide. DSS/HRA also administers another \$48B in state and federal funds supporting NYC Medicaid clients which are not part of the City Budget. Also note that the DSS budget for administration covers shared services for both HRA and DHS.

(Slide 6) Now I will provide an overview of the DHS budget. DHS is committed to providing safe temporary shelter, connecting New Yorkers experiencing homelessness to permanent housing, and addressing unsheltered homelessness. DHS has an FY25 budget of \$4.4B, of which \$2.4B is city tax levy. The agency has a headcount of 1,995; and with its not-for-profit partners, it is the largest municipal organization dedicated to addressing homelessness in the United States. (FY24 budget is \$3.9B; \$2.4B city). Almost 97% of the DHS budget supports shelter for families and individuals and services for the unsheltered, including outreach and low-barrier beds. The DHS budget is broken out as follows in FY25: \$1.35B for family shelter (42%); \$1.34B for adult

shelter (43%); \$384M for street outreach services (12%); and the remaining 3% is for Administration.

(Slide 7) In the FY26 Financial Plan, DSS is continuing to make investments in our critical programs totaling \$323.5M in new needs including: HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA); Affordable Housing Services (AHS), Domestic Violence Services (DVS); Fair Fares; NYC Benefits, Senior Affordable Rental Apartments (SARA), Street Outreach and End of Line (EOL) services, Community Food Connection (CFC) and Wi-Fi access at DHS Shelters.

(Slide 8) As I have highlighted in my testimony, DSS, HRA and DHS budgets are significantly reliant on federal dollars, but more importantly the 3M people we serve receive significant benefits from the federal government. We are seeing increasing demand for these services at the same time they are under threat.

(Slide 9) The current congressional reconciliation proposal contemplates cuts necessary to reach their goal of extending the \$2 trillion dollar tax cuts for the most affluent Americans. Key to reaching that \$2 trillion dollar goal are the targeted cuts to the Agriculture and Energy and Commerce Committees which oversee SNAP and Medicaid respectively. Earlier this week the House Agricultural Committee released their markup bill which proposes cutting \$300B in SNAP funding over 10 years. 1.8M NYers rely on SNAP to feed their families. Approximately 1/3 are older adults and 1/3 children. The House Energy and Commerce committee markup was also released targeting \$715B in cuts to Medicaid through a variety of amendments to eligibility. 4M NYers rely on Medicaid for Health Care.

In addition to the reconciliation plan, the White House released their skinny budget proposal at the beginning of the month. Although the \$163B in proposed cuts is silent on SNAP, Medicaid, and TANF, it would be equally devastating to low income NYers. The skinny budget proposes ~\$28B cuts to housing and community development programs impacting public housing and Section 8 rental subsidies specifically. Thousands of NY households rely on affordable housing subsidies to survive in our high cost city. The skinny budget also proposes eliminating the Community Development Block Grant which supports Housing Maintenance and Planning (~\$3B), and a 12% reduction to Continuum of Care (COC) and Housing Opportunities for People with Aids (HOPWA). It also proposes eliminating Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) (\$4B cut) which thousands of NYers rely on for heating and cooling their homes. All are vital programs that the City and State would not have the budget capacity to replace. We encourage all impacted NYers to make your voices heard because if any of these cuts come to fruition, it would be catastrophic for New

Yorkers, not only for low income households, but also for the overall economy of the City and region.

(Slide 10) Now I'm going to highlight some of the results of our streamlining access to social services and benefits.

(Slide 11) The SNAP caseload continues to remain high with almost 1.8M recipients and over 30,000 applications as of April 2025.

(Slide 12) Turning to Cash Assistance in the executive budget, the FY25 budget for Cash Assistance is \$2.65B to support a caseload of 596k recipients through June 2025. The FY26 budget is \$1.65B. \$78M (\$129M CTL) was added in the Executive Budget for FY25 (only) projected costs, and \$920M (\$468M CTL) was added in the November Plan for FY25 (only) projected costs. This graph shows both one-time and recurring recipients – in April there were over 588K on-going and 7.4K one time recipients. Although the one time recipients receive rent and utility arrears along with other benefits, it is important to note that many of our clients receiving on-going assistance also receive emergency payments for rent arrears so they can remain stably housed. In FY24, HRA issued emergency rent payments to over 56,000 households

(Slide 13) Along with SNAP and CA, DSS/HRA continues to support New Yorkers with other key benefits including, but certainly not limited to, Medicaid, Fair Fares, and HEAP. I cannot stress enough that automatic Medicaid extensions are ending. Clients must recertify in order to keep their health insurance. We are working to ensure that everyone who remains eligible for Medicaid receives ongoing benefits, and we have a robust Outreach Campaign to remind Medicaid clients of changes to renewal rules and the urgency of submitting renewal applications to avoid any interruption to coverage. Please continue to remind all your eligible constituents to renew. On another note, in collaboration with the Council, we expanded Fair Fares eligibility to 145% FPL and encourage eligible New Yorkers to submit for benefits as soon as possible. Although the Federal Skinny budget contemplates eliminating HEAP, DSS continued its collaboration with the State, to provide heating and cooling benefits to New Yorkers.

(Slide 14) Keeping New Yorkers in their homes, moving families and individuals out of shelter, and helping these households remain stably housed are all primary goals for the agency, and I now want to talk about our progress in these areas.

(Slide 15) First I would like to provide a quick update on our DHS shelter population. As of May 2nd, the overall DHS census was 85,615 an increase of 42,000 since the beginning of 2022, before the surge in special population asylum seekers to NYC

Of the 85K, approximately 59,000 (almost 70%) are families made up of children (31,741) and their adult parents and caregivers (27,453) and children make up 37% (or more than one third) of all the people in shelter. The remaining population are made up of single adult men (16,113) single adult women (5,742), and adult families (4,566). Seventy-five percent (75%) of new arrival population are currently housed in DHS shelter facilities.

(Slide 16) In New York City, 97% of people experiencing homelessness are sheltered, but that 3% is an area of particular focus. Since the start of this administration, DSS-DHS has aggressively expanded low-barrier bed capacity, which are shelter types targeted to those experiencing unsheltered homelessness (Safe Havens and stabilization beds). At this year's state of the city Mayor Adams announced 900 new low barrier beds representing an investment of another \$106M in efforts to address street homelessness in NYC. These beds will start to come online as early as this summer, and the remaining beds to be identified in the DHS development pipeline and brought on line in subsequent years. DHS' safe haven and stabilization bed total will be 4900 once all is said and done. Because of this investment in Street Homeless Solutions, DHS placed more than 3,000 New Yorkers residing in low-barrier programs to permanent housing during the Adams Administration. Since the launch of the Subway Safety Plan in February 2022, more than 8,500 (8,515) New Yorkers have been connected to shelter. DSS-DHS continues to invest in outreach staffing (nearly 400 outreach staff as of today) to support referrals to low barrier shelter. Under the Adams Administration, DHS also opened three new drop in centers to offer clients additional access to services.

(Slide 17) DSS remains committed to connecting New Yorkers to permanent housing and keeping them stably housed. This slide outlines the strides we have made over the past year by strengthening our rental assistance programs, providing homelessness prevention services and leveraging social services dollars to create more affordable housing. As a result, DSS has seen record breaking increases in the number of permanent housing placements. In CY24 more than 10,200 households (nearly 22,000 New Yorkers) moved out of shelter into permanent housing placements using CityFHEPS, a 56% increase compared to CY23. This is a subset of the nearly 15,000 households comprised of more than 31,000 New Yorkers who were able to obtain permanent housing or stay in their homes using CityFHEPS vouchers, reflecting a 43% increase year over year. Through our Homebase homelessness prevention services, in CY24, more than 19,000 households (~40,000 New Yorkers) remained in their homes, and more than 11,000 households (~33,000 New Yorkers) received aftercare services from Homebase to help them stay stably-housed. The Affordable Housing Services (AHS) initiative to create at least 1,000 affordable housing units for CityFHEPS voucher holders exiting shelter remains a priority for the agency. This program uses social services dollars to help not-for-profit human services providers either finance the

purchase of, or long-term lease of buildings for use as affordable housing. We are proud of the progress we've made so far. DSS has already opened more than 450 apartments across six high-quality affordable housing sites in the Bronx and Brooklyn in partnership with not-for-profit providers and over 500 apartments are in the pipeline.

(Slide 18) I would like to take a moment to highlight some details on the recent Local Law 46 proposed rule changes impacting the CityFHEPS program. Since its inception in 2018, CityFHEPS has grown to become the second largest rental subsidy in the nation behind NYCHA's S8 program. As a result, the budget for the program has ballooned from CityFHEPS ~\$250M to ~\$1.2B since 2021. With the threat of federal cuts to other housing subsidy programs looming, DSS in coordination with OMB, has strategically pursued a variety of measures to manage the cost of the CityFHEPS program including this proposed rule change. For year 6 renewals, DSS is proposing to change the baseline household contribution from 30% of the household's monthly income to 40% for households which have earned income and are granted additional renewals for good cause. This is one of several changes that DSS is making to the program to address the significant growth in costs and ensure the program is sustainable going forward. For example: Along with HPD, scaling back the Augmented CityFHEPS program and Implementing Rent Reasonableness.

(Slide 19) As discussed at our preliminary budget hearing and at the Mayor's State of the City, DSS will continue to pursue the CRIB (Creating Real Impact at Birth) pilot program to study the impact of babies being born into homelessness. The necessary rule change to authorize the CRIB pilot was published at the end of April, and is expected to be in place for the pilot to commence in July.

(Slide 20) Now for the 3rd pillar, creating economic stability. We recognize that more and more New Yorkers rely on our City's resources to make ends meet. In addition to the public benefits, rental assistance and other essential resources we offer to help people get back on their feet, I will provide an overview of our career services and other supports that enable New Yorkers to secure steady income and live sustainable lives.

(Slide 21) In CY2024 HRA helped 15,577 clients secure employment, an 89% increase over the CY2023's 8,252 job placements. In FY24, Hire NYC broke their record with human service providers hiring 8,197 PA clients (2,515 more than in FY23). In FY25 (thru 2/28/25), 5,564 clients were hired, so far, putting us on track to exceed last year's numbers. The PINCC program advances training, education & job placements: Enrolled 1,126 individuals in construction and industrial training, with 653 completions thus far. Referred 1,001 individuals to jobs with 513 receiving job offers and 383 job placements with more than 8 Unions, and public and private employers.

(Slide 22) Going forward, we will continue to invest in our career services programming. The Pathways for Access to Careers and Employment (PACE) contracts begin October 2025 using the centralized "no wrong door" program model with locations throughout the boroughs. The program will: (1) Streamline and minimize travel burden, maximize access to all employment and support services, and foster stronger client/staff relationships; (2) Establish an in-demand occupation & sector focused approach that connects clients to skilled professions that offer family sustaining wages; (3) Utilize labor market data to assist clients in gaining marketable skills for success and advancement in their careers; (4) Streamline processes for vendors by offering a hybrid approach to engaging clients.

(Slide 23) I will close by underlining our ongoing commitment to break down government silos and improve access to services. The challenges DSS-HRA-DHS works to confront bridge across agencies, and further, bridge across jurisdictional boundaries. Overcoming these challenges goes to the heart of creating the kind of caring, compassionate communities we seek to live in.

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

Thank you.

The logo features the letters "NYC" in a bold, white, sans-serif font on a dark blue background.

Department of
Social Services

Human Resources
Administration

Department of
Homeless Services

A wide-angle photograph of the Manhattan skyline at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the city. The Empire State Building is the central focus, with its iconic spire reaching towards the sky. Other skyscrapers like the Freedom Tower and various mid-rise buildings are visible in the background and foreground. The water of the harbor is visible in the distance.

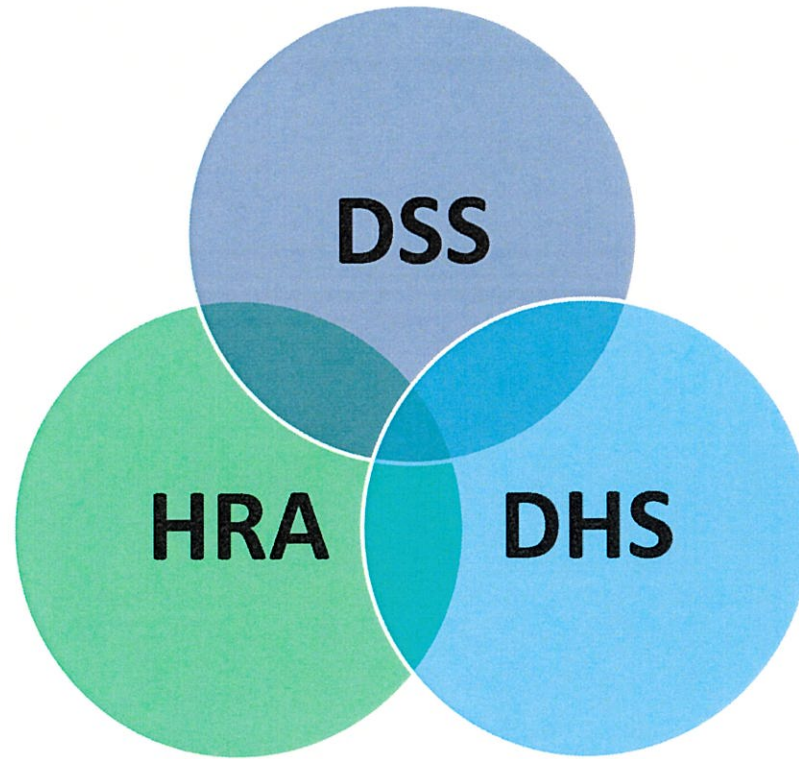
Fiscal 2026 Executive Budget Testimony

Commissioner Molly Wasow Park

May 16, 2025

Agenda

- INTRODUCTION
- AGENCY BUDGETS
- FEDERAL IMPACT
- PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



**Streamlining Access to
Social Services**

**Addressing Homelessness and
Housing Instability**

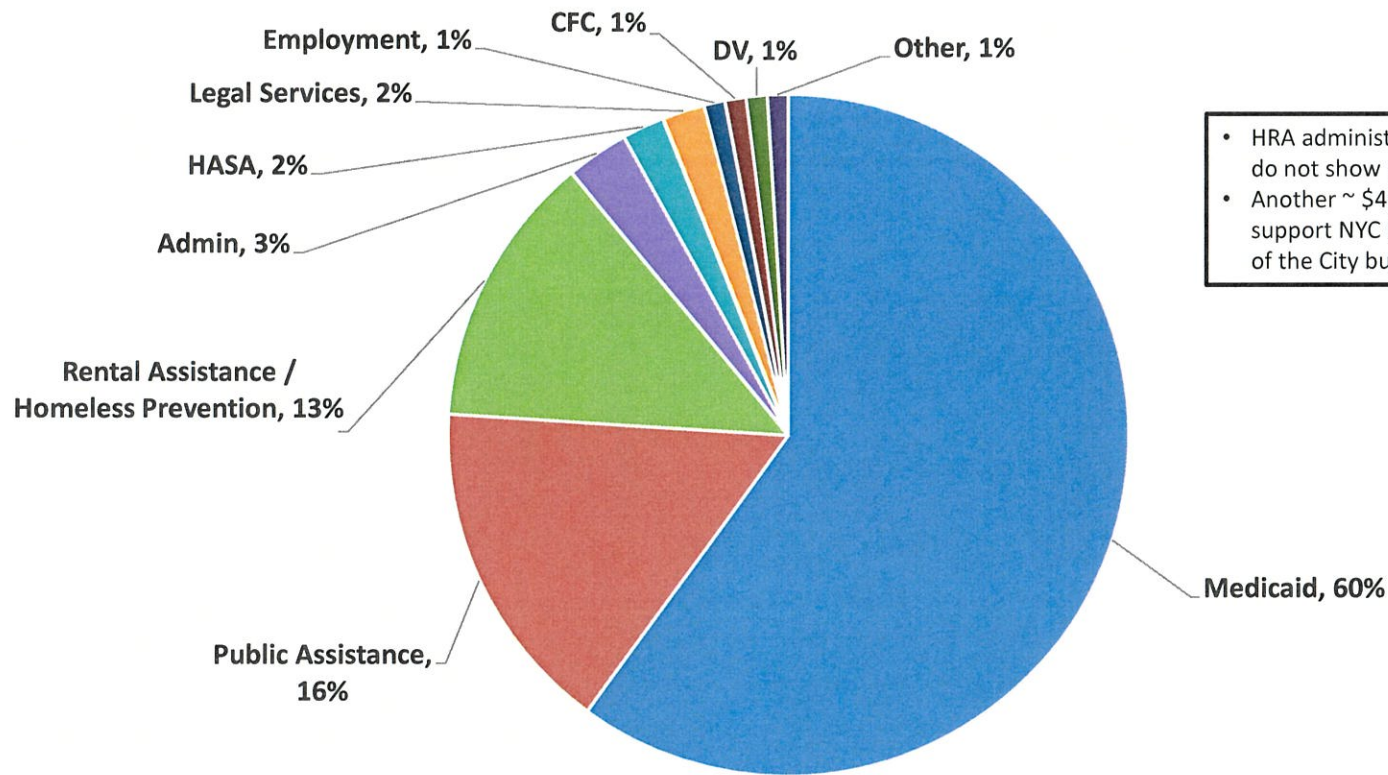
**Creating Economic
Stability**





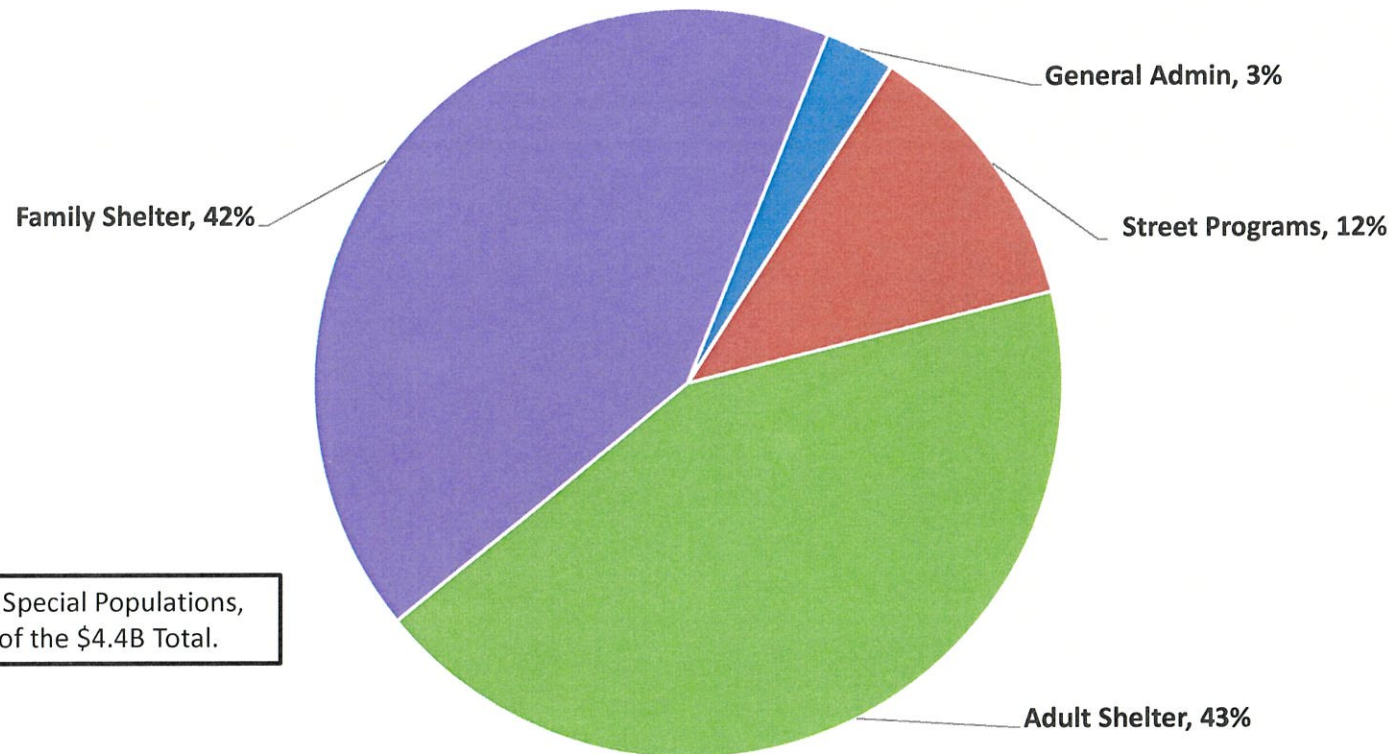
Agency Budgets

ALMOST 97% OF THE DSS/HRA CITY FUNDED BUDGET PROVIDES DIRECT BENEFITS AND SUPPORT TO NEW YORKERS



- HRA administers \$5.0B in SNAP benefits that do not show up in the City Budget.
- Another ~ \$48B in State and federal funds support NYC Medicaid clients but aren't part of the City budget.

97% OF THE DHS BUDGET SUPPORTS SHELTER AND STREET OUTREACH SERVICES



*Excludes funds for Special Populations, representing \$1.3B of the \$4.4B Total.

DSS/HRA/DHS FY26

HASA Housing, Affordable Housing Services, Domestic Violence Services, Fair Fares, Office of Civil Justice, NYC Benefits, Senior Affordable Rental Apartments (SARA), Street Outreach, and End of Line services.



Community Food Connection



WiFi at DHS Shelters



An aerial photograph of the New York City skyline during the 'golden hour' of sunset. The Empire State Building stands prominently in the center, its spire reaching towards the sky. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, orange glow over the city and reflecting off the water in the distance. Numerous other skyscrapers and buildings are visible, creating a dense urban landscape. A dark blue semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text.

Federal Budget Impact on DSS

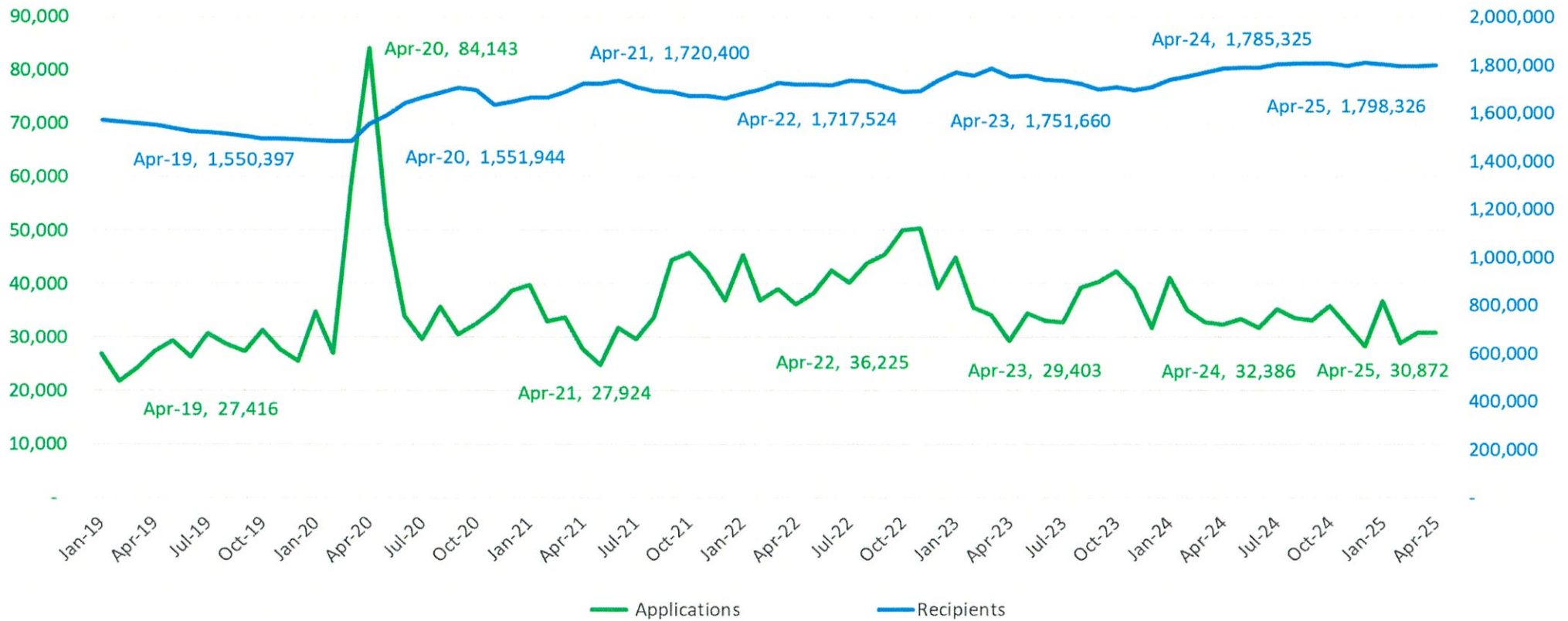
DSS Serving More New Yorkers As Federal Resources Are Threatened

- House Agriculture Committee markup proposes cutting \$300B SNAP over 10 years(1.8M NYers rely on SNAP)
- House Energy and Commerce Committee markup targets \$715B in Medicaid cuts through a variety of amendments to eligibility (4M NYers rely on Medicaid for Health Care)
- Executive Skinny Budget proposes:
 - ~\$28B cuts to housing and community development impacting public housing and Section 8 rental subsidies.
 - a reduction to Continuum of Care (COC) and Housing Opportunities for People with Aids (HOPWA) (12% cut)
 - eliminating Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) (\$4B cut)

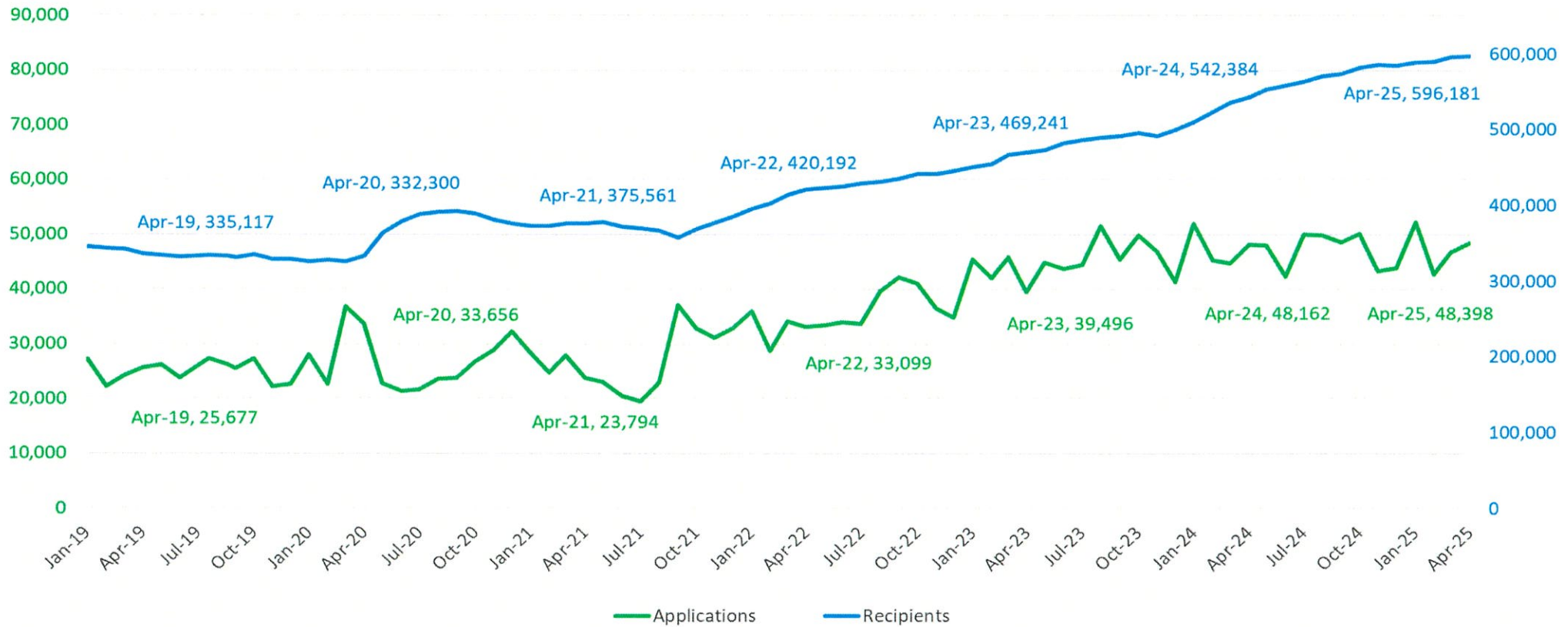
An aerial photograph of the New York City skyline during the 'golden hour' of sunset. The Empire State Building stands prominently in the center, its spire reaching towards the sky. The city is a dense collection of skyscrapers and buildings, with the Hudson River visible in the distance. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and light blue. A dark blue semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

Streamlining Access to Social Services

SNAP CASELOAD CONTINUES TO REMAIN HIGH



CASH ASSISTANCE APPLICATIONS AND CASELOAD HAVE INCREASED



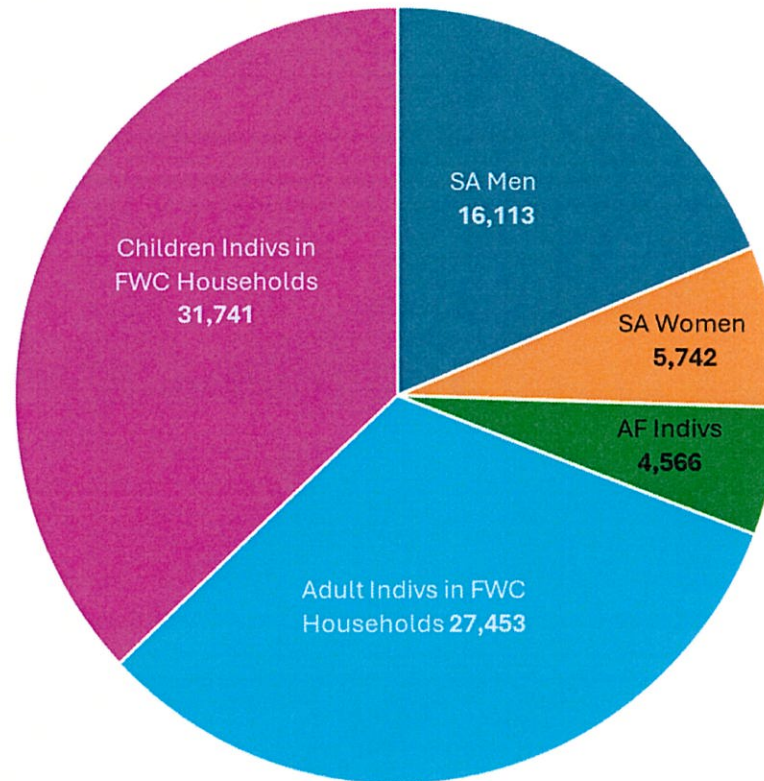
SUPPORTING AND EXPANDING OTHER KEY BENEFITS

- ✓ To comply with federal requirements, HRA has done extensive outreach to ensure clients on Medicaid renew their applications to maintain eligibility.
- ✓ Raised the income limit for Fair Fares eligibility to 145% of Federal Poverty Level. NYers are encouraged to apply now.
- ✓ Continued HEAP support to NYers for heating and cooling.

An aerial photograph of the New York City skyline during the 'golden hour' of sunset. The Empire State Building stands prominently in the center, its spire reaching towards the sky. To its right, the Freedom Tower is visible in the distance. The foreground is filled with a dense array of skyscrapers and buildings, their windows reflecting the warm light of the setting sun. The sky transitions from a pale blue at the top to a deep orange near the horizon. A dark blue, semi-transparent banner is positioned on the right side of the image, containing the title text in white.

Addressing Homelessness and Housing Instability

DHS Shelter by Population (Individuals) May 2, 2025



75% of the new arrival population are in DHS Shelter



Human Resources
Administration
Department of
Homeless Services

Department of
Social Services

Street Homeless Solutions: Services for Unsheltered

\$106M Investment in Expansion of low barrier beds to 4,900 (900 new)

Nearly 3,000 permanent placements from low-barrier beds in Adams Administration

Over 8,500 placements to low-barrier and shelter beds through the Subway Safety Plan

Over 400 outreach staff

Three new Drop-In Centers opened

Affordable Housing Accomplishments

- In CY24, DSS saw a **56% increase** in the number of households exiting shelter into permanent housing using CityFHEPS compared to CY23.
- Nearly 15,000 households comprised of more than 31,000 New Yorkers were able to obtain permanent housing or stay in their homes using CityFHEPS vouchers in CY24, reflecting a **43% increase** year over year.
- Through Homebase, more than 19,000 households (~40,000 New Yorkers) remained in their homes, and more than 11,000 households (~33,000 New Yorkers) received aftercare services to help them stay stably-housed.
- Since the launch of the Affordable Housing Services program, more than 450 apartments across six high-quality affordable housing sites have opened in the Bronx and Brooklyn, and over 500 apartments are in the pipeline.

CityFHEPS Rule Change – Local Law 46

- CityFHEPS budget has increased from ~\$250M to ~\$1.2B since 2021.
- For Year 6 renewal, DSS is proposing to change the baseline household contribution from 30% of the household's monthly income to 40% for households which have earned income and are granted additional renewals for good cause.
- This is one of several changes that DSS is making to the program to address the significant growth in costs and ensure the program is sustainable going forward. For example:
 - Along with HPD, scaling back the Augmented CityFHEPS program.
 - Implementing Rent Reasonableness.

Creating Real Impact at Birth - CRIB

- In FY24 over 2,000 babies were born into shelter.
- The CRIB Pilot will study the impact of providing a housing subsidy (CityFHEPS) to expecting mothers to avoid entering shelter.
- DSS has published the rule change necessary to launch CRIB this summer.

An aerial photograph of the New York City skyline during the 'golden hour' of sunset. The Empire State Building stands prominently in the center, its spire reaching towards the sky. To its right, the Freedom Tower is visible in the distance. The foreground is filled with a dense collection of skyscrapers and buildings, their windows reflecting the warm light of the setting sun. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow, with a few wispy clouds. A dark blue semi-transparent box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the text 'Creating Economic Stability' in white.

Creating Economic Stability

DSS/HRA/DHS WORK TOGETHER TO OFFER SERVICES THAT MOVE NEW YORKERS TO SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

In CY2024, HRA helped 15,577 clients secure employment, an 89% increase over CY2023's 8,252 job placements

- In FY24, HireNYC broke the human service provider record by hiring 8,197 PA clients (2,515 more than in FY23).
- As of FY25, to date, 6,418 hires have been made through HireNYC and we are already ahead of last year's pace

The Pathways to Industrial and Construction Careers (PINCC) program advances training, education & job placements

- Enrolled 1,126 individuals in construction and industrial training, with 653 completions thus far
- Referred 1,001 individuals to jobs with 513 receiving job offers and 383 job placements with more than 8 unions and public and private employers
- Partnered with JFK International Air Terminal (JFKIAT) and the Council for Airport Opportunity (CAO) for an Aviation job fair for Queens residents at JFK. 500 job-seeking clients attended, eager to connect with employers and submit resumes.

DSS/HRA/DHS WORK TOGETHER TO OFFER SERVICES THAT MOVE NEW YORKERS TO SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Pathways for Access to Careers and Employment (PACE) contract begins 10/1/2025; uses centralized "no wrong door" program model with locations throughout the boroughs

- Streamlining minimizes travel burden, maximizes access to all employment and support services, and fosters stronger client/staff relationships
- Establishes an in-demand occupation & sector focused approach that connects clients to skilled professions that offer families sustaining wages
- Utilizes labor market data to assist clients in gaining marketable skills for success and advancement in their careers
- Streamlines processes for vendors by offering a hybrid approach to engaging clients



THANK YOU



Asian American Federation

Testimony for the New York City Council Committee on Finance Jointly With the Committee on General Welfare May 16, 2025

Written Testimony

Thank you Deputy Speaker Ayala and the Committee on General Welfare and Chair Brannan and the Committee of Finance for holding this hearing and giving us the opportunity to testify. I am Navdeep Bains, Associate Director of Advocacy & Policy at the Asian American Federation (AAF), where we proudly represent the collective voice of more than 70 member nonprofits serving 1.5 million Asian New Yorkers.

In 2025, food insecurity for New York's Asian community is at a breaking point. A confluence of catastrophic events have come together—draconian cuts on the federal level, a sharp rise in anti-immigrant policies, community fears of jeopardizing their status because of “public charge” concerns, and, of course, wild shifts in the economy and the prices of food from tariffs, and lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic - have created a perfect storm. Despite the model minority stereotype surrounding Asian Americans, our community holds and lives multiple truths at once. In addition to the dramatic growth in our community comes a drastic need.

- One in six New Yorkers is Asian, and the Asian American community is the fastest-growing demographic in New York City and the state, making up 17.3% of the total population, or 1.5 million people.
- From 2010 to 2020, the Asian American population grew by 34.5%, the highest growth rate of any major racial or ethnic group in the City. This growth was also the fastest in all five of the City's boroughs.
- One in three Asians in New York City lives in low-income households. Asian New Yorkers were twice as likely to live in poverty compared to white New Yorkers.
- Asian Americans have the highest rates of limited English proficiency in New York City, at 44%, more than any other major racial or ethnic group.
- Nearly one in four Asian Americans did not complete high school, the second-highest percentage of adults without a high school diploma among all major racial or ethnic groups in the city in 2021.
- Asian older adults are the fastest-growing demographic among New York City's senior population and the second poorest compared to other racial or ethnic groups. The number of Asian seniors in New York increased by 68% from 2012 to 2022, and a rise in poverty accompanied this growth. Currently, 42% of Asian older adults are low-income, making them among the city's poorest seniors.

What we hear in the community regarding food insecurity is dramatic. Many of our members rely on federal funds to support their community. From food pantries funded under TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) and EFSP (Emergency Food and Shelter Program), our communities rely on numerous government sources at all levels to feed their communities. And in this we are hearing

from organizations around the city that community members are afraid to access food pantries for fear of ICE, that they are disenrolling from benefits, and that they have fallen victim to their benefits being skimmed due to their compromised cards, and in spaces there there is increased demand, organization have had pull from their limited resources to keep the community fed.

In an environment where our communities are surrounded by misinformation, fear, increasing isolation, fears for the economy, and food insecurity, AAF believes it is more critical to reinforce the CBOs that provide critical services that bridge the community's needs.

Recommendations

1. Continue elevating the need for an urgent rollout of chip-enabled EBT cards from our state government because no New Yorker should go hungry due to preventable theft;
2. The city should continue funding a network of linguistically and culturally competent food service programs that provide alternative food benefits to the immigrant community;
3. The city must remain vigilant and committed to keeping our community's data safe and ensure non local law enforcement are not permitted into sensitive locations; and
4. We must continue having a direct line of communication between HRA and our local CBOs who regularly troubleshoot benefits issues on the ground with in-language and culturally competent support.

Below are AAF's Citywide funding requests to support our work across the pan-Asian community:

- **Speaker's Initiative:** (\$800,000)
- **AAPI Community Support:** Support programming to address the urgent service needs of Asian immigrants, including anti-Asian violence prevention and response through our Hope Against Hate Campaign; community education to support parents, families, and seniors in navigating and accessing resources in response to fast-changing immigration policies; and trainings and resources to support small business owners and workers impacted by anti-Asian hate and changing immigration programs (\$400,000)
- **Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund:** Provide technical assistance and leadership development to help Asian-led, Asian-serving organizations thrive (\$150,000)
- **CUNY Citizenship NOW! Program:** Increase Asian American participation in the civic life of our city (\$250,000)
- **Hate Crimes Prevention:** Support programs that aim to prevent hate crimes through community-based safety solutions (\$200,000)
- **Immigrant Health Initiative:** Support programming to reduce mental health stigma in pan-Asian communities (\$100,000)
- **Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations:** Support the development of culturally relevant mental health and related services for pan-Asian communities (\$150,000)
- **Neighborhood Development Grant Initiative:** This integrated approach ensures that immigrant small business owners gain access to essential resources while being empowered to thrive in an increasingly digital and regulated business environment (\$100,000)
- **Legal Services for Low-Income Immigrants:** Strengthen the infrastructure for a rapid response network that swiftly connects Asian immigrants with critical immigration legal support. Empower Asian-serving nonprofits with the knowledge and training needed to navigate and respond to fast-changing immigration policies, ensuring greater protection for New York's most vulnerable communities (\$500,000)

- **Worker Cooperative for Translators:** Support the development of a worker cooperative to help community members become trained and credentialed as interpreters and translators in the most commonly spoken Asian languages (\$700,000)
- **Support Our Older Adults Initiative:** Support AAF's work in identifying and addressing the greatest needs of Asian adults ages 50 and above; amplifying shared points of advocacy with policymakers; and sharing resources and best practices to address the challenges faced by our older adult community members (\$100,000)

At AAF, we know there is no easy answer to this confluence of crises. We understand that the trickle-down of cuts from the federal level to the state and the city is massive and causes deep concern. We applaud your ongoing leadership in continuing to look out for our community. If you have any questions, I can be contacted at navdeep.bains@aafederation.org or by phone at (212) 344-5878 ext. 225.



WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, GENERAL WELFARE
COMMITTEE, EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING BY BROOKLYN LEGAL SERVICES
CORPORATION A

May 16, 2025

Dear Chair Ayala and members of the Committee on General Welfare,

My name is Jessica Rose and I am testifying on behalf of Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A ("Brooklyn A"). Brooklyn A has submitted ten different discretionary funding applications to the City for the upcoming fiscal year. This funding supports our core services: providing legal services to tenants facing eviction and harassment, homeowners facing foreclosure or needing assistance with wills and estates, small business owners and nonprofit organizations grappling with their commercial leases and other corporate and real estate needs across the city, and domestic violence survivors. Details about each of these programs can be found below.

Preserving Affordable Housing

Brooklyn A has submitted several applications for renewed discretionary funding in Fiscal Year 2026 for our Preserving Affordable Housing (PAH) Program, which provides legal representation and legal education and advocacy strategies to preserve and protect affordable housing, prevent eviction, combat tenant harassment and discrimination, and helps tenant organizations marshal the power of strength in numbers to protect the right to safe and sanitary housing. In Fiscal Year 2024, our PAH Program handled nearly 3,000 cases to maintain housing stability and supported 52 tenant associations to fight for habitable living conditions. This year we are applying for funding from seven different initiatives to support this work: \$100,000 from Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers (LSLINY) (reference number 178996), \$350,000 from the Speaker's Initiative (184940), \$40,000 from the Domestic Violence and

building communities ensuring opportunity achieving justice.

Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative (184962), \$50,000 from Community Housing Preservation Strategies (184975), \$50,000 from Information and Referral Services (184989), \$50,000 from Legal Services for the Working Poor (185407), and \$50,000 from Stabilizing NYC (185412).

While the need for these services has increased significantly and costs for providing services have increased, LSLINY has not been increased since Fiscal Year 2021.

A recently-issued report from New York City Comptroller Brad Lander found eviction rates have returned to their pre-pandemic levels, with a 440% increase in active eviction cases from March 2020 to March 2024.¹ As these numbers rise, the portion of New Yorkers being represented in housing court is dropping: between FY21 and FY24, Right to Counsel representation dropped from 71% to 42%.² This decline has exacerbated unequal access to justice, with Bronx residents seeing a decline in RTC representation from 81% to 31% in that same time period, leaving Black and Latine neighborhoods particularly vulnerable.

These shortcomings are all the more disappointing given how effective RTC is when its available to New Yorkers: in FY24, 89% of tenants who received full legal representation in an eviction proceeding were able to stay housed.³ The Comptroller's report echos the concerns Brooklyn A and our peers have identified in testimony and other advocacy: delayed contract delivery, insufficient funding that prevents hiring and retention, and rigid contract requirements make it difficult for providers like Brooklyn A to deliver these vital civil legal services.

Brooklyn A's aggressive housing practice prevents thousands of evictions of low-income tenants and their families each year by securing repairs and essential services; helping families obtain the benefits they need to pay rent arrears and afford future rent; and contesting illegally high rents, slowing the increasingly rising rent costs.

Brooklyn A also provides essential legal services to tenant groups, employing aggressive legal tactics to challenge the management authority of landlords that neglect affordable housing properties with the goal for the building and individual apartments to be repaired and rehabilitated so the tenants can live safely in their homes. Most of our housing work is funded by the Anti-Eviction: Full Legal Representation (formerly the Homelessness Prevention Law Project), also known as the Right to Counsel program (RTC), and Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection (AHTP).

The demand for these services is higher than ever, and discretionary support is essential to provide continued support for eviction prevention work that remains at citywide highs, as well as tenant-affirmative work including organizing and assuring safe

housing conditions, critical work that is not being funded by the City's Right to Counsel Program. We need maximum support to provide representation to keep New Yorkers in their homes, get repairs and restoration of essential services made, educate tenants on their rights, and represent tenants in danger of losing their homes in legal proceedings. AHTP provides tenants with access to justice and legal resources for affirmative and preventive services, diverting eviction cases from being brought to court and preserving and improving affordable housing. The crucial, full array of services offered by AHTP providers are distinct from, and complimentary to, the representation provided through the Anti-Eviction/Right to Counsel (RTC) program.

Brooklyn A joins our fellow legal service providers in urging the city to maintain and expand its sources of funding for the Right to Counsel so the program can be fully implemented and greatly improve contract delivery to providers. The FY25-27 RTC contracts only cover funding for approximately 36% of eviction filings per year—the New York State Unified Court System's Statewide Eviction information shows the City had 124,599 eviction filings in 2024, while the City's RFX for the Anti-Eviction Full Legal Representation is slated to cover just 44,444 cases per year. This rate of funding undermines the intent of the Right to Counsel Law to provide legal services to all New Yorkers facing eviction. Additionally, the average case rate \$4,100 falls short of covering the total cost of the work—an estimated \$7,500 per case—making it difficult for attorneys to have sufficient time and resources to handle complex cases.

Contract delivery and payment also continue to be issues for both RTC and AHTP. Brooklyn A and many of our peers have not been able to submit invoices for our FY25 contracts due to the lengthy contracting and budget approval process. We and many RTC providers are also just now beginning to get approval for final payments under the FY23 and FY24 RTC contracts. These delays can cause civil legal service organizations to miss payroll or incur unreimbursable interest costs related to lines of credit and other loans used to bridge costs, creating instability among our staff while they are trying to focus on delivering essential services, and threaten the viability of our smaller peers who have fewer sources of funding. The City must improve the timeliness of contract delivery and payment in the coming year if it's serious about improving access to legal services for New Yorkers.

Fully funding the RTC program and addressing contracting challenges are parts of the solution to the housing affordability crisis plaguing this City. Keeping low-income people in their homes is essential not only for their individual well-being, but also as a bulwark against the loss of affordable rents in the housing market. When a low-income tenant is evicted, their apartment at times are not rented again to low-income tenants; as contrary to the law, unscrupulous landlords raise rents illegally or remove the apartment from the market altogether. Thus, as we move through the stages of this housing and health

crisis, we remain on the frontline of efforts to ensure that the needs of New York's marginalized communities are met. We will continue to make the case for justice and equity.

Consumer and Economic Advocacy – Foreclosure

Brooklyn A is seeking discretionary funding for our Foreclosure Prevention work (aka our Consumer and Economic Advocacy Program), which provides vulnerable homeowners throughout NYC with free direct legal representation, advice, and appropriate referrals to protect home equity. Brooklyn A is the first, and one of the only, legal services organization in NYC whose foreclosure prevention practice includes complex bankruptcy cases as means to resolve the foreclosure, a strategy that is extremely effective at preventing foreclosure and allowing families to regain long-term financial stability.

Our application for funding from the Foreclosure Prevention Programs, Support Our Older Adults, and Estate Planning and Resolution Initiative (EPAR) is reference number 177105. This year we are applying for \$130,000.

In Fiscal Year 2024, we handled 365 cases dealing with foreclosure and/or discriminatory practices by predatory lenders, financial institutions, and home rescue scam artists. Of these homes, 85% were owned by people of color and about 62% identified as Black.

Queens led all boroughs in foreclosures last year with 581, according to an annual report from Property Shark. The Bronx, meanwhile, saw a 76% increase in foreclosures compared to 2023. All homeowners across the city are feeling the crunch of rising housing costs: a report from the New York State Comptroller found in 2022 New York City homeowners' property taxes were a higher percentage of their shelter costs compared to the national average. The Office also found that in 2022 homeowners in New York State had the third highest rate (28%) of housing cost-burden in the United States—meaning households that spend more than 30% of their income on housing.

Foreclosures disproportionately affect communities of color, who have faced historic barriers to property ownership and accumulation of wealth. More than half of the median wealth gap between Black and white seniors can be attributed to racial differences in housing wealth, according to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Additionally, Black and Latine homeowners have substantially lower return on investment due in part to a

higher rate of distressed sales caused by foreclosure (National Bureau of Economic Research).

Many foreclosures are the result of predatory lending scams, which target people with lower credit scores and less cash on hand. In New York City, these borrowers are often people of color. The elderly, whose wealth is more likely to lie in assets, such as their homes, are also more likely to be targeted. Last year, Brooklyn A collaborated with Council Member Nantasha Williams on Int 1086-2024, a bill aimed at preventing title clouding, a practice where bad actors file deed or mortgage documents on a property in an effort to distort who actually owns a property. The bill would require the Department of Finance to notify the owner in a timely manner and via multiple channels whenever a document is filed for their property.

Brooklyn A provides clients facing foreclosure with representation, advice, counsel, and referrals; helps homeowners prepare answers and discovery demands; represents clients at settlement conferences and in motion practice relating to settlement conferences; negotiates loan modifications; defends homeowners in wrongful foreclosure actions; and commences affirmative litigation challenging predatory lending practices, mortgage fraud, and housing discrimination.

As mentioned above, Brooklyn A was the first and is still one of the only legal service organizations in New York City whose foreclosure prevention practice includes complex bankruptcy cases suitable to resolving foreclosure matters. The bankruptcy code allows for an array of otherwise unavailable remedies, including forcing a bank to reinstate a defaulted loan, stripping of second and third mortgages from the property, reducing loans to the value of the property in limited circumstances, removing judgment liens attached to the property, protection of co-signers from liability, forcing state and federal agencies to accept back taxes being paid over time, and stopping wage garnishments, among others. Expedient handling of a bankruptcy case also eliminates the arrears, interest, and penalties that can develop and build up from delays in state court.

Brooklyn A's team sits weekly in both Kings and Queens Supreme Courts conducting intake and outreach, providing free legal advice to homeowners facing foreclosure. We will also meet and conduct intake at various elected officials' offices. Our intake efforts are for those that may become clients, and our outreach work is for those seeking information about the process who do not need full legal representation or advice for a case before the court that day.

We hope the city will take our request for funding for this important work under consideration.

Consumer and Economic Advocacy – Domestic Violence

Brooklyn A is seeking funding for its Domestic Violence Support Service program. Brooklyn A has long supported survivors through its various program areas since our founding more than 55 years ago. In 2023, we launched a Domestic Violence (DV) program in response to the escalating demand for services we documented among our own clients. With funding from the New York State Office of Victim Services, Brooklyn A hired dedicated staff to provide legal support for survivors of domestic violence, including survivors of child abuse. Free, high-quality, and trauma-informed holistic legal representation and social services are essential for both immediate safety and the opportunity to eventually heal and thrive.

Our application for funding from the Domestic Violence Empowerment Initiative (DoVE) is reference number 176967. This year we are seeking \$70,000.

Survivors of domestic violence, including survivors of child abuse/neglect, face myriad support needs, including the need for free high-quality legal services that can enable them to not only move forward with their lives but also put them in a position to thrive. A 2023 report from the New York State Comptroller found the number of domestic violence victims rose steadily from 2020 to 2022, with more than 39,000 reported cases in 2022. Domestic violence fatalities also rose during this time, reaching 71 in 2022—a report from the city assessing data since 2010 further found that Black individuals are 2.4 times more likely to be victims of DV homicide. A 2024 report from New Destiny Housing found in FY23 that “domestic violence” was second only to “asylum seeker” as the leading reason families with children entered DHS shelters. NYC domestic violence homicides increased 30% between 2021 and 2022 while citywide murders dropped by 11% ([New Destiny Housing, 2024](#)).

BAKA provides legal advice and representation to survivors of domestic violence, including child abuse and sexual assault. Our services cover civil legal issues including orders of protection, custody, and other applicable family law issues. Last year, to better meet the needs of our clients, we replaced the team’s social worker with a paralegal, allowing our DV program to offer more robust legal services to our clients.

In FY2024, Brooklyn A worked with 249 survivors of domestic violence across our program areas. Of these, 55 people received full legal representation services from the DV program. Among these clients, 90% identified as female, and 85% identified as BIPOC. This vulnerable and underserved population is already benefiting greatly from

Brooklyn A's expanded DV program. Most of our DV clients are referred from the NYC Family Justice Centers, courts or nonprofits.

Of the cases handled in FY2024, more than 91% (50 total) identified as women; 45% (25 total) were Black and 38% (21 total) were Hispanic; average total annual income for clients was about \$17,500—11 had no income and 21 had had income below \$5,000. The team filed orders of protection, secured child support, custody, and visitation, and handled divorces for our clients.

We hope the city continues to support the work of Brooklyn A and that you will take our suggestions to improve the City's programs and contracts that support our work under consideration.

Thank you,

Jessica A. Rose, Esq.

Executive Director

Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A

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CATHOLIC COMMUNITY RELATIONS COUNCIL

191 Joralemon Street, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11201

**Testimony of Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director
Catholic Community Relations Council
New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
May 16, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Ayala, and members of the Committee on General Welfare. I am Joseph Rosenberg, the Executive Director of Catholic Community Relations Council (“CCRC”) representing the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens on local legislative and policy issues.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and Catholic Charities of Brooklyn and Queens have been providing shelter, food, and other essential services to New Yorkers for more than one century. Combined, we operate over 80 food pantries throughout the 5 boroughs and serve more than 18 million meals annually. We have faced many challenges assisting New Yorkers over the last 100 years, but we are currently confronting a hunger and food insufficiency crisis. This is due to the rising poverty rate of New Yorkers, the dramatic increase in rents, the large percentage of households who are rent burdened and paying over 50% of their income on rent, and even more significantly, the unprecedented federal attacks on programs that protect our clients. Two of these are the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP).

SNAP provides essential funding to address food insecurity for vulnerable Americans. The proposed Congressional reduction of \$230 billion from the program is particularly troubling and will have significant consequences by increasing the number of Americans who face hunger on a daily basis. Not only would such a cut make it more difficult for households to meet their basic food needs, but it would also lead to broader economic and health challenges, such as an increase in medical issues and hospitalizations. A similar situation exists with the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) a crucial federal resource for our food programs. This program was placed on “hold” by the federal government in March, and as a result, both Catholic Charities have sustained a loss of over \$800,000 each, a challenging blow to our ability to supply our food pantries and feed our clients.

We have seen the number of people at food pantries increase significantly. We are not just feeding more working families, seniors, and children. Newer clients include college students, recent college graduates who are either unemployed or underemployed, youth aging out of foster care and new migrants, many of them with infants.

New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli’s April 2025 report on the cost of living reveals that one of nine households in New York are affected by food insecurity. This is defined as “the inability at times to acquire adequate food for one or more household members due to a lack of resources.” That adds up to over 1.3 million NYC residents going hungry.

The plight of children is particularly heartbreaking, with more than 1 in 4 children in our City living in poverty. Due to all these obstacles, and with more New Yorkers going hungry every year, we urge that \$20 million in emergency funding for food pantries be included in FY’26 New York City Budget for both Catholic Charities as well as our partners, Met Council, and the Hispanic Federation.

Rising food costs have also created tremendous problems for our food pantry programs. As a result, we have difficulty providing as much fresh food to clients as in previous years. With more New Yorkers relying upon our pantries and with us ensuring that no one leaves empty handed, we often distribute canned and jarred products rather than fresh produce.

Both Catholic Charities also rely on the Community Food Connection (CFC) program, and we strongly support the City Council's effort to baseline the CFC at \$100 million annually. We were disappointed to see the Mayoral Administration's Proposed FY'26 Executive Budget included only \$36.1 million for this program, the same amount that was allocated in FY'25.

Our City faces daunting challenges but one of the most important priorities for all of us is to ensure that New Yorkers do not go hungry. We therefore call for your support in including this essential \$20 million emergency food pantry program in the FY'26 City Budget.

We also assist thousands of immigrants in New York City with a wide range of legal services including consultations, pro se workshops, Know Your Rights presentations and full representation of immigrants including families, adults, and unaccompanied minors. Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese also operates the New Americans Hotline, the MOIA Immigration Legal Support Hotline, and the Legal Orientation Program for Custodians Call Center that serve more than 160,000 people annually.

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese received notice in late March that 80% of their legal services contract with the federal government for assisting unaccompanied minors was being terminated. This results in the loss of \$4.3 million. The \$1.4 million balance of the contract that was not terminated is being granted only a 6-month extension. A similar unfortunate situation exists with the Immigration Court Helpdesk and Family Group Legal Orientation Program which provides workshops, legal consultations, and advice, and pro se assistance in the 3 NYC Immigration courts. The federal contract is \$1.45 million and last month we were informed that this is also being ended by the government. At the same time, the federal government terminated the contracts for the Legal Orientation Program for Custodians of Unaccompanied Children and our National LOPC Call Center, which together help tens of thousands of adults ensure that children in their care can exercise their rights and responsibilities.

Catholic Migration Services of the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens had been working with LaGuardia Community College on a federal two-year grant worth \$300,000 to provide naturalization legal services. Three months ago, the Department of Homeland Security abruptly froze the entire grant amount.

The Division of Immigrant and Refugee Services of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York and Catholic Migration Services of Catholic Charities Brooklyn and Queens will continue to seek to find ways to continue to represent and assist asylum seekers and other immigrants. With the continuing loss of federal funding, however, it will be a difficult and long-term endeavor.

Despite drastic federal cuts in funding, political uncertainty, and the increasing needs of so many New Yorkers, Catholic Charities of both dioceses will always continue to serve those who rely on our services.

We thank you for your long-standing support in our efforts to fulfill this life saving mission.

Thank you.



Chinese-American Planning Council
Testimony Before the Committee on Finance and Committee on General Welfare
Chair, Council Member Justin Brannan
Chair, Council Member Diana Ayala
May 16th, 2025

Thank you Chairs Brannan, Ayala, and members of the City Council for the opportunity to testify today. The mission of the Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc. (CPC) is to promote social and economic empowerment of Chinese American, immigrant, and low-income communities. CPC was founded in 1965 as a grassroots, community-based organization in response to the end of the Chinese Exclusion years and the passing of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Our services have expanded since our founding to include three key program areas: education, family support, and community and economic empowerment.

CPC is the largest Asian American social service organization in the U.S., providing vital resources to more than 80,000 people per year through more than 50 programs at over 30 sites across Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. CPC employs over 700 staff whose comprehensive services are linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and highly effective in reaching low-income and immigrant individuals and families. With the firm belief that social service can incite social change, CPC strives to empower our constituents as agents of social justice, with the overarching goal of advancing and transforming communities.

To that end, we are grateful to testify about the issues that greatly impact our AAPI, immigrant, and low-income communities.

Social service agencies like ours have been vital to our communities. Anecdotally, we found that community members experienced a significantly increasing need for new benefits and resources since the start of the pandemic and those needs have been growing dramatically with the rising cost of living and cuts to federal programs. We are hearing another round of fears and hesitation of applying to governmental benefits due to public charge even with eligible community members for housing assistance, SNAP, Medicaid or other public benefits. According to a 2023 report from the [Asian American Federation](#), they reported that 28.5% of low-income Asian households were enrolled in SNAP, which is the lowest rate of all major racial groups. And it goes without saying that disparities widen between citizens and non-citizens when it comes to accessing public benefits.

Our City has a moral responsibility and obligation to address historically compound inequalities that have disproportionately impacted our low-income, immigrant, and communities of color. The adopted FY25 budget must include investments into our social safety net like housing, workforce development, education, and transportation that improves the quality of life for all New Yorkers.

We are also proud members of the #JustPay campaign, which is a racial equity and gender justice campaign committed to ending the government exploitation of human services workers



by demanding sector employees under contract with the New York City and State be paid fair wages for their labor.

The [administration announced](#) last year that there would be an investment of \$741 million as part of a COLA for an estimated 80,000 human service workers. This was part of years of tireless advocacy of the Just Pay campaign led by the Human Services Council (HSC) and we are grateful that we were able to secure this historic win. However, slow implementation of the COLA has delayed the process of getting deserved and adequate compensation to the hands of human service workers, creating detrimental ripple effects for the workforce. We are urging the City to ensure that providers are regularly updated on the timeline of the COLA payments.

In addition, we urge the New York City Council to uplift the collective priorities of the 18% and Growing Campaign, which include expanding the AAPI Community Support Initiative to \$7.5 million, Communities of Color Nonprofit Stabilization Fund to \$7.5 million, and the Access Health Initiative to \$4 million, among other key city-wide initiatives to take further steps in not envisioning, but truly creating a more inclusive, safe, healthy, and sustainable society for our diverse diaspora. Establishing blueprints that lead to a more value driven, culturally representative, and human centered New York City.

CPC appreciates the opportunity to testify on these issues that so greatly impact the communities we serve, and look forward to working with you on them.

Thank you so much for your time and if there are any questions, please reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy Analyst at achen9@cpc-nyc.org.



Testimony of Alice Bufkin, Juan Diaz, Caitlyn Passaretti, and Jenny Veloz
Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
Submitted to the New York City Council on the FY26 Executive Budget Hearing General Welfare
May 16th, 2025

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York has served as an independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, or represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through civic engagement, research, and advocacy. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

We would like to thank Chair Ayala, Chair Brannan, and all the members of the City Council General Welfare and Finance Committees for holding today's important hearing on the Mayor's FY26 Executive Budget. Below we uplift recommendations for how to improve the delivery of essential services for NYC families and children across the following areas:

- **Address Family Homelessness**
 - Improve eviction prevention and aftercare
 - Expedite housing placements
 - Improve education continuity
- **Combat Poverty and Food Insecurity**
 - Enhance financial security for youth and families
 - Invest in anti-hunger programs
- **Enhance Services for Systems-Involved Youth and Families**
 - Restore Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and supportive programming for youth and young adults
 - Invest in child welfare primary prevention and workforce stability
 - Enhance supports for immigrant youth and families

Address Family Homelessness

The current housing and shelter crisis calls for bold actions and enhanced funding to reduce housing instability for families with children. The most recent [CCC's Keeping Track of New York City's Children](#) book revealed that in 2023, 30% of NYC renters pay at least half of their income towards rent, and one in three renter households with children are living in overcrowded conditions. Additionally, there were more than 12,000 residential evictions in 2023, and more than 46,600 children reside in the NYC shelter system.ⁱ

CCC is a steering committee member of the Family Homeless Coalition (FHC), a coalition comprised of 20 organizations representing service and housing providers, children's advocacy organizations, and people with lived experience with family homelessness. We are united by the goal of preventing family homelessness, improving the well-being of children and families in shelter, and supporting the long-term stability of families with children who leave shelter. CCC supports [FHC's 2025 Policy Agenda](#). Below

we uplift a number of the critical investments and policy changes that are needed to prevent homelessness and support families struggling with housing instability.

Improve Eviction Prevention and Aftercare

- **Oppose the Administration's proposed rule change that would raise the household contribution for CityFHEPS families with earned income from 30% to 40% of their income when renewing beyond Year 5 for “good cause.”** This policy would force families to pay a higher proportion of their income towards rent amid a citywide affordability crisis, threatening the housing stability and self-sufficiency of families and increasing the risk of homelessness.
- **Increase the budget for Homebase by \$37.9 million to a total of \$100 million.** In recent years, Homebase providers have taken on tremendous increases in caseload as well as an ever-expanding set of responsibilities, including submitting CityFHEPS applications, renewals, transfer requests and rent portion adjustment requests. This has not been accompanied by funding levels to match the new post-Covid reality. Additionally, Homebase provides public benefits screening, legal assistance, education and employment training for low-income communities.
- **Restore and increase rental assistance funding.** The FY26 Preliminary Budget included a \$325 million funding reduction to rental assistance. We urge the City Council to not only advocate for restoration of rental assistance funding, but to significantly enhance this much needed assistance. Many households must apply for emergency rental assistance to preserve their apartments and prevent eviction. Anticipated Federal budget cuts will have a severe impact on emergency rental assistance for families facing evictions and further underscore the importance of city investments.

Expedite Housing Placements

- **Implement the CityFHEPS Expansion and Reforms Passed into Law in 2023.** The series of reforms and changes to CityFHEPS passed into law in 2023 are now in legal limbo. We urge implementation of these important changes as a means to increase housing stability and reduce homelessness for more families citywide.
- **Adequately Fund the City Commission on Human Rights to Enforce SOI Discrimination.** We support \$4 million in additional funding for CCHR to a total agency budget of around \$18 million. This will help bring CCHR staffing back to 2019 levels and allow for greater enforcement of Source of Income Discrimination laws and implementation of new Fair Chance laws.

Additionally, we urge city leaders to improve the application process and reduce unnecessary delays for families seeking CityFHEPS assistance. Below we outline the process of improvements the city should pursue; additional recommendations are included in [FHC's 2025 Policy Agenda here](#).

- **Electronic Paperwork:** Application packet forms should be readable/fillable PDF forms that can be signed electronically and emailed back, while still allowing for a paper process.
- **Outreach:** If a client's application is missing documents, DSS should not wait to contact that client via mail or phone call. DSS should also reach out to clients via text or email to have the best chance of successfully connecting with clients. DSS often calls to detail this type of

information from an unknown number, so clients may not pick up, and then they miss the opportunity to talk about their application. Then, DSS's next step is to send a letter to the client in the mail. The letter should be clear about what information is needed via the AccessHRA portal. Additionally, if a DSS staff person does call a client for this purpose; they should leave a call back number, along with hours of availability.

- **Family Moves Within Shelter:** When families are transferred into new shelter locations, the application process should not begin again. When this occurred, it added significant time delays. Applications should be maintained even when families move locations.
- **Single Issue Active PA Case Time Frame:** The current time frame is 30 days but often the process for applying and getting the voucher is longer and requires the single issuance to be resubmitted. We recommend a 90-day time frame.
- **Add Option for Access HRA:** There is currently no process on Access HRA to signify that an application is for single issuance public assistance. This results in many applications being treated as ongoing public assistance. This should be a distinct option on Access HRA to avoid confusion.

Improve Education Continuity

- **Eliminate the 60-day rule for migrant families with children.** 60 days is not sufficient time for shelter staff to work with families to secure public benefits assistance and find permanent housing, and migrant students often miss weeks of school due to mid-year transfers. In the face of a frightening federal landscape facing immigrant families in New York City, we oppose the threat of eviction and re-placements for families with children in shelter. The City should eliminate the requirement that families with children in grades K-6 be forced to move shelters after their initial 60-day placement and should eliminate any shelter moves for families with children in school, no matter the grade level.
- **Increase the Percent of Families DHS Places or Re-Places in Shelter in the Same Borough as Where their Children Attend School.** In the most recent Mayor's Management Report (MMR), there was small progress made in increasing the number of families DHS placed in shelter in the same borough as the family's youngest school-age child. But almost 40% of families in shelter continue to be placed in a different borough from where their youngest child goes to school. Further progress should be made in this area through more deliberate policy, such as integrating conversations into the intake and Independent Living Plan processes about the possible availability of a shelter transfer closer to children's schools and helping parents pursue education-related shelter transfers when desired by parents.
- **Implement the Recommendations of the Students in Temporary Housing Transportation Taskforce.** This task force created through Local Law 158 developed a set of [recommendations](#) that the city should promptly implement to ensure school stability and regular attendance for students in temporary housing.
- **Increase Access to Early Childhood Education for Children in Shelter.** The percentage of age-eligible children in shelter who participated in Pre-K was around 50% in the most recent publicly stated numbers, a 10-percentage point decrease from pre-Covid numbers. The City should make greater efforts to connect age-eligible children in shelter to Pre-K and 3-K by continuing to make automatic offers for 3-K and Pre-K to families in shelter who did not participate in the application

process and ensure that 3-K and Pre-K outreach efforts include a targeted approach to increasing access to and participation in early childhood programs for children in shelter (e.g., personalized outreach calls, shelter-based staff talking to all parents of age-eligible children about whether they want to enroll in 3-K and Pre-K, designating a point person to troubleshoot early childhood enrollment issues).

Combat Poverty and Food Insecurity

Enhance Financial Security for Youth and Families

A recently released Robin Hood and Columbia University report highlighted that in 2023, child poverty in NYC rose to 26%, the highest since 2017 and nearly double the national child poverty level. Although employment numbers have increased citywide, the cost of five necessities that make up the poverty line—food, shelter, utilities, clothing, and telephone/internet—outpaced income growth and the overall rate of inflation.ⁱⁱ The increasing cost of living calls for investments that will provide economic relief to low-income families with children and youth.

CCC urges City leaders make the following investments to lift incomes and make the city more affordable for families:

- **Expand Fair Fares to 200% FPL and baseline \$54.2 million for the program to ensure that more low-income families have access to public transportation.** We were glad to see the Executive Budget include \$20 million in FY26 to maintain Fair Fares funding at 145% FPL. However, far too many struggling families with children are currently ineligible for the fifty percent public transportation reduction, and low-income mothers encounter more barriers than other demographics groups in affording public transportation. As a recent CSS report highlighted, enhancing Fair Fares will ease transit hardship for an additional 400,000 New Yorkers.ⁱⁱⁱ We urge city leaders to fund and baseline \$54.2 million to enable more low-income New Yorkers to afford transportation, and to enhance employment and education opportunities for thousands of youths, low-income mothers, and other New Yorkers.
- **Expand guaranteed income pilot funding.** Guaranteed income programs are a proven vehicle of economic stability and poverty reductions. We therefore commend the City Council’s allocation of \$1.5 million in last year’s budget to support a guaranteed income pilot for families with children experiencing housing insecurity and recommend expanding this pilot to at least \$5 million in this year’s budget. We also urge the City Council and Administration to expand guaranteed income programs for child-welfare and justice-involved youth and families.

Invest in Anti-Hunger Initiative

Last month, the State Comptroller's office released a report stating that while one in nine households in New York State experienced food insecurity between 2020-2022, the majority of those households lived in New York City. The report also noted that the Bronx experienced the highest percentage of food insecurity (20.2%). As a result, more families are looking to food pantries and banks to help alleviate food insecurity. According to City Harvest, approximately 1 million families with children are relying on food pantries every month.

As demand for food pantries and banks continue to increase, funding has not matched this demand. With the prospect of looming federal cuts to hunger programs (especially SNAP), it is imperative that New York City continue to invest and fund resources that are vital to the health and well-being of children and families. We must meet current needs and prepare for the increased demand for emergency food that will likely occur due to federal actions that weaken SNAP, freeze funding for pantries and farmers, and potentially raise food prices.

Although the FY26 Executive Budget restored \$36.1 million to Community Food Connection (CFC) for FY26, this funding is for one year only and does not match the growing needs of families who utilize the food pantries and food banks. Food pantries are the last line of defense against hunger for so many, yet these essential services are being asked to do more with less. A substantial investment in CFC is essential to meet the growing demand for food, address increasing food prices, looming cuts to SNAP, and to provide critical support for vulnerable communities facing worsening affordability and food insecurity crises.

As a member of the NYC Food Policy Alliance, a network of 60+ food system stakeholders that advocate for public policies and funding that ensure equitable access to a healthy, sustainable food system, CCC recommends the following be included in the FY26 Adopted Budget:

- **Increase and baseline** funding for the Community Food Connections (CFC) program to \$100 million to meet the growing demand for food assistance across New York City, including enhanced access to fresh food.
- **Increase** funding for free Health Bucks, New York City's longstanding farmers market SNAP incentive program, which has been baselined at \$500,000 for several years but is no longer sufficient to meet growing demand.
- **Create** a \$5 million Food Justice Fund for community-led project designed to grow food justice and build wealth in BIPOC and low-income communities.

We also support the continuation of funding for the following City Council Initiatives:

- \$8.26 million for Food Pantries
- \$1.5 million for Food Access and Benefits Initiatives
- \$2.134 million for the Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education Initiative

Enhance Services for Systems-Involved Youth and Families

Restore Alternatives to Incarceration (ATI) and Supportive Programming for Youth and Young Adults

Extensive research demonstrates the positive impacts of ATI and reentry programs, including lowering recidivism and crime.¹ Moreover, for every dollar invested in ATI programs, studies estimate between \$3.46-\$5.54 in returns, in addition to reduced costs for the criminal justice system and better community health outcomes.²

We are glad that the Executive Budget restored and baselined \$7.6 million for Alternatives to Incarceration and \$4.7 million for re-entry services. These restorations will ensure these programs can support New Yorkers through case management, therapy, housing, employment training and more.

However, a number of critical prevention programs failed to receive restorations in the Executive Budget. We therefore urge City leaders to support the following investments in the FY26 budget:

- **Restore and baseline** \$3.3 million to the IMPACT program, an alternative to placement program for young people who would otherwise be sent to Horizons or Crossroads
- **Restore and baseline** \$2.6 million for Next STEPS (cut August 2023), which offered one-on-one and group mentoring within a cognitive behavioral therapy-based curriculum designed to help young adults make the attitudinal and behavioral changes necessary to avoid criminal activity and re-engage with education, work and community

Invest in Child Welfare Primary Prevention and Workforce Stability

Fundamental to preventing child welfare involvement is investing in the primary prevention supports families need to be safe and secure, including housing, child care, healthy food, and economic supports. At the same time, the prevention workforce currently in place to support families is in crisis. To help ensure that prevention services can best serve children and families, we recommend the following:

- Enhance child welfare prevention contract flexibility to allow providers the ability to aptly respond to different family circumstances
- Invest in salary increases, scholarships and tuition assistance to help agencies sustain a highly trained and credentialed child welfare workforce.
- Ensure that child welfare staff are paid complete salaries and agencies are paid the true cost of services on prevention contracts.
- Reform the current NYC procurement system to ensure timely payments to contracted agencies.

Enhance Supports for Immigrant Youth and Families

In New York City, more than half of children have at least one immigrant parent. Particularly in the face of numerous federal threats, we urge the City Council and Administration to take the following actions in the CFY26 Budget to support the needs of New York's immigrant children and families.

- **Invest \$625,000 for Youth-specific Immigration Legal Services** for young people within the Runaway and Homeless Youth system.

- **Invest \$80 million for Legal Services for Migrant Families.** We urge the City Council to advocate for more legal resources to prevent family separation and more suffering for migrant children and families.
- **Baseline \$5 million to maintain the citywide Community Interpreter Bank** (NYC Interpreter Bank)
- **Invest \$3 million in Workforce Development Programming for immigrants.**

Thank you for your time and consideration of these recommendations to support New York’s children and families.

ⁱ Citizens’ Committee for Children of NY. “Keeping Track of New York Children: 2024”. 2024. https://s3.amazonaws.com/media.cccnewyork.org/2024%2F10%2F2024_10_10_CCC-2024-Keeping-Track.pdf

ⁱⁱ Poverty Tracker Research Group at Columbia University. ”The State of Poverty and Disadvantage in New York City, Volume 7”. Robin Hood.2025. https://robinhood.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/PT_Annual24_final_digital.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Chaterjee D., Torres E. ”When You Can’t Afford the Fare: How Expanding Fair Fares Can Help Working New Yorkers as Transit Hardships Persist”. The Unheard Third 2023. March 2024. https://smhttp-ssl-58547.nexcesscdn.net/nycss/images/uploads/pubs/031324_UHT2023_Transit_Brief_V6.pdf

**FY26 Executive Budget Hearing
May 16, 2025**

**TESTIMONY OF CITYMEALS ON WHEELS
Before the New York City Council
Committee on Finance, Honorable Justin Brannan, Chair
Jointly with
the Committee on General Welfare, Honorable Diana Ayala, Chair**

**Submitted by:
Jeanette Estima
Director, Policy and Advocacy
Citymeals on Wheels**

Citymeals on Wheels works in partnership with the City and the network of meal providers to ensure that homebound older adults have access to at least one nutritious meal a day, including during local or citywide emergencies. In FY24, Citymeals provided over 2 million meals to over 21,000 older adults across all five boroughs.

As the City's population ages and the cost of living—especially food and housing costs—have ballooned, we have seen food insecurity among older New Yorkers emerge as a crisis. Existing nutrition assistance programs that many older adults access, such as SNAP and food pantries, are largely inaccessible to those unable to shop for groceries regularly or prepare their own meals. Furthermore, as federal funding for food pantries is paused, rescinded, or discontinued and programs like SNAP are cut, the assistance these programs provided will be limited. The City's congregate and home-delivered meals programs are a critical part of its anti-hunger infrastructure, bring meals to homebound older adults who are not always able to access other food programs. Yet, our 2024 research found that these programs simply do not go far enough, providing only 1 meal a day, 5 days a week. While Citymeals steps in to privately fund weekend meals for home-delivered meals recipients, 60% still experience food insecurity.¹

¹ [*Older Adult Hunger, Food Services, and SNAP Participation in New York City. Citymeals and CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute, 2024*](#)

The City must adapt its programs to be more accessible to homebound older adults and create new, expanded programs to ensure that its most vulnerable older residents have the food they need to live safely in their homes. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Council:

1. **Renew \$500,000 through the Older Adult Clubs, Programs, and Enhancements Initiative for Citymeals' emergency meals program** to ensure that homebound older adults have food during times of crisis such as storms and localized emergencies.
2. **Pass Intro 770**, to make the City's home-delivered meals program provide one meal 365 days a year.
3. **Invest \$200,000 in Citymeals' innovative pilot programs**, providing a second meal or groceries to home-delivered meals recipients with the greatest need.
4. **Invest \$57 million in congregate meal programs** at Older Adult Centers.
5. **Increase baseline funding for the Community Food Connection (CFC) to \$100 million.**

Background

The two main food programs targeting older New Yorkers generally provide one prepared meal on weekdays only; one program operates in a congregate setting at Older Adult Centers, and the other provides home-delivery of these meals to those who cannot regularly get to a center. Last year, 153,220 older New Yorkers attended an older adult center and 24,472 received home-delivered meals (HDM).² These food programs were established in 1965 through the Older Americans Act, which still only requires that they serve one meal a day, five days a week. We have long known that this falls short in meeting the needs of the most food insecure older adults who cannot regularly access additional food. In a national survey from 2018, 66 percent of home-delivered and 54 percent of congregate meal recipients reported that these meals provide half or more of their daily food intake.³

Here in the City, Our research, done in partnership with CUNY's Urban Food Policy Institute last year, confirmed that the status quo leaves too many older adults hungry. We surveyed 500

² Preliminary Mayor's Management Report. January 2024. Accessed at: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/pmmr2024/dfta.pdf>

³ Administration on Community Living. FY18 Older Americans Act Report to Congress. Accessed at: https://acl.gov/sites/default/files/about-acl/2021-06/ACL_FY2018%20OAA%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf

older New Yorkers participating in the City's congregate and home-delivered meals programs to learn more about how they were meeting their food needs beyond the one meal a day they received through these programs. Some key findings from our research include:

- **48% of all respondents “sometimes” or “often” experienced food insecurity.** This number went up to 60% for HDM recipients.
- Affordability was a clear barrier with **65% of respondents living on \$15,000/yr or less.**
- Physical limitations were experienced by many, including those receiving congregate meals **41% said they are only sometimes or never able to shop for groceries**, and 38% have a limited ability to prepare their own food.
- Additionally, **45% reported having little to no support** from family, friends, or a personal care attendant.
- Other food programs are underutilized given the depth of need indicated: **only 56% received SNAP and only 18% had used a food pantry.**
 - 34% of those receiving SNAP said the benefit was not enough to meet their needs, and food pantries are not always accessible.

And things are about to get even worse for these older New Yorkers as billions in funding for SNAP, Medicaid,⁴ Section 8 housing assistance,⁵ the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP),⁶ and countless other federal benefits that older adults rely on are at risk. For low-income, homebound older adults, any cuts to these benefits would drastically impact their ability to pay for food and other basic needs.

We have already heard directly from meal recipients that they are afraid their regular home-delivered meals will not continue. We know that without that one meal a day, hunger will increase dramatically, worsening an already severe crisis of food insecurity among older New Yorkers. As the Council and the Administration work to negotiate their priorities in response to this challenge to our City's safety net infrastructure, we cannot lose sight of the needs of homebound older New Yorkers, who experience hunger out of sight and behind closed doors.

⁴ [What is Medicaid and why is it a Republican target for cuts? | CNN Politics](#)

⁵ [White House Eyes Overhaul of Federal Housing Aid to the Poor - The New York Times](#)

⁶ [Trump administration eyes elimination of program that helps low-income people heat and cool their homes](#)

Citymeals' Food Programs

To help fill in the meal gap for the City's many older adults, **we have launched a few pilot programs in FY25**. We have a long-term goal to end elder hunger by 2040 by working with our public and private partners to provide older adults with more food in more ways, while increasing choices and the diversity of food where possible. Each pilot will be evaluated to determine its impact and guide us in scaling up what works. Using data provided by case managers, we identify meal recipients who are actively experiencing food insecurity and place them into one of the following programs:

Our **Breakfast Box** provides the equivalent of 30 breakfast meals including shelf-stable food (eg. oatmeal, yogurt, granola, cereal), four frozen meals (eg. breakfast burrito, omelet with potatoes), and seven pounds of fresh produce (mostly fruit), procured, packaged and delivered by Citymeals directly to homebound older adults on a monthly basis. We are currently serving 2,000 recipients across the City.

Our **Mobile Grocery Program** provides the equivalent of 9 meals including shelf-stable items, dairy, and fresh produce (eg. rice, tuna, beans, fruit, and vegetables), delivered directly to an older adult at home. Within this program we are **piloting a phone ordering system** allowing an older adult to order 18-meal equivalents with 4 options (plant or animal-based proteins and milks, and all fresh produce or a mix of fresh and shelf-stable foods). This pilot is a collaboration with the West Side Campaign Against Hunger with a goal to reach 200 people in the first year.

Another way that Citymeals fills a critical food gap for homebound older adults is as a longstanding, citywide emergency food responder. Our Bronx warehouse can store up to 10,000 packed and ready meals, and enough food to quickly package up to 60,000 more meals. With this level of inventory, we can pre-supply HDM recipients with nutritious, shelf-stable meals and respond to any older adult in temporary need during extreme weather, a power or gas outage, or other emergencies. We can turn on a dime to reach large numbers of older adults in senior housing facilities, NYCHA housing, or Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs), as well as individuals living across the five boroughs. **In FY24, Citymeals**

responded to emergencies with 42,514 meals, and pre-supplied program participants with over 230,406 meals in our seasonal emergency food packages.

We are grateful to the Council for their longstanding support of our emergency food program. **For FY26, we respectfully request a renewal of the \$500,000 we received in FY25 through the Older Adults Clubs, Programs and Enhancements Initiative so that we can continue to stand ready to serve older New Yorkers during the next emergency.** Additionally, we ask the Council to partner with us in expanding our pilot programs, which respond directly to our research findings and the expressed needs of meal recipients. **We request an additional \$200,000 to support these programs so we can continue to evaluate, adapt, and scale new solutions to elder hunger.** Funding for the Citymeals pilot programs would be put towards procurement, packaging, and delivery of additional food to current home delivered meal recipients deemed by their case managers to be food insecure.

Sector-Wide Needs

New York City has not prioritized the services and programs that help older adults age in place, demonstrated by long-standing underinvestment in these services. Moreover, food programs serving all New Yorkers are struggling to keep up with dramatically increasing demand. If we fail to make the needed investments, millions of New Yorkers will continue to suffer from food insecurity, and many will be pushed out of their homes and our communities.

We call upon the City Council to prioritize food programs for older adults in the FY26 budget by:

- 1. Passing Intro 770**, which would require the City's home-delivered meals program to provide a meal 365 days a year. As a core public service, this program must be made whole by providing at least one meal every day, rather than just on weekdays.
- 2. Investing \$57 million in congregate meal programs** at Older Adult Centers, to account for steep increases in inflation over the last several years.
- 3. Increasing baseline funding for the Community Food Connection (CFC) to \$100 million** to meet the growing demand for food assistance across NYC—including enhanced access to fresh food. With an 83% rise in emergency food visits from 2019 to 2024, NYC's emergency food system is under unprecedented strain.
- 4. Continuing to fund the following Council Discretionary Initiatives:**

- o \$8.26M for the Food Pantry Initiative
- o \$2.134M for the Access to Healthy Food and Nutritional Education Initiative
- o \$1.5M for the Food Access and Benefits Initiative

Conclusion

The City must support more programs that get food directly to older adults, especially at a time when assistance from the federal government is uncertain. Older adults must no longer be an afterthought in anti-hunger strategies. *Our infrastructure is already failing homebound older adults. We must do more to address food insecurity among this population, such as funding a 365-day HDM program, providing grocery deliveries, and increasing accessibility of food programs like SNAP and food pantries.* To maintain an effective safety net and eliminate service gaps, we must upgrade our infrastructure and ensure that the City's food programs are accessible to older adults and present a comprehensive approach to hunger.



Testimony of
Coalition for the Homeless

before the General Welfare Committee
of the New York City Council

on the

Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026

submitted by

Alison Wilkey
Director of Governmental Affairs & Strategic Campaigns
Coalition for the Homeless

May 16, 2025

The Coalition for the Homeless (“Coalition”) welcomes this opportunity to submit testimony to the New York City Council’s General Welfare Committee. As the court- and City-appointed independent monitor of the Department of Homeless Services (“DHS”) shelter system and the shelter system for adult New Arrivals, and party in the historic *Callahan*, *Eldredge*, and *Boston* cases that created the right to shelter in New York City (“NYC”), we are uniquely situated to provide insight into the impact of proposed funding for unhoused New Yorkers and those at-risk of experiencing homelessness.

Compounding Crisis, Failed Responses

NYC has one of the largest populations of unhoused people in the United States. In February 2025, there were 114,791 people sleeping in New York City shelters, including 39,394 children.¹ This staggeringly high figure does not include the many thousands of people sleeping unsheltered in public spaces, or the hundreds of thousands temporarily sleeping doubled- and tripled-up in the homes of others. As such, the number of people without homes in New York has never been higher.

These alarming statistics have been fueled by decades of underinvestment in permanent affordable housing for low-income communities and the failure of all levels of government to enact policies to meaningfully reverse this trend. The affordable housing shortage in NYC, particularly for extremely low-income (“ELI”) households, is underscored by stark data revealing the depth of the crisis. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition’s 2025 report, “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes,” there is a glaring disparity in the availability of affordable housing: for every 100 ELI households in the New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA metro area, there are merely 34 affordable and available rental units.² In a city where the cost of living far exceeds national averages, and ELI households are defined as those earning 30 percent or less of the area median income (“AMI”), this gap leaves a vast number of residents in precarious housing situations.

The housing precarity in NYC is evidenced by the rent burdens borne by its residents. The number of ELI households who were severely rent-burdened (spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing) was 73 percent in 2023.³ This financial strain severely limits the capacity of ELI households to afford other necessities, such as food, healthcare, and childcare. It forces many of them to live in overcrowded conditions – defined as having more than two people per bedroom or more than one person living in a studio apartment. In fact, nearly a quarter (23 percent) of NYC households with at least one child are overcrowded.^{4,5} Given that living in overcrowded conditions is frequently a precursor to homelessness, such statistics portend greater levels of mass homelessness if this affordable housing crisis continues.

¹ “Facts About Homelessness.” Coalition for the Homeless. <https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/facts-about-homelessness/>, Accessed 12 May 2025.

² “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes.” National Low Income Housing Coalition, https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/2025/gap-report_2025_english.pdf, Accessed 12 May 2025.

³ “The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes.” National Low Income Housing Coalition, https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/gap/2025/gap-report_2025_english.pdf, Accessed 12 May 2025.

⁴ “2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings.” New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/about/2023-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>.

⁵ “2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings.” New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/about/2023-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>.

The dynamics of NYC's real estate market have also exacerbated the affordable housing shortage. The city's median rent has consistently outpaced inflation and income growth, creating an environment where affordable housing becomes increasingly scarce. Rent-stabilized units are particularly difficult to come by. Per the most recent Housing Vacancy Survey, the vacancy rate for rent stabilized units was less than 1 percent in 2023 — down from an already distressingly low 4.6 percent in 2021.⁶ More to the point, the vacancy rate for affordable apartments — those renting for less than \$1,100 per month — was only 0.39 percent. Effectively, there are no affordable apartments left in New York for those who need them most.

Coupled with this is the fact that evictions have remained worryingly high, nearing pre-COVID levels. In New York City in FY24, there were 126,236 eviction filings in city housing courts.⁷ The increase in evictions is particularly impacting low-income residents and communities of color and further straining the city's social safety net. In addition, this surge in evictions, in conjunction with a near-total lack of available affordable housing, has made a substantial increase in mass homelessness in the city a near-inevitability.

The crisis extends beyond those in shelters to include those living unsheltered, which presents its own significant challenges. According to the last HOPE estimate published in 2024, more than 4,000 individuals experienced unsheltered homelessness in one night. However, there is no reliable count of the number of people sleeping unsheltered each night in New York City.⁸ The City's annual HOPE survey, mandated by the Federal government, underestimates the true size of this population due to flawed methodology, and as a point-in-time survey, it fails to capture the dynamic nature of unsheltered homelessness. Whatever figure is reported by the City, we can safely assume the true number of people sleeping unsheltered is far higher.

Housing solutions for the unsheltered homeless population remain woefully inadequate. Recent statistics reveal a troubling disconnect in the supportive housing system. Out of 955 people living on the streets and subways who were approved for supportive housing during a period tracked by city social service and health agencies last year, only 175 successfully obtained a housing placement — just 18 percent of the total.⁹ Nearly 400 people were still waiting to be referred to a supportive housing provider for an interview, despite thousands of apartments sitting empty, while 131 people waited more than a year and had their applications expire without receiving a placement.¹⁰ This systemic failure highlights how even those who navigate the application process successfully are frequently left without the housing solutions they desperately need.

⁶ “2023 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings.” New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/about/2023-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>.

⁷ “FY24 Annual Report.” Department of Social Services, New York City Office of Civil Justice, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ_Annual_Report_2024.pdf.

⁸ “Homeless Outreach Population Estimate 2024 Results.” New York City Department of Social Services, 2024, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dhs/outreach/hope.page>.

⁹ Hogan, Gwynne. “Most Street-Homeless Housing Applicants Never Get a Shot, Inside Stats Show.” The City. 6 Jan. 2025. <http://www.thecity.nyc/2025/01/06/homeless-supportive-housing-eric-adams-statistics/>.

¹⁰ Hogan, Gwynne. “Most Street-Homeless Housing Applicants Never Get a Shot, Inside Stats Show.” The City. 6 Jan. 2025. <http://www.thecity.nyc/2025/01/06/homeless-supportive-housing-eric-adams-statistics/>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Expand CityFHEPS as an Eviction Prevention Tool Using Promised City for All/City of Yes Funding Commitments

The Council's City for All plan, negotiated in December 2024, was intended to bolster Mayor Adams' City of Yes for Housing Opportunity plan with increased funding commitments to address New York's homelessness and housing affordability crisis. As part of that plan, the Council secured a \$215 million commitment to expand the CityFHEPS rental assistance program to cover low-income tenants at risk of eviction and homelessness.¹¹ But now, the Adams administration is reneging on its commitment to keeping New Yorkers housed. It is crucial that the Council fight against this broken promise and ensure that low-income New Yorkers get the resources they urgently need. In the Council's adopted version, City of Yes/City for All laid out a framework for creating and preserving affordable housing across the city. While all components of the plan will take time to implement, the \$215 million for CityFHEPS was supposed to be available over the course of FY 2025 and FY 2026 — with at least \$115 million of it this year.

The \$215 million funding promised in City of Yes must be strategically deployed to expand CityFHEPS as an eviction prevention tool, targeting those most vulnerable to housing instability. We recommend applying specific criteria to maximize the preventative impact of this expansion, focusing on households who would otherwise face eviction, experience homelessness, and ultimately require rehousing at substantially higher cost to the city. The Coalition's Eviction Prevention Program, which pays rent arrears to keep households facing eviction in their homes, turns away approximately a quarter of people seeking assistance because they cannot afford to pay the rent going forward (something that is required to receive a grant for arrears). If many of these households received CityFHEPS, they not only would have been eligible for grants like those we provide for arrears, but they would have been able to stay in their homes.

To effectively target this funding, we propose prioritizing households that meet all of the following criteria: (1) currently facing legal action by their landlord in Housing Court; (2) living in regulated housing such as rent stabilized, rent controlled, Mitchell-Lama rental or cooperative properties, units with low-income tax credits, or those eligible under good cause provisions; (3) household includes either an elderly person over 62, a disabled person, or a minor child under 18; and (4) applicants' current rent does not exceed established CityFHEPS rent levels.

Based on our estimates, \$215 million over two years would prevent homelessness for most households that meet all the above criteria. An analysis by the Community Service Society of 2023 Census data (the most recent available) found that over 370,000 households with a child, senior, or person with disability are severely rent burdened and have incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Of these, fewer than half (148,000) live in one of the types of regulated housing set forth above. Of these, a smaller

¹¹ "NYC Council Secures \$5 Billion in Commitments for City for All Plan to Invest into Communities and Increase Affordability." New York City Council, Press Release, 19 Dec 2024, <https://council.nyc.gov/carolina-rivera/2024/12/19/nyc-council-secures-5-billion-in-commitments-for-city-for-all-plan-to-invest-into-communities-and-increase-affordability/>

subset — 7,490 households — are likely to face eviction. Covering these 7,490 households under CityFHEPS would cost the city \$116 million for one year.¹²

If the Adams administration honors its promise to the City Council, nearly 7,500 households could remain in their homes over the next two years. The Council must stand firm and ensure this crucial funding is delivered—without delay.

Successful expansion of the CityFHEPS program is also dependent on fixing the unnecessary delays and hurdles that plague every step of the process. Clients of the Coalition experience extended delays in processing their applications for CityFHEPS, approvals of apartments, and payments to landlords. Such extreme delays and processing issues are commonly experienced by people who are trying either to leave shelter and find permanent homes or to avoid eviction, like the seven tenants in a lawsuit filed by the Legal Aid Society who faced delays in the processing of their CityFHEPS voucher recertifications.¹³

In recent months, the Coalition assisted three different households that had already received eviction notices from Housing Court, even though two of those people had CityFHEPS vouchers and failed to receive help they needed to complete recertification. The third person was eligible for CityFHEPS to keep her in her home, but was told she was not eligible by a HomeBase provider. Two of these individuals entered the shelter system and were there for months before we were able to get them back in their homes. These examples are reflections of a broken and dysfunctional system that results in unneeded trauma and a waste of resources.

Reject the Human Resources Administration’s Proposal to Hike Rents for CityFHEPS Voucher Holders

On April 30th, the Adams administration quietly proposed a major change to CityFHEPS,¹⁴ New York City’s primary rental assistance program designed to help New Yorkers move out of homelessness and into permanent housing. In a typical rental assistance program, the tenant pays 30 percent of their income toward rent and the government covers the balance between that amount and what the landlord charges — up to a certain payment standard. This is because a renter who pays more than 30 percent of income on rent is classified as “rent burdened.” Under the Adams administration’s new proposal, all income-earning CityFHEPS households enrolled in the program for five or more years would have to pay 40 percent of their income toward rent beginning in year 6, effectively making many formerly homeless low-income New Yorkers rent burdened.

Nearly 30,000 New Yorkers would be hit with higher rents under this rule change. According to HRA, 20,227 single individuals and 9,521 families with children would be subject to the proposed 40 percent

¹² Stein, Sam, et. al. “No More Broken Promises: Commit City Funds to CityFHEPS in the Community.” Community Service Society, 16 May 2025, <https://www.cssny.org/news/entry/no-more-broken-promises-commit-city-funds-to-cityfheps-in-the-community>.

¹³ Zaveri, Mihir. “Program That Fights Homelessness Is Mired in Dysfunction, Advocates Say.” The New York Times, 5 Apr. 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/05/nyregion/ny-housing-voucher-program-problems.html>.

¹⁴ New York City Human Resources Administration. Notice of Public Hearing and Opportunity to Comment on Proposed Amendments to Chapters 10 and 11 of Title 68 of the Rules of the City of New York and to Chapter 60 of Title 28 of the Rules of the City of New York. 30 Apr. 2025. https://rules.cityofnewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/CityFHEPS_Pathway-Home-Rule-Change_CRIB_final.pdf

rent contribution.¹⁵ These households moved into permanent housing using CityFHEPS vouchers issued in 2019 and 2020. Under the proposed rule, the median single individual would owe \$2,400 more in rent annually — a \$200 monthly increase. The median family with children would be obligated to pay \$1,212 more each year, or \$101 more per month. This would force low-income households to cut essentials, like food, childcare, transportation, and health care.

The proposed rule would not only force households to be rent-burdened, it would enshrine rent burden into City policy. In 2017, the Trump Administration proposed raising rents in federally-subsidized housing to 35 percent of a household's income, a proposal that was heavily critiqued and ultimately rejected.¹⁶ A 2024 study published in the journal *Social Science and Medicine* found that increased rent burdens strongly correlate with eviction, reduced spending on food and medicine, and even premature death.¹⁷ That the City would go beyond even what was proposed by the Trump Administration is appalling and sets a dangerous precedent potentially impacting the millions of families who rely on subsidized housing.

While these rent increases will take a terrible toll on low-income working families, they will do little for the City. DSS Commissioner Molly Park testified that the City would save \$11 million — less than 0.01 percent of the city's \$112 billion annual budget. And even these savings may never actually materialize. Many formerly homeless tenants will be unable to meet the new rent standards, requiring emergency financial assistance from the City in the form of HRA's "One-Shot Deals" that help tenants avoid eviction by helping cover rent arrears. In effect, money "saved" by reducing CityFHEPS subsidies would simply become money spent on other forms of emergency rent relief.

If tenants return to shelters, the City pays even more. The sought-after savings would disappear if even a small share of CityFHEPS tenants cannot pay these elevated rents or secure a One-Shot Deal and are evicted and return to the shelter system. or secure a one-shot deal, are evicted, and return to the shelter system. If just one percent of single adults or families return to the shelter system for the average length of stay, not only will they be forced to relive the trauma of homelessness, the cost of shelter alone for the returning households would cancel out the city's projected savings. If a greater number returns to homelessness, the city would actually increase its overall costs. The proposed change is thus systemically dangerous, detrimental to struggling New Yorkers, and likely to cost far more than it saves.

Reject the Human Resources Administration's Unethical Creating Real Impacts at Birth ("CRIB") Research Study

On April 30th, the City also proposed a new research study on pregnant people seeking shelter that raises significant ethical concerns. The study would randomly assign pregnant people arriving at DHS' Prevention Assistance and Temporary Housing ("PATH") intake center to one of three categories: a

¹⁵ "Special Initiatives Moveouts and Placements." New York City Open Data, Updated 29 Jan. 2025, https://data.cityofnewyork.us/Social-Services/Special-Initiatives-Moveouts-and-Placements/vnwq-9b7b/about_data, Accessed 15 May 2025.

¹⁶ "Trump Budget's Housing Proposals Would Raise Rents on Struggling Families, Seniors, and People with Disabilities." The Center of Budget Policy and Priorities, 12 Jul. 2017, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/trump-budgets-housing-proposals-would-raise-rents-on-struggling-families-seniors-and-people>.

¹⁷ Graetz, Nick, et al. "The Impacts of Rent Burden and Eviction on Mortality in the United States, 2000–2019." *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 340, 1 Jan. 2024, p. 116398. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2023.116398>.

group that would receive Pathway Home assistance, a group that would immediately receive CityFHEPS, and a control group that would receive nothing.

The proposed research presents significant ethical concerns, particularly as it involves vulnerable human subjects, namely pregnant people. DSS has not received, nor is it seeking, Institutional Review Board (“IRB”) approval for this research. IRB approval exists to protect the rights, safety, and well-being of human participants in research and ensure that research involving human subjects meets ethical standards. A key ethical principle in research involving human subjects is that, “[p]articipation in potentially beneficial research should be fairly distributed to all who wish to participate.”¹⁸ Under DSS’s proposal, the group assigned to CityFHEPS would get immediate access to the vouchers without being required to meet the normal work or other requirements when applying from shelter. In contrast, the control group in the proposed research study would not receive this benefit of immediate access and would need to meet the existing eligibility requirements. Thus, the control group would be missing out on a substantial benefit by virtue of random assignment.

Furthermore, the random assignment of pregnant people to receive Pathway Home assistance is nonsensical. Pathway Home is a program that assists people to exit shelters by moving in with friends or family members by providing monthly payments of up to \$1,200 per month to the hosting household for up to 12 months. A person cannot be randomly assigned to a program that requires a condition precedent – here, that the person has family or friends who are willing to take them in. Pathway Home also does not do an assessment of the safety of the hosting household, such as whether it is overcrowded or whether the person might be at risk of interpersonal violence in the household.

The stated intent of the research is vague: “to track the three groups over time, measuring factors such as days in shelter and housing placements.” Why this research is necessary is unclear. The City regularly touts the success of CityFHEPS in assisting people to leave shelter to permanent homes.¹⁹ This begs the question of why the research study is necessary when DSS could simply make CityFHEPS immediately available to all pregnant people seeking shelter.

Create Affordable Housing for Extremely Low-Income and Homeless Households

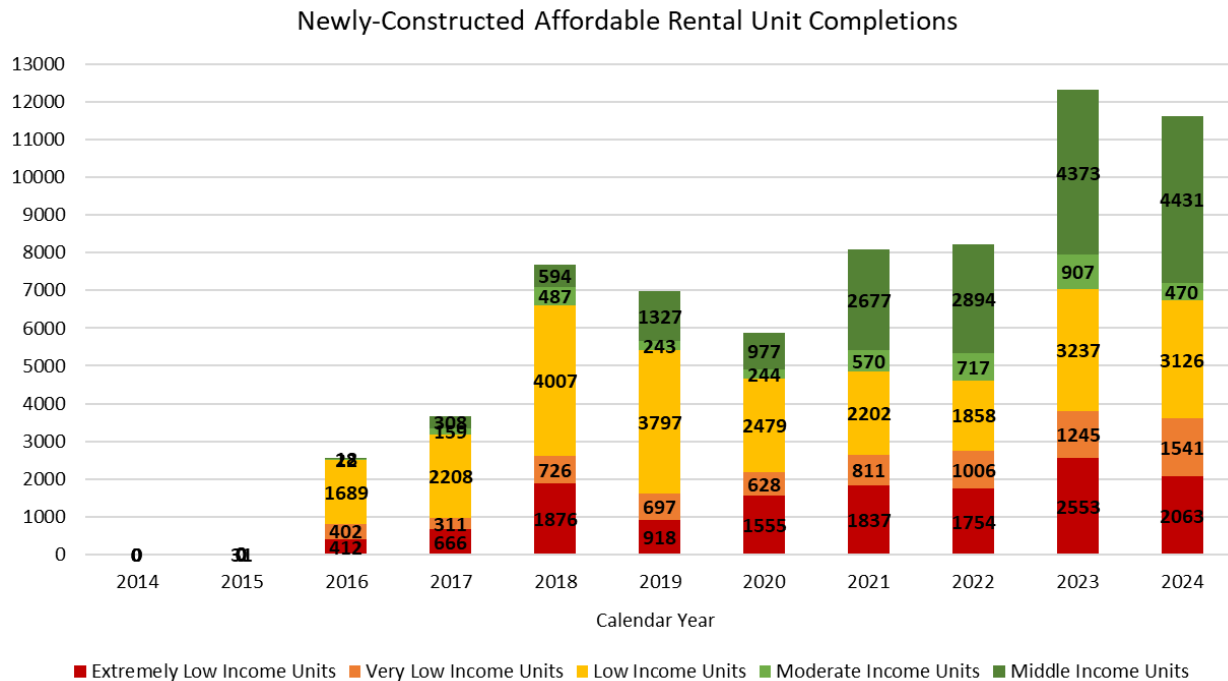
While the Coalition will continue to vigorously defend the Right to Shelter, our ultimate goal is to make shelters unnecessary. But the increasing need for emergency shelter over the past 43 years is a direct result of the depletion of housing that is affordable to those at the lowest income levels. The only way to decrease the number of people living without shelter and the crisis in the shelter system is through permanent, affordable housing. Yet, the City has no plan that acknowledges and addresses the housing need for homeless and ELI individuals and families. The City of Yes for Housing Opportunity zoning amendment did not set requirements for the deepest affordability, only creating an optional Universal Affordability Preference that allows developers to build 20 percent larger if the addition includes units that are affordable to households making 60 percent AMI or higher. Even these units – which are not addressing the greatest housing need – will not be built without subsidy, particularly as there is no

¹⁸ White, Michael G. “Why Human Subjects Research Protection Is Important.” *The Ochsner Journal*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2020, pp. 16–33, <http://doi.org/10.31486/toj.20.5012>.

¹⁹ Video and Transcript of the New York City Council General Welfare Committee’s Preliminary Budget Hearing on 17 Mar. 2025, <https://citymeetings.nyc/meetings/new-york-city-council/2025-03-17-1000-am-committee-on-general-welfare/chapter/efforts-to-address-homelessness-and-housing-instability/>, Accessed 16 May 2025.

requirement to build any affordable units.²⁰ Given the high cost of housing construction in NYC, there is not enough housing being developed for those who need it most, and no plan in place that fills this void.

From 2014 to 2024, only 20 percent of the City’s newly-constructed affordable rental unit completions were targeted for ELI households. That amounts to only 13,634 new affordable rental unit completions for the lowest-income New Yorkers over an entire decade.



Source: HPD, chart by Alexius Marciano (CFTH, 2025)

We urge the City to allocate \$2.5 billion in additional new construction financing each year for the next five years for apartments to specifically be built for homeless and ELI New Yorkers. Increased funding at this level would support building an additional 6,000 apartments for homeless households and 6,000 apartments per year for ELI households.

The City for All commitments that the City Council negotiated as part of the agreement with the Mayoral administration to pass the City of Yes zoning text amendment included “\$2 billion secured in additional housing capital investments to finance affordable housing development and preservation, support Mitchell-Lama developments, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), and HDFCs.”²¹ At least half of this commitment – \$1.25 billion – must be put toward the aforementioned \$2.5 billion recommendation to ensure the development of affordable housing for homeless and ELI households.

²⁰ “The City of New York. “City of Yes – Universal Affordability Preference.” City of New York, <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans-studies/city-of-yes/housing-opportunity/guide-universal-affordability-preference.pdf>, Accessed 12 Mar. 2025.

²¹ “City for All Commitments.” New York City Council, <https://council.nyc.gov/press/wp-content/uploads/sites/56/2024/11/City-for-All-Commitments.pdf>, Accessed 18 Mar. 2025.

Help Unsheltered New Yorkers

Low-Barrier Safe Haven Shelters

Every NYC resident can see that the number of people suffering on the streets continues to increase. The City must invest in more low-barrier shelter beds, such as Safe Havens and stabilization beds. These low-barrier shelter settings offer fewer restrictions, more privacy and security, and better staffing and social services to meet the needs of our unsheltered neighbors.

While the Mayor has often stated the need for creating more Safe Haven beds, and recently announced that 900 new beds would be added, it is simply not enough to meet the need. In the first four months of FY24, the City created only 350 new Safe Haven beds, even though they are proven to be more effective than the general shelter system for unsheltered individuals with mental illness and other disabilities.²²

Rather than ensuring that we have a sufficient number of these critical beds, the City and State are doubling-down on law enforcement sweeps, which data show connects few people to shelter, let alone permanent housing.²³ The City must allocate \$98 million to add 2,000 new Safe Haven beds for unsheltered New Yorkers.

Intensive Mobile Treatment

In addition to low barrier shelter beds, there is a desperate need for functional and expanded Intensive Mobile Treatment (“IMT”) teams. IMT is designed to provide intensive, continuous, flexible support and treatment to individuals in their communities, including mental health, substance use, and peer specialists, psychiatric treatment and medication, and facilitated connections to housing and supportive services. The program is currently stagnant in funding at \$42 million, with a long waitlist of individuals in need of help. The City must invest \$22 million in baselined funds to create additional IMT teams. This additional funding would bring the total to \$64 million and help address the critical shortage of services.

IMT is a critical part of addressing the needs of unsheltered individuals with serious mental illness, but key reforms and increased funding are needed for it to realize its full potential. If NYC truly wants to meet the standard of providing appropriate access to mental health care in the community, and to hold ourselves accountable to the standard of placing individuals in the least restrictive setting possible, then it requires allocating adequate funding to actually make those resources and services available to people in need.

Right to Counsel Legal Services

There is a critical need to expand funding for Right to Counsel (“RTC”) legal services. Under New York City’s RTC law, DSS/HRA’s Office of Civil Justice provides tenants facing eviction in Housing Court or NYCHA administrative proceedings access to legal representation and advice delivered by nonprofit legal services organizations from across the five boroughs. RTC legal services are free, available in every NYC ZIP code, and available regardless of immigration status. Since the expiration of COVID eviction protections in January 2022, over 73,000 tenants have been facing eviction court with no representation

²² “Mayor’s Management Report 2024.” Office of New York City Mayor Eric Adams, Sept. 2024, https://www.nyc.gov/assets/operations/downloads/pdf/mmr2024/2024_mmr.pdf.

²³ “Local Law 34 of 2024 Quarterly Interagency Reporting on Encampment Cleanups and Aided Removals.” City of New York, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dhs/about/stats-and-reports.page>.

according to the NYS Office of Court Administration.²⁴ Despite RTC, the percentage of tenants with an attorney has been rapidly falling. In December 2024, only 21 percent of tenants in eviction court had an attorney when their case was filed, down from 65 percent in January of 2022 according to the NYS Office of Court Administration.²⁵

The City must allocate \$351 million in increased funding for the RTC program to ensure that all low-income tenants facing eviction have access to an attorney to fight for their right to stay in their home. According to DSS/HRA's Office of Civil Justice, 84 percent of NYC tenants who had a lawyer through the City's RTC program avoided eviction.²⁶ If NYC is truly committed to preventing homelessness and maintaining housing stability, then it must allocate adequate funding to ensure that every eligible tenant has access to legal representation when facing the threat of eviction.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. We look forward to working with the Council on the budget and other legislation to address the needs of those who are unhoused or precariously housed throughout NYC.

About Coalition for the Homeless

The Coalition, 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 12 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 to distribute PPE and emergency supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. But growing food insecurity, increased homelessness, and the arrival of thousands of people in desperate need have greatly increased demand for emergency meals and resources provided by this program. 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.

²⁴ Analysis by the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD) in collaboration with the Right to Counsel Coalition. Data source: NYS Office of Court Administration via the Housing Data Coalition. <https://www.righttocounselnyc.org/nycrcrisismonitor>

²⁵ Analysis by the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD) in collaboration with the Right to Counsel Coalition. Data source: NYS Office of Court Administration via the Housing Data Coalition. <https://www.righttocounselnyc.org/nycrcrisismonitor>

²⁶ "New York City's Right to Counsel Website." New York City Department of Social Services, <https://www.nyc.gov/site/mayorspeu/resources/right-to-counsel.page>, Accessed 6 Mar. 2025.

Since the pandemic, we have been 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 Legal Aid 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 worked with Legal Aid to support homeless New Yorkers, including through the *E.G. v. City of New York* Federal class action litigation initiated to ensure Wi-Fi 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 of the Family Homelessness Coalition

The New York City Council Committee on Finance Jointly with the Committee on General Welfare

New York City Council Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearings

May 16, 2025

The Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC) is made up of organizations representing service and housing providers, children's advocacy organizations and people with lived experience with family homelessness. We are united by the goal of preventing family homelessness, improving the well-being of children and families in shelter, and supporting the long-term stability of families with children who leave shelter.

We would like to thank Chair Brannan, Chair Ayala, and members of the committees for the opportunity to submit testimony on this topic.

While we were pleased to see \$176.6 million in the executive budget dedicated to the City Fighting Homelessness and Eviction Prevention Supplement (CityFHEPS) program, we are greatly concerned about the proposed HRA rule to increase some recipients' portion of rent from 30% to 40%. While rents in New York City continue to increase sharply, incomes have not. The cost of rent has been rising faster than income, further widening the gap in recent years. While we understand the need to control costs in an uncertain federal and budgetary environment, this change is not the way to do so.

We applaud the restructuring of the 15/15 agreement to bring more congregate supportive housing and the \$1.25 billion in housing investments through the City for All agreement, with the critical support of State funding.

This is a critical moment for the City to commit sufficient resources to support families in need. Given the federal landscape, the City should do all in its power to mitigate the impacts of looming federal cuts to housing programs, social services, Medicaid and other social safety net programs.

FHC continues to strongly urge the following priorities in the upcoming budget:

Finding a Housing Stability Solution for the Emergency Housing Voucher recipients. Our Coalition is deeply troubled by the planned end of funding for the EHV vouchers, which house around 16,000 families. There is a looming crisis of homelessness if a solution is not found for these families, and while federal advocacy efforts continue, we urge all stakeholders to come together with a plan.

Increase the Budget for Homebase by \$37.9mm to a Total of \$100mm. Since the pandemic, Homebase providers have taken on tremendous increases in caseload as well as an ever-expanding set of responsibilities. This has not been accompanied by funding levels to match the new post-Covid reality. As a result, wait times have increased for critical Homebase services like help with eviction prevention, emergency rental assistance, and obtaining benefits.

Establish a Dedicated Funding Stream Strictly for Aftercare Services. Families who are placed in permanent housing from shelter require support in their period of transition to avoid the trauma of a return to homelessness. Establishing a strict separate funding stream for this essential work will ensure organizations can properly dedicate staff and tailor programs which will increase stability.

Adequately Fund the City Commission on Human Rights to Enforce SOI Discrimination. We support \$4 million in additional funding for CCHR to a total agency budget of around \$18 million. The current proposed appropriations are not sufficient to help bring staffing back to 2019 levels and allow for greater enforcement of Source of Income Discrimination laws and implementation of new Fair Chance laws.

Commit to a Capital-Needs Assessment of the Entire Shelter Portfolio. Building conditions at both the City's shelter sites and sites owned by homeless service organizations vary wildly, and in many instances, conditions at properties are poor. While shelter is and should be temporary, conditions at the worst sites do not meet minimum acceptable standards, particularly for families with children. An overall assessment of the entire system would help to identify the most pressing needs and allow for a plan to direct capital funds to address them.

Increase the Pay of Shelter Staff to Establish Parity with Comparable Settings. Difficult-to-hire titles such as social workers are particularly difficult to retain when there is disparity between pay and comparable settings, such as NYC H+H Hospitals. Bring pay for these roles in line with the comparable roles in order to adequately staff and support shelters in the city.

On behalf of FHC, thank you again for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



Family Legal Care's Testimony to the New York City Council's General Welfare Committee

Friday, May 16, 2024
Council Chambers, City Hall
Diana Ayala, Chairperson

Thank you to Chair Ayala and members of the Committee on General Welfare for the opportunity to submit testimony about the issues families with cases in New York Family Court are facing.

My name is Cathy Cramer and I am the Chief Executive Officer at Family Legal Care, formerly LIFT. On behalf of Family Legal Care, I'd like to thank Chairperson Ayala and the New York City Council for its continued support and focus on issues impacting New York's parents and caregivers in Family Court. Without funding from the New York City Council we could not do our vital work to assist families confronting issues at the heart of their well-being, including child support, custody and visitation, and domestic violence. If families are provided upstream support and services to address these issues in an efficient and careful way, we can help prevent future problems for children and families. This is especially important now, as rising uncertainty about the economy, immigration, and the programs and services that New Yorkers rely on will lead to considerable strain on families and have real impacts on their welfare.

We urge the Council to increase discretionary funding allocations for Family Legal Care in the upcoming budget cycle to ensure we can continue to help the thousands of parents and caregivers who rely on us to create stability, security, and emotional well-being.

Family Legal Care's mission is to increase access to justice in New York State Family Court. We combine legal guidance, easy-to-access technology, and compassionate support to help unrepresented parents and caregivers self-advocate on critical family law issues, while working on reform that improves the system for everyone.

We are the only organization in New York State dedicated solely to empowering parents and caregivers to represent themselves in New York Family Court. Each year we help approximately 28,000 parents and caregivers to self-advocate for positive outcomes in Family Court. The demand for free, expert legal advice has never been greater, continues to grow, and Family Legal Care is the only organization in New York City filling this need.

The New York City Family Courts have been under-resourced and overburdened for decades, and 80% of litigants come to Family Court without a lawyer. These unrepresented litigants are disproportionately low-income, from communities of color, often undocumented immigrants, or speak monolingual Spanish or some other language. Because the family courts are understaffed, there is a justice gap for many of the litigants. Organizations like Family Legal Care and others have worked closely with the Court to close this justice gap, but serious issues remain. The underinvestment in the family courts, and particularly the failure to prioritize child support cases, has significant effects for families in NYC. **Investing in organizations like Family Legal Care to help parents address their child support concerns will increase financial stability of NYC families and have upstream effects on the general welfare of our city.**

As of 2021, 1 in 6 children in NYC live in a household receiving child support¹. Child support is a literal lifeline for many of the most impoverished families in NYC, but it is not uncommon for custodial parents to receive none of the money they are entitled to. Many parents turn to the Family Court for help: 1 in 3 cases in New York Family Court deals with child support, but the Courts do not give child support cases the weight they are due. Because there is a formula to help calculate child support, many people believe it is not a complicated or urgent legal matter. This could not be further from the truth. Child support is not just about money – it is about housing, healthcare, and food on the table.

Pro se litigants, a disproportionate number of whom self-identify as people of color, are navigating the complex Court and legal systems completely on their own, and the stakes for their families are high. When child support cases take months and years to be resolved, it puts additional strain on the parents' relationship. This stress can discourage noncustodial parents from spending time with their children or being involved in their children's lives. **Helping litigants resolve their child support cases faster can lead to families with stronger bonds and create stability that is invaluable for children's growth and development.**

Family Legal Care helps by

- Offering legal advice and consultations from staff attorneys with expert knowledge on family law topics.
- Providing critical legal information to pro se litigants via our bilingual phone, email, and live chat Helplines or in-person at the city's family courts.
- Regularly conducting legal education workshops, presentations, and webinars on common family law issues.
- Developing over 60 multilingual legal information materials on child support and other family law issues, which are available online and in each of the city's borough courthouses.
- Connecting unrepresented litigants with pro bono attorneys for video consultations through our Pro Bono Program.
- Developing innovative digital tools that make legal information and court documents easy to access, understand, and be completed on a mobile device.
- Connecting those impacted by the digital divide in our Brooklyn, Queens and Bronx Legal Information and Tech Hubs to the equipment and stable internet connection they need to access the hybrid courts.

The communities with the fewest resources, a disproportionate number of whom identify as people of color, are bearing the brunt of the Court's systemic failures. The Court's decisions touch the lives of thousands of children and families with profound, long-lasting effects on their safety, economic security, health, and well-being.

Strong families are essential building blocks for a thriving city, and we believe we have a powerful upstream impact in this unique space through Family Court. Family Legal Care helps families self-advocate for the financial resources to which they are entitled, that will help them to care for their children, and remain in their homes and communities. With increased support from the City Council, Family Legal Care can continue to be part of the solution.

Thank you.

¹ New York City Human Resources Administration Office of Child Support Services. August 2021.

Thank you city council for this time today.

My name is Emily Brett, I'm the director of the Greenpoint Hunger Program under Executive director Ann Kansfield.

I don't think you need me or any of the other folks here today to tell you that New York is in a food crisis. I don't think you need us to tell you that food pantry lines are long and getting longer, that the promised post-pandemic recovery still hasn't come, and, despite the optimistic tone of this budget, we are on the verge of both a political and economic crisis. I think these are facts that the council is already acutely aware of.

What the council may not be aware of, and what I think is easy to forget when we get lost in statistics, is that 100 million dollars for Community Food Connections is not just a number on a page, but there are lives behind this money. And if you do not pass this funding, there will be people in this city, adults, families, and children that will be hungrier than they would otherwise be. That is not an abstraction, or a spreadsheet, but an embodied reality.

Each week at my pantry in Greenpoint, we see about a hundred guests. Many come not just for themselves, but for their families. Several bring their young children with them. I would ask the council, and each of us here today, to stop for a moment in this hearing, and try to remember who you were when you were 6, or 7, or 8. Maybe you were a child who went hungry. But if you weren't I want you to think to yourself; what would that have felt like? How might hunger have changed the course of your life? Would you be here in the position you're in today, sitting in this city council, if as a child, you had not had access to the resources necessary to feed yourself?

Hunger is not just about nutrition, it's about mental health, it's about dignity, it's about the knowledge that someone in your community, whether it's your parent or your teacher or a member of your city council cares about you and wants you to be here. This city is a hard place to live and as stewards of this "best budget" I know and hope that it is each of your intentions to make it more liveable, to make it better, to make it safer. And to that end I would express to the council that to allow hunger into our city doesn't just make New York a worse, less liveable city, but also makes it more dangerous. Hunger is not just a physical sensation, but a destabilizing threat. It can undo communities, families, and individuals. A fed child is a child that can focus, that can learn, that can go to school, that can play. A hungry child, or a hungry person, is in danger, not just physically, but mentally. They're at risk for depression, anxiety, and as they grow older, substance abuse, suicidality, and violence.

Failing to give CFC its 100 million dollar share while giving the NYPD over 3 billion dollars isn't just an act of absurdity, it's an act of hypocrisy. Robot police dogs on the subway in Times Square do not make our kids safer. Food on the table makes our kids safer. Please give pantries what they need to do their essential work. If you want to keep New York safe, keep New Yorkers fed. Thank you.



Testimony: Hamra Ahmad, Head of Legal Programs and Policy
Hearing: City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026
Host: Committee on General Welfare
Date: May 16, 2025

Thank you, Chair Ayala and the Committee on General Welfare— Council Member Riley, Council Member Stevens, Council Member Ung, Council Member Cabán, Council Member Restler, Council Member Ossé, Council Member Avilés, and Council Member Banks— for the opportunity to submit testimony on this critical matter. I am Hamra Ahmad, the Head of Legal Programs and Policy at Her Justice, a nonprofit organization that has advocated with and for women living in poverty in New York City for more than 30 years. In 2024, Her Justice provided a range of legal help to more than 4,000 women and their children in our practice areas of family, matrimonial and immigration law. Among the clients served, 92% are women of color and 85% are survivors of domestic violence. Three-fourths of our clients were born outside the U.S., coming from 103 countries across the world.

Support from the City Council helps Her Justice to provide direct representation and skilled advocacy in an arena that often fails to adequately serve the legal needs of the marginalized. In this moment of volatile change, as in ordinary times, legal services are essential services. The current federal administration has contributed to a heightened demand for legal services, increased economic instability, decreased funding for nonprofit organizations, and a potential reduction in pro bono support, thereby underscoring the critical importance of support from the City Council. Every day, our staff attorneys provide women with information about the legal remedies available to them and advise and strategize with clients to help them weigh their options and decide the course that is right for them and their children.

We are deeply grateful to the Committee for hosting a hearing on this important topic. Council support through SAVE, DoVE, and the Speaker's Initiative has allowed Her Justice to provide critical legal services to low-income survivors of domestic violence and immigrant women in New York City. We hope the City Council will reaffirm and enhance resources to survivors and recognize legal services as essential to ensuring their economic well-being and safety.

Organizational Background

Legal services. Her Justice offers information, advice, brief services and full representation in support, custody and visitation, and order of protection matters in Family Court; divorces in Supreme Court; and immigration matters under the Violence Against Women Act. Our staff responds to those who contact us with a broad array of legal advice, review of papers, and, for some, tools to ensure they get the best outcomes they can on their own. Many of the women who contact us receive free full legal representation through our pro bono first model, in which Her Justice pairs thousands of well-trained and resourced pro bono attorneys from the City's premiere law firms with women who have urgent legal needs. This approach has enabled us to assist tens of thousands of women over the years, far more than we could have reached relying exclusively on direct service. It also allows Her Justice to offer representation for many of the cases other legal services organizations do not have the bandwidth to take on – for example, child and spousal support matters, and litigated divorce. In addition to training and mentoring pro bono attorneys, Her Justice in-house attorneys provide representation to some clients whose legal issues are particularly urgent or complex. This both meets critical needs and allows staff attorneys to remain fully expert on the legal issues on which we train and provide support. By ensuring that



more women have lawyers by their side, we help make their voices heard and we begin to break down systemic barriers to access to justice.

Community outreach. Her Justice also works to ensure that women living in poverty in New York City are knowledgeable about their legal rights and available remedies, reducing barriers to access to justice. We use a targeted, culturally sensitive community outreach strategy that involves conducting informational and know-your-rights presentations and capacity-building trainings for community-based not-for-profit organizations. Prospective clients learn of our services from colleagues at legal and social services agencies throughout New York City, including the Family Justice Centers, bar associations, elected officials' constituent services offices, court and law enforcement personnel, schools, shelters, hospitals, our website, LawHelp.org and word of mouth. The "Get Help" section on our website provides women and their advocates with easy access to information about their legal rights and detailed instruction about how to secure free legal assistance from Her Justice through our online intake application. Her Justice staff also conduct presentations to community-based organizations across New York City to provide organization staff and their clients with information on various legal issues and ways to access legal services at Her Justice.

System reform. We believe that the client-centered services we provide must also be paired with policy work – through independent efforts and in partnership with peer organizations and coalitions – to advance systemic reform while meeting individual need. Our policy work is informed by the lived experience of our clients – women living in poverty, whose livelihood and well-being are often determined by the civil justice system. That civil justice system is often invisible to those outside of it, which makes a focus on elevating the reforms to this area that much more essential for our clients and all who depend on it. Through this framework, we begin to break down systemic barriers that are built into our civil justice system and that reinforce and exacerbate economic, gender and racial imbalances.

Immigration Legal Services and Advocacy

At Her Justice, we understand that our immigrant communities are an essential part of the fabric of our city and, for 30 years, have been committed to providing critical free legal services to undocumented immigrant women living in poverty. The Her Justice Immigration Practice provides free legal assistance to clients who have experienced domestic violence, sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence as they seek to stabilize their immigration status in the United States. The legal services we provide are especially important for survivors of violence since abusers and traffickers commonly exploit a survivor's lack of status as a powerful way to exercise control. Our Immigration Practice has a proven track record of excellence, and its impact grows every year.

We have recently seen the City's deep commitment to the heightened need for assistance for newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers. As New York City welcomed new migrants during the last couple of years, those seeking asylum faced increasing court delays and adjudication timelines, putting their legal status at risk, and further widening the access-to-justice gap. Among the newly arrived migrants, some will have experienced domestic violence, sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence. We anticipate that many will contact Her Justice for assistance. We, along with the City's support, hope to support them with the dire legal services that are needed to bridge the justice gap and help stabilize their lives.



We pair our legal services for undocumented survivors of gender-based violence with research and policy advocacy. In 2023, we released our policy research report, [*Stories from Immigrant Survivors of Gender-Based Violence: the Impact of Work Authorization*](#). Through our direct services work, we know that the ability to work legally in the U.S. with an employment authorization document makes a significant difference in the quality of life, safety, and stability of our clients and their children. The report is the culmination of a multi-year qualitative research project to interview our immigrant clients about the impact on their lives of delays in access to work authorization. It presents findings about the benefits of legal work permits in terms of our clients' economic independence and freedom from abuse, housing stability, mental health and well-being. It illustrates the strong connection between our clients having legal work authorization and their likelihood of seeking help from other systems, including the Family Courts and the civil justice system and law enforcement. In the words of one client interviewed for the project, "The stability of having a fixed job and waking up knowing that I will be able to provide for my kids – it's like the world opens." The report also presents recommendations for reform, including recommendations that New York City support State reform around immigration legal services, protections and benefits and continue to partner with nonprofit service providers to ensure adequate resources for immigrant survivors. We look forward to working with the Council on these matters.

Family Court and Child Support

Child support. Her Justice has had a robust Family Court practice since our founding, providing essential legal assistance to women seeking child and spousal support, custody, and orders of protection. Child support is a key priority for Her Justice in our direct services for individual clients and in our policy reform efforts. We believe that the fairness and efficiency of the child support system should be improved to ensure that children receive the most support parents can afford. With almost all parents in New York navigating child support cases without legal representation, parents deserve greater choice in how they resolve child support in court.

Her Justice has been advocating for New York State legislation that we drafted (Persaud/S.245, Reyes/A.3531), which would authorize the development of an expedited settlement conference process in New York Family Court for parents whose income is straightforward or undisputed to agree on support rather than engage in lengthy litigation in court. Her Justice is committed to providing legal representation in Family Court where it is most needed – for example, to parents who must utilize legal discovery mechanisms to determine income available for child support or to families with multiple cases pending simultaneously such as child support and custody or orders of protection. In those cases, our clients need more time before support magistrates during court appearances, with shorter adjournments between court dates, so that affordable child support orders can be established and support can be delivered to children more quickly. We strongly believe that if straightforward cases between parents who want to reach agreement on support are resolved through an expedited process, the courts will be able to dedicate urgently needed time and resources to complicated child support cases. The proposed solution will critically provide more resources to the Family Courts and will benefit all families in the child support system, getting support to children more quickly. We have been grateful to the Council for engaging in discussions around child support and Family Court reform, and we look forward to continuing to collaborate on this area of need for New Yorkers.



Family Court research. Her Justice works with thousands of pro bono attorneys each year who are true advocates in our community. In November, we launched our newest policy initiative, [Report From Court](#), a groundbreaking new policy research project that surveys pro bono attorneys representing Her Justice clients in New York City Family Court about court experiences and outcomes. There are approximately 500,000 filings each year in Family Court throughout NY State, with more than a quarter of those filed in New York City. Major decisions that impact families and children in our community are made in Family Court in cases concerning child support, custody, and protection for survivors of intimate partner violence. But most of us have no idea what goes on inside the courtroom. There is scant publicly available data about court experiences or outcomes — and the high-level data that *is* available from Family Court is about the number of cases that are filed, the number that are concluded, and the number still in progress. It neither informs those engaging with the system about what to expect in court nor supports advocacy for system improvements. This vital project aims to address the Family Court data gap and illuminate the litigant experience by sharing insights from our key pro bono partners to support meaningful reform. We look forward to the opportunity to discuss the project and what it reveals about the experience of New York City residents in Family Court.

Divorce

Her Justice, along with our pro bono partners, provides legal advice and representation to hundreds of women seeking a divorce each year. Going through a formal legal process in divorce is especially important for women who are typically the lesser-earning spouse. The legal process should ensure a fair child or spousal support award which gives single mothers a critical safety net. A fair divorce can be especially critical for victims of domestic violence, for whom financial stability is key to remaining free from abusive relationships.

As the Council is aware, domestic violence takes many forms beyond physical abuse. Many of our clients experience financial abuse – the control by one intimate partner of the other’s access to economic resources, which diminishes the victim’s self-sufficiency and forces them to depend financially on the abuser. To address this issue, Her Justice has developed an expertise in coerced debt, identity theft and financial abuse that is recognized by the New York legal community. We provide holistic legal representation, essential information, advice, brief services, referrals and financial advocacy across our family and divorce cases. We now run credit reports for 100% of our family/matrimonial clients to determine if other financial services are needed. These legal services are critical to creating stability, safety, autonomy and a sense of freedom in our clients’ lives. As a complement to our work with individual clients, Her Justice is committed to advocating for full recognition of the economic realities of domestic violence under the law and in the courts to ensure full redress for survivors.

Thank you again to the Committee and the City Council for your support for Her Justice and our work on behalf of women living in poverty in New York. We look forward to continued collaboration and partnership.

Respectfully,



Hamra Ahmad, Esq.
Head of Legal Programs and Policy
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Testimony of Housing Works
Before
The New York City Council Committees on General Welfare and Finance
Regarding
The New York City Fiscal Year 2026 Budget
May 16, 2025

Thank you, Chairpersons Ayala and Brannan, and Members of the Committees on General Welfare and Finance, for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Housing Works, a healing community founded in 1990 with a mission to end the dual crises of homelessness and AIDS. My name is Anthony Feliciano, and I am the Vice President of Community Mobilization for Housing Works. We currently provide 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 marginalized and underserved—those facing the challenges of homelessness, HIV, mental health issues, substance use disorder, other chronic conditions, and incarceration. and, most recently, migrants displaced from their homes due to violence or other crises who seek safety and a better life in the United States.

Housing Works is also a founding member of the *End AIDS NY Community Coalition* (EtE Community Coalition), a group of over ninety healthcare centers, hospitals, and community-based organizations that are fully committed to ending AIDS as an epidemic in all New York communities and populations. New York City and State have made significant progress implementing the historic 2015 [*Ending the Epidemic \(EtE\) Blueprint*](#) recommendations developed collaboratively by HIV community members, providers, advocates, and public health authorities. Our EtE efforts enabled us to “bend the curve” of the epidemic by the end of 2019, decreasing HIV prevalence for the first time since the epidemic began, and the most recent HIV surveillance data show that this trend continues. However, the data also shows that while HIV health outcomes have improved across all communities, stark and unacceptable disparities persist in HIV’s impact on Black and Hispanic/Latino New Yorkers (who accounted for 84% of persons newly diagnosed in NYC in 2023), transgender New Yorkers, and young men who have sex with men. Ending the HIV epidemic for all New York communities and populations requires sustained and new EtE efforts to advance health equity. New York City Council support has been critical to this progress, and we urge the Members of the General Welfare and Finance Committees to review all of the ***End AIDS New York Community Coalition Proposed Additional NYC Investments for the FY 2026 Budget*** attached to this testimony.

Housing Works and the EtE Community Coalition, on behalf of the marginalized New Yorkers we serve and represent, implore the City Council to ensure essential funding for the services that sustain and support our most vulnerable citizens and the non-profit agencies that work on the front lines of poverty and homelessness to meet critical needs. The Executive Budget falls short of the action necessary to address the serious and overlapping humanitarian and public health challenges facing New Yorkers. In my oral testimony I will focus on issues that specifically hinder Housing Works’ efforts. Our written testimony includes more detailed calls for action to support the systems of care needed to meet the urgent needs of the most marginalized New Yorkers.

Transform the City’s Failed Response to Homelessness and Behavioral Health Issues

Housing Works and the EtE Coalition continue to strongly oppose efforts to expand involuntary inpatient and outpatient commitment initiatives, and in particular any effort to involuntarily commit

an individual based on a determination of “*substantial inability of the person to meet his or her basic need for food, clothing, shelter or medical care.*” For over 35 years, Housing Works has successfully employed low-threshold, harm reduction strategies to engage the most marginalized New Yorkers in effective care to address co-occurring medical, mental health, and substance use disorders. What we have learned first-hand is that New Yorkers struggling to cope with serious mental health issues face multiple, significant barriers to voluntary access to the care they seek, especially those who are also trying to survive without a safe, stable place to live. These often-insurmountable barriers include a lack of supportive housing, low reimbursement rates for needed services, a shortage of health care professionals, high caseloads, and low pay for contracted service workers that makes it difficult to recruit or retain staff. As one result, on any given day, there are approximately 1,400 people with serious mental illness in City jails, where mental health services are woefully inadequate, leaving our most vulnerable New Yorkers to cycle between the streets, shelters, and jails with little or no access to voluntary care.

Housing Works, on behalf of the vulnerable New Yorkers we serve and represent, implore New York City to transform the City’s inhumane and ineffective response to the homelessness crisis by urgently adopting effective, evidence-based approaches that will save lives and money. We must stop harassing people experiencing homelessness through sweeps of the subways and encampments of those who opt for survival in public rather than entering frightening shelters, and stop stigmatizing people experiencing homelessness, especially those who are dealing with untreated or undertreated chronic medical and/or behavioral health issues while trying to survive in shelter or on the streets.

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. While we welcome the Mayor’s pledge to create an additional 900 Safe Haven beds, it is important to note the ongoing barriers to access to these facilities faced by unsheltered New Yorkers experiencing homelessness who have been afraid or unwilling to engage with the Department of Homeless Services. Truly low-threshold facilities that combine a drop-in center with on-site medical and behavioral health care with private hotel rooms to provide transitional housing without preconditions are perhaps the most effective way to engage unsheltered persons with behavioral health needs who are unable or unwilling to access more traditional shelter or treatment programs.

Make a New York City Council Investment of \$12M Annually in a Meaningful, Evidence-Based Intervention to Address the Crises of Homelessness and Mental Health

After four years of fruitless efforts to work with the New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) to open an innovative new model of comprehensive housing and services for unsheltered New Yorkers, Housing Works seeks \$12M annually in New York City Council funding for the project, which would support 166 private stabilization beds, a co-located drop in center with on-site medical and behavioral health crisis care, and access to a full range of health, mental health, and substance use services through a proximately located Housing Works Federally Qualified Health Center—as well as debt service on a non-profit owned facility available for NYC use for at least 60 years.

The model involves operating a Drop-In Center with co-located low-threshold stabilization beds; its cornerstones include delivering on-site medical and behavioral health care through a harm reduction modality, prioritizing stabilization beds for drop-in center clients who reject “traditional” entryways

into the DHS system and addressing chronic physical and behavioral health conditions that persist among drop-in and stabilization clients alike. These innovations were developed in thoughtful consultation with DHS and based on Housing Works' experiences delivering DHS-funded services at the height of the COVID pandemic, including operating two DHS COVID isolation/quarantine hotels and providing medical and behavioral health services at all DHS COVID isolation sites citywide.

Between 2020 and 2022, Housing Works received both DHS and OMB approval to operate the proposed model at three distinct locations: Chelsea, Chinatown, and Jamaica. Unfortunately, in all three cases, the sites fell through for different reasons (in June 2020 the Chelsea hotel owner pulled out one week before opening, betting that NYC tourism would rebound; in May 2022 the hotels union persuaded the Mayor to object to and kill the Chinatown project; and in February 2023 the Jamaica hotel operator reneged on its deal with Housing Works to pursue—successfully—a more lucrative contract to use the site as a DHS City Sanctuary Facility).

Despite these setbacks, Housing Works remains committed to bring its model of street homeless services to one of New York City's most impacted neighborhood, leveraging our 35 years of experience providing housing, supportive service, and primary and behavioral health care to populations other providers deem "too difficult to serve." Our goal is to pilot a model that 1) engages NYC's hardest-to-reach populations who reject "traditional" DHS services, 2) provides sustained high-quality care to addresses chronic medical and mental health conditions, substance use, and overdose, 3) demonstrates long-term cost savings by reducing avoidable utilization of hospital emergency department and other city resources, and 4) work intensively with stabilized residents to secure appropriate permanent housing placements.

In 2023, Housing Works was awarded a grant from the New York State Health Foundation (NYSHF) to conduct a rigorous academic evaluation of the proposed model; while the grant was returned when the last site fell through, NYSHF has graciously invited us to reapply when a new site becomes available. Through a multisector partnership of government, nonprofit, and academic partners, we hope to provide an evidence-based model that would strengthen New York City's ability to better address unsheltered homelessness and its associated issues.

Housing Works has now identified 538 W 48th Street in Manhattan as a potential site for our proposed program. A former Holiday Inn, this location was a former DHS COVID quarantine hotel which Housing Works operated between 2021 and 2022; therefore, we are well familiar with the property and its condition. The site would provide for 166 private stabilization beds and 50 drop-in center chairs.

Housing Works proposes to acquire this site through DHS's nonprofit-owned (NPO) program, using a 30-year service contract to fund the acquisition and renovation. Given that the site is a former commercial hotel in good condition, the site does *not* require a complete redevelopment; capital costs would be limited to reconfiguring the ground and basement levels into a layout suitable for the drop-in center, and providing whatever minor updates are needed for existing guest rooms. This provides the added benefit of opening the site on a quicker timeline compared to ground-up development or substantial redevelopment. Indeed, 150 stabilization beds and a temporary drop-in center would be operational within four months of registration, and the building would be fully operational within a year.

Housing Works is partnering with Slate Property Group on this project, both to develop and to help finance the acquisition. Slate has successfully facilitated the development of multiple DHS NPO facilities for other nonprofit providers and therefore understands the needs of this program. They have already evaluated the site and found it to be both operationally and financially feasible. Further, they are willing to leverage financing so that the acquisition and renovations may move forward expeditiously.

Significantly, under this acquisition program the location must be operated for its initial purpose for at least 30 years and would remain available for City use for a full 60 years, making this an excellent investment for New York City.

The proposed 48th Street location is also strategically located just two avenues away from the Westside Health Center at 326 W 48th Street opened by Housing Works in summer 2023. As part of our Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) system, the Westside Health Center provides robust primary and mental health care services, including services operated through our FQHC's "Health Care for the Homeless" designation. We also operate a robust New York State Article 31 Office of Mental Health (OMH) program at this site. Through the escort of peer workers, we may help drop-in center and stabilization clients walk to and from the health center for appointments. For clients with mobility issues, transportation would be provided. And staff between the two sites would work hand in hand to monitor client progress and health outcomes through interdisciplinary team meetings, integrated case conferences, and shared client data across our common electronic medical record and case management systems.

The proximity of these two sites will enable Housing Works to deliver a robust model of care that would supplement on-site medical and behavioral health crisis care with access to the full services available at our 48th Street location. As we understand that opioid use, overdose, and co-occurring medical and mental health conditions are among the top public health issues experienced by street homeless populations, we will focus on leveraging on-site medical and behavioral health teams who can provide 24/7 crisis intervention and navigate clients toward buprenorphine induction, ongoing mental health care, and other appropriate interventions available at our 48th Street community health center.

DHS has informed Housing Works that they will not no longer support the project because they are only interested in facilities located at the ends of the transit lines in Coney Island, Staten Island, and the Bronx. Housing Works asserts, however, that parts of Midtown West, including Hell's Kitchen and edges of the Theater District and transit hub, have long experienced an unmet need for street homeless services and substance use and mental health interventions. Housing Works intends to leverage the infrastructure, talent, and capacity of its considerable primary care, housing operations, and social service system to address street homelessness in this high need neighborhood. We are prepared to deliver a service-rich program model that will be enhanced by the unique proximity of our proposed site to our existing clinic. Unlike other drop-ins, we do not intend to close our doors once we hit capacity for the night. Rather, we are "all in" on making a marked improvement in the immediate area as well as collaborating with our partners to pilot, innovate, and evaluate models of care that can improve outcomes for homeless individuals citywide.

Invest in the Development of Housing With Deep Affordability

Of course, addressing our housing and homeless crises requires substantial new City investments in housing with deep affordability, including supportive housing for those who need it. Housing Works

calls for \$2.5 billion in additional new construction financing each year for the next five years for apartments specifically built for homeless and extremely low-income New Yorkers, including: doubling the set-aside in new affordable housing developments for homeless households from 15 to 30 percent, to produce at least 6,000 new apartments per year; and building an additional 6,000 apartments per year for households with extremely low incomes. The high delinquency rate in commercial buildings also presents an opportunity, and we call for a dedicated funding stream and the appropriate level of zoning relief to convert these properties to affordable housing.

Housing Works joins the City Council in welcoming the Executive Budget provisions to accelerate realization of its commitment to develop 15,000 new NYC-funded supportive housing units by 2030. It is critical to shift the focus of the 15/15 from the scattered site model to the creation of congregate, single site supportive housing units, and we welcome the \$46M provided for rental assistance over three years to support and preserve 15/15 units. We urge the City Council to ensure that the NYC 15/15 initiative is employed to accelerate production and preserve older housing stock, and to remove arbitrary barriers to the housing created. NYC 15/15, the City's 15-year plan to develop 15,000 units of supportive housing, is currently in its tenth year yet only 20% of the 7,500 scattered site units are awarded as of 2025. Housing Works joins calls for the City to allocate unawarded funding into three "buckets": to create more congregate housing which adds affordable units to the housing stock, to preserve and maintain older supportive housing units which otherwise might be lost, and to create "overlay" units, in which nonprofits will combine increased scattered site service contracts with units in City-funded affordable housing developments. It is equally important for the City to amend eligibility for the program to remove, to the extent possible, the requirement that residents meet the federal definition of "chronic homelessness." This definition can be difficult or impossible for many people experiencing homelessness to demonstrate, and while we acknowledge that it is a requirement for programs funded at least in part by Federal Continuum of Care homeless housing funding, the City should not employ the definition to define eligibility for any program that does not receive CoC funding.

Improve and Expand the CityFHEPs Program

Housing Works is grateful for the improvements to the CityFHEPs program enacted by the City Council in 2023, and fully support efforts to enforce their full implementation by the Administration. However, as you know, the CityFHEPs process is plagued by unpredictable and lengthy delays, rampant discrimination from landlords and brokers, and administrative missteps that discourage applicants, alienate landlords, and prolong homelessness. We urge the Council to address aspects of the program that undermine its efficacy, including using your oversight authority to hold DSS accountable for administrative problems, and increasing funding, as noted below, for enforcement of source of income protections.

We also urge the Council and Administration to expand eligibility for CityFHEPs beyond residents of shelters operated by the NYC Department of Homeless Services, to include residents of any type of NYC emergency or transitional housing such as the transitional housing program that Housing Works operates for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) and young adults (16-24) who access shelter through NYC's Department of Youth and Community Development, and for State and City action to work to expand eligibility for the program to include new immigrants.

As just one example, The MOCJ Emergency and Transitional Housing Program (MOCJ ETH) provides up to twelve months of a safe stable place to live for people leaving incarceration without housing, while providing vocational, educational, and therapeutic services as well as assistance to

secure permanent housing. Housing Works, as one of several non-profit MOCJ ETH program providers, provides 356 beds combined with skills building, job training, access to medical and behavioral health services, and housing placement assistance. Originally initiated during the COVID crisis, the MOCJ ETH program has been continued and expanded in recognition of the fact that New Yorkers leaving incarceration often require housing assistance and supportive services to make a successful transition back into the community. However, while many of our program participants complete job training and secure employment they are not able to afford housing on the open rental market.

During the COVID crisis, MOCJ ETH program participants had access to Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) under the Housing Choice Section 8 program, but the supply of those vouchers has dried up, and our MOCJ ETH participants are not eligible for any other housing subsidies. Like other supportive housing programs for the justice-involved population, the MOCJ Transitional Housing Programs generate reductions in shelter and jail use, inpatient hospitalizations and related Medicaid costs, and substance use. However, this worthwhile investment is squandered when at the end of a successful 12-month transitional housing stay, participants who have completed educational and job training programs, and are stable and employed, are pushed back into homelessness in the mass shelters or on the streets, and in the worst-case scenario end up back in jail. It makes no economic sense to spend over \$130/day on shelter or over \$500K annually to keep someone at Rikers, when the City has invested \$50K to \$60K annually in supportive transitional housing but is unwilling to afford participants a housing voucher that would cost only \$25K to \$36K a year.

Housing Works also calls on the City Council to restore \$325M included in the FY25 budget to support rental assistance for households experiencing housing eviction but eliminated in this year's FY26 Executive Budget. As the Council knows, New York City faces an eviction crisis with the Trump Administration's announcement that funding for the federal Emergency Housing Vouchers supposed to continue through 2030 will be terminated on December 31st of this year. Some 7,700 New Yorkers who rely on these vouchers, including the MOCJ Transitional Housing Program graduates Housing Works placed with these vouchers, face the loss of their rental assistance and a potential return to homelessness. This loss of housing support will be devastating for the individuals and families who lose housing support, and for the landlords who were assured of ten years of funding for these units. New York City must make every resource available to mitigate this disaster, including support for households experiencing eviction and expanding eligibility for CityFHEPS vouchers to residents of any type of New York City emergency or transitional housing.

Fund Non-Profit Legal Services Organizations to Address Source of Income Discrimination

To maximize the effectiveness of existing NYC voucher programs, including HASA rental assistance and CityFHEPs vouchers requires more consistent and effective legal action to enforce the City prohibition on source of income discrimination. Housing Works and the End AIDS NY Community Coalition respectfully assert that in addition to any enforcement resources added to the City's Human Rights Division, at least \$4M in funding be made available annually to support contracts with non-profit organizations with a record of successful litigation to address the continued illegal discrimination by brokers and landlords who refuse to accept government-funded rental vouchers.

Authorize and Expand Overdose Prevention Centers

Housing Works and the End AIDS NY Community Coalition call on the NYC City Council to officially authorize the operation of Overdose Prevention Centers (OPCs) in NYC, and to fund at

least five OPCs using Opioid Settlement funding in addition to the two programs currently operating in upper Manhattan with \$1.5 million each annually in Opioid Settlement funding that supports approximately 90% of costs of the programs excluding actual observation of participant injections. Considering recent public threats of federal action to try to shut down NYC’s two OPCs – that, together, have served 5,804 participants and intervened in 1,696 overdoses since they opened in November 2021 – it has never been so important for government to exercise its power to authorize OPCs as an evidence-base public health intervention to address our opioid and overdoses crises. We call on the NYC City Council to exercise its oversight authority to require release of the prepared NYC Health Department request for proposals to operate these additional OPCs and call for at least \$1.5 million in annual Settlement funding for each of at least five additional OPCs, for a total of \$7.5 million annually to support expansion of this life-saving initiative.

Enhance and Baseline the Trans Equity Programs Initiative at \$10M Annually

We call on the City Council and Administration to enhance and baseline funding for the Trans Equity Programs initiative, supporting a range of services to help empower the transgender and gender non-conforming (TGNC) communities. Funding supports education programs, workforce development, health care navigation, legal guidance, community workshops, and mental health programs, among other services. The City Council has already taken important action to counter the unprecedented attacks on TGNC people and their rights, but this federal administration’s persistent actions through executive orders and directives to erase transgender identities, eliminate medically necessary health care for TGNB people, and threaten all support and care provided for the LGBTQ+ community, are meant to paralyze, frighten, and divide. As these new challenges exacerbate ongoing economic troubles (e.g., increased needs for mental health, substance abuse, and food supports), we expect the needs of TGNC service providers in NYC to increase dramatically in FY26. It is essential to strengthen the ability of these programs to serve transgender New Yorkers, including delivery of HIV and sexual health services to transgender New Yorkers, including HIV and STI testing, prevention, care, and supportive services.

It is also imperative to empower trans-led programs with the funding necessary to sustain and grow their works. Currently, 62% of Trans Equity Programs funding goes to cisgender-led organizations. Since the creation of the Trans Equity Programs initiative, more trans-led organizations have been created, but due to the way initiative funding operates, it is nearly impossible for new groups to receive funding or for any trans-led funded groups’ award to increase.

To meet real need and elevate trans leadership, the End AIDS NY Community Coalition calls on the NYC City Council to increase the Trans Equity Programs funding to \$10M; make the application process more accessible by contracting a technical assistance provider to provide free support to eligible applicants who have been left out of past funding cycles; and prioritize trans-led organizations for funding

Support Human Services Agencies with Adequate Indirect Funding

Housing Works also welcomes the addition of \$45M in the Executive Budget to “fund indirect rate growth” for human services contractors that contract with the New York City Department for the Aging (NYC Aging), New York City Public Schools, and the New York City Human Resources Administration. However, it is time for meaningful action to address the underfunding of critical non-profit infrastructure needs for *all* human services contractors, including those providing essential HIV prevention and care under contract with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. We welcomed adoption by the City two years ago of a contracting agency’s approved

Federal indirect rate after years of inadequate funding, but to date total contract amounts have not been adjusted to reflect the additional infrastructure funding, and social service agencies employing their approved indirect rate have been required to cut direct services by an amount equal to the additional indirect costs covered. Housing Works and the End AIDS NY Community Coalition call on the Council to support the funding required to amend each existing NYC human services contract as soon as practicable to increase the total contract amount to reflect the contracting agency's approved Federal indirect rate "below the line" without impacting contract funding for direct services. For the EtE Initiative Contracts alone, we request approximately \$2M in additional indirect funding be added to existing contracts to afford providers their Federally approved indirect rates.

Wage Equity for Human Services Workers

Inadequate NYC contract reimbursement rates have resulted in poverty-level wages for many human services workers, who are predominantly women and people of color. Essential human services workers are among the lowest paid employees in the NYC economy, resulting in high turnover and serious disadvantage in an increasingly competitive labor market. Housing Works and the End AIDS NY Community Coalition join the #JustPay Campaign to call on the Administration to ensure a living wage for all City-funded human services workers by creating and funding a comprehensive wage and benefit schedule for City-contracted human services workers comparable to the salaries made by City employees in the same field.

Thank you for your time. Please direct any questions to Anthony Feliciano, Vice President of Community Mobilization at Housing Works, Inc., at a.feliciano@housingworks.org.

Attachment:

End AIDS New York Community Coalition Proposed Additional NYC Investments for the FY 2026 Budget



New York City Council Committee on General Welfare
Jointly with the Committee on Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
May 16, 2025

Submitted by:
Gloria Kim
Director of Policy, Research, and Impact
Human Services Council of NY

Introduction

Good afternoon, Chair Ayala and Chair Brannan, and members of the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare and Finance. My name is Gloria Kim, and I am the Director of Policy, Research, and Impact at the Human Services Council (HSC), a membership organization representing over 180 human services providers in New York. HSC serves our membership as a coordinating body, advocate, and intermediary between the human services sector and government. We take on this work so that our members can focus on running their organizations and providing critical direct support to New Yorkers. These are the nonprofits that support our city's children, seniors, those experiencing homelessness, people with disabilities, individuals who are incarcerated or otherwise involved in the justice system, immigrants, and individuals coping with substance abuse and other mental health and behavioral challenges. We strive to help our members better serve their clients by addressing matters such as government procurement practices, disaster preparedness and recovery, government funding, and public policies that impact the sector.

Indirect Cost Rate Investment

We thank the City for funding indirect rate growth for human services providers that contract with NYC Aging, NYC Public Schools, and HRA. Indirect expenses like information technology, building maintenance, program evaluation, accounting, human resources, and employee training are vitally important to service delivery. Without adequate indirect funding, it could lead to inadequate and obsolete facilities, equipment and technology, understaffed and under skilled accounting, human resources, and administrative offices that reduce organizational ability to deliver programs, document results, and diminish accountability, oversight, and compliance.

\$5 Billion in Advances

We appreciate the over \$5 billion investment in advance payments for nonprofit providers. This could ease the financial burden suffered by nonprofits and allow the sector to provide critical resources to better serve our communities. However, it has been clear for years that most City contracts with nonprofit human services providers are registered months or even years after the nonprofits have begun providing services. System improvements, most notably PASSPort, have been put in place but nonprofits still report significant delays in contract registration, and that

means that providers do not have access to advances until contracts are registered. Registration delays can be financially ruinous, as services are expected to begin on the first day of a contract, even if the contract has not yet been registered by the relevant agency. This means providers take enormous fiscal and legal risks by signing leases, hiring staff, and starting programs without a contract, or continuing to operate services on the verbal agreement that things will get sorted out.

MOCS Investment

We thank the City for including 20 additional positions to the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS) help desk and making system improvements. The Mayor's Office of Contract Services is responsible for overseeing the City procurement process and leading reform initiatives to make it more equitable, transparent, and efficient. This will help with the significant amount of pending contract actions that are preventing providers from getting paid for the services they provided. This is unsustainable for the sector especially as they continuously deal with delayed procurement processes, which further exacerbates the cashflow challenges that countless human services nonprofits face. By investing in additional positions to MOCS, it will ensure that providers contracting needs are met so that they can focus on providing services to their communities.

Conclusion

The nonprofit sector has struggled for decades with the government procurement system to the detriment of the financial health of nonprofits. Although the City has taken on a great effort in creating substantial reforms to address the procurement challenges that nonprofits face, there are still compounding delays in the contracting process that force providers to undertake costly borrowing to make payroll and rents, often accruing interest not covered by government contracts. There are real and insurmountable financial hurdles that the current system has placed on providers, which must be resolved so that the sector can continue to deliver its human services programs.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify. We greatly value our partnership with the City Council and know you stand with us in our call to support the human services sector.

Gloria Kim
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Testimony for the New York City Council Executive Budget Hearing on General Welfare May 16, 2025

My name is Kristin Miller, and I am the Executive Director at Homeless Services United. Homeless Services United (HSU) is a coalition representing over 50 mission-driven, homeless service providers in New York City. HSU advocates for the expansion of affordable housing and prevention services and for immediate access to safe, decent, emergency and transitional housing, outreach and drop-in services for homeless New Yorkers. Homeless Services United promotes effective solutions to end the crisis of homelessness in New York City.

The FY26 Budget must take decisive action to rectify payment issues for Shelter Providers.

Our members have recently experienced a temporary cash flow due to actions the city took to address overdue payments. The Backlog Initiative moved hundreds of outstanding invoices pending at the Department of Homeless Services alone at the end of 2024 and recent attention and systems improvements have helped move pending payments. However, we still have months (even years) of catch-up in pending budget, budget updates, and invoice approvals that are prohibiting them from being reimbursed for the services already performed that continue to restrict cash flow. Nonprofits are still trying to close out fiscal years as far back as FY19, and many are still trying to get the Workforce Enhancement Initiative monies in their budgets from FY24.

HSU took a recent sample of 5 DHS-contracted providers to assess the outstanding budget actions. Out of this sample group, **these 5 providers have over \$112,000,000 in outstanding budget actions from FY19 to FY25.** Some providers have stopped bidding on new DHS contracts because the risk of doing further business with the City is simply too high.

In a recent report by the Comptroller, DHS has over 1300 pending invoices as of April 28 – 20% of which have been sitting with DHS over 100 days.¹ Providers routinely experience delayed contract registration, delayed approvals for budget modifications and invoices for review, and repeated requests for supporting documentation, only for there to be continued delays once submitting requested documentation. The lack of normalcy when it comes to payments puts our member organizations at risk. It makes it difficult to pay staff, vendors, and run programs for clients. Organizations are often forced to take out lines of credit just to relieve cash flow issues, only to then have to pay interest. members have paid over \$1million in interest in this fiscal year alone.

Alongside procedural inefficiencies, short staffing within City Agencies has also contributed to delays in payment. We are pleased to see the Executive Budget allocates \$8.9 million to add 20 additional positions to the Mayor's Office of Contract Services' help desk and making much-

¹ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nonprofit-nonpayment/>

needed PASSPort system improvements. There is also an increase in 131 positions at DSS. Unfortunately, adequate staff investment is not across the board. Per the New York Housing Conference, the DHS' budgeted headcount dropped by 494 staff from Dec. 2019 to Jan. 2025.

The Executive Budget removes 111 positions at DHS. This removal, on top of the fact that DSS has not been able to recruit and retain staff at a rate that keeps up with the demand, will likely result in payment lag times. We must increase the number of staff positions at DHS and dedicate funding to create separate teams to clean up past fiscal years' backlogs, which are often more complicated and time-consuming to process. When DHS pulls staff away from day-to-day budget and payment approvals to clear out aged invoices disrupts the little cash flow members already get. Without additional staff, DHS will never clean up the huge backlog of pending budget approvals.

Alongside adequate staffing, it is also crucial to push for an investment in the PASSPort system to make technological advances that make the invoicing process easier and so that providers can see more information on their pending invoices. Members lost much of their ability to track actions in the system when the old HHS Accelerator was replaced by PASSPort. They also lost the ability to move concurrent actions on the same contract PASSPort software modifications will bring more transparency and speed to the process.

Finally, the new federal administration has created much uncertainty for non-profit providers here in NYC.² Between the proposed federal funding freezes, program eliminations and federal staff firings, many providers are concerned over the reliability of funds from the federal government. Given the uncertainty of federal resources and proposed cuts, it is all the more important that the City registers contracts in a timely manner and pay non-profit homeless service providers for their services on time to not further threaten the insolvency of non-profits.

We are glad to see that the FY26 Executive Budget includes the baselining of prevailing wages for security guards. We hope additional investments like this are made in this year's budget and in future budgets.

We urge the City Council to invest in homeless services and the social safety net.

Concerningly, the FY26 Executive Budget does not make significant new investments when it comes to protecting homeless New Yorkers and preventing evictions. NYC stands to lose thousands of vouchers from federal funding cuts. The Emergency Housing Voucher provides 7,700 vouchers here in NYC. Should the program not get additional funding, it will affect the housing 20,000 people and will impact 5,700 property owners. Additionally, several HUD rental assistance programs are at risk of losing funding -- 329,644 units in NYC receive some form HUD rental assistance. We need to allocate additional funding to programs like Homebase,

² Oreskes, B., Newman, A. (2025, January 28) Nonprofits in New York Are Told Their Contracts 'Have Been Paused'. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/28/us/politics/nyc-nonprofit-contracts.html>

street homelessness outreach, and invest in our shelter system to prepare for the thousands of New Yorkers at risk of entering homelessness. While federal funding may go away, the people receiving those services will not and are at extremely high risk of becoming homeless.

We urge the City Council to reduce barriers in voucher administration that greatly expedite placement in permanent housing.

The Executive Budget provides \$176.6 million to protecting rental assistance, including CityFHEPS. Additionally, alongside an investment into the program, we must work to further steps are needed to greatly expedite placement and meaningfully reduce family homelessness. These include:

CITYFHEPS - On Inspections:

- Do Not Allow Minor Issues to Hold Up Move-In: Apartment inspection processes should be standardized and include a hierarchy of issues, such that minor issues will not result in an inspection failure. Currently, minor issues, which can be immediately rectified, such as a missing light switch cover, may result in an inspection failure and a severe delay to the client's move-in date. This is modeled after NYCHA's approach to inspections.
- Reform Double Inspection Rule: For units which require a DHS inspection (cellars and ground floor units), DSS requires both a DHS and a separate HRA inspection. We call for the secondary inspection to be limited to a fraction of the units as a secondary review/audit procedure but not policy for every unit.

CITYFHEPS - On Income Verification:

- The \$100 Rule: The incomes presented in a voucher package must be within \$100 of the original shopping letter amount. With low-income tenant incomes often varying greatly week by week, this discrepancy often triggers a rebudgeting letter, which is a source of delay. DHS/HRA staff who are reviewing this should be allowed to reissue the tenant share with the new income numbers, and not require a separate rebudgeting process.

CITYFHEPS - On Public Assistance Single Issuance:

- Time Frame: The current time frame is 30 days but often the process for applying and getting the voucher is longer and requires the single issuance to be resubmitted. We recommend a 90-day time frame.
- Add Option for Access HRA: There is currently no process on Access HRA to signify that an application is for single issuance public assistance. This results in many applications being treated as ongoing public assistance. This should be a distinct option on Access HRA to avoid confusion.

CITYFHEPS – Process Improvements:



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- Electronic Paperwork: Application packet forms should be readable/fillable PDF forms that can be signed electronically and emailed back, while still allowing for a paper process.
- Outreach: If a client's application is missing documents, DSS should not wait to contact that client via mail or phone call. DSS should also reach out to clients via text or email which to have the best chance of successfully connecting with clients. DSS often calls to detail this type of information from an unknown number, so clients may not pick up, and then they miss the opportunity to talk about their application. Then, DSS's next step is to send a letter to the client in the mail. The letter should be clear about what information is needed via the AccessHRA portal. Additionally, if a DSS staff person does call a client for this purpose; they should leave a call back number, along with hours of availability.
- Family Moves Within Shelter: When families are transferred into new shelter locations, the application process should not begin again. When this has occurred, it has added significant time delays. Applications should maintain even when families move locations.



2025 Budget Hearing of the NYC Council Committee on General Welfare on Hunger and Food Insecurity in New York City.

May 16, 2025

Testimony of Kim Moscaritolo, State Policy Director for Hunger Free America

I am honored to submit this testimony today on behalf of the estimated 1.2 million city residents who are struggling against hunger.

New Yorkers still face massive hunger and food insecurity crises citywide, and we need a massive response from the City, especially one that focuses on increasing participation in the federally-SNAP, WIC, school breakfasts, and new summer EBT programs. Given the massive funding cuts proposed, and in some cases already implemented, by the federal government, it is more important than ever that New York City step up and ensure that all New Yorkers have access to ample nutritious food by adequately funding anti-hunger initiatives.

This week, the House Agriculture Committee passed portion of the broader Budget Reconciliation package that would slash the main U.S. domestic food assistance program by \$300 billion in order to pay for a new round of tax cuts that would most greatly benefit the wealthiest Americans. The cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – formerly called the Food Stamp Program – would reduce benefits for all 41 million participants in the program, the vast majority of whom are children, working people, seniors, people with disabilities, and veterans. In March, the USDA cut a billion dollars of funding to purchase food from local farmers for schools and food banks.

Background on The Current State of Hunger In New York City

According to raw USDA data analyzed by Hunger Free America:

Across New York City, 14.3% of the population, or 1.2 million people, lived in food insecure households between 2021 and 2023. The Bronx is New York City's hungriest borough in terms of prevalence, with 19.1% of residents (227,086 people) living in food insecure households.

Queens contains the highest number of individuals living in food insecure households, reaching 310,310 people between 2021 and 2023.

Nearly one out of every five children (18.6%) in New York City experiences food insecurity, while almost one third (32.2%) of children in the Bronx are food insecure. Food insecurity among employed adults increased slightly between 2021 and 2023, reaching 10.4%. The number of food insecure older New York City residents increased to 213,143 between 2021 and 2023.

At the same time, hundreds of thousands of City residents eligible for federally funded benefits do not receive them. The best under-participation estimates that we have for SNAP that are official are old (for 2018, pre-pandemic). For technical reasons we would be glad to discuss, we believe USDA's estimates, even in 2018, undercounted those who are eligible but did not then receive SNAP. But even if USDA's numbers were correct, that still meant that 1 in 10 people overall, 25 percent of working people, and 30 percent of older New York State residents who were eligible for SNAP did not get it. The percentages are likely even higher for the City than the State as a whole.

As for federally funded WIC benefits (for pregnant women and children under five), as of 2021, USDA estimated that whopping 45 percent of the pregnant women and children under five eligible for WIC statewide did not get it. Unlike SNAP, WIC has no immigration restrictions in the program and has slightly higher income eligibility than SNAP, so this under-participation in WIC is especially harmful. The percentages are likely even higher for the City than the State.

As for steps the City can take to fight hunger, we have six recommendations:

- Increase funding to nonprofit groups (including Hunger Free America) that increase access to government food benefits through the NYC Benefits program and direct City Council funding.
- Accelerate the City's promised work to create a MyCity portal to allow application for multiple benefits.
- Urge the State to end the sub-minimum wage for tipped food service workers.
- Enact and fund a SNAP-like program, to be funded by the City, to give extra grocery funds to immigrants and working poor New Yorkers who are ineligible for federal SNAP benefits. California recently started such a program.
- Ensure that all classes in all New York City public schools provide either in-classroom school breakfasts or grab and go breakfast in their hallways. Currently, New York City has the lowest school breakfast participation rate out of any big city school system in the United States, with 55.4 percent of kids who get school lunches failing to get school breakfasts.
- Work with nonprofit groups to launch a comprehensive outreach and enrollment campaign to ensure robust participation in the new Summer EBT program.

We also suggest that the Council formally endorse the Congressional and State HOPE bills which would make it easier for people to apply for multiple benefits online and enable low-income families to develop assets by being able to buy a first home, start a small business, or save to pay for higher education or retirement.

We hope you can take all or some of these actions rapidly. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.



Executive Budget Hearing Testimony

New York City Council Committee on Finance and General Welfare

Delivered by: Sierra Kraft

Executive Director, Immigrant Children Advocates' Relief Effort (ICARE)

May 16, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Brannan, Deputy Speaker Ayala, and members of the Committees on Finance and General Welfare. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sierra Kraft, and I'm the Executive Director of the ICARE Coalition, a coalition of seven legal service providers that has, for over a decade, ensured unaccompanied immigrant children in New York City have access to free, high-quality legal representation.

Our members, Catholic Charities Community Services, Central American Legal Assistance (CALA), Human Rights First, Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), Legal Aid Society, The Door, and Safe Passage Project, are on the frontlines of this work every day, fighting to ensure that no child has to face the immigration system alone. Collectively, we have served over 14,000 children and families across the city providing access to critical legal and social services, ensuring young immigrants can build a bright future here in New York.

But right now, we are in a moment of urgent crisis. On March 21st, the federal government abruptly terminated the Unaccompanied Children Program (UCP) contract, eliminating nearly \$14 million in funding for New York City providers. Overnight, 1,300 children lost their attorneys. Some of these children had court hearings the very next day. Their cases are still moving forward, despite having no understanding of their rights, no voice in the



courtroom, and no protection.

These are kids, some just toddlers, who fled unimaginable violence, trafficking, and separation from their families. They arrived here hoping for safety. Instead, they're being pushed through a legal system even trained professionals struggle to navigate, without counsel, without support, and without a fair shot.

One of those children is a young mother, still a child herself, who gave birth the morning of her scheduled hearing. She missed it. And the judge ordered her deported in absentia. No consideration for her circumstances. No room for compassion. She now has to try to reopen her case, and yet we are at capacity and cannot promise her the full representation she deserves. This is what the system looks like right now, when due process is treated as optional.

At a time of rising threats of mass deportations and political attacks on immigrant communities, New York must step in. Legal representation is one of the most effective tools we have to prevent deportation, homelessness, and exploitation. Without an attorney, a child's chance of remaining safely in the U.S. drops to less than 15%. With an ICARE attorney, that number rises above 90%.

This is about legal services, but it's also about protecting our values. It's about keeping families together, protecting children from harm, and ensuring that our city doesn't abandon them when federal systems fail.

This federal collapse has destabilized the legal ecosystem we've spent the last decade building. Several providers have already had to issue layoffs, freeze intakes, and lose expert



attorneys. These are attorneys who have built trusted, culturally responsive relationships with the communities they serve, particularly in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx, where most unaccompanied children in NYC now live.

For over six years, city funding through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative (UMFI) has remained stagnant, even as demand has grown and costs have risen. And while UMFI has allowed providers to shift cases and respond quickly during this crisis, it is not enough to meet the scale of need or offset the federal cuts.

That's why we're respectfully requesting:

- **\$6.297 million in FY26 discretionary funding through UMFI** to sustain and stabilize legal services for 2,013 children and families; and
- **\$5.4 million in emergency funding** to address the immediate fallout from the UCP contract termination and prevent further erosion of services.

These children are already here. They're attending our schools, rebuilding their lives in our neighborhoods, and trying to survive. When the federal government failed to protect them, and the State failed to act, but New York City has a chance to lead. To stand with these kids.

We ask you to meet this moment, not just with words, but with City investment. These young people need more than sympathy. They need representation. They need protection. And they need a city that's willing to fight for them.



Thank you for your time, and for your continued commitment to immigrant youth in New York.

In Community,

Sierra Kraft
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Defend Their Future: Fund Legal Services for Immigrant Children

Who We Are: ICARE is a coalition of legal service organizations dedicated to expanding access to legal representation for immigrant children facing deportation in New York City, while advocating for universal access to counsel.

The Challenge: Every year, thousands of children—some as young as infants - appear in NYC immigration courts without an attorney. New York ranks 4th nationwide in unaccompanied arrivals released to sponsors, yet many must face the system alone.

Most of the children and families we represent are fleeing extreme violence, trafficking, and persecution, seeking safety in the U.S. Without an attorney, they have only a 15% chance of winning their case. With ICARE representation, their success rate jumps to over 90%.

At the same time, immigration court backlogs have hit record highs, leaving children and families in legal limbo for years. Federal policy shifts have created new legal hurdles, requiring providers to expand services to meet emerging needs. Without City Council's continued investment, thousands of children will be left to represent themselves, leading to deportation and life-threatening consequences.

What We Do: With City Council's help, ICARE provides **free legal services** for immigrant children and families fighting deportation in NYC. Our services include: **Know-Your-Rights trainings**, **legal screenings**, **direct representation** and **connections to city & social services**, ensuring vulnerable New Yorkers don't face the immigration system alone.

Our Impact (Since 2014)

Screened over
14,000 children for
relief

Represented over
3,000 children

Obtained relief for
1,500 children

Secured over \$24M in
public funding for legal
services

ICARE FY26 Discretionary Funding Request: \$6,297,250

Despite overwhelming demand, ICARE providers have not received a funding increase in six years. This year's funding request is the difference between safety and deportation for 2,013 children and families.



**No child should face
the immigration process alone**



In partnership with:

CENTRAL AMERICAN LEGAL ASSISTANCE



THE
LEGAL AID
SOCIETY



KiND
KIDS IN NEED OF DEFENSE

Human
Rights
First

Impact of UCP Contract Termination on Legal Services for Unaccompanied Children in NYC

On March 21, 2025, the federal government issued a near-total termination of the Unaccompanied Children Program (UCP) contract, eliminating nearly all federal support for unaccompanied minors in immigration proceedings. This decision dismantles protections outlined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) and destabilizes a decades long infrastructure that safeguarded children's rights.

Overview of What Was Lost

- 1,300+ children with open immigration cases were left without legal representation overnight
- Nearly \$14M in federal funding for NYC legal service providers, including 4 ICARE members
- Detained & Post Release full representation in immigration court, legal screenings, KYRs, Friend of Court advocacy, case management, and referrals to social services

Provider-Level Impact in NYC

- Catholic Charities Community Services: \$5.2M lost in FY25, with \$5.9M approved for FY26; 43 staff impacted; 550 cases affected. Lost services include: Detained & Post Release full representation; case management; follow-on services for detained children (Friend of Court (FOC) appearances, follow-up screenings, referrals and advocacy)
- The Door: \$4.7M lost, 38 staff impacted; 300 open representation cases. Lost services include: Detained services for two short-term shelters and two long-term foster care centers. Services include KYRs, legal screenings, monitoring and advocacy, FOC appearances, and full representation including screening, application filing and immigration court representation.
- Kids in Need of Defense (KIND): \$3M lost, 580 cases affected; 43 staff impacted. Lost services include: Detained & Post release full representation, KYRs, legal screenings, and social services
- Safe Passage Project: \$251K lost in FY25, with \$350k approved for FY26; 9 partially funded staff impacted; 39 cases affected. Lost services include: Post Release full representation

Consequences for New York City

- Staff layoffs, loss of experienced attorneys, intake freezes, programs paused or downsized
- Cases are moving forward without children understanding their rights
- Children at risk of in absentia removal because they never receive guidance or representation
- Chilling effect on sponsor participation due to fear of enforcement
- Schools, shelters, and hospitals report confusion and fear, as referrals are turned away
- Without a lawyer, a child is nearly guaranteed to be deported back to dangerous conditions, but with an attorney by their side, they have over a 90% chance of remaining safely in the U.S.

Why New York Must Act

These young people are already here, attending NYC schools, living in our communities, and in our courtrooms. They are New York's responsibility. When the federal government pulled support, these kids were left defenseless. We cannot do the same.

What ICARE is requesting:

- **\$5.4M in emergency funds** to prevent further case loss
- **\$6.29M through the Unaccompanied Minors and Families Initiative** to sustain a citywide safety net for immigrant children
- Long-term investment in a statewide legal defense infrastructure that protects immigrant children



**No child should face
the immigration process alone**

Contact: Sierra Kraft, Executive Director | skraft@icarecoalition.org | www.icarecoalition.org

LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE WORKING POOR

City Fiscal Year 2026

City Council Executive Budget Hearing
Committee on General Welfare and Committee on Finance

May 16, 2025

Thank you, Chairs Brannan and Ayala, and to the members of the New York City Council, for your long-standing support of the Legal Services for the Working Poor (LSWP) Coalition.

My name is Leslie Thrope, and I serve as the Executive Director of Housing Conservation Coordinators (HCC), one of the five member organizations of the Legal Services for the Working Poor Coalition. Alongside HCC, the Coalition includes CAMBA Legal Services, Mobilization for Justice, Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation, and TakeRoot Justice. For over 20 years, with the steadfast support of the City Council, this Coalition has worked to address the civil legal needs of working poor and other low-income New Yorkers—individuals whose income slightly exceeds the threshold for traditional free civil legal services, yet who still cannot afford private representation.

The LSWP initiative is vital to preserving the economic stability and independence of these New Yorkers. In Fiscal Year 2025, the City Council funded the initiative at \$3,455,000, allocating \$455,000 to each Coalition partner. For FY 2026, we are requesting an increase to \$600,000 per

organization—a full restoration of last year’s funding and an enhancement to meet growing demand and challenges.

This increased investment will allow Coalition members to expand our services in key areas including immigration, workers’ rights, access to public benefits, and economic justice. These services are more critical than ever, as federal policy changes and budget cuts continue to erode the social safety net for working New Yorkers.

Every day, our organizations work with clients who face civil legal crises that threaten their livelihoods and homes. These include:

- Wage theft and unpaid labor
- Identity theft and bank account freezes due to unknown collection lawsuits
- Denials of vital public benefits
- Consumer and foreclosure issues that jeopardize housing stability

Without legal assistance, these issues often push working individuals and families into poverty. But with the support of the LSWP initiative, we help them fight back, assert their rights, and remain self-sufficient. Our Coalition provides these services across all five boroughs, in state, appellate, and federal courts, as well as in administrative forums.

Conclusion

The Council’s investment in the Legal Services for the Working Poor remains the *only* funding stream specifically dedicated to addressing the civil legal needs of working people in New York

City. We urge the Council to not only continue this flexible and essential funding, but to increase it, so we can meet the rising demand for legal services that support the city's working poor.

In FY 2026, we respectfully request an enhancement of the allocation for each Coalition member from \$455,000 to \$600,000. This investment is a necessary step to ensure that vulnerable working New Yorkers can continue to access justice and maintain their economic stability.

Thank you for your time and continued support.



**MET
COUNCIL**

Feeding the hungry. Serving the poor.
Changing lives.

New York City Council General Welfare Committee Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026

Chair Ayala and fellow members of the New York City Council General Welfare Committee,

Thank you for holding this hearing on the New York City FY26 Executive Budget. I am here to present testimony on behalf of the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty (Met Council). Met Council's food pantry network and all other emergency food providers in New York City urgently request that the City Council invest in Community Food Connection (CFC). Food insufficiency is currently estimated to be higher than it was in 2020. According to a recent study conducted by the New York Health Foundation, 1.3 million New Yorkers are currently experiencing food insecurity, and 63 percent of households with children cannot consistently meet their basic needs.¹ There is an urgent need for more funding for frontline emergency food providers in New York City. Baseline funding of \$100 million for CFC will allow emergency food providers to battle food insecurity for all New Yorkers. Additionally, as this council did in 2020, in response to an acute hunger crisis, we request that an allocation of \$20 million in discretionary funding for emergency funding for food pantries in the Fiscal Year 26 New York City Budget for Met Council as well as our partners, Catholic Charities and the Hispanic Federation. We request this because this crisis is as bad, if not worse, than it was in 2020, and the federal government is rapidly decreasing funding and halting programs to meet these needs.

For over 50 years, Met Council has been one of America's largest Jewish charities dedicated to fighting poverty. We operate ten departments, including 100% affordable housing, our family violence relief program, comprehensive Holocaust survivor assistance, senior programming, crisis intervention, and the country's largest kosher emergency food network. Over the past five years, we have expanded our emergency food network to halal-observant communities and now regularly serve a network of halal pantries meeting the needs of Muslim New Yorkers. Met Council provides a wide array of support to over 320,000 New Yorkers annually, including those with religious dietary restrictions.

New York City is a refuge for millions of people. However, with this incredible diversity also comes significant poverty that unduly affects millions of our residents. This poverty persists and directly affects food insecurity and the need for emergency food throughout the five boroughs of NYC. Improved access to nutritious foods results in lower healthcare costs, higher educational attainment, financial flexibility to pay rent or bills, and overall improvement in mental and physical well-being for all New Yorkers, including those with religiously informed dietary restrictions. CFC also uniquely enables pantries to select the food that meets the needs of their communities. The flexibility of CFC funding is particularly valuable for kosher and halal food providers, as it enables them to procure foods for their communities that are not accessible through other streams of funding. An investment in CFC will undoubtedly lower costs throughout this city's budget.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, at the height of need and significant uncertainty, New York City Council wisely created a special fund for emergency food, allowing for an injection of additional resources that allowed for targeted support to go to hard-to-reach, historically underserved communities. This funding enabled Met Council, Hispanic Federation, and Catholic Charities to deploy resources to areas with limited pantry and social service infrastructure, to communities with religiously informed or

¹ (New York Health Foundation, March 31, 2025, "Hunger on the Rise: New York's Food Insufficiency Rates Hit New Highs and Exceed Pandemic Levels [2024 Update]"; United Way of NYC & The Fund for the City of New York, April 2023, "Overlooked and Undercounted: Struggling to Make Ends Meet in New York City 2023").

culturally nuanced diets which have often been left out of the traditional emergency food system. With this proven experience, Met Council, Catholic Charities, and Hispanic Federation urge this City Council to commit \$20 million to continue and expand on the important work that we have done.

New York City is home to the largest Jewish and Muslim populations in the country. Research shows that poverty within the Jewish population tracks alongside general poverty and that Muslim Americans face food insecurity at a higher rate than nearly all other religious groups in the country, which means hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers are either kosher-observant or halal-observant, and low-income, and likely facing food insecurity.² New Yorkers observing religiously informed diets are often put in a position to compromise their religious observance or go without food when they try to utilize the emergency food system, which does not meet their needs. It is essential that the New York City Council adequately funds programs that enable frontline emergency food providers to access a wide variety of kosher and halal food to meet the needs of their communities.

Emergency food providers are working to meet this continuously growing demand, but we are facing widespread cuts to the federal funding sources on which we rely. The NYS Ag & Markets program New York Food for New York Families (NYFNYF) has been cancelled, a significant portion of The USDA Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) has been frozen with no end date or guarantee of reinstatement, and major cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) were just proposed on Tuesday night. All of these programs enable hungry New Yorkers to access the food they need to feed their families, and without federal support, these programs will fail our communities.

Met Council greatly appreciates that the City Council also called for \$100 million in baseline funding in response to the Mayor's Preliminary Budget. However, in the recently released Executive Budget, funding for CFC was maintained at \$36.1 million, same level as FY25. While we are grateful that funding for CFC has been maintained, in this uncertain moment, when federal anti-hunger programs are under attack, it is essential that the City Council step in to fill the gap that federal cuts will leave behind.

We thank you for taking the time to review our testimony, and we hope to continue to work with this committee and the City Council to better meet the needs of all New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity.

Thank you,



Dickran Jebejian
Director of Policy
Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty

² (Pew Research Center, May 11, 2021, "Jewish Americans in 2020"; Met Council, March 2023, "Food Insufficiency and Halal Observance Among American Muslims")



TESTIMONY REGARDING

FULLY FUNDING AND ENHANCING LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE WORKING POOR
AND OTHER LEGAL SERVICES INITIATIVES FOR CITY FISCAL YEAR 2026

PRESENTED BEFORE:
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S PRELIMINARY BUDGET HEARING
COMMITTEES ON FINANCE AND GENERAL WELFARE

PRESENTED BY:

RAQUEL NAMUCHE
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MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE

MAY 16, 2025

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Introduction

Good afternoon, Chair Ayala and the Committee on General Welfare, and thank you for this opportunity to testify today. My name is Raquel Namuche and I am the Tenant Advocate and Community Outreach Specialist at Mobilization for Justice, as well as a member of MFJ's staff union, ALAA – UAW LOCAL 2325.

Our mission is to achieve justice for all. For over 60 years, Mobilization for Justice has provided free civil legal services to New Yorkers who are low-income, disenfranchised, or have disabilities. We also conduct community education, advocate for policy, and engage in impact litigation that brings relief to working class New Yorkers. Every year, we handle approximately 14,000 cases from across New York City in the broad areas of Housing, Disability and Aging Rights, Economic Justice, and Children's Rights.

Through our services we prevent homelessness, help seniors and people with disabilities live independently, stabilize families, support immigrant New Yorkers and children with mental health disabilities, and address harmful racial disparities.

We're speaking here today in the midst of several crises: surging homelessness, skyrocketing cost of living, marginalization of the vulnerable, and a city struggling to meet the needs of its existing residents, let alone those of our newest neighbors who come here seeking safety, stability, and opportunity. And we're tackling these issues in the face of a federal administration openly hostile to

the ideals of public service and the public good. The nonprofit community in NYC has also faced severe delays in contract payments and hiring obstacles amidst the challenges of pay parity for public service work. It has been a tough year - especially for our clients.

Like all institutions, our judicial systems are imperfect. However, they are the arena to which the public has the most direct access and in which many of their individual needs are adjudicated. This includes housing court when New Yorkers face unfair evictions or terrible living conditions; or administrative hearings to determine someone's disability benefits; or fights to ensure a struggling child's Individualized Education Plan meets their needs; and immigration court for those escaping violence and persecution.

No one wants to find themselves embroiled in a complex system that requires a lawyer they simply cannot afford – yet far too many do. At Mobilization for Justice, we seek to be their advocate and their ally. But doing so requires resources, and I am here today to strongly urge the Council to build and buttress those resources as much as possible so New York City can stand as a bulwark against callous federal policy.

Need for Comprehensive Resources and Support

I am respectfully asking you to ensure the following Initiatives are fully funded and enhanced: Legal Services for the Working Poor, Family Advocacy and

Guardianship Support, Immigrant Opportunity Initiative, Legal Services for Low Income Immigrants, Low Wage Worker Support, and the new Protect NYC Families initiative.

Now is the time to make deep and comprehensive investments in these initiatives. This critical moment requires collaboration between the City and our nonprofit community to ensure that the most vulnerable among us have the opportunity to thrive. This critical moment requires a commitment to providing access to justice for underserved communities whose rights and supports are being stripped away – from Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security, to supports for children with disabilities in our public schools, and our newest neighbors seeking asylum.

Mobilization for Justice relies on City Council funding to protect and enforce these rights. For some of our most critical programs – such as our immigration practice and our Kinship Caregiver Law Project– Council funding is *the* major source of support, without which we could not continue to provide robust services. For Kinship Care in particular, this is particularly crucial as we are the *only* New York City provider of free legal services for the grandparents, aunts, uncles and other kin caring for many of our children outside the foster care system.

And as New Yorkers, we know that immigrants are who make our neighborhoods the vibrant communities we all love. Now is the time to

demonstrate that the Council will *stand with* all of our neighbors, providing legal pathways to permanency, citizenship, and the safety and stability promised by our highest ideals.

We know there is plenty of work to do in the years ahead. Mobilization for Justice stands ready to leverage our 60 years of expertise, experience in the community, and grit to serve New Yorkers. We respectfully ask that you favorably consider our funding requests. Thank you for your time.

**TESTIMONY OF NEW DESTINY HOUSING TO
THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE
AND COMMITTEE ON FINANCE JOINT HEARING ON
THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026**

**Gabriela Sandoval Requena, Vice-President of External Affairs
May 16, 2025**

Thank you, NYC Council Deputy Speaker Ayala, Finance Committee Chair Brannan, Council Members, and Council Central Staff for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the executive budget for Fiscal Year 2026.

ABOUT NEW DESTINY

Founded in 1994, New Destiny's mission is to end the cycle of domestic violence and homelessness for low-income families and individuals by developing and connecting them to safe, permanent, affordable housing and services.

New Destiny is the only organization in New York City solely dedicated to the solution of permanent housing for survivors of domestic violence. We are the largest provider of supportive housing for survivors in New York, and we operate the first federally funded rapid rehousing program for those impacted by domestic violence in our city.

We are also a co-convenor of the [Family Homelessness Coalition \(FHC\)](#), a collective of mothers with lived experience of homelessness and organizations committed to tackling housing insecurity among families in our city. New Destiny is also a member of the Supportive Housing Network of New York and the Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS

Domestic violence and homelessness are fundamentally connected. As New Destiny documented in its report: [A Crisis Compounded: The Dual Crises of Domestic Violence and Homelessness](#), domestic violence is the leading cause of family homelessness in New York City, pushing more families into shelter than evictions.

Due to the lack of permanent housing options, which are compounded by the devastating long-lasting effects of abuse, survivors may linger in shelter for years. In 2023, only 9% of survivors moved from a Human Resources Administration (HRA) domestic violence emergency shelter to a permanent home, while more than half left for another shelter upon reaching the State-mandated limit of 180 days.

One in 4 survivors and their children had to move to the massive Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system. For survivors, entering the DHS system means losing the anonymity and the supportive services of the HRA domestic violence shelters. This not only represents a safety risk for them and their kids, but it also may mean an even longer shelter

stay for survivors and increased costs for the city. On average, families with children stay in DHS shelter for over a year according to the Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report.

With no certainty of when they might be able to find a safe home, survivors are forced to make the impossible choice between entering the shelter system or remaining in abusive situations, putting their lives at risk. In 2023, 1 out of every 5 homicides were domestic violence homicides in New York City, where the victim was either an intimate partner or a family member.

FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS

The federal government has issued a series of workforce reductions and proposed budget cuts to multiple agencies that provide critical services to survivors of domestic violence. Key branches in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) have been decimated, which will interrupt functions and threaten lifesaving resources for survivors. Furthermore, President Trump proposed a \$33.6 billion cut to HUD and modifications to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program, including a 2-year time limit on assistance for able-bodied adults, in his Fiscal Year 2026 budget framework. If enacted, these changes will be devastating for thousands of survivors in our city.

Since 2019, New Destiny has received HUD funding through the New York City Continuum of Care (CoC) to operate the first rapid rehousing program for domestic violence survivors in the five boroughs: HousingLink. This program provides housing navigation help, temporary rental assistance, and supportive services to promote long-term housing stability. In 2022, New Destiny added a second rapid rehousing program dedicated to survivors with housing vouchers, such as CityFHEPS, FHEPS, and Section 8. At any given time, we are supporting 300 domestic violence households across these two contracts.

Like the other 165 CoC programs in New York City, New Destiny's rapid-rehousing programs are a lifeline for New Yorkers, including thousands of survivors. We are worried about HUD's ability to properly manage these contracts when the job cuts go in effect next month, as well as the imminent threat of budgetary reductions. While funding for CoC programs has been appropriated already, the [Trump administration has made attempts](#) to make it difficult for nonprofits to access these funds.

New Destiny is also deeply concerned about the ending of the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program. EHV's are a form of Section 8 rental assistance program. The program was created as a 10-year initiative in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to house 70,000 households nationwide, focusing on those in most dire need, like people living in the streets and survivors trying to flee an abusive relationship. Agencies across the country were notified in March that funding for the EHV program is ending this year. Close to 8,000 New Yorkers depend on this vital housing resource, [including nearly 1,700 domestic violence survivors](#).

New Destiny was among the nonprofits selected to provide voluntary housing navigation to EHV recipients. In less than 2 years, we helped house over 700 domestic violence survivors with EHV's. New Destiny went a step further and secured private funding to make available aftercare to the survivors we placed. We know firsthand how vulnerable many of them are to return to homelessness or their abuser if they were to lose their voucher.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We thank the Council for supporting the mayor's \$46 million investment for the reallocation of NYC 15/15 unawarded scattered-site units to congregate. This will allow the development of much needed supportive housing for domestic violence survivors, and other vulnerable New Yorkers, across the five boroughs.

We are also grateful to Deputy Speaker Ayala and the Council for including \$6 million for the Housing Stability Microgrants for domestic violence survivors in the Council's Preliminary Budget Response. This program, overseen by the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence, was finally implemented last year as part of the existing HOME+ initiative. However, the \$1.2 million allocated in the budget has proven to be insufficient. We understand the funding has run out and survivors in need of flexible funding are being turned away.

Additionally, as the federal government continues to threaten vital housing programs for survivors, we need our city leaders to step up and protect New Yorkers impacted by domestic violence by:

Calling on members of the New York Delegation to expand – not cut – investments in HUD programs and ensure that NYC agencies plan for contingencies

We ask the City Council to urge our Members of Congress to allocate funding to HUD to renew all existing Section 8 contracts and funding to sustain all EHV's. Similarly, we ask the Council to ensure that HRA, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, and New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) are planning for contingencies to support any loss of EHV's, including increased funding for CityFHEPS and opposing the proposed income changes to the program.

Expediting NYCHA emergency transfers for domestic violence survivors

Under the Emergency Transfer Program, NYCHA allows tenants who are escaping domestic abuse, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking, as well as other crime victims, to apply for an apartment transfer. The process is intended to protect at-risk public housing residents by providing them with confidential relocation quickly. Eligible tenants are placed on a waiting list and assigned a transfer priority status. The total number of residents approved for an [emergency transfer dropped](#) from 1,552 in Fiscal Year 2023 to 1,207 in Fiscal Year 2024. Since the City does not report the number of applications submitted, the drop in approved transfers does not necessarily indicate a decrease in demand.

At a City Council Committee on Public Housing hearing in March 2023, [NYCHA testified](#) that the agency had a total of 2,330 emergency transfers pending, of which 76%, or more than 1,770, were related to domestic violence. They reported that crime victims requesting emergency transfers must wait for a significant period of time for a new home. The agency has struggled to accommodate emergency transfers for years. According to a City Limits investigation, in July 2017, one of the 256 families on NYCHA's emergency transfer waiting list had been [waiting since March 2012](#) to move. The prolonged wait for a transfer forces survivors to choose between remaining in unsafe situations or entering the shelter system.

As Legal Services NYC's eye-opening report: [*Trapped in Danger*](#), exposed, NYCHA places emergency transfers in its lowest priority category, which results in domestic violence survivors waiting anywhere from one to three years, or more, for an emergency transfer. New York City must adhere to federal VAWA regulations and address the significant delays in NYCHA emergency transfers that put survivors' lives in jeopardy. NYCHA must give emergency transfer requests a much higher priority. This is a budget neutral, administrative change.

Additionally, NYCHA must ensure timely completion of repairs of vacant units and assess alternative resources, such as available Section 8, for pending transfers waiting over 12 months, who are willing to relocate outside of public housing.

Thank you for your leadership and the opportunity to submit written testimony.



Testimony by the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)

Before the New York City Council General Welfare Committee regarding:

Executive Budget Hearing

May 16, 2025

Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan, Council Members and staff, thank you for the opportunity to testify to the Finance and General Welfare Committees about the FY26 budget. My name is Abby Biberman, and I am the Associate Director of the Public Benefits Unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). NYLAG uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers in need combat social, racial, and economic injustice. We address emerging and urgent legal needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community education. NYLAG serves immigrants, seniors, the homebound, families facing foreclosure, renters facing eviction, low-income consumers, those in need of government assistance, children in need of special education, domestic violence victims, persons with disabilities, patients with chronic illness or disease, low-wage workers, low-income members of the LGBTQ community, Holocaust survivors, veterans, as well as others in need of free legal services. NYLAG impacted the lives of nearly 130,000 individuals in 2024.

NYLAG's Public Benefits Unit at NYLAG serves clients who are experiencing barriers to accessing and maintaining public benefits, including Public Assistance, SNAP, appropriate shelter, Medicaid, Homecare, Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans' Benefits, and we prepare medical and financial advance planning documents for

clients in need. In New York City, where the high cost of living is coupled with a level of benefits insufficient to meet basic needs, we serve clients with overlapping needs related to food scarcity, housing instability, and homelessness.

Our Shelter and Economic Stability Project represents clients having trouble accessing or maintaining public assistance, SNAP, and appropriate shelter. We represent clients at Administrative Fair Hearings and conduct advocacy with the Department of Social Services (“DSS”), Benefits Access and SNAP centers, and bring impact litigation to ensure that our clients are obtaining and maintaining an adequate level of benefits. We also provide legal services and advocacy to low-income people in and trying to access homeless shelter placements in New York City. 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 offer representation at Administrative Fair Hearings.

We have worked with individuals and families who are attempting to apply or recertify for cash assistance and SNAP benefits, in addition to families facing eviction who applied for or receive rental assistance administered by HRA, and households who have or need CityFHEPS to exit the shelter or maintain their permanent housing. We appreciate the opportunity to offer the following comments.

Improving Access to Benefits

NYLAG continues to fight for the rights of low-income New Yorkers in need of Public Assistance and SNAP benefits and shelter placements. In a political climate where access to food

and healthcare benefits are on the chopping block, and where the federal government intends to create barriers and access to these benefits, the City must provide the highest level of care to New Yorkers in need.

Unfortunately, NYLAG clients still encounter problems completing their applications and recertifications because of systems at HRA that are either not functioning well or that are not accessible. These include barriers to completing the phone interview, and documents that are not timely indexed and added to their case. Both persistent issues lead to improper denials. So even though there may be some number of clients who are ineligible, we urge the Agency to look inward and evaluate whether their services, such as the phone interview line and the online app for uploading documents are functioning and actually accessible for clients in need.

For example, one NYLAG client who was recertifying for benefits waited for hours on hold and was not able to get through on the interview line. She then went to the center to attempt to complete the interview in person. She was directed to a cubicle in the center and was told to call the interview line from there, which she did. She waited on hold for four hours. Eventually she spoke with a supervisor who told her to call the interview line again. At this point she had to leave and was not able to complete the interview required to complete her recertification. Unfortunately, we hear variations of this scenario with some frequency. There are still long wait times on the interview line, and although the Agency is showing some improvement, our clients are still experiencing barriers, both on the phone and in the centers, to completing their phone interviews. We hope the Agency will take seriously the testimonials of advocates who work with clients in need every day, and direct resources to serving clients on the phone and in person.

NYLAG clients also continue to experience problems with getting their documents indexed and properly committed to their cases, resulting in improper denials. Our clients

routinely make multiple attempts, online and in person, to submit documentation before it is properly indexed by the Agency. Clients report that the HRA mobile app only allows them to take photos of their documents, but then even after many attempts the uploads are blurry and ultimately not accepted. To make matters worse, it is not made clear to them that this is the reason for the denial until it is too late to rectify, at which point they must start the process over from the beginning. Finally, in many cases, clients present us with “documents received” notices from the Agency, and still their applications are denied for failure to submit requested documents.

Regarding delays, the cash assistance application timelessness rate of 53.4% in the Mayor’s Management Report¹ was disappointing. We are pleased to hear that the percentage timeliness rate improved in March of 2025, and we are hopeful that HRA will continue to improve processing timeliness. Unfortunately, we know that NYLAG clients are still waiting far too long and encountering numerous barriers, specifically to obtaining rent arrears grants to stop their evictions. Our clients routinely apply for this emergency assistance, upload documents, and complete their phone interviews, and then are denied based on a missing a step that they did in fact complete, or waiting more than 30 days for a decision. These delays put our clients up against housing court deadlines and dangerously close to eviction. They are often waiting without updates they must provide to a housing court judge, or they must start the process over again with the clock running in court.

These are client stories we hear regularly, and although this may appear to HRA as an applicant who did not follow through or was not eligible for benefits, these are New Yorkers in

¹ *Id.* at 205.

need who tried to get benefits and were unable to complete the processes. We urge the agency to actively explore ways to improve access to benefits for our clients, by both utilizing technological solutions and by providing in-person services, when needed.

Finally, NYLAG clients are also experiencing extremely long wait times on DSS One Number (718-557-1399).² One Number, as distinguished from the Interview Line, is the phone number clients are directed to use to contact the Agency for anything other than completing a phone interview. Some clients must use this number to obtain a temporary Client Identification Number (“CIN”) needed to complete their applications for benefits. NYLAG attorneys and clients have reported 4-6 hour wait times on One Number. Advocates have sounded alarms about InfoLine over the past several years, and the Agency restructured its phone lines and rebranded, but the inadequate service on this line is mostly the same. We urge the agency to work on improving service and wait times on One Number.

These are just a few examples of the many clients we serve who report the same problems. We appreciate that the city is working hard to process a high number of benefits applications, but it must maintain functional systems for clients to complete the steps needed for their applications and recertifications. It must focus on staffing, training, and attention to detail to prevent wrongful denials. Failure to do this causes administrative churn, leading clients losing these subsistence benefits and for many to have to submit multiple applications before they are accepted. Meanwhile, these clients are missing deadlines in housing court, losing out on rental subsidy programs, and are at serious risk of eviction. The city must address the failures to administer these benefits properly.

² <https://www.nyc.gov/site/hra/about/contact.page>

CityFHEPS

NYLAG opposes the City's harmful changes to the CityFHEPS program that will result in a higher rent obligation for recipients, in contrast with the principle that no family should have to pay more than 30% of their income toward rent. This will impact low wage working families who are on CityFHEPS. These voucher holders also already struggle to pay the 30% required under the current program. Increasing their obligation to 40% will result in more eviction cases.

We continue to support the Council's efforts to expand access to CityFHEPS vouchers and have been profoundly disappointed in the City's position that it need not implement the law thereby excluding eligible families from access to benefits that would allow them to exit shelters, stop their evictions, and obtain permanent housing. The City must invest in the expansion of CityFHEPS to allow more households in the community to become eligible for the voucher without requiring a shelter history or currently be in DHS shelter. CityFHEPS expansion is financially prudent and humane. Households are being evicted from stable and affordable apartments because there are not enough programs available that will help them maintain their housing. When they are not eligible for a rental assistance program, they are much more likely to be evicted and forced to enter the shelter system, where they may languish until they obtain a shopping letter and secure a new apartment. Providing the voucher before would prevent them from needing to enter the shelter system and cost the city less money. Further, shelter stays can be trauma inducing, and this can be avoided by making the voucher available to more households in the community to preserve their homes.

Housing — Right to Counsel

Funding for the Anti-Eviction Full Legal Representation Program continues to not meet the demand for representation in eviction cases. The RFX published by the City in August 2023 anticipated funding of \$408,520,077 for FYs 25-27. At the original case rate proposed in the RFX, this funding anticipated providing representation on 44,444 cases. However, after case rates were negotiated with providers to closer reflect in part the true costs of a full representation anti-eviction case, the current contract only covers 33,000 cases per year (a little over 25% of anticipated filings). Despite the proven success of Right to Counsel, preventing evictions and creating savings to the City, the initiative remains underfunded and cannot meet the demand of new cases being files or the backlog of pending cases.

Additional issues also hinder the success of this initiative, and our abilities as providers to do this important work. This includes the 10% performance-based reimbursement reduction for failing to meet metrics on a performance scorecard, which was implemented with a lack of clarity and negatively impacts providers ability to perform our work while not accounting for systemic delays in Housing Courts. Not accounting for roll-overs of cases worked on in multiple fiscal years also adversely affects the implementation of the program.

Immigration

NYLAG is proud to operate in a City that values its immigrant citizens and supports much-needed services to them through its annual budget. We are thankful that the Council has long funded initiatives, and developed new initiatives, that respond to emerging needs of our immigrant neighbors. Long-term, continued and increased investment in legal services – including the deep expertise housed within our organizations – is crucial to meeting the current and future needs of

immigrant families in New York. Our city of immigrants is under attack by the federal government, whose policies are undermining our security, subjecting out residents to cruel and inhumane enforcement and detention, and threatening our economy by dividing our communities.

While a lot can be said about the increase in need for immigration legal services, for this testimony we would like to focus on the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative. NYLAG joins other legal services providers to call for an increase and baseline \$40 million for the Immigrant Opportunities Initiative. The IOI program funds many of the immigration legal services and community-based organizations in the City and thus far, we have collectively represented clients in over 37,000 cases under the contract, benefiting over 55,000 people. We commend that Council that in this time of extreme uncertainty for NYC's immigrant communities, the City has extended the existing contract for one year, so that we are able to ensure continuous support and services for communities in need.

We also urge the City to increase funding to the contracted providers. The current IOI contracts were entered into eight (8) years ago. Since then, not only has the scale of the need for immigration legal services grown, but so has the complexity of clients' needs. However, the IOI contract terms have not changed to reflect these changes. As a result, the contracted providers are currently subsidizing the work performed under the contract by \$12.5 million dollars, collectively. We ask that the City commit to fully funding the IOI contracts by providing the contracted providers with \$12.5 million of additional funding, to ensure that we can continue and grow the critical services we provide to both long-time and newly arrived immigrant New Yorkers.

FY26 NYLAG Requests:

For FY26, NYLAG has submitted the following initiative requests, for which we are asking to be renewed funding. It is funding through these City Council initiatives that allows us to provide critical legal services to low-income and vulnerable New Yorkers and remain nimble as needs shift. We thank you for your continued partnership and consideration of these requests.

Legal Services for Low-Income New Yorkers: \$1,200,000 (a 20% increase over FY25)

Immigrant Opportunities Initiative: \$500,000

Immigrant Health Initiative: \$500,000

Low-Wage Worker Support: \$400,000

Legal Services for Veterans: \$125,000

Legal Services for Low-Income Immigrants: \$400,000

Estate Planning and Resolution: \$150,000

Thank you to the Committee on General Welfare for the work it has done to facilitate services for vulnerable New Yorkers and for holding this hearing. We look forward to a strong continued partnership with the Council and the Mayor's Office.



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**Testimony of Patricia Wong, Manager of Pro Bono Programs
at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest to the New York City
Council Committee on General Welfare
May 16, 2025**

Good afternoon, Chair Ayala and members of the Council. My name is Patricia Wong, Manager of Pro Bono Programs at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to testify.

Founded nearly 50 years ago, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) pursues equality and justice for all New Yorkers through our community-driven approach in the areas of civil rights and health, disability, immigrant, and environmental justice.

NYLPI's Pro Bono Clearinghouse builds capacity for local nonprofits and community-based organizations by connecting them with pro bono attorneys who provide high-quality legal solutions that strengthen communities and serve underrepresented New Yorkers. The Clearinghouse also produces a series of innovative and impactful workshops for nonprofit leaders. Through this work, NYLPI has strengthened the infrastructure and increased the capacity of community services across the city.

1. HRA Must be Adequately Staffed and Funded to Meet the Needs of New Yorkers

NYLPI's advocacy often addresses systemic delays that prevent eligible clients from accessing critical HRA services and benefits. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and under-staffing have routinely caused processing delays lasting weeks or months that leave vulnerable individuals without essential resources, benefits, or case updates. These delays result in severe consequences, including mounting medical debt, barriers to healthcare, housing instability, and food insecurity.

As an example of this, NYLPI's Health Justice practice encounters clients who face harmful gaps in coverage and care when they have difficulty transitioning from their Emergency Medicaid program to New York State's 65+ Medicaid program.

We also assist clients who qualify for health insurance under local Aged, Blind, and Disabled programs administered by HRA. These clients frequently face extended, unnecessary delays and systemic barriers to enrolling in urgently needed health insurance due to understaffing.

We assist clients eligible for HASA benefits, including Medicaid, financial assistance, and rental assistance through HRA. Despite meeting HRA's eligibility criteria, many clients are still wrongfully denied benefits. To address these unjust denials, NYLPI has had to advocate for individual clients and work with HRA liaison groups to overcome these barriers. We ask the Council to ensure that HRA is adequately staffed and funded to meet the needs of New Yorkers.

2. NYLPI's Nonprofit Resiliency Network

The new federal Administration is singularly focused on exacting retribution from local government agencies, elected officials, nonprofit organizations, judges, and law firms that challenge their anti-immigrant agenda or seek to challenge executive decisions by asserting the rule of law.

The human cost to New York's immigrant communities and to nonprofit services and legal organizations that support or defend New Yorkers is already severe. In New York City, the nonprofit sector is both vast and vulnerable: many small, community-based organizations operate with limited resources and are unprepared for legal challenges that could disrupt their work. Nonprofits across the country are facing heightened legal and political threats, including investigations and the potential revocation of tax-exempt status. There is a critical need for resources to help organizations respond to politicized threats and prepare to face scrutiny under a hostile federal administration. NYLPI is building upon our current work focused on strengthening and protecting New York City's nonprofit sector by launching the Nonprofit Resiliency Network. This Network specifically focuses on rapid response and risk mitigation for nonprofits facing politicized legal threats. While NYLPI has long supported community-based organizations through our Clearinghouse, the Network meets the challenges of the current political climate in a more urgent and strategic way. NYLPI is supporting and providing services to community-based organizations that are currently the direct targets of federal agencies. We are standing up against those attempting to conduct raids, chill advocacy organizations, and claw back or freeze vital funding for services to immigrants and low-income New Yorkers. This work complements our broader mission by empowering nonprofit leaders—especially those serving immigrant and marginalized communities—to continue their work with stability, confidence, and legal protection. The Network also expands our coalition-building efforts across the sector, fostering deeper collaboration among nonprofits, funders, and pro bono attorneys to build collective resilience in the face of coordinated attacks on civil society.

NYLPI has already begun providing informational resources, hosting events and workshops, trainings, facilitating limited scope consultations, and legal representation to address the issues presented by the actions, laws, executive orders, regulations, and policies imposed by the administration. These resources are relevant to organizations working in various contexts,

serving as guides for CBOs and nonprofits of all kinds to protect themselves from hostile government action and to help mitigate the impact of the actions described above. **With a City Council grant of \$200,000, NYLPI could train or support 600-800 organizations across the City this fiscal year, with an additional multiplier effect through our written guidance and trainings which reach thousands of organizations in New York City and beyond. So far this year, training sessions organized by our Nonprofit Resiliency Network have been attended by over 3,800 nonprofit professionals, and resource guides published as part of this work have been accessed by over 27,000 readers. The project's reach will continue to grow as our outreach to local organizations continues.**

3. NYLPI's Immigrant Health Initiative Work

NYLPI is privileged to be a part of the City Council's Immigrant Health Initiative (IHI), and we thank you for that support. This initiative has supported NYLPI programs aimed at improving the health and well-being of immigrant New Yorkers and their families through direct immigration representation, litigation, community education, medical-legal partnerships including with local doctors and public hospitals, and non-legal advocacy. Through vigorous client and community advocacy and wraparound services, NYLPI improves health outcomes, increases access to healthcare, and provides critical and timely education for communities, healthcare providers, and legal service advocates.

We are asking the Council to restore and enhance funding for the Immigrant Health Initiative, which has saved lives and improved health across our city. We were allocated \$435,504 in CFY2025. **Due to the growing and ever-changing complexity of immigration cases and the challenges placed on immigration processes, especially given the arrival of thousands of migrants to the City in recent years and a hostile federal administration, we are seeking a \$650,000 allocation from the City Council's Immigrant Healthcare Initiative in CFY 2026.**

Yours,

Patricia Wong
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For almost 50 years, NYLPI has fought to protect civil rights and achieve lived equality for communities in need. Led by community priorities, we pursue health, immigrant, disability, and environmental justice. NYLPI combines the power of law, organizing, and the private bar to make lasting change where it's needed most.

For more information visit: www.nylpi.org



**Testimony for the
CITY COUNCIL EXECUTIVE BUDGET MEETING
Topic: General Welfare
May 16, 2025
Committee on General Welfare, Chair Diana Ayala**

Submitted by Kimberly George, President and CEO, Project Guardianship

Good afternoon, Chair Ayala and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Kimberly George, and I am the President and CEO of Project Guardianship. We are a nonprofit organization that delivers person-centered guardianship services to New Yorkers who have no one else to turn to—individuals without family, friends, or financial resources to manage their personal, medical, or legal affairs. In addition to providing direct services, we advocate for critical reforms to modernize the state’s guardianship system and promote less restrictive options wherever appropriate.

Guardianship provides a crucial safety net for individuals who can no longer make informed decisions due to conditions such as advanced dementia, serious mental illness, intellectual or developmental disabilities, or other impairments. For these individuals, a guardian can step in to ensure medical treatment is received, finances are managed, benefits are secured, and basic needs like housing and food are met.

However, the guardianship system meant to serve these vulnerable individuals is buckling under the weight of growing demand.

Despite Article 81 of the Mental Hygiene Law guaranteeing access to a guardian for those in need, courts across the state frequently cannot fulfill this obligation. Judges report that in roughly one-third of cases across New York—and up to half in New York City—they are unable to appoint a guardian. The primary reason: there is simply no one available or qualified to serve. Many of those in need are isolated, impoverished, or otherwise marginalized, and with no public guardianship infrastructure in place, they are left without protection.

This is the guardianship crisis we are facing—and it is on the brink of worsening.

Should proposed federal cuts to core programs like Medicaid, Medicare, SNAP, and Social Security take effect, the ripple effects will be devastating—not only for individuals who rely on these programs, but for the guardianship system as a whole. Guardians are not miracle workers. They cannot produce affordable housing out of thin air or secure medical care without coverage. They cannot feed their



clients when food assistance is stripped away. Guardians can coordinate and advocate—but without social programs, they are left without the tools they need to help clients survive.

These failures also directly strain our broader social safety net. Hospitals are unable to discharge patients who lack a guardian, clogging emergency rooms and delaying care. Judges are forced into making difficult compromises, often appointing unqualified individuals out of urgency. And social service agencies, already under pressure, are burdened further—particularly as they try to support individuals at risk of homelessness or those already living on the streets without a guardian to represent their interests.

Despite increasing needs, New York State allocates only \$1 million annually for guardianship services—an amount that does not begin to meet the scope of the problem. Nonprofit providers like Project Guardianship have long filled the gap, offering high-quality, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive care. But this work is often done with limited funding and overwhelming caseloads.

A chronically underfunded guardianship system has cascading consequences throughout the public sector. Social services, housing systems, and mental health supports all bear the burden when guardianship fails. And thousands of New Yorkers remain unprotected, unsupported, and unseen.

Yet we also know that investing in quality guardianship saves money and improves lives. Project Guardianship's model has proven to reduce unnecessary hospital visits and prevent premature institutionalization, saving the state approximately \$67,000 per person annually—mostly through avoided Medicaid costs. Scaling nonprofit guardianship to meet the actual need could generate more than \$85 million in annual savings.

We were encouraged by the New York City Council's passage of Resolution 0561, which called for a statewide public guardianship program in partnership with nonprofits. Unfortunately, the State did not include this in the FY26 budget, despite the reality that over 60% of guardianship cases originate right here in New York City.

Now is the time for city leaders to step forward. We urge you to allocate funding to strengthen and expand nonprofit guardianship services, close the gap for those most at risk, and help build a more robust and equitable care infrastructure. This includes supporting those experiencing or at risk of homelessness—many of whom would benefit significantly from guardianship and stronger connections to social services.

In doing so, the city can demonstrate its commitment to justice, dignity, and care for our most vulnerable neighbors.



On behalf of Project Guardianship, I thank Chair Ayala and the General Welfare Committee for your leadership and continued focus on the well-being of New York's older adults and people with disabilities.

**JOINT TESTIMONY OF RIGHT TO COUNSEL LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, COMMITTEE ON GENERAL WELFARE,
EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING**

May 16, 2025

**Bronx Defenders
Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A
CAMBA Legal Services
Housing Conservation Coordinators
Legal Services NYC
Mobilization for Justice, Inc.
Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem
New York Legal Assistance Group
Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation
The Legal Aid Society**

INTRODUCTION

Thank you to the City Council's General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify about the crucial need to improve the City's contracting and payment process for nonprofit providers and the need for increased funding and contract reform to meet the mandate of the Right to Counsel (RTC) program to protect New York City residents facing eviction and insure this critical, cost-savings program remains strong and intact. The City's financial and programmatic support is especially important at a time when the legal services providers are faced with federal funding cuts as well as an increased demand for our services as prices climb and the economy moves towards a deep recession.

This testimony highlights the critical issues currently facing Right to Counsel providers in New York City and requests that the City:

- Reform its contracting process to provide timely funding allocations and reimbursements for legal service providers to ensure that they never have to advance more than a few weeks' expenses;
- Develop a plan to insulate the RTC and AHTP programs from federal cuts;
- Increase funding for RTC to cover all eligible tenants;

- Equalize payments under the RTC contracts and raise the case rate for all providers to \$7,500 per case;
- Modify the RTC contracts to better fulfill the spirit and mission of the program including eliminating the new policy to reimburse only 90% of invoices and impose 10% performance penalties.

I. The Impact of Right to Counsel

Over the last 8 years, the Right to Counsel program has been well established in housing proceedings in New York City. Studies consistently show that tenants with legal representation in eviction proceedings remain in their homes and that RTC programs reduce the number of eviction filings. In New York City, 89% of tenants with an attorney remain in their homes,¹ while eviction filings and default judgments have dropped by 30% since the implementation of the RTC program.² Furthermore, legal representation results in fewer judgments of possession and lower money judgments. The impact of RTC goes beyond keeping families housed. Evictions have far-reaching consequences, not only affecting housing stability but also impacting employment, physical health, and mental well-being. Even when displacement cannot be avoided, representation ensures that tenants obtain valuable time to navigate related challenges, such as finding alternative housing or stabilizing their finances.³

The benefits of RTC extend beyond the tenants themselves—it also saves the City money. As of April 2025, New York City's shelter system is accommodating nearly 85,000 individuals nightly, including over 31,000 children.⁴ This marks a significant increase from previous years.⁵ The city's legal obligation to provide shelter to all who request it has led to substantial financial commitments, with the shelter system's budget reaching \$4 billion in Fiscal Year 2024.⁶

By preventing evictions, RTC reduces the strain on this overburdened system. Keeping families in their homes not only preserves community stability but also mitigates the need for costly emergency shelter placements. Given the high expenses associated with the shelter system,

¹ https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ_Annual_Report_2024.pdf

² See, “In the most expensive city in the country, evictions remain lower than before COVID-19,” by John Pablo Garnhem, The Eviction Lab (January 14, 2025), <https://evictionlab.org/in-the-most-expensive-city-in-the-country-evictions-remain-lower-than-before-covid-19/>, last visited 3/13/2025.

³ See, The Effect of Legal Representation on Tenant Outcomes in Housing Court: Evidence from New York City’s Universal Access Program, by Mike Cassidy, Janet Currie. Journal of Public Economics Volume 222, June 2023.

⁴ Family Homelessness in 2024 in New York City: A Snapshot, Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, dated February 13, 2025, accessed at <https://www.icph.org/commentary/family-homelessness-in-2024-in-new-york-city-a-snapshot/>.

⁵ Id.

⁶ Report to the Committee on Finance and the Committee on General Welfare on the Fiscal 2024 Executive Plan and the Fiscal 2024 Executive Capital Commitment Plan for the Department of Homeless Services May 8, 2023, accessed at <https://council.nyc.gov/budget/wp-content/uploads/sites/54/2023/05/DHS.pdf>.

investment in RTC is a fiscally responsible strategy to address the housing crisis, particularly in an environment of fiscal belt-tightening.

II. The City Should Reform its Current Contracting Process.

A. The City's Current Contracting Process Is Marked by Significant Disorganization.

The City's current contract process is marked by significant disorganization, including delays in registering contracts, failure to timely allocate and disburse funds, and inadequate clarity on reimbursement procedures. Together these issues pose significant challenges to nonprofit organizations contracted to provide services on behalf of New York City.

Nonprofit organizations face significant disadvantages in comparison to City agencies when it comes to receiving funding to provide services. While City agencies begin the fiscal year with their funding already allocated and confirmed, nonprofits are left waiting for funding confirmation, oftentimes for months into the fiscal year. This delay in securing funding allocations creates operational challenges and financial uncertainty for nonprofits. These challenges, in turn, undermine nonprofits' ability to deliver essential services to New Yorkers who rely on them. Additionally, the registration of the respective contracts can also take months, if not years, which further delays the availability of funds and wreaks havoc on nonprofits' budgets and financial statements.

Furthermore, nonprofits are subjected to a complex, bureaucratic reimbursement process that is characterized by frequent changes in rules, requirements, and deadlines. This lack of clarity and consistency creates further inefficiencies and delays, forcing organizations to expend valuable time and funding navigating a convoluted system rather than focusing on their core mission of serving clients.

The City must ensure that nonprofits receive their funding allocations in a timely manner at the beginning of each fiscal year. Delayed confirmation of funding forces organizations to operate without financial certainty, placing their operations, staff, and services at risk. By aligning the timing of nonprofit funding with City agencies and ensuring timely contract registration, the City can level the playing field and allow nonprofits to plan and execute their programs without interruption.

In addition to timely funding confirmation, nonprofits require a clear and consistent set of reimbursement guidelines to minimize confusion and ensure that payments are processed quickly and efficiently. The City should provide detailed and stable guidance on reimbursement procedures, clearly outlining the expectations and documentation requirements upfront. Furthermore, the City must avoid sudden changes to reimbursement rules mid-year, which can create serious operational disruptions and financial challenges for nonprofits.

The City must also streamline the contracting process itself, reducing unnecessary paperwork and bureaucratic hurdles that slow down the approval and payment process. Nonprofits should be able to enter into contracts and submit invoices without facing excessive delays due to administrative red tape. By making the contracting process more efficient and user-friendly, the

City will allow nonprofits to focus on serving clients, rather than spending valuable resources navigating an unnecessarily complicated and inefficient system.

Finally, to address cash flow challenges, the City should implement pre-approved advances or interim payments based on established milestones. This approach would help nonprofits cover operating expenses and ensure that they can continue to serve their communities while waiting for full reimbursement. Advances should be issued promptly and proportionally, reflecting the work being done, so that nonprofits have the necessary financial flexibility to maintain their operations.

By implementing these reforms, the City can reduce the operational burdens placed on nonprofit organizations, enabling them to better serve New Yorkers in need. Streamlining the contracting and funding processes will lead to more effective service delivery, reduced administrative costs, and a more sustainable nonprofit sector that is better equipped to fulfill its vital role in the community.

Recommendation

The City should align timing of nonprofit funding with that of City agencies so nonprofits contracted to deliver services on behalf of the City can do so without interruption or delay. The City should also provide clear, upfront direction on reimbursement expectations and processes, reducing the bureaucratic hurdles nonprofits must cross in order to receive funding. The City should also implement pre-approved advances and interim payments to ensure that non-profit providers never have to be advancing more than a few weeks' expenses.

B. The City Should Pay Nonprofits Timely to Avoid Current Jeopardizing Providers' Ability to Deliver Crucial Legal Services to Clients.

The most urgent issue facing Right to Counsel (RTC) providers is the ongoing delay in receiving payment on contracts with the Human Resources Administration (HRA). These delays affect critical funding for RTC and the Anti-Harassment Tenant Protection Program (AHTP) and greatly impede providers' ability to provide crucial legal services to clients. The delays are even disrupting the basic operations of our nonprofit organizations.

While our contracts were registered on time, the City failed to approve our budgets in a timely way. Due to the City's failure to approve our FY25 budgets until March 2025, a nine-month delay, most nonprofit legal service providers went nine months or more without being able to invoice. While the advance on baseline City contracts this year helped to fill the nine-month gap, once providers exhausted these advances and had no way to receive additional payment until they were approved to invoice.

These payment issues for FY25 are on top of the significant amounts some providers are still owed on FY24 contracts. These payment delays are threatening the viability of our organizations, especially for smaller nonprofits. These delays not only jeopardize our capacity to meet payroll

but also undermine our ability to fulfill our mission of providing high-quality, timely legal representation to those most in need, many of whom are facing imminent eviction.

Nonprofit RTC providers need to be able to invoice monthly to ensure they have enough cash to make payroll, and to continue providing much needed services. This need is especially acute, now that expanded RTC contracts account for large percentages of providers' overall organizational budgets. Some organizations had to rely on or exhaust lines of credit. If providers don't have money to pay their attorneys and paralegals because of HRA contractual delays, their work will come to a screeching halt, frustrating the purpose of the Right to Counsel program. Nonprofits cannot continue to operate this way. It is simply unsustainable. While we urge the City to ensure providers can invoice at the time they incur expenses, as we also request the City to provide advances for 75% of the contract to account for the time until providers will be able to invoice.

This existential threat is further compounded by HRA's position that HRA will pay the nonprofit providers only 90% of their invoices. With the remaining 10% of each invoice to be released only if the provider meets certain performance milestones. This plan, only shared with providers in mid-October 2024 after contracts were bid and issued (and not referenced in any contractual document) is disastrous for nonprofit RTC providers. Providers do not have reserves to await reimbursement for money they have spent – reimbursements that may not come if milestones cannot be met. This is an extremely damaging way to implement a new performance-based payment provision. This scheme unnecessarily undermines the effort to expand and improve this program for New Yorkers in need.

Recommendation

The City must ensure that RTC providers have sufficient cash to operate by (1) allocate additional advances for 75% of the contract amounts immediately and allow for 75% advances every fiscal year until there is track record of timely payments; (2) commit to additional monthly advances until it is current in the payment of invoices submitted by RTC providers; and (3) pay the full 100% on invoices as they are submitted.

III. Providers are Facing Federal Funding Cuts and Anticipating Increased Demand for Our Services

At a time of increased demand for our services, the providers are facing severe federal funding cuts directly or as a result of federal funding that New York State and New York City receive and pass through to fund our services.

The City Comptroller's office reported that \$47 million of the \$112 million the City uses for "Access to Counsel" (a/k/a RTC) (42%) is paid for using the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant funds from the federal government.⁷ In addition, the State

⁷ <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/nycs-federal-funding-outlook-under-trump/>

Comptroller reported that \$16 million of the funding used for “Universal Access to Counsel in Housing Court” is subject to an unspecified federal funding fiscal cliff, meaning that it relies on federal aid that is not recurring.⁸

While there have not yet been specific threats to abolish the TANF block grants, during the prior Trump administration there were calls to reduce it by 10% and the overall funding has remained flat since 1996. This flat funding has resulted in an effective reduction of 50% in real spending power since 1996.⁹

In addition, recent shifts in federal policy and DOGE activity have raised alarming concerns about the sustainability of financial support for legal services overall. For example, in March 2025, the Trump administration reportedly cut funding to legal programs providing representation to unaccompanied immigrant children.¹⁰ In addition, DOGE met last month with the nonprofit Vera Institute of Justice and indicated its intent to assign DOGE teams to every nonprofit organization receiving federal funds.¹¹ DOGE also reportedly met with the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) last month.¹² LSC provides 15% of the budget for Legal Services NYC – money which allows them to meet payroll in light of the City’s failure to make timely payments on contracts and subsidize the true cost of their RTC program. All of these actions herald a broader trend of reducing federal aid for legal services and underscore the vulnerability of federally supported legal assistance to these programs at a time when they are needed more than ever.

⁸ NYS Comptroller’s Review of the Financial Plan of the City of New York, Report 23-2025, dated February 2025 and accessed at <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/reports/osdc/pdf/report-23-2025.pdf>.

⁹ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Trump Budget’s Deep Cuts to Block Grants Underscore Danger of Block-Granting*, June 20, 2017, accessed at [https://www.clasp.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025.3.5_Cuts-to-SSBG-TANF-Would-Eliminate-Child-Care.pdf](https://www.cbpp.org/research/trump-budgets-deep-cuts-to-block-grants-underscore-danger-of-block-granting#:~:text=These%20proposals%20are%20a%20dramatic,ongoing%20programs%20into%20block%20grants; Center for Law and Social Policy, <i>Cuts to SSBG, TANF Would Eliminate Child Care for 40K Children, Disrupt Care for Millions More</i>, March 2025, accessed at <a href=)

¹⁰ White House Reportedly Halts for Unaccompanied Minor Children, The Guardian, [White House reportedly halts funding for legal aid for unaccompanied migrant children | US immigration | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/us/immigration/2025/apr/15/white-house-reportedly-halts-funding-for-legal-aid-for-unaccompanied-migrant-children); last visited 4/15/2025.

¹¹ DOGE attempted to assign team to US nonprofit group Vera Institute of Justice, Reuters, dated April 16, 2025 and accessed at <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/doge-attempted-assign-team-us-nonprofit-group-vera-institute-justice-2025-04-16/>; Trump administration ramps up on attacks on civil society, empowers DOGE to investigate independent nonprofits, Vera Institute of Justice, dated April 15, 2025 and accessed at <https://www.vera.org/newsroom/trump-administration-ramps-up-on-attacks-on-civil-society-empowers-doge-to-investigate-independent-nonprofits>.

¹² DOGE dodges discovery, Politico, dated April 15, 2025 and accessed at <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/west-wing-playbook-remaking-government/2025/04/15/doge-dodges-discovery-00291744>.

Recommendation

As providers face reductions in federal funding, we ask for the City's support to ensure the financial viability of these programs by taking the following steps:

- Coordinating with federal officials to gather information and advocate for continued funding;
- Coordinating with state officials to explore other funding streams;
- Elevating the importance of this funding through public discussions and media;
- Creating contingency plans for other resources to bridge the funding gap;
- Commit to ensuring that federal cuts will not impact these contracts; and
- Ensuring sufficient and timely payments on City contracts for services rendered.

IV. The Providers Have Significant Concerns about the FY25-27 RTC Contract

A. The Funding Does Not Meet the Demand for Representation in Eviction Cases.

On August 3, 2023, the City published the Anti-Eviction Full Legal Representation RFX with anticipated funding of \$408,520,077 for fiscal years 2025 through 2027.¹³ This funding was to provide full legal representation for 44,444 eviction cases each year.

According to the New York State Unified Court System's Statewide Eviction information, eviction filings in 2024 in New York City totaled 124,599.¹⁴ The RFX, and in turn the contract providers now operate under, thus caps representation at 36% of NYC tenants facing eviction per year. While some percentage of tenants are over income for services, all seniors qualify regardless of income under Local Law 20/23. Funding at most 44,444 cases each year ensures that tens of thousands of eligible tenants are denied representation before they even walk into the courthouse. This is the antithesis of the intent of the RTC law, which was enacted to ensure that ALL eligible tenants have access to counsel in eviction proceedings.

Even on paper, the RFX proposed in 2023, could never have fully funded the RTC. And in practice, the contract as implemented falls even shorter. The RFX was originally planned to fund 44,444 cases at \$3,063 per case. But once actual rates were negotiated with providers, to account, at least in part, for the true cost of providing representation, the rate increased to approximately \$4,100 per case. This means that the pool of funding provided by the current contract covers only about 33,000 cases per year, barely more than a quarter of anticipated filings.

The City is severely under-funding a program that is objectively successful in both moral and economic terms. The RTC program boasts an extremely high success rate in preventing evictions

¹³ The RFX had many shortcomings, most of which are outlined here and were outlined by RTC providers in their various protest letters. See, e.g., LAS's Protest Letter at
<https://www.scribd.com/document/664436607/The-Legal-Aid-Society-Protest-Letter-to-HRA-8-10-23>

¹⁴ New York State Unified Court System Statewide Eviction Information available at:
<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjojZGE3NzljYmItYTBMZC00OGI2LTliYTgtYzY5ZjI0N2U0MwYxIiwidCI6IjI0NTZmZTkxLWVhZDEtNDA2ZC1iNWVzLTUzNjRiZWVhZTgzMyJ9>. Last visited 3/12/2025.

and other collateral consequences. Every eviction prevented by the program creates huge savings to the City by avoiding shelter costs, brings the City closer into compliance with its own RTC law, and protects the most vulnerable New Yorkers.

Recommendation

The City should increase funding for Right to Counsel to a level sufficient for legal services providers to provide high-quality, holistic services to all eligible cases. There has to be sufficient funding to meet the demand for representation in the new cases being filed and the backlog of eviction defense cases pending without representation. It should also sufficiently fund the brief legal services that are required under the law.

B. The Contracts Do Not Cover the Full Cost of Providing Anti-Eviction Services.

Eviction defense proceedings are complex and require significant time to resolve. New York City has some of the most robust and complicated housing laws in the country. Important laws, such as the Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act of 2019 and the Good Cause Eviction Law passed in 2024, have increased critical tenant protections while also adding to the complexities of tenant defense. As a result, providers must increase staff training to stay current with the law and attorneys must dedicate more time per case. Notably, these changes have all occurred in the last few years. Since 2018, providers have seen a 24% increase in how many hours it takes to resolve a case, while increased administrative and training burdens mean that staff have fewer hours available to do casework.

The current contract fails to account for these changes and the cost of this work. The case rates under the current contract vary between providers, but the average rate of \$4,100 represents barely more than half the cost of the work. Doing full representation at such a low case rate results in ballooning caseloads and attorneys who may not have the time and resources needed to properly litigate these complex matters. The other outcome has been that even fewer tenants than anticipated are being represented. Providers cannot force staff to handle more cases than permitted by legal ethics, negotiated collective bargaining agreements, and by practical considerations such as retention. Case rates being below the cost of services mean providers cannot hire and retain sufficient legal staff.

The funding also currently fails to consider the full breadth of staffing and support needed to provide holistic, quality legal representation. To meet client needs, provider organizations must staff programs not just with attorneys, but also with paralegals, social workers, administrative staff, and infrastructure supports such as finance and IT. The low case rates in the current contract do not allow for these substantial and necessary costs. While attorney representation stops evictions in the immediate moment, restabilizing a family's housing often requires social workers and benefits advocates. The underfunding has and will continue to hamper our ability to solve the totality of our clients' housing problems and will lead to tenants being sued in Housing Court year after year.

The variable case rate between providers must be equalized at the highest rate. Before the RFX process, providers collected data that demonstrated that the then cost of the average provider to

holistically and properly defend an eviction case and provide fair salaries for staff was approximately \$7,500 per case. These costs have only increased since cases are taking longer to resolve, in part due to new tenant protections like the 2024 Good Cause Eviction Law, as well as the rising costs of operations, including interest on loans needed to cover the lack of payments under these contracts. These costs span across organizations, regardless of size or history.

During the negotiation process for the current contract, OCJ met with providers individually. Most providers were asked to present new, lower proposals as close as possible to \$3,500 per reportable case. OCJ told at least one provider that the average case rate was \$4,100 and asked them to lower their case rate to that average. OCJ strongly implied in these negotiations that if the providers failed to lower their case rates, their bids would be rejected. The process for negotiating the bids was entirely incompatible with the City's stated intention of allowing providers to identify their own costs and with partnering to build an effective program.

The outcomes of this process were entirely predictable. Some organizations were forced to accept case rates well below the cost of providing services to continue providing the essential anti-eviction work their organizations deeply believe in. Thus, many RTC providers are now operating under a contract that provides for thousands of dollars less per case than the \$7,500 necessary to have a robust program with fairly paid staff. The individual bid negotiations also created a wide disparity in payment for nearly identical services. This disparity resulted in some of the smaller community-based providers, who are more reliant on RTC funding and thus more vulnerable, being compensated at the lowest rates. We ask that the City rectify these disparities by funding an increased rate for all providers up to the \$7,500 case rate reflecting the true current cost of doing this work, or at least bringing all providers up to the highest RTC case rate for which OCJ has currently contracted.

Recommendation

The City must equalize funding for the RTC providers at the true cost of doing the work. The current cost-per-case for the average provider is at least \$7,500 per case. The City must (1) fund an increase to the RTC contract to allow for a \$7,500 case rate for all providers and (2) in the interim equalize the funding for all providers at the highest case rate currently being paid under the RTC contracts.

C. Additional RTC Contract Issues

(1) The 10% Reduction in Compensation Should Be Eliminated or at Least Suspended.

The recently implemented contractual penalty for nonprofit legal services providers—imposing a 10% reduction in funding for failing to meet metrics on a new performance scorecard—is a measure that not only exacerbates the existing challenges faced by providers but also undermines the fundamental goals of the RTC program. Compounding the impact of the 10% reduction, the specific metrics used by OCJ to evaluate providers' scorecards were unclear prior to the first evaluation in January 2025. Even after the first evaluation and some vague written guidance, significant confusion remains about how to calculate the scorecard metrics and how they will be evaluated in the future.

Providers are frequently at the mercy of systemic delays, including backlogs in Housing Courts, clogged court calendars, inefficient court administration or operations, backlogs in obtaining public benefits assistance, unresponsive opposing counsel, and evolving legal standards that impact a provider's ability to meet deliverables. Imposing a 10% funding penalty ignores these externalities and unduly harms providers. The penalty also creates perverse incentives for nonprofits to prioritize quantitative metrics over qualitative outcomes. In an effort to meet contractual benchmarks, organizations may feel compelled to take on more cases than their staff can handle or resolve cases quickly, leading to compromised representation.

The penalty provision has significant downstream implications for the City itself. Weakening the RTC program through financial penalties increases the likelihood of evictions, which impose substantial costs on municipal services, including emergency shelter, public assistance, and healthcare. From a cost-benefit perspective, adequately funding and supporting RTC providers is far more fiscally prudent than penalizing them in an already underfunded system.

Recommendation

The City should eliminate or suspend the 10% performance penalty or at least ensure there are clear guidelines, provided in writing, for the evaluation of the metrics. While OCJ circulated some guidance in February 2025, the guidance still lacks clarity on many of the metrics. The City should also allow for appropriate flexibility when quantitative metrics cannot be met by a provider due to systemic issues outside of their control.

(2) Rollovers and Brief Services Should Be Counted and Funded.

The current contracts, in sharp contrast to the first eight years of the RTC program, no longer allow cases continuing beyond one year to be “rolled over” and reported in subsequent fiscal years. This change ignores that eviction cases are complicated and often last beyond a year. Disallowing RTC providers from reporting rollover cases as part of their deliverables creates a perverse incentive for providers to prioritize “easy” cases and de-prioritize representing tenants with complex and time-intensive cases. Any incentivization of one case or another caused by contract terms is fundamentally repugnant to the letter and spirit of the Right to Counsel law and to our missions as legal service providers. Such antithetical incentives undermine this essential program.

In a world where not every eligible tenant will obtain legal representation, RTC providers' ability to be compensated for brief legal assistance is an invaluable part of preventing homelessness. For community-based legal service providers, providing brief legal assistance to their neighborhoods is a fundamental part of their mission. The new contract eliminates partial payment for brief service and shifts to all those cases being handled by a telephone hotline staffed by one provider. This change means that every neighborhood referral forces a community provider to choose between providing services for “free” with limited resources and operating contrary to its mission by turning away the vulnerable tenants.

We urge the City to fund brief legal assistance, as it has under previous contracts. This change would allow providers to triage cases at intake and to provide legal advice to the community in accordance with our missions.

Recommendation

The City must fund providers for all active and litigated cases, even those that take a year or more to resolve. The City must also sufficiently fund brief services and advice work to reflect the realities of RTC practice on the ground, particularly for community-based providers.

(3) OCJ Should Streamline and Simplify the Onerous Reporting Requirements of the Right to Counsel Contracts

OCJ's increasingly strict reporting requirements often obstruct the goal of obtaining data that accurately reflects RTC providers' work. By prioritizing strict adherence to reporting protocols over case management realities, OCJ does not obtain a complete picture of RTC providers' work, uses up previous resources with data collection and management and fails to credit providers with work done where marginally relevant data cannot be obtained. For example, if a provider cannot obtain a tenant's unit number, the case cannot be reported despite the provider dedicating dozens of hours to the case. The resulting obligation to devote increasing resources to reporting data undermines the program's overall effectiveness.

Inaccurate or delayed data not only obscures the true scope of RTC providers' work but also undermines the program's accountability and strategic planning. When RTC providers must divert time and resources toward meeting burdensome reporting requirements, they have less capacity to focus on their clients' urgent legal needs. OCJ must adopt less burdensome and more flexible reporting practices that align with the operational realities of nonprofit legal service providers.

Recommendation

OCJ must adopt less burdensome and more flexible reporting practices that align with the operational realities of nonprofit legal services providers, who expend excessive resources attempting to comply with OCJ's changeable yet rigid reporting requirements.

CONCLUSION

As we move through the many stages of NYC's housing crisis, we as providers remain on the frontline of efforts to ensure that the needs of New York's marginalized communities are met. We will continue to make the case for justice and equity and we urge the City to adopt the recommendations provided throughout this testimony. As our clients undergo this unparalleled crisis, we stand right there beside them. We thank the City Council for your continued support, and for allowing us to testify today.

LEGAL SERVICES PROVIDERS

BRONX DEFENDERS

The Bronx Defenders (“BxD”) is a public defender nonprofit that is radically transforming how people in the Bronx are represented in the legal system, and, in doing so, is transforming the system itself. Our office’s staff of over 450 includes interdisciplinary teams comprised of civil, criminal, immigration, and family defense attorneys, as well as social workers, benefits specialists, legal advocates, parent advocates, investigators, team administrators, and policy, organizing, and community engagement specialists who collaborate to provide holistic advocacy to address the causes and consequences of legal system involvement and push for systemic reform at the local, state, and national level.

Through this integrated, comprehensive, referral-based structure, we have pioneered a groundbreaking, nationally-recognized model of direct services representation we call “holistic defense” that achieves transformative outcomes for the people we represent. Each year, we defend over 20,000 low-income Bronx residents across civil, criminal, immigration, and family legal systems, and reach thousands more through our community intake, youth mentoring, and outreach programs. We take what we learn from the people we represent and communities that we work with and launch innovative programs designed to bring about real and lasting change.

Our Civil Action Practice

The Civil Action Practice provides comprehensive civil legal services to clients and their families by integrating civil representation. Our goal is to actualize the civil right to counsel – including for tenants – and minimize the severe and often unforeseen fallout from housing, criminal, family, and immigration court proceedings and facilitate the seamless reintegration of our clients into the community. Our Civil Action Practice attorneys, social workers and benefits & legal advocates represent clients in every forum in New York City – administrative, state, and federal – to address these problems and assist our clients in overcoming civil legal barriers to housing, eviction, employment, and public benefits, as well as addressing instances of police misconduct, criminal record errors, and civil forfeiture.

BROOKLYN LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION A

Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A (Brooklyn A) believes all New Yorkers should have equal access to legal services to seek justice, make their voices heard, and overcome systemic racism and oppression. We represent low- and moderate-income individuals and families throughout New York City. Our clients live in rapidly-gentrifying neighborhoods where many residents and small business owners have been displaced or are facing displacement and harassment. For more than half a century, Brooklyn A has provided high-quality, low-barrier neighborhood-based legal services to individuals, families, nonprofit community-based organizations, community development corporations, coalitions, and small business owners, interested in developing and sustaining vibrant, healthy communities. Our Preserving Affordable Housing (PAH) Program uses legal and advocacy strategies to preserve and protect affordable housing, prevent evictions, combat tenant harassment and discrimination, and ensure that working families, individuals, older adults, and others live in stable environments and within their financial means. Brooklyn A’s PAH Brooklyn and Queens Programs have 53 staff attorneys, paralegals, social workers, and supervising attorneys, in addition to other supporting staff.

CAMBA LEGAL SERVICES

CAMBA Legal Services, Inc. (CLS) is a community-based law practice in Brooklyn and Staten Island that provides free civil legal assistance to low-income New York City residents. Our mission as a dedicated and diverse staff of lawyers and paralegals is to provide our clients with the highest quality of legal representation while standing committed with our communities in the fight for racial, social, and economic justice. CAMBA Legal Services' Housing Unit provides anti-eviction legal services to tenants, including legal advice and representation in non-payment proceedings, holdovers, HP actions for repairs, HCR overcharge complaints, administrative hearings (NYCHA and HPD), Article 78s and other related proceedings. The CLS Housing Unit has a staff of more than 56 attorneys and paralegals. CLS prides itself on being guided by the following principles; compassionate case handling, decentering the attorney to empower the client, tenacious advocacy, collaborative learning, and a commitment to legal excellence.

HOUSING CONSERVATION COORDINATORS

Housing Conservation Coordinators (HCC) is a community based legal services organization that was founded over 50 years ago to “advance social and economic justice and fight for the rights of poor, low-income and working individuals and families.” HCC provides comprehensive services on housing-related matters, including preventing displacement, accessing public benefits, and preserving the limited stock of affordable housing, immigration matters, consumer protection and elder law to help stabilize the lowest income households.

HCC has served income eligible residents in Manhattan through the Right to Counsel Program since 2017.

LEGAL SERVICES NYC

Legal Services NYC's (LSNYC) is the largest civil legal services provider in the country, with a mission to fight poverty and seek racial, social, and economic justice for low-income New Yorkers. For over 50 years, LSNYC has helped New Yorkers obtain the basic necessities of life, including housing, economic security, family and immigration stability, education, health care, and challenge the systemic injustices that trap people in poverty. At LSNYC, we pride ourselves on our deep community roots, our holistic, trauma-informed approach to advocacy, and our ability to work creatively, strategically, and collaboratively with our clients.

MOBILIZATION FOR JUSTICE, INC.

Mobilization for Justice's (MFJ) mission is to achieve justice for all. MFJ prioritizes the needs of people who are low-income, disenfranchised, or have disabilities as they struggle to overcome the effects of social injustice and systemic racism. We provide the highest-quality free, direct civil legal assistance, conduct community education and build partnerships, engage in policy advocacy, and bring impact litigation. MFJ has a staff of more than 150 attorneys, paralegals, social workers, and support staff. It is a diverse, unionized, and collegial workplace where staff share the organization's mission to achieve social justice.

MFJ's housing practice is honored to engage in Right to Counsel work in the Bronx and Manhattan, where we deploy a wide array of litigation and advocacy strategies to prevent eviction and to protect tenants' rights.

NEIGHBORHOOD DEFENDER SERVICE OF HARLEM

Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem (NDS) is a community-based public defender office that provides high-quality legal services to residents of Northern Manhattan and a member of the LEAP coalition. Since 1990, NDS has been working to improve the quality and depth of criminal and civil defense representation for those unable to afford an attorney through holistic, cross-practice representation. With the early implementation of Right to Counsel in key Northern Manhattan zip codes, NDS joined the Right to Counsel Coalition and began serving the community through the Right to Counsel Program. As a holistic public defender office, NDS is particularly familiar with the collateral consequences of homelessness, including an increased chance of entering the criminal legal system.

NEW YORK LEGAL ASSISTANCE GROUP

New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers experiencing poverty or in crisis combat economic, racial, and social injustice. 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. Our Tenants' Rights Unit (TRU) fights for housing justice: fair, safe, and affordable housing for adults and families so that they can stay in their communities and thrive.

NORTHERN MANHATTAN IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION

Northern Manhattan Improvement Corporation (NMIC) is a community-based, settlement house and not-for-profit organization founded in 1979. NMIC is a leading multi-service agency with over 140 staff members serving New York City, with a focus on residents of upper Manhattan and the Bronx. Our mission is to serve as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of the people in our communities on their paths to secure and prosperous futures. Integration is the cornerstone of NMIC's programs, and our staff can identify and address a broad array of immediate needs through comprehensive crisis intervention services. Clients may then move seamlessly to capacity building services through our holistic programs designed to transition individuals and families to safer, healthier, and more stable futures.

NMIC's Legal, Organizing, and Advocacy (LOA) unit meets community members' basic needs including legal representation, immigration assistance, housing advocacy and tenant organizing, eviction-defense representation, financial-planning and tax preparation services, services for survivors of domestic violence, and health and mental health related programming. NMIC serves about 14,000 clients each year across the LOA programs and its Education and Career Services unit.

NMIC's advocacy for the housing rights of its community began with the founding of the organization, nearly 45 years ago. NMIC's representation of tenants in New York City housing courts reaches back decades and it is an original RTC provider, since the program's inception.

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

The Legal Aid Society (LAS), the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, was founded in 1876 to provide free legal representation to marginalized New York City families and individuals. The Legal Aid Society's legal program operates three major practices – Civil, Criminal, and Juvenile Rights – and through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel. Each year, LAS handles more than 250,000 cases and legal matters for clients, taking on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States.

Our Civil Practice works to improve the lives of low-income New Yorkers by helping vulnerable families and individuals to obtain and maintain the necessities of life - housing, health care, food and self-sufficiency. We serve as a “one-stop” legal resource for clients with a broad variety of legal problems, ranging, among others, from government benefits and access to health care, to immigration and domestic violence. Our depth and breadth of experience is unmatched in the legal profession and gives the Society a unique capacity to go beyond any one individual case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals, and broader, more powerful systemic change at a societal level.

Our work has always taken an explicit racial and social equity lens, and the current housing crisis has further focused our efforts to advocate for the needs of New York's marginalized communities.

Testimony

New York City Council Committee on General Welfare

Executive Budget Hearing

May 16th 2025

Good afternoon, Chairs Ayala and Brannan and members of the New York City Council Committee on General Welfare. My name is Bryan Ellicott-Cook (They/He), and I serve as the Director of Government Relations at SAGE—the nation’s oldest and largest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTQ+ older adults.

Since our founding in 1978, SAGE has worked to address the social, economic, and health inequities that LGBTQ+ elders face as they age. We do this through national advocacy, policy engagement, and local direct services that tackle systemic barriers such as poverty, housing insecurity, food access, and healthcare disparities.

SAGE is proud to join our partners across the human services and social safety net sectors to advocate for a city budget that prioritizes equity and care for New York’s most marginalized residents. While we recognize and appreciate the Mayor’s commitment to addressing the \$102 million fiscal cliff, the Executive Budget still falls short in addressing the full range of critical needs facing vulnerable communities—including LGBTQ+ older adults.

Older adults across the board face significant challenges as they age—social isolation, rising costs of living, declining income, and navigating complex healthcare systems. But LGBTQ+ elders experience these challenges more acutely, having lived through a lifetime of discrimination and systemic exclusion. They are more likely to experience poverty, health disparities, and housing instability, and less likely to have traditional family supports.

That’s why SAGE strongly supports Age Strong New York’s call for a \$2.3 billion investment in New York City’s aging services infrastructure—a transformative funding plan that would bolster the human services workforce, expand supportive programs, and address the compounded barriers facing older adults, particularly those who are LGBTQ+, living with HIV, disabled, immigrants, BIPOC, and low-income.

In an era of escalating anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and policy threats on the national stage, queer elders are living with real fears about their safety, their rights, and their access to healthcare and essential services. Here in

New York, SAGE is often a lifeline for LGBTQ+ older adults, providing a network of culturally competent services and trusted community support that they can't find elsewhere. But meeting this growing need requires enhanced investment and partnership from the City.

Many LGBTQ+ elders are isolated and lack the traditional family structures that other older adults might rely on. Twenty-five percent of the people we serve at SAGE report having no one to call in an emergency. Their vulnerability makes robust, community-based services not just helpful—but essential. Yet distrust of mainstream providers persists due to a long history of mistreatment and exclusion. That's why culturally responsive organizations like SAGE play a vital role in bridging that gap.

Our SAGE Centers across New York City offer a holistic array of programs designed to reduce isolation and meet practical needs—ranging from benefits counseling, legal and financial aid, and health and wellness programs, to support groups and congregate meals. We also specialize in serving older adults living with HIV and LGBTQ+ veterans, two populations with complex and intersectional needs.

To continue and expand this critical work, SAGE respectfully submits the following funding requests for FY26:

- **\$1,255,000** under the Council Initiative LGBTQIA+ Older Adult Services in Every Borough, to sustain programming at our five SAGE Centers. This includes more than 300 programs weekly for over 5,000 LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected older New Yorkers, as well as planned enhancements such as Know Your Rights trainings and expanded participant education.
- **\$250,000** from the LGBTQIA+ Caucus, to provide affirming, HIV-competent care management services, including benefits access, legal referrals, counseling, and crisis response.
- **\$100,000** through the Geriatric Mental Health Initiative, to provide home-based and remote mental health services for frail, homebound LGBTQ+ elders and those aging with HIV.
- **\$100,000** through the Legal Services for Veterans Initiative, to support **SAGEVets**, our program providing benefits access and legal aid to LGBTQ+ veterans.
- **\$36,868** under the Senior Centers Program and Enhancement Initiative, for care management services including friendly visiting, crisis intervention, and counseling.

Additionally, we urge the Committee to champion the following priorities in the Executive Budget:

- **\$500 Million for Older Adult Centers (OACs) – State of Good Repair:**
Many OACs are physically deteriorating after decades of underinvestment. These spaces are vital hubs for LGBTQ+ elders. This funding will ensure they remain safe, accessible, and affirming.
- **\$44 Million for Expanded Case Management:**
A significant increase is needed to reduce caseworker caseloads and improve service access for the most vulnerable—including LGBTQ+ and HIV-affected older adults who depend on trusted care coordination.
- **\$78 Million for Nutritional Support:**
We support a \$57 million increase to address the rising costs and staffing shortages for meal

programs, and an additional \$21 million to ensure weekend meals for homebound older adults. Many LGBTQ+ elders rely on these services to survive.

In closing, LGBTQ+ elders have given so much to our city and our movements. As we advocate for a more just and equitable New York, we must ensure they are not left behind. We call on the Council to prioritize bold investments in programs and services that center dignity, inclusion, and the well-being of all older New Yorkers.

Thank you for your time and your steadfast commitment to the welfare of our city's most vulnerable communities.



Testimony of

The Legal Aid Society and the Community Service Society of NY

before the

New York City Council Committees on General Welfare and Finance Regarding the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026.

May 16, 2025

The Legal Aid Society (“LAS”) and the Community Service Society (“CSS”), welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council’s Committees on General Welfare and Finance regarding the Executive Budget for Fiscal Year 2026.

CityFHEPS FUNDING

City of Yes: We want to begin by thanking the City Council for securing an additional \$215 million to expand the CityFHEPS voucher program as part of the City of Yes legislation. We greatly appreciate the Council’s dedication to ensuring that any housing plan moving forward prioritizes the needs of vulnerable populations such as families facing eviction, individuals with disabilities, or elderly New Yorkers struggling to remain housed. It is important to remember that this funding was specifically intended to assist those most at risk of losing their homes, and part of the deal in the Council’s approval of the legislation was to ensure these vulnerable groups receive the support they need. We urge the City Council to continue to fight to ensure that this money is allocated as promised, and that it is used effectively to protect those who are most at risk. We are eager to continue collaborating with the City Council to ensure that this funding is maximized to its fullest potential.

But we must raise a serious and urgent concern: despite the Council's clear intent and commitment, the Adams administration is now reneging on its promise. Instead of using \$215 million to expand CityFHEPS as agreed, the administration is diverting those funds to plug budget gaps. These gaps exist, in part, because of years of systemic underfunding. This is not only a broken promise, but a direct threat to the lives and stability of thousands of New Yorkers. It's a bait-and-switch that undermines the Council's leadership, the law, and the trust of the people who were counting on this support.

As the Council knows, the adopted City of Yes/City of All plan included a commitment that \$215 million would be spent over FY 2025 and FY 2026, with at least \$115 million of it available this year. Yet the FY 2026 Executive Budget slashes CityFHEPS funding by nearly 50%, from nearly \$1 billion down to \$519 million. While the administration claims to be allocating \$176.6 million in revised needs for rental assistance in FY 2025, it offers no assurance that these funds will support the promised expansion or keep families facing eviction in their homes.

The stakes are enormous. A 2025 CSS analysis of 2023 Census data shows that more than 370,000 households with a child, senior, or person with a disability are severely rent burdened and have incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level. Of these, fewer than half live in eligible housing. Among them, a smaller, targeted group of 7,490 households are likely to face eviction, which could be avoided with CityFHEPS rental assistance. Covering these households for one year would cost the City just \$116 million. If the administration honors its commitment, nearly 15,000 households could remain stably housed over two years.

The Council has long been a champion for reducing homelessness. In 2023, Council Member Pierina Sanchez sponsored [Int. 893](#) to expand CityFHEPS eligibility to households at risk of eviction regardless of shelter history. Two-thirds of Council Members co-sponsored the bill. There is no ambiguity about the Council's intent—or the scale of the need. Yet instead of implementing the will of the people, the administration has chosen to sidestep the law and deepen housing insecurity. We respectfully urge the Council to keep this issue front and center in all housing and budget negotiations. This is a matter of credibility, of compassion, and of basic justice. The administration must not be allowed to walk away from this promise. The money was secured. The need is urgent. The path forward is clear. Now is the time to stand firm and fight for what was agreed to and for the people this funding was always meant to protect.

Proposal to Increase the Rent Burden for Already Struggling Households: On April 30, the Adams administration introduced a proposed revision to the CityFHEPS rental assistance program whereby income-earning households who have been enrolled in the program for five years will contribute [40 percent](#) of their income toward rent, instead of the current 30 percent, in their sixth

year of the program. This will only increase the rent burdens on low-income households who remain economically vulnerable, despite being stably housed. Approximately 29,748 households would be directly affected. These are individuals and families who moved into permanent housing through CityFHEPS in 2019 and 2020 and have maintained their housing since then. Under the proposed rule, the median single individual would owe \$576 more in rent annually. The median family with children would be obligated to pay \$384 more each year. These are substantial increases for low-income households who are already operating on extremely tight budgets.

The financial strain imposed by this policy would require families to make painful trade-offs. According to the Urban Institute's [True Cost of Economic Security measure](#), 62 percent of city residents already lack sufficient income to meet their basic needs. The average shortfall is roughly \$40,600. Asking households in this position to pay more for housing will inevitably reduce their ability to afford essentials such as food, child care, transportation, and medical care. Further, a 2024 peer-reviewed study in *Social Science and Medicine* found that increased rent burdens are strongly associated with a higher risk of eviction, reduced access to necessities, and even premature mortality. These outcomes are well-documented and widely understood by researchers and practitioners alike. Housing stability is directly tied to physical, mental, and economic well-being.

Despite the harm this policy would cause, the projected financial savings are minimal. At a May 16, 2025 hearing, the City's Human Resources Administration projected that increasing rent for low-income residents would yield just \$11 million in savings—roughly 0.01% of the City's \$112 billion annual budget. Yet even these savings may never materialize. Many formerly homeless tenants will be unable to meet the new rent standards, requiring emergency financial assistance from the city in the form of [“one shot deals”](#) for rent arrears. In effect, money “saved” by reducing CityFHEPS subsidies would simply become money spent on other forms of emergency rent relief.

The city's savings could also disappear if even a small share of CityFHEPS tenants cannot pay these elevated rents or secure a one-shot deal, are evicted, and return to the shelter system. If just one percent of single adults or families return to the shelter system for the average length of stay, not only will they be forced to relive the trauma of homelessness, the cost of shelter alone for the returning households would cancel out the city's projected savings. If a greater number returned to homelessness, the city would actually increase its overall costs.

This policy, as proposed, is not only counterproductive but also costly. It undermines the housing stability CityFHEPS is meant to promote, increases the risk of eviction among low-income working families, and delivers negligible fiscal benefit while raising the likelihood for a greater cost in the future.

We urge the City Council to strongly object to this proposal. A housing assistance program should not place greater burdens on the very populations it was designed to support. Rather than penalizing long-term stability, the city should be focused on strengthening CityFHEPS to ensure it continues to provide effective, lasting support for those working to maintain a foothold in one of the most expensive housing markets in the country.

Expand Eligibility to elderly and disabled tenants: As per CSS’s analysis of the 2017 Housing Vacancy Survey (“HVS”), there are 9,463 rent-regulated apartments with low-income tenants who are severely rent-burdened and have a head of household over the age of 65. However, these households, some of which rely on public assistance, do not currently qualify for CityFHEPS simply because they are not in NYC shelters. Demonstrating a continuation of this trend, the 2023 HVS further indicates that more than 38 percent of households with disabled or elderly family members are severely rent-burdened.¹ While all such households should qualify for vouchers, creating even just 5,000 vouchers for rent-regulated seniors and people with disabilities already living in the community would reduce homelessness, preserve affordable housing, and maintain community stability.

Low Rent Limits: The rental assistance caps set under the CityFHEPS program are often lower than the actual market rents in high-cost neighborhoods. As a result, eligible households may find it difficult to secure housing that fits within the program's limits, which leaves them without the support they need to avoid homelessness or eviction. To better align the program with current market realities, the rental assistance caps should be increased to reflect the actual cost of housing in high-demand areas. This would allow households to secure housing that meets their needs without being forced into inadequate or unaffordable housing options. In addition, this will combat the concentration of poverty seen with voucher usage and further the City’s professed goal of affirmatively furthering fair housing.

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

In the past 12-months HRA has made improvements in the timely processing of applications for ongoing cash assistance and SNAP benefits. However, the agency remains well below its target goal of 95% timeliness and Legal Aid clients continue to experience barriers in communicating with the agency about their cases and in applying for as well as in demonstrating ongoing eligibility for benefits. In particular, New Yorkers who are seeking assistance with their rental obligations through either an ongoing subsidy like CityFHEPS or FHEPS or a discrete request for emergency assistance to help with arrears regularly find themselves stuck in an endless bureaucratic cycle created by lack of staffing and the necessary infrastructure to adequately support the administration of these benefits.

¹ <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/about/2023%20NYCHVS%20Selected%20Initial%20Findings.pdf>

Our testimony today focuses largely on the CityFHEPS program; however, we urge the Council to consider these recommendations as applicable to all programs administered by HRA.

We commend the agency's commitment to continue to improve timely processing of applications and recertifications for ongoing benefits, and we similarly commend the CityFHEPS program's intention to support vulnerable households. However, the reality is that this program has not lived up to its potential. Despite its well-meaning goals, the program is hindered by numerous challenges, including significant delays, administrative inefficiencies, limited support services, and inadequate rental assistance limits. As a result, many households who qualify for assistance under the program are still unable to access the support they need, putting them at continued risk of housing instability. It is critical that we increase funding and remove the barriers preventing people from benefiting fully from the program. The October 2024 Office of the New York State Comptroller audit of CityFHEPS ("Comptroller Audit") chronicles these shortcomings.² To little surprise, the report cited numerous concerns about the program's efficiency, its ability to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, and its overall effectiveness in addressing homelessness and housing insecurity in New York City. The report highlighted the lack of comprehensive support services, oversight and accountability issues, inadequate communication, failure to serve all eligible households, delays in processing applications and inadequate rental assistance.

Hiring More Staff: Staffing shortages negatively impact client experience across the range of HRA services. Households applying and recertifying for Cash Assistance, SNAP, and emergency rental assistance regularly report delays, mistakes, poor communication, and being erroneously diverted to HomeBase. HRA must ensure that Benefits Access Centers are equipped with knowledgeable staff to address client needs whether by phone, online or in person. Although the majority of applications and recertifications are submitted via AccessHRA, the back-office work of indexing and processing documents, conducting interviews, and approving applications and recertification requires dedicated and well-trained staff. HRA should appropriate the necessary funding to ensure sufficient staff to meet its obligations to timely and accurately process applications for public benefits.

HomeBase: Clients in the community at risk of entering shelter have to connect with their nearest Homebase provider in order to apply for CityFHEPS. The non-profit Homebase providers are understaffed, often having to make difficult prioritizing decisions that determine whether a family gets a same day intake appointment or one that will be weeks or months out. Wait times for appointments have recently ranged between two and six months. Increased funding can be used to hire additional personnel, including caseworkers, administrative support staff, and processing specialists at the agency as well as the Homebase providers. This will reduce delays in processing applications, conducting inspections, and issuing vouchers. More staff means a better ability to handle the workload and address backlogs, which improves overall efficiency. With increased

² New York City Department of Social Services: Administration of the CityFHEPS Program for Department of Homeless Services Shelter Residents <https://www.osc.ny.gov/files/state-agencies/audits/pdf/sga-2025-23n1.pdf>

funding, more case managers can be hired to work directly with tenants throughout the application process, helping them secure housing and ensuring they don't miss out on opportunities due to administrative challenges.

Underfunding of Support Services: Enhanced support services, such as case management housing placement assistance and follow-up services, are crucial for ensuring that households do not just receive financial aid, but also receive the ongoing support needed to maintain stable and safe housing and achieve long-term success. Without sufficient funding for critical supportive services households will struggle to maintain long-term housing stability, reducing the effectiveness of the program. Furthermore, Case managers, especially those working in shelters, must receive adequate training in public benefits since a lack of knowledge can impact a client's ability to access CityFHEPS.

Handling Property Inspections Efficiently: Inspections are often a barrier for landlords, so funding could support the hiring of additional inspectors or invest in technologies that streamline the inspection process, reducing the burden on landlords and speeding up approvals.

Centralized Management: Another contributing factor to the failures of CityFHEPS is the lack of effective oversight and monitoring mechanisms. To ensure that the CityFHEPS program fulfills its mission of preventing homelessness and providing stable housing for vulnerable New Yorkers, we strongly urge the City to allocate additional funding to address critical systemic issues. A key factor in the program's current shortcomings is the lack of effective oversight and monitoring mechanisms. Without adequate tracking and evaluation of the program's performance, it is difficult to identify and address issues in a timely manner, which in turn hinders the program's ability to serve eligible households effectively. Funding should be directed toward enhancing oversight capabilities, including improved tracking of outcomes, regular evaluations, and the ability to take corrective action when necessary. Further, funding should be allocated toward developing a centralized management system for the CityFHEPS program. A single point of contact for both applicants and housing providers would significantly reduce confusion and inefficiencies. Such a system would streamline communication and eliminate redundant application reviews or unnecessary re-verification of documents, improving coordination between agencies and reducing delays. By investing in this centralized system, the City can ensure that resources are being used more efficiently and that the program better meets the needs of those it is designed to serve.

Training Staff: Dedicated funding for staff training is essential for addressing many of the inefficiencies and challenges associated with housing rental voucher programs such as CityFHEPS and for the administration of public benefits generally. Well-trained staff can reduce delays, improve communication, encourage landlord participation, minimize administrative errors, ensure legal compliance, and empower tenants. Moreover, training contributes to program integrity, enhancing public trust and making the voucher system a more effective tool for providing affordable housing to

those in need. Proper training also ensures that staff can handle complex situations, stay adaptable to changing circumstances, and keep the program running smoothly over time. Funding can be used to train agency staff in the best practices for managing the voucher application process, ensuring that they can handle tasks more efficiently. Training staff to use digital tools and software efficiently can drastically reduce processing times. Staff who are proficient in these systems will be able to quickly resolve issues, track applications, and update records, making the process smoother and faster for everyone involved. With consistent and well-organized training, employees will be better equipped to manage high volumes of applications, reducing delays caused by errors or lack of familiarity with procedures. A well-trained team will be able to maintain better records, which minimizes errors and miscommunication.

- One of the major sources of frustration in housing voucher programs is poor communication. Training staff to engage effectively with applicants, landlords, and other stakeholders—while providing clear, timely, and empathetic communication—can make a big difference. Properly trained staff are more likely to resolve issues efficiently, answer questions accurately, and provide guidance that helps all parties navigate the system.
- Staff trained in cultural competency, anti-discrimination policies, and fair housing laws will be better prepared to handle the diverse needs of both tenants and landlords. This ensures that the program is accessible to all eligible individuals and that landlords are properly educated on the legal requirements of accepting rental vouchers.

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

Call Centers and Help Desks: With more funding, the HRA can establish or expand dedicated **help desks** or **call centers** that provide tenants and landlords with timely, clear information about their application status or program updates. Social media forums for voucher program participants are awash with people who are unaware of their rights, obligations and the next steps in their process. Providing accessible customer service that is staffed with trained, motivated and dedicated staff would reduce confusion and increase trust in the CityFHEPS program. Further, trained staff is better equipped to help tenants navigate challenges such as discrimination, confusion about the voucher process, or difficulties in securing housing. Empowered and informed staff can directly address these issues, ensuring that tenants have the support they need to succeed in using their vouchers.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Increased funding could be used to conduct **outreach and education campaigns** to better inform tenants and landlords about how the voucher program works. Educating landlords about the benefits of participation, as well as providing guidance to voucher holders on how to apply for and use the vouchers, could reduce misunderstandings and encourage participation.

Landlord Education and Outreach: Funding can support training for staff members who work directly with landlords. Well-trained staff will be able to effectively explain the benefits of participating in the voucher program and address concerns that landlords may have. They can also ensure that landlords understand the legal protections and requirements related to accepting vouchers, which can reduce reluctance and increase participation. This training ensures that staff members are fully aware of their legal responsibilities and can better enforce these protections. Funding could also support programs that educate landlords about their legal obligations and the benefits of participating in the voucher program, helping to overcome reluctance caused by inefficiencies or misconceptions. This could include workshops, informational materials, and targeted outreach to property managers and rental owners.

TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE TRACKING:

Upgrading IT Infrastructure: Funding can be directed toward improving the digital infrastructure, such as creating user-friendly online portals for both tenants and landlords similar to the Housing Choice Voucher Program administered by the New York City Housing Authority (“NYCHA”). Funding can be allocated to invest in tools that automate various processes like application submission, document verification, and payment tracking. This would facilitate quicker application submission, document uploads, and communication between all parties. This can help reduce human error and speed up processing, which would reduce the incident of missed housing opportunities.

Automation and Digitization: Invest in technology solutions that can automate parts of the process, like application submission, eligibility verification, and communications. A more streamlined digital process could reduce paperwork and delays. Automation and digitization would improve services and client experience across all of the public benefits that HRA administers. Applicants for Cash Assistance, SNAP and rental arrears routinely report that documents submitted to HRA, whether via AccessHRA app or in person at the BAC, are not timely processed and assigned to their cases. Sometimes, the app will show that a document has been received but will fail to inform the applicant that the document was found illegible or otherwise lacking. Clients might find that their application submitted via AccessHRA was rejected and not be able to learn the reason unless they visit a BAC and ask the right staff person. HRA should endeavor to automate and digitize the processing of documents while also ensuring that staff are trained to provide a high level of customer service.

Tracking and Accountability: Regularly track the performance of the program through data on application processing times, landlord participation, and tenant satisfaction. Use this data to continuously improve the process and hold responsible parties accountable.

Feedback Loops: Engage with participants (both tenants and landlords) to gather feedback about their experiences with the program. This can help identify ongoing pain points and areas for improvement.

LEGAL SERVICES

Tenant Support Programs: More funding can go toward **tenant advocacy and legal assistance** programs to help individuals navigate the voucher process. These programs can assist with disputes, prevent discrimination by landlords, and ensure that tenants understand their rights, particularly in overcoming delays or unfair denials.

Source of Income Discrimination Enforcement: Despite clear prohibitions against voucher discrimination under both the City and State Human Rights Laws, source of income discrimination remains widespread. The pledge of a “coordinated enforcement and outreach effort” to combat source-of-income discrimination from the Mayor’s June 2022 housing plan has yet to materialize.³ Correspondingly, in March 2023, the City announced that HPD would allocate funds to external organizations that would target housing providers who violate the law. It is unclear why HPD, instead of the New York City Commission on Human Rights (“CCHR”), was chosen to administer the funds. More importantly, these funds have not been distributed.⁴ The lack of clear execution and the failure to distribute promised funds reflect a lack of urgency and effective action to combat source of income discrimination, leaving vulnerable populations without the support they need. CCHR’s source of income discrimination unit must be funded to allow it to prosecute discriminatory activity as well as to engage in early interventions to ensure housing unstable and homeless New Yorkers can secure apartments.

³ Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/office-of-the-mayor/2022/Housing-Blueprint.pdf>

⁴ <https://gothamist.com/news/after-touting-3m-housing-discrimination-crackdown-nyc-has-yet-to-issue-the-funds>

Conclusion

We thank the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify about the City's spending priorities with respect to rental assistance, and public benefits generally, and commend the Council for its dedication to addressing New York City's mass homelessness crisis.

About 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 2,400 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 200,000 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 200,000 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 and the administration of public benefits. 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 Hughes Hubbard Reed LLP, settled *Toliver v. New York City Department of Social Services* on behalf of current and past recipients of CityFHEPS and FHEPS rental subsidies.

About the Community Service Society of NY

The Community Service Society of New York (CSS) has worked with and for New Yorkers since 1843 to promote economic opportunity and champion an equitable city and state. Through a strategic combination of data-driven research, direct services, and people-driven advocacy, we ensure New Yorkers have the power to create change in their lives and the life of our city and state. Our programs, policy analysis, legal advocacy, and campaigns expand access to health care, safe and affordable housing, employment, opportunities for individuals with conviction histories, consumer debt assistance, and more—making a tangible difference in the lives of millions.

We focus on issues that touch every facet of life in New York so that every New Yorker has the power to create change in their own lives—and the life of our city and state. CSS links people to immediate opportunities in higher education, health care coverage, living wage jobs, debt assistance, housing, and legal support while fighting long-term for more equitable systems. New Yorkers turn to us for urgent support, and we also channel their aspirations into policy and advocacy efforts that address the root causes of economic insecurity. All of the work we do in research, services, and advocacy is interconnected. Insights from one area of work inform others, ensuring our approach is both all-encompassing and effective in making New Yorkers' lives better today and tomorrow.

We power multifaceted advocacy efforts with tenant leaders to prevent evictions and make housing more affordable. Our research and advocacy have been central to achieving important wins for New York tenants, including a right to free counsel for households facing eviction and a stronger system of rent laws that help keep people in their homes. We also equip social service providers with up-to-date, actionable information on affordable housing resources for their clients.

CSS is one of the nation's first and most impactful charitable organizations. Since our founding in 1843, we've helped generations of New Yorkers live in safe, affordable housing; pioneered the social work and public health fields; and championed America's first public social welfare programs, including the forerunner to Social Security. Our track record of innovation and our commitment to equity continues to this day.



Testimony to the New York City Council – FY26 Executive Budget Hearing

Submitted by on Behalf of the Supportive Housing Network of NY

May 16, 2025

Thank you to the City Council for the opportunity to submit written testimony on Mayor Adams' FY26 Executive Budget. We appreciate the City's continued investment in supportive housing, human services, and community-based care, while also urging continued action to address the structural challenges that threaten the sector's sustainability.

We are encouraged by the inclusion of several long-sought investments, particularly:

NYC 15/15

We thank the Council for your partnership in securing the long-awaited reallocation of NYC 15/15 funding toward the development and preservation of congregate supportive housing. This marks a necessary and strategic shift away from unsustainable scattered-site models. As the plan moves forward, we call on the Council to ensure that the rental assistance, service dollars, and capital funding remain intact through the out-years to realize the successful completion of the initiative.

Despite progress on rental subsidies at HPD, service rates for scattered-site supportive housing remain significantly below those for congregate units. We urge the City to increase DOHMH's scattered-site service rates to match congregate levels, ensuring every household, regardless of placement, has access to the support and care they need to thrive.

\$45.1M to Support Indirect Rate Growth

We thank the administration for recognizing the critical role that indirect expenses play in effective service delivery. Investments in IT infrastructure, HR, financial oversight, staff training, and evaluation are not "overhead", they are the backbone of any successful organization. These financial investments, however, must be paired with timely, accurate contract registration and invoicing.

\$5 Billion in Contract Advances

We appreciate the City's plan to release over \$5 billion in contract advances to nonprofit providers. Advance payments can be a lifeline for nonprofits forced to front costs for years before payments are reimbursed. However, the details remain unclear, and we urge the Council to ensure implementation is consistent, automatic, and timely across agencies.

\$8.9M Investment in MOCS Staffing and Systems

We commend the administration's addition of 20 positions to the Mayor's Office of Contract Services and investments in system upgrades. Still, staffing is only one component-- this investment must be paired with increased transparency, accountability, and urgency in clearing backlog and reducing delays.

\$47.3M for Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) Teams

This historic investment in mobile mental health support is a testament to the power of sustained advocacy. We are hopeful this will expand the reach and quality of services available to New Yorkers with the most acute behavioral health needs.



\$8.9M for Alternatives to Incarceration and \$8M for Re-entry:

We support the administration's decision to restore and baseline funding for programs that reduce incarceration and support reentry. These investments are critical to public safety and community wellbeing.

Despite these important gains, we are disheartened that **\$4.5 million in baseline funding for peer responders on B-HEARD teams** was excluded from the Executive Budget. Peer responders offer compassionate, community-rooted crisis intervention and are a vital complement to clinical teams. We urge the Council to champion this funding and help realize a non-policing model of mental health response that New Yorkers deserve.

In closing, we recognize the City is operating within a difficult and uncertain fiscal environment. Nonetheless, investments in supportive housing and community-based services remain essential to meeting the needs of New Yorkers and achieving long-term cost savings. We look forward to working with the Council to ensure the adopted budget supports these priorities and delivers effective outcomes.

Thank you,
Tierra Labrada, Director of Policy and Advocacy
Supportive Housing Network of NY
tlabrada@shnny.org



Testimony: NYC Council Executive Budget Hearing

Committee on General Welfare

Re: Support for Community Food Connection in the FY26 Executive Budget

Chairs Brannan, Ayala, and Members of the NYC Council:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of United Way of New York City (UWNYC) in strong support of the City Council's proposal to baseline **\$100 million** to expand funding for the **Community Food Connection** program in the FY26 City Budget.

Investing in the Community Food Connection program is one of the most impactful and values-aligned investments the City can make in the FY26 budget. Given UWNYC's role in supporting the operations and physical infrastructure of hundreds of food pantries across the five boroughs, we are deeply grateful for the Council's ongoing leadership in ensuring that 700+ community kitchens and food pantries are funded and prioritized in FY26.

The Community Food Connection program centers dignity, neighborhood trust, and access to healthy, culturally appropriate food. This crucial program bolsters NYC's emergency food systems, which were never meant to be permanent, and yet for many New Yorkers, they've become exactly that.

Visits to food pantries surged during the COVID pandemic, but have not abated since then—according to [City Harvest](#), we have seen an **85% increase in visits to food pantries and soup kitchens** since 2019. During the pandemic, the increased demand was coupled with numerous initiatives that eased the burden for everyday New Yorkers, including the Child Tax Credit, Pandemic EBT benefits, eviction moratorium, and increased unemployment benefits. Today, those additional supports are gone, but food insecurity remains.

In FY25, UWNYC's Food and Benefits Access portfolio supported **more than 400 food pantries and soup kitchens**, and many report an increase in working families on their lines and a need for expanded resources to meet rising demand. Our programs directly support food pantries, soup kitchens, mobile meal providers, and SNAP enrollment specialists which serve tens of thousands of New Yorkers each week. Given the ongoing freeze in EFSP reimbursements and the rising cost of food, many local programs are limiting their services and freezer trucks are going unrepaired.



The Community Food Connection program creates predictable, flexible funding. It allows local organizations to plan ahead, staff up, and invest in infrastructure. It acknowledges that food access is not just a crisis issue—it's a systems issue. It helps us move beyond band-aids and toward a food system that is truly resilient, equitable, and community-led.

One important component of CFC is the **capacity-building support** it provides to pantries that need administrative support, including funding for personnel, utilities, and food service products to ensure continued operations. As longtime members of the Policy Committee on NYC Hunger Resources, UWNYP partners closely with CFC to ensure that emergency food providers have sufficient funds to feed their visitors.

With sustained support, Community Food Connection could serve as a model for what public-private coordination on food access should look like: responsive, locally grounded, and scalable.

United Way of New York City strongly supports the City Council's call for **\$100 million in baselined funding for the** Community Food Connection program, which has still not been met in the Mayor's Executive Budget proposal.

New Yorkers should not have to choose between dinner and rent. Food pantries should not be forced to ration.

We thank the City Council for its leadership and commitment to building a more just and food-secure city.

With gratitude,
United Way of New York City

About Us

United Way of New York City has been serving low-income New Yorkers for over 85 years. As a backbone organization, we coordinate cross-sector efforts across food access, education, health equity, and economic mobility. Through a network of more than 600 community-based partners, we connect resources to where they're needed most and advocate for structural solutions to poverty. Our work centers equity, trust, and long-term impact—because every New Yorker deserves the opportunity to thrive.



Written Testimony
New York City Council
Committees on General Welfare and Finance
Executive Budget Hearing
May 16, 2025

Thank you, Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan and members of the Committees for the opportunity to submit written testimony for the Committee on General Welfare's Fiscal Year 2026 Executive Budget Hearing. My name is Cristina Abbattista, and I am a Policy Analyst at Urban Pathways. I will be sharing budget priorities for support needed by nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing providers, as well as necessary investments to the CityFHEPS voucher program.

Urban Pathways is a nonprofit homeless services and supportive housing provider serving single adults. Last year, we served over 2,500 unique individuals through a full continuum of services including street outreach, drop-in services, safe havens and stabilization beds, extended-stay residences, and permanent supportive housing in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx. We also offer a wide range of additional programming to meet the needs of the people we serve, including our Total Wellness, Employment, and Advocacy programs. We hold City contracts with DHS, DOHMH, and HRA.

Procurement Reform

The FY26 Budget must take decisive action to resolve payment issues for contracted nonprofits.

We appreciate the Council's understanding of the detrimental effect that compounding late contracting issues has on human services providers and the communities we serve. The Backlog Initiative created meaningful reforms to address the procurement challenges faced by nonprofits by moving hundreds of outstanding invoices pending at the Department of Homeless Services alone at the end of 2024. However, there continue to be delays in the contracting process and getting reimbursements for services provided. We still have months of catch-up in pending budget, budget updates, and invoice approvals that are prohibiting us from being reimbursed for

the services we have already performed. **Nonprofits are contracted by the City to provide essential services on the government's behalf, but the City is not paying contracted nonprofits who deliver critical services to our city's residents most in need on time.** In many instances, payments are made months after services have been provided.

In the Comptroller's recent "Nonprofit, Nonpayment" report, DHS has over 1300 pending invoices as of April 28 – 20% of which have been sitting with DHS over 100 days. The lack of normalcy when it comes to payments puts organizations like ours at risk. It makes it difficult to pay staff, vendors, and run programs for the people we serve.

To create a fair and transparent contracting system, the Council must:

- **drastically reform its procurement and payment process**, with additional staff, updated technology, increased efficiency and transparency, and a streamlined process that eliminates burden and barriers;
- pass Int. 514 for City agencies to **pay interest on late payments** to contracted nonprofits;
- pass Int. 1247 to require the City **to immediately release 80% of contract funds upon registration**. Timely access to these funds ensures we can continue supporting the most vulnerable members of our communities without interruption;
- pass Int. 1249 to **require contracting agencies to submit corrective action plans** that analyze the causes of delays, specify improvements to be made, include implementation timelines, and performance targets; and
- **pay the true cost of the services** being provided through the term of its contracts.

Increase Staffing in Key City Agencies for Housing

Along with procedural inefficiencies, short staffing in City agencies has also contributed to delays in payment. We are pleased to see the Executive Budget allocates \$8.9 million to add 20 additional positions to the Mayor's Office of Contract Services' help desk and making necessary improvements to the PASSPort system. There is also an increase in 131 positions at DSS. Unfortunately, adequate staff investment is not across the board.

The Executive Budget removes 111 positions at DHS. This removal, on top of the fact that DSS has not been able to recruit and retain staff at a rate that keeps up with demand, will likely result in payment lag times. **We must increase the number of staff positions at DHS.** When DHS pulls staff away from day-to-day budget and payment approvals to clear out aged invoices, it disrupts the little cash flow nonprofits already get. Without additional staff, DHS will not be able to clean up the huge backlog of pending budget approvals.

Prevailing Wage for Human Services Workers

The City must establish prevailing wage requirements for city-contracted human services workers to bring true livable wages to the human services sector.

Our services are not possible without the hard work of our dedicated staff. Our 24/7 programs require case managers to connect the people we serve with the services and resources needed to meet their goals, maintenance workers to keep buildings clean, security staff to ensure the safety of our residents, and cooks to provide healthy meals.

Due to historic underinvestment in the human services sector over the last several decades, these frontline essential workers, who are majority women and people of color, are paid poverty-level wages. Requiring human service providers to pay their human services employees no less than the prevailing wage via Int. 734 is critical in addressing the underpayment of our essential workforce who dedicate themselves to ensure the health and safety of our communities.

CityFHEPS: Administrative Barriers and Rent Hike

We urge the City Council to reduce barriers in the administration of CityFHEPS to expedite placement in permanent housing.

The CityFHEPS voucher program fails to realize its full potential as a pivotal tool to combat homelessness due to a bureaucratic process that lacks clarity and efficiency, requiring eligible individuals and voucher holders to be their own advocate in receiving and utilizing vouchers.

Concrete timelines and guidelines, increased accountability and responsiveness, and streamlined processes are essential in addressing the persistent barriers within the administration of the CityFHEPS voucher.

As it stands, there is no set standard for how long it should take to complete an application from start to finish. The City Council must expedite CityFHEPS applications by committing to a 15-day maximum turnaround from finding an apartment to approval to ensure that voucher holders can retain permanent housing prospects. Many voucher holders lose apartments due to the lengthy process that must be completed before an apartment can be approved and checks cut. Most landlords are unwilling to hold an apartment beyond this time frame, which mirrors the private sector application timeline. Losing an apartment to bureaucratic processes is unfair to the apartment seeker, who applies for many apartments before finding one that will accept them.

The process of leasing an apartment with a CityFHEPS voucher is opaque and creates a sense of hopelessness for the people we serve. To remedy this, the administration must require the creation of an accessible voucher holder checklist that clearly communicates all the necessary paperwork to the recipient. This should be universally accessible and available in all languages via AccessHRA. This will decrease the chances of incomplete or incorrect applications and increase voucher-holder confidence.

We urge the Council to push back against the rent hikes for CityFHEPS Voucher Holders.

This proposed rule change can place an undue burden on voucher holders in their sixth year of eligibility by increasing their share of the rent to 40%, potentially putting households at risk of homelessness again. This proposed rule change will only apply to households with earned

income. The Council must ensure that, in their \$25 million investment in technology upgrades and administrative fixes, we create processes to protect people from being mistakenly informed that they will have to pay more than 30%, even if the voucher holder is not in their sixth year on CityFHEPS.

15/15 Supportive Housing Initiative

We are pleased to see that the Mayor has announced a \$46 million investment toward the development and preservation of 5,850 congregate supportive housing units by 2028 in the NYC 15/15 initiative. This investment increases operating rates for both new and existing congregate units from 66% to 80% FMR. We urge the City to mirror this increase in operating rates for existing scattered site units as well. In order to successfully improve and expand the supportive housing system, it is imperative that all existing 15/15 supportive housing units are able to keep pace with rising operating expenses and address increased wear and tear with this investment.

Combat Source of Income Discrimination

Source of Income (SOI) Discrimination is rampant city-wide and is the biggest challenge the people served by Urban Pathways face when searching for an apartment. SOI discrimination leads to extended stays in our safe havens, stabilization beds, and drop-in centers. Although discrimination against voucher holders is illegal, inadequate enforcement makes it difficult to prove instances of discrimination by property owners. The City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), the only agency tasked with holding discriminators accountable, has historically been underfunded and understaffed.

To combat SOI discrimination, the City must:

- properly resource CCHR to end discriminatory housing practices and ensure that voucher holders are able to utilize their vouchers in a timely manner;
- develop and implement outreach initiatives to educate voucher holders about their rights and help owners, managers, and agents understand the available resources to help support tenants and clients;
- require an annual public reporting on SOI complaints and the average time it takes to resolve a complaint; and
- pass Introductions 1210-1215 to strengthen penalties against landlords and brokers who refuse to rent to tenants using rental subsidies.

Thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to testify today. We look forward to working with the City Council on a fair and equitable budget for all New Yorkers.

For questions or more information, please contact:

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Testimony on behalf of Volunteers of America-Greater New York
The New York City Council Committee on General Welfare and Committee on Finance
Joint Executive Budget Hearing on General Welfare
May 16th, 2025

Introduction and Thanks

My name is Catherine Trapani, Assistant Vice President of Public Policy for Volunteers of America-Greater New York (VOA-GNY). We are the local affiliate of the national organization, Volunteers of America, Inc. (VOA). I would like to thank Deputy Speaker Ayala and Chair Brannan for the opportunity to submit testimony for this hearing.

About Us

VOA-GNY is a 129-year-old anti-poverty organization that aims to end homelessness in Greater New York through housing, health and wealth building services. We are one of the region's largest human service providers, serving more than 12,000 adults and children annually through 70+ programs in New York City, Northern New Jersey, and Westchester and thousands more via our Operation Backpack® initiative. We are also an active nonprofit developer of supportive and affordable housing, with a robust portfolio permanent supportive housing, affordable and senior housing properties—with more in the pipeline. VOA-GNY is a member of the Human Services Council (HSC), Homeless Services United (HSU), The Supportive Housing Network of New York, and the Family Homelessness Coalition (FHC).

Overview of Payment Process and Current Challenges

Thank you, Speaker Adams, Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan, and Members of the Council, for your unwavering leadership and for continuing to elevate the critical role that non-profit providers like VOA-GNY play in safeguarding New Yorkers and the urgent need to pay providers on time. As uncertainty continues to grow at the federal level, New York City must do everything within its ability to shore up our human services safety net and restore the fiscal health of city-contracted non-profit organizations. By strengthening local non-profits and ensuring the New York City agencies are well-staffed and working collaboratively with providers, the city can help ease disruptions caused by cuts and changes at the Federal level.

Swift action must be taken by the administration to clear the payment backlog and process budget amendments and new needs requests for prior fiscal years to make providers like VOA-GNY whole for the services provided. To date, VOA-GNY is owed \$32 Million for services provided through our city contracts with the lion's share owed by DHS. Recent announcements about increasing advances to nonprofits to address this problem may be useful in the future but, as of now, the majority of the monies owed to our organization stem from prior fiscal years. **We are owed monies for services rendered as far back as Fiscal Year 20.** VOA-GNY has been forced to rely on our line of credit and incur interest costs that are not reimbursable to bridge the gap created by City reimbursement delays. Last year, VOA-GNY



spent \$1,000,000 on interest fees to keep our NYC contracted programs running, and we project spending \$1,500,000 in interest fees for FY25. We could do a lot of good with \$1.5 million if we weren't forced to divert those funds to pay interest to cover the City's fiscal delays.

These delays could also impede our development pipeline, as banks may eventually view our diminished cashflow and the highly leveraged position of our investments as possible concerns when considering future loans for financing affordable and supportive housing projects.

This fiscal strain has become untenable, forcing us to delay the implementation of a much needed cost of living increase for our staff, delay the opening of one new shelter facility, and walk away from another recently awarded contract for two new shelters entirely because we simply cannot afford to carry the costs of operating these programs while the City is mired in delayed payments. DHS and DSS staff are working to clear our pending invoices, but they are resigned to working within an inflexible system that lacks the capacity to quickly address the significant payment delays we are experiencing.

The late payment crisis not only impacts on our ability to function as a service provider, but it also inhibits public oversight of nonprofit spending. VOA-GNY wants to be transparent stewards of public dollars, but the City's delays processing our budget amendments and new needs prevent timely auditing of our contracts. VOA-GNY has outstanding budget amendments dating as far back as FY20 which prevent us from closing our books, which must be done prior to audits. Timely processing of amendments and new needs enables the City to have more effective oversight authority by diminishing the lag for audits of city contracts.

The following actions are needed to preserve NYC's non-profit human services safety net:

1) Immediately deploy a large infusion of funding of at least \$500 Million to contracted providers to cover expenses while the City works to clear the backlog of invoices and budget amendments and new needs

Repurposing the City's Renewable Grant Fund ("the Fund" for short) as a more flexible and easily deployable source of funding could be effective, however in practice, city agencies are implementing unnecessary barriers which unduly complicate what could have been an otherwise elegant solution. We respectfully disagree with the administration assertions that \$30 million is adequate to administer the Fund given the scale of monies owed to nonprofits. To date, the Fund has only granted \$2.1 Million of our \$12 Million in Fund applications, covering less than 7% of how much the city owes our organization.

The current process requires providers to submit separate applications for each contract and by fiscal year rather than a more unified process, which is labor intensive. Additionally, only some expenses are allowable for Fund reimbursements, and staff at DSS/DHS have begun overseeing approvals for the Fund, choosing to deny applications to reimburse providers for long overdue invoices, under the



assumption that their own staff will be able process payments for the invoices, which completely misses the point that we would not be applying for the Fund if DHS Finance staff could pay our invoices on time.

2) Process all outstanding budget amendments from current and prior fiscal years to enable providers like VOA-GNY to close our books for multiple prior fiscal years.

VOA-GNY has outstanding budget amendments on our SRO contracts dating back as far as FY20 for critical investments including new needs for City owned properties to comply with updated building code requirements and protect the safety of our clients and staff, Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) which the Council fought so hard for to help our staff, and higher Indirect Cost Rates (ICRs) to cover rising overhead expenses like utilities and administrative costs to run our programs. For our DHS contracts, we still have some Workforce Enhancement Initiative (WEI) dollars, ICR amendments, and new needs which still need to be processed.

While we appreciate DHS granting us permission to submit updated budgets for our FY26 annual approvals instead of our prior approved budgets which are outdated (given the pending prior year amendments still in process), this is a one-off solution. We need contracting agencies to routinely process our amendments with greater regularity, so that we can do timely close-outs for annual audits and are working off of up-to-date approved budgets for annual approvals.

3) Expand headcount within MOCS, DSS, DHS, DOHMH and other city agencies' procurement staff lines to strengthen the City's overtaxed infrastructure to approve contract actions and reimbursements for human services providers.

Emergency measures alone won't resolve the City's late payment crisis. The City must invest in the infrastructure of its agencies so that they can appropriately process contracts and payments in real time going forward. Timely reimbursements are critical to maintaining our ability to continue to answer the city's call to stand up new programs and to maintain the flow of our development pipeline of affordable and supportive housing projects.

DSS, DHS and DOHMH need additional headcount to eliminate the backlog of pending budget amendments and modifications, new needs requests, Form 65A subcontractor approvals and pending invoices.

We are heartened by the Executive Budget's inclusion of \$8.9 million for MOCS which will fund the hiring of 20 additional help desk staff, as recommended by the Council's Preliminary Budget Response, as well as funding additional system improvements. MOCS is responsible for overseeing the city procurement process and leading reform initiatives to make it more equitable, transparent, and efficient. However, pending contract actions at the contracting agency level are preventing VOA-GNY from getting paid for the services we provided as far back as FY20. This includes updating our budgets with approved Indirect Cost Rates to cover overhead



costs, as well as Cost of Living Adjustments (COLAs) for our staff from prior fiscal years. This is unsustainable for our organization, as continual delays in procurement processes further restrict cash flow, already hindered by an unwieldy reimbursement process which limits us to submitting only two invoices per contract at any given time. MOCS as well as contracting and payment staff at DSS, and DHS need to be adequately funded to ensure that providers' contracting needs are met so that we can focus on providing services to our communities.

In addition to needing to catch up on all pending and yet-to-be-submitted contract actions and to disburse the hundreds of millions owed to non-profits, these city agencies need sufficient headcount to sustainably do the work moving forward. DHS' shelter capacity grew four times larger in recent years, yet their contract services headcount has not had a corresponding expansion. Just as higher caseloads negatively impact on the work of case managers, we cannot expect agencies like DSS, DHS, and DOHMH to resolve significant payment and contracting delays if they do not have sufficient staff to sustain the work.

Support for Students in Temporary Housing:

VOA-GNY greatly appreciates the Council's inclusion of \$250 thousand in its Preliminary Budget Response for Operation Backpack®, which helps students living in shelter to start their school year off on the right foot by equipping them with brand new backpacks full of school supplies. In FY25, VOA-GNY was able to provide backpacks to 19,000 homeless students, but to reach every school age child in shelter, **we ask for the Council's support in urging the Department of Education (DOE) to resume its support of the program at \$500 thousand for FY26.** Through the Council and the DOE's support of Project Backpack®, we can help ensure that all students regardless of their housing status can start the school year off with the tools they need to succeed.

Investing in Women's Health:

VOA-GNY is immensely grateful to Majority Leader Farias for championing funding in the Council's budget response to create a women's concussion clinic pilot program for survivors of Domestic Violence (DV). The ability to refer survivors to specialized trauma-informed care provided by the clinic will strengthen VOA-GNY and other DV shelter providers' ability to treat these often overlooked but debilitating injuries. We applaud the Council and urge the Mayor to approve this funding in his final budget.

Supportive Housing Investments:

VOA-GNY applauds the Mayor for inclusion of \$46 million in the FY26 Executive Budget to reallocate unawarded NYC 15/15 scattered-site units towards the development and preservation of 5,850 units of supportive housing in the NYC 15/15 initiative. Thank you to Speaker Adams and the Council for including this in their FY25 Preliminary Budget Response



and Council Member Lee for leading a sign-on letter in support of this key investment to maximize utilization of NYC 15/15 units.

VOA-GNY appreciates the Mayor's additional investment of \$45.1 million in his Executive Budget for funding Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) growth for human services providers including Human Resources Administration contracts. This investment will be critical to helping right-size the operating budgets for our Single Room Occupancy (SRO) supportive housing contracts, to better reflect the cost of maintaining this much-needed housing stock.

Investing in CityFHEPS Rental Assistance:

VOA-GNY urges the City to accurately budget for the full cost of operating CityFHEPS including rightsizing the funding set aside for vouchers for FY26 and the outyears without increasing the rent burden of working tenants receiving the voucher longer than five-years and ensuring sufficient resources for timely administration of applications and renewals. We thank the Council for including in their Preliminary Budget Response a \$25 million investment in CityFHEPS staffing and infrastructure. We urge the Council to oppose the pending rule change that would increase rents for up to 25% of City FHEPS voucher holders, all of whom are working, and who have remained on the program for five years or more.

Legislative Solutions to Protect Non-Profit Human Service Providers:

Int 1247-2025:

VOA-GNY strongly supports the Speaker's legislation which would require city agencies to disburse 80% of the fiscal year contract to non-profit providers upon contract registration. Current contract advances of 25 to 30% are insufficient to cover the prolonged lag of amendment registration and invoices each year. Even the recent announcement of advancing up to 50% falls short of what is needed to overcome a renewed backlog every year. Because of multi-year delays with approving budget amendments, we are forced to start each fiscal year using the most recent approved budget in order to receive any payment at all when the new year starts— in our case, those dollar amounts may be as old as fiscal year 18. Meanwhile, the actual cost to run our programs is much higher, which means we will exhaust our advances much faster than the schedule suggests. In an ideal world, the advance would be large enough to sustain the organization while providing the city with enough time to address any amendments stuck in the pipeline, such that by the time the advance runs out, we are able to invoice for our full, actual expenses. Given how far behind the city is now, and how historically these delays compound when demand for services increase, a significant advance is necessary to ensure we can continue to operate. Larger advances and healthy cash flow will also make doing business with MWBEs and other small businesses easier since they often opt not to bid on subcontracts with human services providers because they cannot afford to float the cost of rendered goods and services for the nine plus months it takes for the city to reimburse



providers. By moving to this 80% upfront model, the city can widen access to more MWBE and small businesses, creating more options for VOA-GNY and other providers to do business with, such as restaurants and businesses within the community which offer culturally competent foods and services for the people we serve.

Int 1248-2025:

VOA-GNY supports the Speaker's legislation to establish the Department of Contract Services, headed by a commissioner, who would serve as the City Chief Procurement Officer. While the City has made strides to improve the procurement process for the non-profit sector over the years, interpretation and implementation of procurement policy has varied by city agency, resulting in varying equivalent processes and agency-specific bottlenecks. By centralizing the accountability of all agency ACCOs and offices with oversight of procurement, we hope this new Department can achieve the long-envisioned standardization and streamlining of non-profit procurement process citywide. Given the Department's broad vision and authority, we also think it would be ideal to take up the unfinished goals of the Mayor and Comptroller's Joint Task Force focused on resolving contracting delays for non-profit organizationsⁱ.

Int 514-2024:

VOA-GNY strongly supports the intent of this legislation which would make interest a reimbursable expense when the City of New York fails to pay for services on time. Passing this legislation would hold providers harmless when the city does not pay its bills on time. Our one note of caution is that the language as written should be clarified to prevent the agency from using monies budgeted for programming to cover interest reimbursements.

While in some instances, that may mean that providers simply serve fewer people (an outcome that is undesirable but possible), shelter providers do not have the option to reduce services because our clients are in residence irrespective of when the contract is scheduled to renew. Regardless, our costs are fixed regardless of occupancy and, there is a right to shelter making scaling back programs impractical in any case. Therefore, while we could in theory be reimbursed for interest payments, unless new funding is added to the contract to pay this cost, we would still be operating at a deficit.

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA-GREATER NEW YORK FY2026 DISCRETIONARY BUDGET PRIORITIES

CITYWIDE INITIATIVES

Veterans Community Development (Total \$100,000; Renewal; Ref 181375)

The funds support VOA-GNY's part-time Economic Employment Coordinator who assists the staff of our citywide VA-funded Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) program, as well as veterans housed



within our multiple permanent supportive housing sites. Veterans are connected to employment and training opportunities in high-demand fields like transportation, healthcare and construction. Additional funds would allow us to cover veterans' costs related to training and employment, housing placement, and meeting basic needs, and costs related to recreational, education, and therapeutic programming at our congregate housing sites with set-aside units for Veterans.

BOROUGH DELEGATION/MEMBER DIRECTED INITIATIVES

Food Pantries (Total \$60,000/\$20,000 per Borough):

- **\$20K Bronx (New Request; Ref 187658)**
- **\$20K Brooklyn (Renewal; Ref 181379)**
- **\$20K Manhattan (New Request; Ref 187632)**

Funds provided by the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Manhattan Delegations would be used exclusively for the purchase of food to be distributed at no cost to residents of VOA-GNY operated temporary and permanent housing programs within each respective borough. VOA-GNY maintains pantries at all our permanent housing sites, as well as shelters where residents prepare their own meals. City Council fundings would expand our budgets allowing us to purchase more nutritious and culturally appropriate foods and offsetting the impact of inflation on both our programs and our clients.

Domestic Violence and Empowerment (DoVE) Initiative (Total \$100,000; Renewal):

- **District 18, \$30K Farias (Ref 181386)**
- **District 27, \$10K Williams (Ref 181387)**
- **District 37, \$30K Nurse (Ref 181382)**
- **District 42, \$30K Banks (Ref 181370)**

These funds enrich services available at our DV shelters and safe dwellings within Districts 18, 27, 37, and 42, by assisting survivors with meeting basic needs, as well as promoting their healing journey through social-emotional and recreational programming. Funds will also be used to raise awareness about the link between brain injury and DV and to support outreach efforts to those experiencing interpersonal violence to promote quickly exiting dangerous situations towards safety.

Support our Older Adults (Total \$45,000; Renewal):

- **District 16, \$15K Stevens (Ref 181378)**
- **District 18, \$30K Farias (Ref 181377)**

Funds will be used to promote the health and wellness of older adults in Districts 16 and 18 permanent supportive housing sites dedicated to, or with high proportion of low-income seniors. It will cover recreational activities and group workshops to promote physical, economic, and emotional well-being, training for staff, on evidence-based approaches and interventions, purchasing of adaptive technologies or other items that support independence and reduce risk of falls or other household accidents, and distribution of food pantry and other basic needs.



MEMBER DIRECTED ITEMS

Operation Backpack® \$520,000/ \$20,000 per member (New Request; Ref 179272)

Due to historic budget pressures in 2024, the NYC DOE did not contribute financially or in-kind to Operation Backpack®, VOA-GNY's signature service campaign, which partners with the Department of Social Services and our sister organizations to provide grade-specific school supplies to every school-aged child in the shelter system prior to the first day of school. We are seeking the support of Councilmembers throughout the city to offset the rising cost of the program as DOE participation remains uncertain and ensure that we can continue to help homeless kids get their school year off to a strong start in the 2025-26 school year.

CM Salaam \$20,000 Request (Renewal; Ref 181368)

Funds would be used to expand programming and resources available for formerly homeless adults living within VOA-GNY programs in District 9. This includes recreational activities, celebrations, and group workshops that promote physical, economic, and emotional well-being, training for staff on evidence-based approaches and interventions, and distribution of food pantry and other basic needs.

CM Sanchez \$20,000 Request (Renewal; Ref 181373)

Funds would enrich social and recreational programming within two sites within District 14 which provide affordable and permanent supportive housing for older adults and formerly homeless seniors, as well as providing food and other basic needs for residents.

Closing

VOA-GNY is grateful to Speaker Adams, Deputy Speaker Ayala, Chair Brannan, and Members of the Council for your steadfast commitment to non-profit human services providers and the New Yorkers we serve, and we continue to stand ready to partner with both the Council and the Administration in supporting the needs of all New Yorkers.

Testimony respectfully submitted by Catherine Trapani.

If you have any questions, please contact me at Ctrapani@voa-gny.org.

ⁱ New York City Mayor Adams' Office and New York City Comptroller Lander's Office, A Better Contract for New York, February 14, 2022, <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/a-better-contract-for-new-york/>



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

**Testimony of Win (Formerly Women in Need, Inc.) for the New York City Council
Committee on Finance Jointly with General Welfare Executive Budget Hearing
May 16th, 2025**

Thank you, Chairs Brannan and Ayala, and the esteemed members of the Committees on Finance and General Welfare for the opportunity to submit testimony on the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. My name is Chris Mann, and I am the Assistant Vice President of Policy and Advocacy at Win, the largest provider of shelter and supportive housing to families with children in New York City and the nation. We operate 16 shelters and nearly 500 supportive housing units across the five boroughs. Each night, nearly 7,000 people call Win “home,” including 3,800 children.

As the federal government threatens to significantly cut funding for housing, homelessness, and social welfare programs, it is imperative that our City government allocate more funding for programs and initiatives that serve the lowest-income New Yorkers, including rental assistance, cash assistance, and legal aid.

In January, Win released Project Hope, a report outlining administrative and legislative actions New York City and State lawmakers can take to protect low-income, homeless, and immigrant New Yorkers from the draconian policies laid out in the conservative blueprint Project 2025. In anticipation of massive federal cuts to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) workforce, the slashing of individual federal benefits, like Section 8 and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Trump Administration’s mass deportation efforts that are already underway, we urge the City to:

1. Allocate an additional \$263 million dollars to CityFHEPS to serve approximately 10,000 households at risk of losing their Section 8 voucher;
2. Invest \$10 million in direct cash transfer programs serving high risk populations, including families with children, youth, and single adults experiencing housing instability or homelessness, like it did last year with a \$1.5 million investment to The Bridge Project, which provides unconditional cash to housing insecure mothers and infants; and
3. Increase its share of funding for immigration legal services, including consultation, pro-se assistance, full representation, and application fees, to \$80 million, and direct these funds to experienced nonprofit immigration legal service providers.¹

Since the Council’s last budget hearing, the Adam’s Administration has announced a new rule that would increase the household contribution for CityFHEPS voucher recipients with earned income from 30% to 40% after 5 years in the program, a harmful policy that imposes a rent burden on the lowest income New Yorkers and undermines the purpose and effectiveness of the CityFHEPS program.

CityFHEPS exists to provide critical housing support to New Yorkers transitioning from homelessness or facing serious risk of housing loss. For families who qualify—those earning less



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

than 200% of the federal poverty level—the program has been a vital tool in achieving stability. Forcing these same families to contribute 40% of their income to rent would turn back that progress. In fact, a 2020 study found that a \$100 increase in median rent was associated with a 9% increase in the estimated homelessness rate.² As the City experiences its worst affordability and homelessness crisis in its history, this policy is both fiscally irresponsible and morally reprehensible.

The City has cited a projected \$50 million in cost savings from this policy. However, this represents just 0.04% of the City's nearly \$110 billion budget—and these savings are unlikely to materialize. When rent burden is forced on low-income families, many will face renewed housing instability, requiring costly emergency interventions such as one-shot deals, legal services through Right to Counsel, and even shelter placements. The policy may shift costs on paper, but in practice, it merely moves expenses from one agency to another—while destabilizing families in the process.

The City must also invest \$40 million to successfully implement Local Law 35, which mandates clinical mental health professionals in every shelter for families with children, so that families experiencing homelessness can have immediate access to lifesaving mental healthcare, in-person or virtually. The cost neutral approach taken by the Administration in the first year of implementation has left providers unable to effectively meet the provisions of the law.

Prioritizing this investment in the upcoming fiscal year would create long-term benefits for both the families and the City, as mental health treatments lead to improved health and employment outcomes for recipients.³

In addition to mental health services, the City must prioritize funding for child care. Having access to child care creates pathways for families experiencing homelessness to leave shelter by allowing them to work, see apartments, or go back to school. The current pause on child care enrollment leaves families in the lurch and will prolong shelter stays. The City must include funding in the budget to fill the gap and reopen enrollment.

Finally, the Fiscal Year 2026 budget must take decisive action to rectify payment issues for shelter providers. While efforts to address overdue payments, like the Backlog Initiative, did provide some temporary relief, the lack of normalcy when it comes to payments puts organizations like ours at risk. It makes it difficult to pay staff, vendors, and run programs for clients.

The Trump Administration has created significant uncertainty for the nonprofit providers serving low-income New Yorkers who are concerned over the reliability of funds from the federal government. We know federal cuts to social safety net programs will have dire results for the



Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness
for Women and their Children

communities we serve, including the closure of programs that serve people experiencing homelessness. Given the uncertainty of these federal resources, it is crucial that New York City, the wealthiest city in the world, allocate the necessary resources to providers and low-income households to help struggling New Yorkers obtain financial stability, and achieve our collective mission of ending homelessness.

¹ “Project Hope: A 180-day Action Plan for Protecting Homeless and Low-Income New Yorkers from Project 2025,” *Win*, January 2025, <https://winnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Project-Hopev3.pdf>.

² “How COVID-19 Could Aggravate the Homelessness Crisis?” *U.S. Government Accountability Office*, August 25, 2020. <https://www.gao.gov/blog/how-covid-19-could-aggravate-homelessness-crisis>.

³ “Helping Families Heal: Incidents and Data Show Families in Shelter Need Mental Health Supports,” *Win*, May 2023.

PROJECT HOPE

A 180-day Action Plan for Protecting
Homeless and Low-Income New Yorkers
from Project 2025

By Jade Vasquez, Henry Love PhD, Chris Mann,
Maya Jasinska, Christine Quinn

win



Background

In early 2024, right-wing think tank The Heritage Foundation released the detailed 900-page policy book, [Project 2025](#), to serve as a blueprint for the next conservative presidential administration.¹ The Heritage Foundation's plan includes unprecedented rollbacks to the civil rights and anti-poverty policy gains the United States has made over the past 50 years. It proposes massive rollbacks to social welfare programs critical to families experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) program benefits, a "mass deportation" plan, which will impact tens of thousands of homeless immigrant families, and the eradication of critical evidence-based education programs, like Head Start.

Since the 2024 presidential elections, housing and homeless advocates' concerns about the reactionary policies laid out in Project 2025 have intensified, as several of its contributors have been appointed to the highest ranks of the Trump Administration and will dictate federal policy for the next four years, including Tom Homan as his incoming "border czar" and the architect of Project 2025, himself, Russ Vought, as the White House Office of Management and Budget director.² Vought is also a lead figure in carrying out the fourth pillar of Project 2025, the highly secretive "180-Day Transition Playbook," which includes an action plan of conservative policy changes to each federal agency during the first six months of the Trump Administration.³ Although the contents of the 180-Day Playbook have not been shared with the public, it is likely that the incoming Administration plans to implement many of the policy proposals in Project 2025 and the 180-Day Playbook beginning inauguration day.⁴

Project Hope is a response to the draconian plans laid out in Project 2025, and, more specifically, what we anticipate will be aggressive, fast sweeping policy changes during the first six months of the Trump Administration that would detrimentally impact low-income individuals and families experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Endorsed by social service and advocacy organizations committed to ending homelessness for all, Project Hope is a call to action to New York state and local elected officials to combat the violent and inhumane policy proposals in Project 2025 and mitigate some of the immediate impacts of the ultra-conservative policy playbook.

In the wealthiest city on earth, with the highest number of billionaires, more than 130,000 people in New York City slept in a homeless shelter every night last year, the highest level on record.⁵ About 70% of the total NYC shelter population are families with children, due to the significant shortage of affordable housing, spike in post-pandemic evictions, rising costs of raising a family, and increasing rates of domestic violence.^{6, 7} Black and Latinx families experiencing homelessness, approximately 90% of those in NYC shelters,⁸ will face unprecedented challenges under a second Trump term, especially those in undocumented or mixed status households. New Yorkers experiencing unsheltered homelessness—more than 4,000 individuals—⁹ will also face increased criminalization under a new Trump Administration, as he has vowed to ban encampments nationwide and force individuals sleeping on the street, many of whom struggle with mental illness or substance use disorders, to accept treatment and rehabilitation or face arrest.¹⁰

To prepare for and respond to the unique threats that the individuals we serve face under the proposed policy platform of the incoming Trump Administration, New York government officials should utilize Project Hope as an action plan to guide administrative and legislative decisions taken in the next six months. While we believe that federal elected officials should do all that they can to stop the implementation of the harmful policies laid out in Project 2025, it is imperative that New York government officials at the state and local levels act proactively to prevent and mitigate the impact that the proposed policy agenda will have on our most marginalized neighbors.

The following recommendations address ways in which New York City and New York State can act prior to the Trump Administration taking office in January 2025, as well as during the first 180 days of the new administration to ensure the protection of basic human and civil rights for low income and homelessness New Yorkers.

Housing & Homelessness

Project 2025 calls for systematic cutting of funding and limiting the reach of housing programs that are vital for low-income individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Specifically, federal programs that help individuals achieve housing stability—such as the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD) Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8), Public Housing (NYCHA), Continuum of Care (CoC), and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) programs—are at great risk of loss of funding under the incoming Trump Administration. Furthermore, Project 2025 calls for draconian legislative reforms to Section 8 vouchers that would increase work requirements, limit the period during which households are eligible for rental subsidies, and “prohibit noncitizens, including all mixed-status families, from living in all federally assisted housing,”¹¹ which will cause many struggling NYC households to lose vital assistance. It also calls for the sale of our current public housing stock to the private market and banning noncitizens and mixed-status households from receiving federally assisted housing.¹²

In his first term, President Donald Trump proposed cutting HUD’s budget by \$9.6 billion.¹³ This included massive cuts to Section 8, which serves 123,000 New York City households,¹⁴ and could have led to a net loss of 10,000 vouchers for NYC residents.^{15, 16} These policy proposals, if successful, will ultimately lead to a loss of benefits that will exacerbate financial insecurity and homelessness for tens of thousands of low-income individuals and families with children in New York City and State.

These policy proposals, if successful, will ultimately lead to a loss of benefits that will exacerbate financial insecurity and homelessness for tens of thousands of low-income individuals and families with children in New York City and State.

To prevent low-income households from losing their housing and to help more individuals gain access to safe, stable, and affordable housing, *New York City government should:*

- **Allocate an additional \$263 million in funding for the CityFHEPS voucher program in the FY26 budget**

Increases in evictions, due to the loss of Section 8 vouchers, would further exacerbate the City's housing and homelessness crisis, currently at an all-time high. By increasing funding for CityFHEPS by \$263 million, the Mayor and the City Council can offset the proposed cuts to the Section 8 program and ensure that the 10,000 households at risk of losing their federal rental subsidy will not fall into homelessness. Failing to prevent these individuals and families from falling into homelessness could cost the city up to \$1 billion in shelter costs per year.

- **Pass legislation to ensure that individuals and families who reach the proposed Section 8 time-limit, under a Trump Administration, can seamlessly transfer to CityFHEPS**

In New York City, approximately 123,000 households rely on Section 8 for permanent housing.¹⁷ Project 2025's proposed time limits for Section 8 would be devastating to the housing stability of those low-income families and individuals who rely on the program. This is particularly true in New York City, where Section 8 households rely on the program for an average of 15 years.¹⁸ For many Section 8 households, the affordability offered by the program is the only thing preventing them from falling into homelessness. If the incoming Administration successfully implements time restrictions on Section 8, City Council should pass a law that would allow any household timing out of Section 8 to transfer to CityFHEPS if all other eligibility requirements are met.

- **Allocate an additional \$900 million in funding for the FY26 budget for NYCHA to address major capital improvements**

Over the past two decades, conservatives in the United States Congress have divested funding for NYCHA, starving the agency of resources needed to preserve public and affordable housing. Disrepair in NYCHA buildings has led to thousands of vacant apartments considered too inhabitable to rent.¹⁹ NYCHA projects that it will cost the agency nearly \$80 billion over the next 20 years (or \$4 billion per year) to preserve our public housing stock.²⁰ However, Congress only provides about \$700 million a year for NYCHA capital improvements,²¹ a slice of what it needs to accomplish comprehensive repair work.

Rather than investing in capital improvements for public housing, Project 2025 proposes prioritizing the sale of Section 9 public housing to private investors, an effort to eliminate public housing altogether.²² The Mayor and City Council should increase annual capital funding for NYCHA by at least \$900 million to meet the increasing capital gaps left behind by the federal government.

- **Repeal the 30/60-day shelter limits on new New Yorkers and other policies that increase homeless immigrants' risk for deportation**

Mayor Eric Adams' administration must end cruel and inhumane policies of 30/60 day shelter limits. These policies needlessly expose immigrants without homes to danger and create obstacles for them in progressing their immigration cases. Shelter placement time limits and reapplication requirements for asylum-seekers and other new arrivals make it difficult for people to receive their mail and subsequently vital notices from the immigration court about their pending cases, increases street homelessness, and increases unsheltered migrants' interaction with the criminal justice system, which can impact their immigration status.

Moreover, the 60-day shelter placement limits imposed upon families with children further disrupt schooling for students. Every 60 days a family is transferred, they may have to make new arrangements for their child to get to school, disrupting classrooms and the lives of thousands of students. Rather than creating additional barriers to shelter, the City should guarantee New Yorkers and children experiencing homelessness a safe place to sleep every night by adhering to the terms of all legal settlements, consent decrees, local laws and State social service laws that established a legal right to shelter.²³

- **Stop criminalizing homelessness and invest in community-based mental healthcare and low-barrier housing options for individuals and families experiencing homelessness**

Given the likelihood of increased criminalization and fewer resources for unhoused individuals and families under the incoming administration, it is critical that the City take immediate steps to provide the needed housing, shelter, and services for unsheltered individuals, and reduce unnecessary involvement with law enforcement. The City should immediately remove law enforcement and the Department of Sanitation from all homeless outreach functions whether conducted on the streets, subways or elsewhere, and end street sweeps of homeless people and their belongings. Instead, the City should increase outreach from trained workers who can connect people to low-barrier shelters and, ultimately, permanent supportive housing.

Homeless people experiencing mental health crises need care not forced treatment. The City should allocate additional funding in the FY26 budget for community-based mental health and housing for unsheltered homeless people experiencing mental health crises. It should invest in a spectrum of services and ensure coordination between services. This includes better discharge planning and care coordination and expanding the number of Intensive Mobile Treatment (IMT) teams.

New York State Government should:

- **Pass and allocate \$250 million in the FY26 budget for the Housing Access Voucher Program (S72 – Kavanagh / A3701B – Rosenthal)**

The New York State Legislature and Governor Hochul should pass and allocate \$250 million in funding for the Housing Access Voucher Program (HAVP), which would create a flexible and inclusive statewide voucher for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, regardless of their immigration status or criminal record.

- **Direct all funding from New York’s Rental Supplement Program to rental assistance programs for homeless families traditionally ineligible for public benefits**

In the FY25 budget, the State allocated \$100 million to its Rental Supplement Program (RSP), which was designed to provide rental assistance “to individuals and families, both with and without children, who are experiencing homelessness or are facing an imminent loss of housing, regardless of immigration status.”²⁴ To alleviate shelter capacity, the NYC Department of Social Services developed the SHARE program, which utilizes funding from New York State’s Rental Supplement Program to provide rental assistance to the longest-term stayers, many of whom are undocumented immigrants, in the DHS system who are not eligible for other housing subsidies.²⁵

Despite the purported goals of RSP, in the last budget cycle, the State mandated New York City to use a portion of RSP funding to pay for NYS FEPS increases. The State should ensure that 100% of the \$68 million in RSP funding to New York City goes to the SHARE program, which will begin to support 950 undocumented households experiencing homelessness in 2025 and find another source of funding to pay for FEPS increases. The City needs this funding to immediately implement this program, so more undocumented households and long-term stayers in shelter can access housing resources and exit shelter sooner.

- **Pass legislation to empower New York City to extend housing benefits to New York residents regardless of immigration status (S1631 – Kavanagh / A5513 – Rosenthal)**

Many immigrant households are ineligible for most housing subsidies, due to their immigration status, a denial that is exacerbating the historically high shelter census and trapping noncitizens in shelters for incredibly long periods of time. [S1631/A5513](#) would empower the City to expand housing vouchers, including CityFHEPS, to these households in need, regardless of their immigration status. This expansion could save hundreds of millions of dollars annually, while helping the newest New Yorkers exit shelter, and freeing up space in our homelessness response system.²⁶

- **Allocate an additional \$900 million in funding for the FY26 budget for NYCHA to address major capital improvements**

Federal divestment and disrepair of NYCHA buildings has led to thousands of vacant apartments considered too inhabitable to rent. According to the Community Service Society of New York, it would cost \$4.5 billion over the next 5 years (or \$900 million annually) to preserve 15,000 NYCHA units and 25,000 units of public housing outside of NYC, as well as build 8,000 new units across the state.²⁷ The Governor and State Legislature should increase annual capital funding for NYCHA by at least \$900 million, only 20% of the State's last \$25 billion housing plan, to meet the increasing capital gaps left behind by the federal government.

- **Pass legislation to prohibit arbitrary shelter limits ([S8493](#) – Hoylman-Sigal / [A9129](#) – Cruz), or the Governor should end shelter limits through executive order**

Mayor Adams' harmful 30- and 60-day shelter limits for new arrivals are a direct threat to homeless immigrant households' safety and survival. If Mayor Adams does not repeal the harmful 30- and 60-day shelter limits, the New York State Legislature and Governor must move forward with a policy that prevents arbitrary shelter limits. The legislature can do this through the passage of [S8493/A9129](#), which would end the harms of arbitrary time limits in shelter and allow persons to receive shelter and related services in the system best suited to their individual needs. In addition, if Mayor Adams refuses to repeal the shelter limits, the Governor should also end shelter limits through executive order, mandating OTDA's compliance with all legal settlements, consent decrees, local laws and State social service laws that established the legal right to shelter for New Yorkers experiencing homelessness.²⁸

- **Stop criminalizing homelessness and invest in community-based mental healthcare and low-barrier housing options for individuals and families experiencing homelessness**

The State should immediately remove law enforcement and the National Guard from all functions involving homeless people, whether conducted on the streets, subways or elsewhere. Instead, the State should allocate funding to increase outreach from trained workers who can connect people to low-barrier shelters.

The State should also take immediate steps to provide the needed housing and supportive services for unsheltered individuals and reduce unnecessary involvement with law enforcement. Homeless people experiencing mental health crises need care and community-based services, not forced treatment. The State must invest in a spectrum of services and ensure coordination between services. This includes increasing the number of inpatient psychiatric hospital beds, better discharge planning and care coordination, and expanding the number of Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams.

Social Welfare

Project 2025 calls for significantly more rigid eligibility and work requirements, as well as making cuts to federal social welfare programs, including the US. Department of Agriculture's SNAP and WIC programs. For instance, Project 2025 proposes reversing changes made to the SNAP funding calculation under the Biden Administration that resulted in a permanent 23% increase in SNAP benefits.²⁹ Approximately 1.73 million New York City residents receive \$5 billion in SNAP benefits each year,³⁰ and a 23% reduction would result in a loss of \$1.15 billion in SNAP benefits to low income New Yorkers. Cuts to these vital programs will result in millions of New Yorkers going to bed hungry each night, especially people experiencing homelessness.

To offset these potential losses and support individuals and families currently struggling to meet the high cost of living in New York, the City and State Legislature should expand direct cash transfer programs, as well as increase funding to supplement anticipated SNAP cuts by enacting the following recommendations.

Approximately 1.73 million New York City residents receive \$5 billion in SNAP benefits each year, and a 23% reduction would result in a loss of \$1.15 billion in SNAP benefits to low income New Yorkers.

New York City Government should:

- **Allocate funding in the FY26 budget to supplement the SNAP program**

Project 2025 calls for a 23% cut to the SNAP program, a vital lifeline for millions of low-income New Yorkers. Currently over one million households in NYC receive SNAP benefits.³¹ To offset these cuts at the federal level, it's imperative that the City dedicate additional resources to fund the critical SNAP program.

- **Allocate \$10 million in additional funding in the FY26 budget for targeted direct cash transfer programs serving high risk populations**

In the FY2025 budget, the City Council allocated \$1.5 million to expand the Bridge Project's efforts to provide cash payments to expecting mothers experiencing housing instability.³² The City should go further and increase its funding of direct cash transfer programs to \$10 million in FY26 to fund programs that target families with children at risk of eviction as well as in shelter, single adults experiencing homelessness, and youth experiencing homelessness.

New York State Government should:

- **Allocate at least \$1.15 billion in FY26 to supplement the SNAP program**

Project 2025 calls for a 23% cut to the SNAP program. In 2022, nearly three million families across New York State, including millions of children, were food insecure, as a result of limited financial resources.³³ To offset these cuts at the federal level, the State should dedicate additional resources to fund the critical SNAP program.

- **Pass the Working Families Tax Credit ([S277C](#) - Gounardes / [A4022](#) - Hevesi)**

The Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) would improve and expand the State's refundable tax credit by combining the Empire State Child Credit (ESCC), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), and the dependent exemption (DE) into one. It would also provide the credit to families quarterly on a sliding scale based on income.

- **Pass legislative package that would increase state funding for Public Assistance and direct cash assistance**

The Governor and State Legislature should pass Cash Assistance Reform, a package of bills that would improve current cash assistance programs, including increasing the benefit amount ([S5270A](#) -Persaud/[A5500](#) - Rosenthal), establishing parity for homeless recipients ([S113](#) - Cleare) /[A108](#) - Rosenthal) and helping working recipients to save more ([S182](#) - Persaud).

- **Pass legislation to establish the Mothers and Infants Lasting Change ("MILC") Allowance ([S4578A](#) - Ramos/[A6197A](#) - Clark)**

The MILC Allowance would provide direct cash assistance to income-eligible parents, for the last three months of pregnancy and the first 18 months of a child's life.

Immigration

President-elect Trump has made the issue of immigration one of his core policy priorities over the past decade, separating hundreds of families at the U.S.-Mexico border during his first term and making mass deportations a central component of his most recent presidential campaign. Project 2025 calls for significantly increasing the enforcement of harmful and draconian immigration policies throughout the United States, including the expansion of tents and detention centers; enhancing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) authority to expedite removals; repealing designations for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for hundreds of thousands of immigrants; and cutting federal funding to states and localities that do not honor all immigration detainees.³⁴ If the proposed mass deportation plan laid out in Project 2025 is realized, tens of thousands of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness could face deportation and family separation, as well as lose crucial public benefits.

If the proposed mass deportation plan laid out in Project 2025 is realized, tens of thousands of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness could face deportation and family separation, as well as lose crucial public benefits.

A significant portion of households in shelters are led by immigrants, including mixed status families, recent arrivals legally seeking asylum, and undocumented families. Project 2025's calls for "total information-sharing in the context of both federal law enforcement and immigration enforcement,"³⁵ of state and local databases to the U.S. government in exchange for federal grants. This is particularly concerning given the amount of sensitive information that the City and State have collected from our most recent arrivals and the Playbook's proposals to mandate and empower local and state law enforcement agencies to engage in immigration enforcement on behalf of ICE, violating NYC's sanctuary laws.³⁶

The following recommendations offer actions the City and State must take to resist Project 2025's violent and dehumanizing immigration policies that will disproportionately impact-low income and homeless New Yorkers.

New York City Government should:

- **Defend and strengthen New York City's sanctuary laws passed under the first Trump Administration to protect immigrant New Yorkers**

Mayor Adams' recent rhetoric and actions on immigration issues, including an incorrect statement about undocumented immigrants not being entitled to due process, a meeting with incoming "border czar" Tom Holman, and an announcement to amend NYC's sanctuary laws via executive order to make it easier for local law enforcement to conspire with the incoming Trump Administration,³⁷ is of grave concern. The City Council should pass the following bills that would restrict City officials from conspiring with ICE in the detention and deportation of individuals and families in our communities:

- **Intro 396 – Powers**: Would limit communication between the NYC Department of Correction (DOC) and ICE regarding any person in DOC custody for purposes of immigration enforcement unless a person is convicted of a violent or serious crime or there is a warrant signed by a federal judge.
- **Intro 395 – Powers**: Would limit the New York Police Department's (NYPD) ability to hold people on immigration detainers without a judicial warrant, in compliance with New York State [law](#).
- **Intro 214 – Hanif**: Would create a private right of action in the City's civil immigration detainer laws, enabling immigrant New Yorkers harmed by NYPD, DOC, and Department of Probation (DOP)'s violation of current detainer laws to seek justice.³⁸

- **Develop new data security protocols for shelter and social service providers who collect sensitive information on homeless immigrants in programs like CARES, IDNYC, and Host NYC**

Ensure that any record of an individual's immigration status being collected or stored by the City on CARES, IDNYC, and Host NYC is not retained in any form, electronic or otherwise, beyond the period necessary to complete the service requested by such individual. As the Trump Administration begins its mass deportation efforts, the data the City has collected on immigration status, specifically clients' Alien (A) number, is now a dangerous liability. The City must take immediate action within the next 30 days to ensure that the data collected is fully secured and remove clients' A numbers from all electronic documents to prevent them from being used in ICE's mass deportation efforts.

- **Increase City funding for immigration legal services to \$80 million, including consultation, pro-se assistance, full representation, and application fees and direct funds to nonprofit immigration legal service providers**

Despite an influx of more than 210,000 new immigrants to NYC since 2022, City allocation toward immigration legal services, under the Office of Civil Justice, has remained relatively stagnant at \$53–54 million per year.³⁹ In FY2025, New York State allocated \$38 million towards immigration legal services, to better support new arrivals and asylum seekers. The City should increase its share of funding to at least \$80 million to better enable nonprofit immigration legal service providers and support staff to meet the ever-growing demand of legal aid for New York’s most recent arrivals and maintain a strong City workforce of legal service providers. Additional City funding should go to support the Immigrant Opportunity Initiative (IOI), the New York Immigrant Family Unity Project (NYIFUP), and the other programs that help low wage workers and unaccompanied minors.

New York State Government should:

- **Pass the New York for All Act ([S987](#) – Gounardes /[A5686](#) – Reyes)**

The Governor and New York State Legislature should pass the New York For All Act, making New York a sanctuary state. This bill would enable immigrant New Yorkers to lead more open lives and take care of family, despite the incoming Administration’s cruel immigration agenda. The legislation would strengthen protections created under Governor Cuomo’s 2017 [Executive Order 170](#) (extended by Governor Hochul in [2021](#)) by prohibiting New York’s state and local government agencies, including police, sheriffs, school safety officers, and probation officers from questioning individuals regarding their citizenship or immigration status and regulate the disclosure of information relating to immigration status to federal immigration enforcement officers, or ICE.

- **Amend Protect Our Courts Act to include schools, hospitals, and homeless shelters that receive state funding ([S425A](#) – Hoylman-Sigal /[A2176A](#) –Solages)**

In 2020, in response to a 1,700% increased ICE arrests in or around New York courthouses under President Trump’s first term,⁴⁰ the New York State Legislature passed the Protect Our Courts Act ([S425A/A2176A](#)), which protects immigrants from civil arrest by federal immigration authorities when attending court proceedings. Media reports have indicated that a longstanding federal rule designating certain sites as sensitive areas, where ICE is not currently allowed to make arrests, will be repealed under the incoming Administration as early as day one.⁴¹ State lawmakers should expand these protections, so children and families are not targeted by ICE and other immigration enforcement officials in places of sanctuary, including homeless shelters, schools, and hospitals, that receive state funding.

- **Pass the Access to Representation Act ([S141](#) – Hoylman /[A270](#) – Cruz) and invest \$165 million in the FY26 budget for immigration legal services**

The Governor and New York State Legislature should pass the Access to Representation Act, which would establish the right to legal counsel in immigration court proceedings. In addition, the State should allocate \$165 million in the FY26 budget for immigration legal services and infrastructure, including funding for the NYS Office of New Americans and for the education, accreditation, recruitment, and retention of talented and experienced immigration attorneys and support staff providing such services.⁴²

Early Childhood & K-12 Education

Project 2025 proposes an aggressive attack on public education that would have significant implications for students who are experiencing homelessness. It calls for the eradication of the Department of Education, funding cuts to education programs for low-income students, and the elimination of Head Start.⁴³ Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides financial assistance to school districts for children from low-income families.⁴⁴ It is the largest source of funding that the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) and New York State Education Department (NYSED) receive from the federal government. If enacted, the education policies proposed by Project 2025 could result in a loss of \$1.4 billion in federal funding for low income and homeless students in New York public schools.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY) established under the U.S. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987, is a critical program that provides funding to school districts across the U.S. to support the educational continuity and success of homeless children, by supporting the costs of school transportation, students in temporary housing liaisons, and other needs of students experiencing homelessness.⁴⁶ State funding for the program relies on the Title I federal allocation. Eliminating the \$10 million per year in McKinney-Vento funding that the state receives would detrimentally impact the education of New York City's 146,000 students experiencing homelessness.^{47, 48} Project 2025's proposal to eliminate Head Start and Early Head Start could prevent 19,000 low-income children in NYC from accessing high quality early childhood education and care.⁴⁹ An estimated 153 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees across New York State will lose over \$835 million in funding.⁵⁰

Project 2025's proposal to eliminate Head Start and Early Head Start could prevent 19,000 low-income children in NYC from accessing high quality early childhood education and care. An estimated 153 Head Start and Early Head Start grantees across New York State will lose over \$835 million in funding.

To support students experiencing housing instability and homelessness and preserve the quality of their education, New York City government should:

- **Allocate an additional \$17 million in funding for FY26 for the NYC DOE Office of Students in Temporary Housing**

The City should allocate an additional \$17 million to the budget of NYC DOE Students in Temporary Housing, to increase the number of shelter-based community coordinators, who help students in shelter enroll in school, set up transportation, and request additional resources (IEPs and comparable service plans, if necessary). In FY25, the City appropriated \$17 million to pay for 100 community coordinators across the city. While they play a critical role in combating chronic absenteeism among students experiencing homelessness, these coordinators' efficacy is stymied by their challenging caseloads. Currently, each coordinator can work with up to 300 children. The past school year had the largest number of students experiencing homelessness in the City's history, over 146,000.⁵¹ It is critical that additional resources are allocated to support NYC DOE students in the greatest need.

- **Improve and invest additional resources in school transportation for students in temporary housing**

Students in temporary housing often face long delays in getting buses to school because of a complicated, overburdened school transportation system. This leads to unnecessary mid-year school transfers and school absences. The City should promptly implement the recommendations of [Students in Temporary Housing Transportation Taskforce](#), established by [Local Law 158 of 2021](#), to ensure school stability and full participation in school for students in temporary housing.

- **Provide continued funding for early childhood education and prioritize outreach for children who are homeless**

In the face of threats to Head Start and Early Head Start, which serve approximately 19,000 children in NYC,⁵² the City should double down on its commitment to early childhood education, with a focus on ensuring children who are homeless have access. More than \$200 million in early childhood funding in NYC is set to expire in June unless extended in the upcoming City budget. This includes funding for 3-K; preschool special education, Promise NYC, which helps children access childcare regardless of immigration status, and early childhood outreach. The City should extend, baseline, and increase this funding, launch a targeted outreach plan to help children who are homeless enroll, and commit to covering the cost of any seats lost due to actions taken by the Trump Administration.

New York State government should:

- **Add per-pupil weights for students in temporary housing to the State Foundation Aid Formula**

The Foundation Aid per pupil funding formula was intended to distribute state education funding to school districts in an equitable manner based on student needs. However, the current formula includes no added funding for students who are homeless. Reforming the Foundation Aid formula to include weights for students in temporary housing can help ensure that school districts have the resources to provide quality education to students in temporary housing, including hiring non-instructional staff to offer support to students to overcome barriers to education. These weights are especially important in the face of potential cuts to the EHCY program.

Conclusion

New York's individuals and families experiencing homelessness, particularly Black, Latinx, immigrant, LGBTQ+, and low-income households, will face a plethora of challenges if the proposed policy recommendations in Project 2025 are enacted under the second Trump Administration. New York's State and City governments must proactively craft policy solutions that will ensure the protection of our most vulnerable neighbors, especially families with children.

Without City and State action during the first 180 days of the Trump Administration, New York's most marginalized communities will suffer profound irreversible damage. While these recommendations require significant investments from City and State government, as one of the largest economies in the world, New York has the ability and a moral obligation to protect homeless and low-income New Yorkers from some of the most harmful proposals of Project 2025 and the incoming Trump Administration. By implementing the proposals of Project Hope, New York government officials can prevent the shelter system from growing even larger, which is far more expensive than keeping New Yorkers safely and stably housed, and help individuals and families experiencing homelessness, including the newest New Yorkers, regain their independence, thrive in permanent housing, and inspire children to look forward to a brighter future.

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About Win

Win is a 501c3 nonprofit organization and the largest provider of family shelter and supportive housing in New York City and the nation. Win offers transitional housing and permanent supportive housing to current and formerly homeless families alongside programs and services that promote long-term housing stability. Each night, nearly 7,000 people call Win “home,” including 3,800 children.



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Thank you, Deputy Speaker Ayala and Chair Brannan for the opportunity to comment on the FY26 executive budget. My name is Michelle Bennett. I am a domestic violence survivor, and a member of New Destiny's Survivor Voice Project and the NYC Mayor's Office to End Gender-Based and Domestic Violence's (ENDGBV) Voices Committee.

I am focusing my written testimony on two issues: CityFHEPS and the ENDGBV's Housing Stability Microgrant program for domestic violence survivors.

CityFHEPS

I spent time in 4 different shelters during a period of 3 years due to my domestic abuse situation before moving into my apartment in October 2022. My child and I lived in 2 HRA shelters and 2 DHS shelters. This apartment is my first home. Having our own apartment meant a lot to us. Yet as soon I moved in, I was at risk of losing it when I was notified by DSS/HRA that the little cash I received in child support was, according to them, too high and it made me ineligible for my state FHEPS voucher.

For the past three years, I have been running all over, from agency to agency, to figure out a solution to this situation. At one point, I was able to get my FHEPS case reopened, but because of paperwork and delays the rent wasn't paid and I lost my rental assistance, again. Now, thanks to the incredible help of the ENDGBV Deputy Commissioner for Family Justice Centers and Survivor Supports, Jennifer DeCarli, I am in the process of finally getting a CityFHEPS voucher.

The only reason I will soon be able to get the CityFHEPS voucher is because I spent time in the DHS shelter system. If we had only been in HRA shelter, I would not be eligible for CityFHEPS, and my child and I would probably lose our apartment. This is the case for countless domestic violence survivors. HRA shelter history is not recorded in a centralized system like DHS.

I am pleading the Council to ensure that the CityFHEPS program is enhanced so survivors without DHS shelter history, or any shelter history at all, can be eligible. Now that the federal government is ending the EHV program, many survivors will be at risk of losing their home. That is retraumatizing for the family, not only the parent, but the children too. The Council must do everything in their power to not leave them out in the cold.

ENDGBV's Housing Stability Microgrant program

I was a victim of financial abuse. My child's father was controlling all our money and one day, when I least expected it, he changed the locks to our apartment and left me and our child out. especially when he locked me out by changing the lock on the door. When the Council passed legislation to create the microgrant program I was hoping that it would enable me and other survivors to access resources so we could get clothes, food, furniture for our new home, etc. but I have been trying to access the

funding through the organization serving my borough without success for months. The microgrant program is not low barrier at all. The program needs \$6 million to so that the program can operate as the Council envisioned.

Thank you,

Michelle B.
Domestic violence survivor

Testimony Submitted by
Carolina Cortes-Rivera, Digital Food Choice Program Manager

West Side Campaign Against Hunger

General Welfare Executive Budget Hearing May 16, 2025

Thank you to General Welfare Committee Chair Diana Ayala for holding today's budget hearing and the opportunity to submit this testimony. My name is Carolina Cortes-Rivera and I'm here today as a constituent from Washington Heights and as an anti-hunger advocate. I serve as the Digital Food Choice Program Manager at the West Side Campaign Against Hunger (WSCAH), an anti-hunger organization that has for 46 years worked to increase access to healthy foods, fresh produce, and connect New Yorkers in need with benefits enrollment.

In 2024 alone, I've helped over 2,000 customers receive groceries delivered directly to their homes—just one of the distribution channels we're using to expand our vision of food access and choice. We're actively finding ways to strengthen ties with the communities that we serve to better understand their unique needs and where we can provide support. Last year, WSCAH served over 110,000 New Yorkers. Of the 5 million pounds of food we distributed, more than 50% was fresh produce. By engaging with our customers, we've tailored the healthy foods we provide to better reflect the wide array of cultures of our community. Our Digital Choice platform gives customers the option to select their grocery box type online and soon will let customers choose a pickup location closer to home.

Folks shouldn't have to endure long commutes to obtain their groceries so we're working to address the accessibility gap by prioritizing convenience and giving our customers back a critical resource: time – especially for many of our customers that work long hours or have families to care for.

I'm proud to help lead this work with the understanding that "choice" isn't just about selecting food items – it's also about where and when customers access their groceries, free of stigma. WSCAH has partnered with health institutions to promote a more holistic view of community health, knowing that inconsistent and unreliable access to food directly affects well-being. Our home delivery program reaches patients experiencing food insecurity – specifically, pregnant people, families with young children, and older adults, many of whom live with chronic mobility issues. Reliable access to healthy foods has clinical and preventative health benefits. Every New Yorker deserves that.

But none of this work is possible without the City's financial support. Programs like Community Food Connections (CFC) are critical in achieving food security in our city – but as many here

know firsthand, these efforts fall short in the face of rising costs of food, housing and basic needs. CFC funding helps front-line providers like WSCAH keep our pantries stocked with the market-quality fresh produce our communities deserve.

And yet, we're struggling. For the first time in our 46-year history and in a time where both housing and food insecurity are reaching another record high, we've had to turn away new customers at our in-person pantry on West 86th street on the Upper West Side. I'm here today not asking for something new considering anyone who calls themselves a real New Yorker knows that the need in our city is indisputable and access to nutritious food is fundamental to a dignified life. Yet we're facing unjustifiable budget cuts to the very programs that help us innovatively increase food access and promote "food as medicine."

So, although last week the Mayor proposed 31 million dollars (again) for CFC funding in the year ahead, we know this is not nearly enough and we ask that the FY26 New York City Budget:

Increase baseline funding to a total of \$100 Million for Community Food Connections (CFC), formerly known as the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP).

CFC funding helps emergency food providers like WSCAH purchase fresh, high-quality food for our communities. The impact of federal budget cuts, state budget stagnation and rising food inflation is being felt across the sector and while we're implementing cost-saving solutions through initiatives like The Roundtable – a coalition of nine major NYC pantries including WSCAH – we still need the City's support to ensure our communities are healthy and nourished.

Last year, The Roundtable served 69 million meals, distributed 33 million pounds of produce, across 882 distribution points, and saved over \$200,000 in bulk purchasing through collective action. Imagine the reach and impact we could have with the City's increased financial support.

We deeply appreciate all this committee and Council have and will do for the community, hopeful that you can bolster the Community Food Connections program to the needed levels and are grateful for your continued support and leadership.

Submitted by:

Carolina Cortes-Rivera, Digital Food Choice Program Manager, West Side Campaign Against Hunger, 263 West 86th street NY, NY 10024 ccortes-rivera@wscah.org

Committee on General Welfare
Executive Budget Hearing
Testimony by Harold Alexis
May 16, 2025

Hi, my name is Harold Alexis. I am a native New Yorker, a member of Neighbors Together and VOCAL-NY Homeless Union, grassroots organizations that advocate for affordable housing and fight homelessness. I want to thank the Council and the Committee on General Welfare for convening this budget hearing to discuss the CityFheps programs administered by the Department of Human Resources Administration (HRA). These programs are essential for New Yorkers who rely on them to secure affordable housing in a city that has become increasingly unaffordable. I want to share all my experiences with CityFheps as an in-community voucher holder who received assistance from HRA and Homebase.

I would like to first address the proposed policy, Enhanced Client Placement Support. During my time in the shelter, I was linked to an apartment. I viewed a 1 bedroom unit that I envisioned as my new found beginnings, access to permanent housing and stability using my CityFheps voucher. I told my housing specialist that I would like to move forward and take the apartment. Unbeknownst to me, when I moved into my new apartment, it was not the same unit I viewed- it was a studio when I in fact shared with my housing specialist that my preference is a 1 bedroom. I was baited and switched by management of the building with no support from my caseworker at the shelter, and rushed to move into this apartment. I felt my preference didn't matter and my autonomy to make decisions on my new home was not considered. Although Enhanced Client Placement Support was not being actively enforced then, my experience surely exemplifies what this proposed

policy would look like; people feeling rushed and pressured to take housing that isn't right for them, or risk being kicked out of shelter

There's more: I submitted a transfer request at Homebase due to medical concerns. I was later approved for the transfer voucher, but when it became time to update my transfer voucher-that's when issues occurred. Caseworkers and supervisors weren't responding to phone calls and emails. In December of 2024, I was informed during my visit to HRA for my annual voucher renewal that my current rental assistance to my current residence was stopped due to a transfer. Please note, I haven't moved out yet & Homebase continues to sabotage my move-out plans and lost the approved transfer voucher and was told my request wasn't good enough. CityFheps stopped paying my rent to my current apartment and I was told that I had moved, which doesn't make any sense because I never found an apartment or submitted a move-in package to move into a unit. The caseworker at CityFheps didn't present any proof nor were there any remedies provided to fix this blunder. My public assistance case was closed, although I was in compliance with recertification, and now I'm facing rental arrears. Communicating with Homebase and HRA has been a challenge with delays to update my case. I've learned that I am entitled to utility allowances but never was notified nor have I received any payments to pay my utilities. Now I'm home in the dark due to having no assistance to pay my electricity bill and HRA is delaying help to turn my lights on. Lastly, I want to address the proposed rule change that will cause CityFheps vouchers holders to become rent burdened by requiring them to pay 40% of their income after 5 years. This will cause housing expenses to exceed tenants' budget and with the rise in electricity costs and other inflation, this will harm people. The thought is truly overwhelming.

To the entire Council, please take into consideration that both HRA and Homebase have set me up in a deplorable & despicable housing situation and I am now at risk of eviction. Imposing rent burden on low-income New Yorkers with CityFheps to undermine their stability and self-sufficiency. This situation needs to be handled with care and concern; it will affect many CityFheps voucher holders if not resolved in a timely manner. No one should be in this predicament in a program that is supposed to keep low-income New Yorkers stable in permanent housing, but yet facing housing insecurity. Housing is a fundamental human right, and I will relentlessly advocate for justice and peace. I am deeply frustrated with the current situation and will not back down.

Thank you,

Harold Alexis.

New York City, New York

Committee on General Welfare
Executive Budget Hearing
Testimony by Khaliyl Mayes
May 16 , 2025

Greetings, and thank you, City Council and all the Committee on General Welfare members, for holding this executive budget hearing. My name is Khaliyl Mayes, and I'm a member of Neighbors Together. I am here to share my experience as a CityFheps voucher holder, shedding light on the realities others face in the same situation. Without this program, I wouldn't be permanently housed. Still, unfortunately, some issues need the necessary funding and oversight to allow recipients of the program to prevent housing insecurity effectively.

In 2019, I received a transfer voucher from Homebase, and since then, it has taken a month to see a caseworker to receive an active voucher. The caseworker wasn't informative and didn't offer much support on my rights as a voucher holder, and the journey during my housing search has been daunting and challenging. Another discouraging aspect of this experience is that the caseworker did not promptly respond to emails or phone calls. I almost missed out on an opportunity to rent an apartment, and the landlord nearly gave up on me. Without the intervention from Neighbors Together, I finally moved into my apartment in 2023. Neighbors Together has advocated on my behalf to communicate with Homebase and inform me of my rights as a voucher holder when facing source of income discrimination. The need to fight bad actors in source of income discrimination is necessary to strengthen enforcement, which includes adding funding to the Commission on Human Rights, and special thanks to Council Member Krishnan for sponsoring bills Intro 1210-1215.

I've been in my apartment using CityFheps to cover my rent for 1.5 years. I am grateful to have a safe home. At Homebase, instead of voucher holders having to wait months for an intake appointment to obtain a voucher, to solve this issue, there needs to be more workers to assist anyone who needs help to move into an apartment. I know other Cityfheps voucher holders are currently experiencing a long wait to get a voucher, recertifying their benefits at HRA, and submitting a move-in package after being linked

to an apartment.- Without this form of communication, it isn't easy to sustain permanent housing.

Solutions needed to address these administrative barriers are an in-community voucher holder and receiving benefits at HRA, which includes hiring more caseworkers to assist with the demand for benefits. Securing a baseline funding for HRA will help mitigate these issues. Furthermore, I was unaware that HRA would allow me to receive a reasonable allowance to cover monthly utility bills. I did not receive any payments to pay my utility bill, which led me to apply for a One-shot deal. The cost of utility bills, including the proposed rent hikes at 40 % tenant share for CityFheps voucher holders, will enable recipients of this program to be rent-burdened, imposing instability and self-sufficiency if this proposal were to be adopted.

Thank you for your time and consideration. My experience will foster a favorable resolution to make the CityFheps program, address the necessary funding for administration improvements, and allow recipients of CityFheps programs to utilize the reasonable utility allowance and follow the mission of HRA to prevent housing insecurity due to becoming rent-burdened.

Sincerely,

Khaliyl Mayes



Testimony before the New York City Council
General Welfare Committee

Jaime Madden
Chief Operations Officer
Project Renewal

Project Renewal's mission is to end the cycle of homelessness by empowering individuals and families to renew their lives with health, homes, and jobs.

www.projectrenewal.org

To the Attention of Chairwoman Ayala and Members of the General Welfare Committee

My name is Jaime Madden, and I am the Chief Operations Officer at Project Renewal. I am a licensed social worker with over 20 years of experience delivering vital services to New Yorkers, including as Associate Commissioner at the Administration for Children's Services.

Project Renewal provides vulnerable New Yorkers with behavioral healthcare, primary care, housing, and employment programs. As COO, I manage the operations of all Project Renewal frontline programming.

Project Renewal delivers healthcare to over 12,000 people annually and provides emergency, transitional, and permanent housing to almost 4,000 New Yorkers a year, including veterans and families. In 2023 alone, 9,796 people received substance use disorder treatment, medical care, or psychiatric services through our programs. The City Council has been a reliable partner in funding our efforts, and I am grateful for your enduring support.

When the City Council invests in Project Renewal, the resources you provide power our efforts to address the intersecting challenges of homelessness, mental health, and substance use. I want to highlight three critical areas where additional Council investment will expand our capacity to serve New York's most vulnerable residents.

Expanding Access Through Mobile Behavioral Health Services

We are seeking \$200,000 to launch a first-of-its-kind behavioral health mobile clinic that will lower barriers to mental healthcare for hundreds of New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. The demand for these services is steep and unfilled, and a dedicated behavioral health unit will allow us to directly deliver this care to unhoused New Yorkers right where they are. Our existing mobile units primarily provide primary care, but over the past year, we have begun offering limited psychiatric care, and we know there is growing demand. This mobile model reaches underserved populations who often cannot access traditional clinic-based services, facilitating their path toward stability and independence.

Addressing the Substance Use Crisis

Mental health challenges cannot be separated from the prevalence of substance use among New Yorkers experiencing homelessness. Addiction to opioids and other substances can exacerbate preexisting conditions and drive unhoused New Yorkers deeper into distress. Project Renewal operates four distinct licensed substance use treatment programs, providing low-threshold care where drug users health needs are addressed. We are seeking \$100,000 to continue expanding these vital services, ensuring that comprehensive addiction treatment remains available to those who need it most.

Building the Behavioral Health Workforce

None of these programs can run unless we have trained behavioral health professionals to provide these services. Today, the city is grappling with a workforce shortage in this category. To address this critical gap, Project Renewal is piloting "Care Corps" in partnership with Health + Hospitals to train Psychiatric Health Technicians and fill approximately 400 vacancies in psych units citywide. Our first cohort just graduated this month, and participants are currently seeking placements at city facilities. We request \$150,000 from the Council to expand this pilot, enhancing our city's capacity to deliver critical behavioral health services while creating pathways to stable employment for program participants.

Supporting Our Veterans

Project Renewal also provides specialized support and career readiness training to veterans, who experience homelessness and behavioral health challenges at higher rates than the general population. We have a duty to support those who served our country. Our request for continued funding through the Homeless Prevention for Veterans Enhancement Initiative will help us build on the success of this specialized program and ensure no veteran falls through the cracks.

Taken together, these investments will meaningfully expand the reach of our programming. At a time when the federal government is reducing funding, we are especially grateful for your continued partnership in addressing New York City's most pressing challenges.

Respectfully submitted,

Jaime Madden

Chief Operations Officer

Project Renewal

From: [Save Shelter Animals](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Cc: [District8](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Testimony for Committee On Welfare Hearing May 16
Date: Wednesday, May 21, 2025 11:12:16 AM

Marilyn Galfin -Voices for Shelter Animals
May 21, 2025
Testimony for Committee on Welfare Hearing -May 16

For many New Yorkers, pets are family. They provide comfort, companionship, unconditional love—and for some, critical support as service animals or emotional lifelines. Yet today, more people are being forced to give up their beloved animals—not because they want to, but because they have no other choice.

The top reasons animals are flooding the NYC ACC shelter system are the lack of affordable, pet-inclusive housing, breed discrimination, and financial hardship. The economic aftershocks of COVID—including inflation and rising costs—are hitting low-income New Yorkers hard. Food insecurity isn't just a human issue—it affects their pets too.

Basic necessities like pet food are becoming unaffordable. Veterinary care is so expensive that many guardians are forced to forgo it entirely. These hardships are driving a heartbreaking rise in economic euthanasia—where guardians must choose between feeding their families or feeding their pets, or surrendering them to shelters. In fact, a survey by Rover.com found that 41% of U.S. dog owners have reduced their own grocery spending due to rising pet food costs.

Housing insecurity compounds this crisis. No one should be forced to make the traumatic decision between keeping a roof over their head or keeping their pet. It's a choice no one should have to face—and one that leaves lasting emotional scars.

Now more than ever, New York City needs compassionate, life-saving solutions. We must invest in people and their pets, protect families from being torn apart, and ensure no one is forced to choose between survival and the animal they love.

The human–animal bond is undeniable — real, deep, and life-affirming. No one wants to reach a point where the only option is to surrender a beloved dog or cat to the city's kill shelter, knowing what that animal will endure. NYC's ACC shelters, now operating at double and triple capacity, leave helpless animals in cages without sufficient humane care. They sit, confused and waiting, hoping their family will return. What they experience is trauma, despair, depression, and terror in a loud, chaotic, and stressful environment.

Many of these animals are friendly, adoptable, and treatable — including puppies from struggling families — yet they are being killed. This is not humane euthanasia.

The \$1 million allocated for the pilot Pet Food Bank Program is a good start — but it's not nearly enough.

As of 2025, New York City is home to an estimated 600,000 pet dogs and 500,000 pet cats. Of the city's 3.3 million households, roughly 27% own at least one dog (averaging 1.4 dogs), and cat-owning households average 1.7 cats. In addition, there are an estimated 500,000 to 1 million stray and feral cats, not included in household pet counts.

While exact numbers of families struggling to afford pet food aren't known, and the exact number of strays needing to be fed is not known, the need is real — and growing.

In 2024 alone, NYC ACC euthanized 1,282 animals: 590 dogs and 692 cats. Housing and financial instability remain the leading reasons pets are surrendered.

The data clearly shows that the high cost of pet food and the large number of animals in need require millions more in funding for the Pet Food Bank pilot initiative outlined in the preliminary budget.

Spay Neuter Needed- Preliminary budget says 1.5 million would go to 8000 S/ N surgeries annually.

New York City is home to an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 pet dogs. According to NYC Open Data (updated March 1, 2025), there are currently 85,085 active dog licenses, showing:

- 70,636 dogs listed as spayed/neutered
- 14,449 listed as intact

These numbers do not reflect the city's large population of unlicensed dogs, making it impossible to know how many remain unaltered. Applying national sterilization trends from the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), it is estimated that between 60,000 and 130,000 dogs in NYC are not spayed or neutered — including licensed, unlicensed, stray, and breeder-owned dogs.

For cats, the numbers are even more staggering.

NYC is home to an estimated 500,000 to 1 million stray and feral cats, and many pet cats are also unaltered. In 2024, the ACC took in 9,004 cats. According to ACC data, roughly three-quarters of all animals entering the shelter system are not fixed, which would mean approximately 6,750 cats came into the shelter unaltered — in just one year.

Combined with the approximately 4,490 unaltered dogs, that's over 11,000 unaltered animals entering NYC shelters in 2024 alone.

The preliminary city budget allocates \$1.5 million for 8,000 spay/neuter surgeries annually, but based on conservative estimates of 60,000+ unsterilized dogs and the scale of the stray and feral cat population crisis, millions more dollars are urgently needed to expand access to spay/neuter services — and to make any meaningful dent in the homeless animal crisis.

HOMELESS PEOPLE AND THEIR PETS

New Yorkers and their pets living on the streets of this city. This concern led to intro 1483 in 2019 and passed in 2021 introduced by Council Member Stephen Levin, aimed to address barriers faced by homeless individuals who own pets. *The bill proposed that the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) develop a plan to accommodate pets in shelters, thereby allowing homeless pet owners to keep their animals while accessing shelter services. This initiative recognized the strong bond between individuals and their companion animals and sought to prevent the difficult choice between shelter and pet ownership.*

In New York City, while exact figures are limited, anecdotal evidence suggests that pet-related shelter restrictions significantly impact individuals experiencing homelessness. For instance, in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, in 2019, over 98 pets were relinquished within a six-month period due to owners' homelessness. This indicates that the lack of pet-friendly shelter options in NYC contributes to difficult decisions for pet-owning individuals seeking shelter. [Brooklyn Eagle](#)

There are also many individuals experiencing homelessness who will not go into a shelter if it means giving up their pets or surrendering them to the kill shelter. They will stay out in frigid cold weather and bear the burden.

According to URI, 50% of domestic violence survivors would not leave an abusive home unless they could bring their pet with them. [URINYC](#)

There are programs like (PALS and the first Uplift Families Residence (Bronx) Opened in May 2024, NYC's first purpose-built pet-friendly homeless shelter. It offers 161 units, with five designated for families with pets. The need for more facilities and beds is critical.

For many homeless people their pet is their primary source of social support. These pets offer more than companionship; they provide emotional stability, help alleviate feelings of isolation, and give their owners a sense of responsibility and purpose. [Affinity](#)

All the drop in centers in NYC must accommodate people and pets whether they have ESA status or not. I'm advocating for legislation to ensure that during Code Blue emergencies, there are beds available without hurdles or bureaucracy — and that people can stay with their pets, whether or not they have ESA status, to escape the cold.

PET INCLUSIVE LEGISLATION IS URGENTLY NEEDED

I have model legislation and am still looking for a Council Member to sponsor such legislation. One of the top reasons for people giving up pets is housing and landlord issues along with financial instability. (You will see some cases in the attachments)

ACCESS TO FREE/LOW COST VET CARE

Money is also needed for access to more low cost or free vet care for low income New Yorkers. Vet costs are astronomical. Some people have to forgo vet care. A recent PetSmart Charities-Gallup study revealed that 52% of U.S. pet owners have skipped or declined necessary veterinary care, with 71% citing financial constraints as the primary reason. Notably, even among households earning over \$90,000 annually, one-third reported forgoing care due to cost concerns <https://petsmartcharities.org/our-stories/community-impact/52-of-u-s-pet-owners-have-skipped-or-declined-recommended-veterinary-care?>

The decision to delay or skip veterinary visits can have dire outcomes: 14% of pet owners who avoided care reported their pet's condition worsened or resulted in death. 30% knew someone who lost a pet because they couldn't afford treatment .Commonly

declined services included diagnostics (22%), preventive care like vaccinations (18%), and even life saving surgeries (7%) .

Due to financial hardship driven by inflation, economic euthanasia is on the rise. No one should ever have to face the heartbreaking decision to surrender—or even euthanize—a beloved pet simply because they can't afford veterinary care for a treatable condition or the rising cost of pet food and basic necessities. That's why increased investment is urgently needed in both veterinary care and pet food assistance initiatives.

NYC ANIMAL CARE STAR FUND <https://www.nycacc.org/how-you-can-help/#star>
Maybe monies can go to this fund which is money for medical assistance.

BEHAVIOR TRAINING

Funding is urgently needed to expand access to free or low-cost behavior training programs, as well as other support services, to help people keep their pets instead of surrendering them to shelters. More availability of free virtual behavior consultations can also provide timely support and solutions for struggling pet guardians.

MICROCHIPPING

Investing in microchipping is essential—not only does it help reunite lost pets with their families and reduce the strain on shelters, but it also serves as a tool to identify and hold accountable those who illegally abandon their animals.

As you can see, a comprehensive approach is urgently needed to address animal homelessness and keep beloved pets out of the shelter system and with their families — and this testimony doesn't even cover everything that's needed. For those animals who do enter the system, they must receive humane treatment and every possible chance to find a new, loving home — a chance to live freely and give and receive unconditional love.

We must also prioritize shelter reform and policy change at ACC, placing it on equal footing with other life-saving initiatives. Only then can we ensure that animals are truly protected and not forgotten — because their lives matter.

NYC's per capita spending on animal welfare is lower than in cities like Miami, Dallas, and Los Angeles. That is unacceptable. If this city truly believes in animal welfare, it must invest in it. The city must also take action to stop animal abandonment, exploitation, and cruelty — toward both domestic and wild animals — and end the killing in our shelters.

New York has a moral obligation to help those in need and protect those who cannot protect themselves. That means serious investment in life-saving programs, stronger cruelty and welfare laws, and sustained funding to keep animals out of shelters and in loving homes.

To truly grasp the gravity of the homeless animal crisis, you need to see some of the dogs who were destroyed—read their bios, watch their videos. Without that, they remain mere statistics instead of being seen for the sentient beings they truly were: each with a name, a history, a personality, and emotions. All of that was senselessly taken from them. New York can and must do more.

TRINITY killed 5/18 QUEENS ACC - **Financial Hardship**
VIDEO https://youtu.be/SIhJfEwZ8Bo?si=_F7-uNXH3gnD0T2r

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1107065814788277?rldid=DsKHBp8je4dPnvYy#>

KRATOS-Queens Found abandoned in an apartment after an eviction.

VIDEO <https://www.facebook.com/reel/1636695877216100>

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1077838867710972?rldid=1Dlet9x43yG7nJBy#>

BLU MACC- Housing Instability

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1094378586057000?rldid=eDIq0DeNsujBFJ56#>

ELLA- Queens ACC- Eviction

<https://www.facebook.com/mlsavingnycdogs/posts/672103625328313?rldid=HJcretA86ZJErRZ5#>

SIMBA -Manhattan ACC -Landlord wouldn't allow

<https://www.facebook.com/mlsavingnycdogs/posts/717976954074313?rldid=yAhViHEcrgBEllmW#>

MILO- 9months old -Manhattan ACC -NYCHA not allowed

VIDEO <https://youtu.be/0Drp1POgKzc?si=4z7XCQEzf4pT7pmM>

BIO: <https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1092829826211876?rldid=El1slQlWyMrM2pqh#>

ROSCO-Queens ACC- 1 1/2 yr old Landord issues

<https://www.facebook.com/mlsavingnycdogs/posts/675870071618335?rldid=9AayB6MncB7lgLJ2#>

ZORRO Queens - 2 yrs old-Moving No Pets Allowed

<https://www.facebook.com/mlsavingnycdogs/posts/674796048392404?rldid=KUdNNB2qCruyUiLV#>

LUCKY Manhattan ACC 2yrs old - Owner evicted

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1083579170470275?rldid=rTqWpLPGXKBo2z4d#>

CHOOPER MACC- 1 yrs old - Moving - no pets allowed

VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LU1KsfvpbxY>

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1080414004120125?rldid=Qy8PVMeTDoDWKKhv#>

FRANKLIN SAINT - QUEENS 2 yrs old

VIDEO <https://www.facebook.com/reel/643305138683213>

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1102688798559312?rldid=TWoxRQY59veSwqeW#>

TAILOR SUITS MACC 2 yrs old MACC

VIDEO <https://youtu.be/7jyjrhhGZC0?si=3ZatYZZZN-BcavSB>

<https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1085915483569977?>

[rdid=bbNx D68lAybxEqZ9#](#)

OLIVE MACC 1 yrs old

VIDEO <https://youtu.be/gVzrZpcCVY0>

VIDEO <https://youtu.be/x9aPX9aqzjU>

[https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1081959953965530?
rdid=XCEfehrGNPAwGbO4#](https://www.facebook.com/NYCDogsLivesmatter/posts/1081959953965530?rdid=XCEfehrGNPAwGbO4#)

Here you can see in Real Time the animals at risk of being destroyed.

<https://www.nycacc.org/priority-placement/>

**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: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: MOLLY WASOW PARK

Address: 150 GREENWICH

I represent: COMMISSIONER, DSS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: RICHARD TOWNS, CFO

Address: 150 GREENWICH

I represent: DSS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JILL BERRY, first DEP Comm

Address: 150 GREENWICH, DSS

I represent: DSS

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SCOTT FRENCH, ADMIN HRA

Address: 150 GREENWICH

I represent: DSS / HRA

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JOSLYN CARTER, ADMIN DHS

Address: 33 BEAVER

I represent: DSS / DHS

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Abby Biberman

Address: _____

I represent: New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Harold Alexis

Address: Waterline Square 675 W. 59th St
N.Y., N.Y.

I represent: Neighbors together & Vocal
N.Y.

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Carolina Corks-Rivera

Address: _____

I represent: West Side Campaign Against Hunger

Address: 263 W 86th 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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Joseph Rosenberg

Address: 191 Jordanna St

I represent: Catholic Community Relations Council

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Harold Alexis

Address: _____

I represent: Neighbors Together

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Chris Mann

Address: _____

I represent: Win

Address: 1 State St. Plaza

**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: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Patricia Wang

Address: _____

I represent: New York Lawyers for the P. 602 Interest

Address: 151 W 34th St. NY, NY 10001

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emily Brett

Address: _____

I represent: Green point Hunger Program

Address: 136 Milton

**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: Richard William Jones

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 16, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stephanie Mansfield

Address: New York New York

I represent: Domestic Violence Survivor Advocate SVP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Patricia Wong

Address: _____

I represent: New York lawyers for the Public Interest

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Emily Paoz

Address: _____

I represent: Hispania Federation

Address: 55 Exchange Place New York

**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: Diana Ramos

Address: _____

I represent: Salvage Det Activist

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tania Mattos

Address: _____

I represent: Unlocal

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Leslie Thrope

Address: _____

I represent: Housing Conservation Coordinating for the

Address: Legal Services for the Working Poor
Coalition

**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: Bacquel Marie Manuche

Address: _____

I represent: Mobilization for Justice

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Agnes Kim

Address: _____

I represent: Enterprise Community Partners for Family

Address: Homeless Coalition

**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: Shervon Small

Address: _____

I represent: Legal Services NYC

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Gabriela Sandoval Requena

Address: _____

I represent: New Destiny Housing for Family Homelessers

Address: Coalition

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

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: May 16, 2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Constance Lesold

Address: [REDACTED] BKLYN 11225

I represent: _____

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kristin Miller

Address: [REDACTED] Bklyn, 11209

I represent: Homeless Services United (HSU)

Address: 307 W 38th St NY, NY 10018

THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alison Wilkey

Address: _____

I represent: Coalition for the Homeless

Address: 129 Fulton St 10038

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brian Fitch

Address: 2 Broadway, 16th Fl.

I represent: Permanent Litig. Advisory Comm.

Address: to the MTA

**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: Sora Penningberg
Tammy Murray

Address: SEIU 32BJ POLITICAL DEPT

I represent: SEIU 32BJ member

Address: 25 W 18th 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: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sora Penningberg

Address: _____

I represent: SEIU 32BJ POLITICAL DEPT

Address: 25 W 18th St, NY NY

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Catherine Trapani

Address: _____

I represent: Volunteers of America - Greater New York

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: MAY 16

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: STEPHANIE WOODBINE (TV SURVIVOR)

Address: _____

I represent: NEW DESTINY'S SURVIVOR VOICES PROJECT.

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/19/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Garland Roberts

Address: Brown NY 10452

I represent: SEC OF DEFENSE / HQA Television and under law

Address: 3000 5th Ave. New York NY 10014

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

ETC

**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: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mark Papish

Address: _____

I represent: Center for family Reproduction

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kim Moscaritolo

Address: [REDACTED] 10028

I represent: Hunger Free America

Address: 50 Broad 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: 5/16/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Abdullah Younus

Address: _____

I represent: United Way of New York City

Address: _____

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Agnes Kim

Address: _____

I represent: Family Homelessness Coalition

Address: _____

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

THE COUNCIL THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 4/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nandeen Bains

Address: 120 Wall Street, 9th floor, NY, NY 10005

I represent: Asian American Federation

Address: _____

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 5/16/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Molly Eckert

Address: _____

I represent: Met Council

Address: 1 State Street Plaza, NY, NY

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

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Calvin Michael

Address: 11213 S. Hwy Net Adm

I represent: BRNY

Address: _____

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