



**TESTIMONY**

Presented by

**Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez  
Commissioner**

on

**Oversight: Improving Older New Yorkers' Access to City Services**

before the

**New York City Council  
Committee on Aging**

on

**Wednesday, September 7, 2022  
10:00 am**

Good morning, Chair Hudson and members of the Aging Committee. I am Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA). Happy National Senior Center Month! This month is our opportunity to highlight how older adult centers (OACs) improve the lives of older adults, show the importance of OACs in the community, and promote a positive image of aging. There are many planned celebrations throughout the month to help us do just that. Beginning on September 1<sup>st</sup>, Encore Community Services hosted a celebration for the community in Freedom Plaza, and later this month on September 29<sup>th</sup>, we will be holding a National Senior Centers Month celebration co-hosted by the Mayor at Gracie Mansion.

As you well know, the Department for the Aging administers a wide range of programs that enhance the independence and quality of life for the City's older adult population. A key component of DFTA's mission is to ensure that all older New Yorkers have access to city services and programs, including our own, and that barriers to services are reduced or eliminated. Everyday, we work to connect critical services, benefits, and entitlements with older adults in need, including those who are neither members of OACs nor clients of other DFTA programs. This yeoman's task cannot be accomplished alone. DFTA partners with hundreds of deeply committed community-based organizations, sister city agencies, as well as our counterparts in State government in order to ensure critical services are accessed and accessible.

#### **CONNECTIONS TO AGING SERVICES**

DFTA's in-house contact center, Aging Connect, allows New Yorkers to speak with an Aging Specialist to learn about programs, supports, and opportunities available to older adults and their caregivers. Aging Connect was fortuitously founded in February of 2020, just a month before the COVID-19 pandemic shut down our City, and quickly became a valuable lifeline for one of the most impacted populations during the pandemic.

In reality, we all will need to fully understand the benefits and entitlements that are available and how to navigate accessing those services provided by the government. Even knowledgeable people can find this daunting. This is made more complicated by the differences in eligibility requirements between city, state, and federal benefits—especially around income restrictions. Through Aging Connect, older New Yorkers are connected with a friendly and trained Aging Specialist to find the answers to their questions and be connected to DFTA's suite of critical programs, community partners, or other government agencies for assistance and support. Aging Connect staff are multicultural, multilingual and can speak directly with older adults in Spanish, Chinese, and English. Other language needs are supported through *LanguageLine*, which can provide translation services in more than 240 languages. Since its inception, Aging Connect has received more than 142,000 calls from older New Yorkers, caregivers, and other aging service providers who have been connected to DFTA and city services.

In addition to Aging Connect, DFTA's network of more than 300 older adult centers located across all five boroughs is another major access point to critical city services and other benefits and entitlements. The community partners, who operate OACs, provide screenings for Medicare, Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), nutritional guidance, the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE), and the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). In the Fall, to increase public outreach, DFTA is launching a public service campaign reminding older New Yorkers of the many services and activities available to them and encouraging them to return to OACs.

Additionally, DFTA's case management program is yet another important entry point for services. Case management clients undergo a comprehensive screening and needs assessment which identifies

the specific needs of the client and, in turn, connects them to appropriate in-home services such as home delivered meals, home care services, as well as our Friendly Visiting and Bill Payer programs—each of which are themselves access points to important resources and referrals.

Ultimately, for the benefit and convenience of older New Yorkers, a DFTA-funded program can serve as a resource and referral to DFTA’s other services and programs. From Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP) —which helps folks navigate the complex Medicare benefits system—to New York Connects which follow the “no wrong door” model for long term care.

### **INTERAGENCY COORDINATION**

We are fortunate that this Mayor’s commitment to an age inclusive city and interagency collaborations promoting government efficiency has led to the creation of the *NYC Cabinet for Older New Yorkers*. This body will prioritize formal connections between agencies as it relates to services for older New Yorkers. Specifically, the Cabinet will review city policies and operations to eliminate age-related barriers or discrimination, create joint action and innovation among city agencies in relation to aging services, and develop cross-agency solutions to address challenges facing older New Yorkers today and into the future. DFTA will serve as the lead organizing and convening agency and we anticipate that many partnerships will be forged as a result. I look forward to providing updates to this Committee on the progress of the Cabinet, which will hold its inaugural convening later this month. In the meantime, I want to offer a sampling of some of the great collaborations already in existence with sister agencies.

For instance, DFTA is working with the New York City Department of Education (DOE) to develop and include anti-ageism content as part of their inclusion curriculum and resource guides. The intention is to promote positive, diverse, inclusive views on older adults to school age youth and to re-shape views on aging and older adults. We are a firm believer that ageism can be eradicated, and we acknowledge that young people have an important role in our efforts to achieve this goal. DFTA also recently worked with the Mayor’s Office of the Chief Technology Officer (CTO) to help bridge the digital divide. In addition to the 10,000 tablets distributed in partnership with CTO and NYCHA to disconnected older NYCHA residents, we also distributed 10,000 WiFi-equipped tablets to non-NYCHA older adults living in TRIE neighborhoods. While the COVID-19 pandemic made all of us feel isolated or cut off from our support networks, it was particularly hard for older adults who experienced higher rates of social isolation over the past three years. These tablets provided a needed resource for older adults and underscored the benefits of collaborations across sister agencies to address a critical need.

Additionally, DFTA recently formalized an MOU with the NYPD that will establish a pilot around sharing crime victim data, beginning in September, so that DFTA can provide counseling, crisis intervention services, and support for cases, identified by NYPD, who are not known to the DFTA Elder Justice Program. With hopes to eventually expand citywide, this pilot program will focus on victims in Manhattan north of 59<sup>th</sup> Street as well as Chinatown. This expansion of the Elder Justice Program and newly formalized MOU with the NYPD will expand access to these critically important supports for older adults who are victims of abuse.

We are also working closely with the NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and Health and Hospitals (H+H) to educate geriatricians and primary care physicians on the range of DFTA services. The intent is to help address the social and economic determinants of health needs of

older adults, connecting them to social and health services that are necessary to remain well and active in their communities.

Other ongoing sister-agency partnerships include the Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD), the Human Resources Administration (HRA), the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), and the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). Among the key tenants of these collaborations, the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, and DFTA in general is to help ensure aging services evolve with the needs of older adults and that they are—as previously stated—not just accessed but are accessible. I believe this is consistent with the intent of today’s hearing as well as the Introductions on today’s agenda.

## **INTRODUCTIONS**

The three pre-considered bills being introduced today include T2022-1650, which would give all older adults over 60 access to free legal representation in instances of eviction, expand rental arrears support, and establish a housing program at DFTA; T2022-1538 which would create a “know-your-rights” pamphlet; and T2022-1696 which would expand culturally competent programming at OACs. While we are generally in support of the intent of these bills, we look forward to working with you and your team to identify the best path forward in achieving their stated goals.

## **CONCLUSION**

DFTA does extensive work to ensure older adults can access our programs as well as other city services. We recognize, however, that there is always more work to be done in order to increase outreach efforts and fuller utilization of services. Hundreds of older adults and their families do not understand the full extent of government and non-profit services available to them. We will continue to engage our network of aging-services providers, the many advocates we work with, and sister agency colleagues to help in the much-needed outreach efforts which support access to government services. Many of you in the Council already disseminate information through your channels to support the evolving and nuanced needs of diverse older adults searching for programming and we welcome working with you to include this information and our *Older Adults Bill of Rights*.

As always, we are grateful to the Chairs and the Committees for your advocacy and continued partnership to support older New Yorkers. Thank you.



**TESTIMONY OF CITYMEALS ON WHEELS**

**Before the New York City Council Aging Committee**

**Honorable Crystal Hudson, Chair**

**Committee on Aging Hearing - Improving Older New Yorkers' Access to  
City Services**

**September 7, 2022**

**Submitted by:**

**Citymeals on Wheels**

**Prepared by:**

**Vik Bensen**

**Policy Analyst**

Good morning, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Vik Bensen and I'm the Policy Analyst at Citymeals on Wheels. I would like to begin by thanking the Council and Chair Hudson for advocating on behalf of the older adults who helped build the city we live in today, especially the most vulnerable and in-need among them. Citymeals works in partnership with the City and the network of home-delivered meal providers to fill the gap by funding the delivery of meals on weekends, holidays, and emergencies to homebound older adults alongside additional supplemental feeding and connective services. The Department for the Aging funds one meal on Mondays through Fridays (excluding holidays); to fill the gap on the 115 days the city does not provide for, Citymeals funds the same network of



providers to deliver weekend and holiday meals. In addition, we are the only organization providing home-delivered emergency meals.

We know that thousands of older adults live precariously, in-need and hungry throughout the year, struggling to access services that can help them make ends meet. These conditions were only exacerbated by the pandemic and the economic instability that has followed. Home-delivered meals are essential in ensuring at least one nutritious meal a day is available for them to consume. Beyond the one meal a day, we are keenly aware of the need to expand supplemental food services for this population as well. Reliance on home-delivered meals has only increased since the pandemic and the knock on their door from a familiar deliverer has continuously reassured homebound recipients that they are not forgotten. Access to food services for older adults is integral to their survival and should be a greater part of the food safety net, as programs serving homebound older adults have been consistently under-funded and under-invested in throughout the years. Ensuring that our meal recipients have enough food throughout the week and in times of emergencies is at the heart of the partnership between Citymeals and the community-based Meals on Wheels provider network, and we need to increase the capacity to provide more food and better access to services.

Citymeals currently serves over 20,000 homebound older adults, a 25% increase in distribution since the pandemic began in 2020, with another 3,000 clients expected to join the program in FY23. In serving homebound older adults, we see the ways these recipients are cut off from the myriad services that are available but do not reach them because of requirements that necessitate showing up in person or accessing them online—due to



mobility or cognitive issues and lack of technology, these points of access are particularly difficult for the homebound elderly to meet. Nationally 42% of seniors do not have broadband internet access at home. 40% of our meal recipients are physically unable to leave their homes by themselves, 90% use assistive devices, and at least 14% rely on only the one meal per day they receive through home-delivered meals. For those who have some mobility and could access services with assistance, our public transit infrastructure makes it incredibly difficult for them to get around; with only 27% of MTA stations being ADA accessible and Access-A-Ride arriving late 30% of the time it adds yet another barrier to service access. Older adults are the fastest growing demographic, and 1 in 7 older New Yorkers lives in poverty. Living longer and on fixed incomes means more struggle to access food and other vital services for this vulnerable group.

While all our clients have a case manager who could presumably connect them with appropriate services where they exist, the case management agencies are all overburdened and underfunded and cannot have the level of contact needed to ensure that homebound older adults are adequately taken care of. This is a high needs population that needs higher touch services because circumstances can change so rapidly for older adults. The current system doesn't allow for high-contact monitoring because there's a lack of funding to ensure fair caseloads; average caseloads range from 65 to 75 per case manager, an unrealistically high load. Trying to adequately manage that many cases can leave clients vulnerable to a lack of services. Many of the programs that the homebound are connected to struggle to serve them adequately. For example, only around half of eligible NYC seniors are signed up for SCRIE, and while 30% of HDM recipients are signed up for SNAP, they



struggle to get to the store to spend their SNAP dollars and have difficulty using online ordering. If they can access one of the few food pantry services that will bring pantry bags to their home, they will have to sacrifice choice and cultural appropriateness in what they receive in exchange for the option of delivery. The Citymeals Mobile Food Pantry program is designed to supplement the most in-need of our recipients with additional food, but we know that what we can provide is not enough food, and not enough reach.

The Meals on Wheels network reaches those homebound older adults not reached by other anti-hunger programs. As a not-for-profit, Citymeals will continue to raise private dollars to meet the needs of our partners in the years to come. The estimated cost of providing weekend and holiday meals, emergency food, and supplemental food is \$1.1 million for every 1,000 older adults we serve. Citymeals has increased its fundraising to keep up with the increasing number of older adults requiring a home-delivered meal, but the possibility of an influx of 3,000 new clients in FY23 due to the end of the GetFood emergency pandemic feeding program, could create an insurmountable challenge to this model of service access. Therefore, we also need the support of our partners in city government to help us reach all our recipients consistently, to offer more to those experiencing food insecurity and vulnerability in all areas. This kind of partnership is even more crucial in times of uncertainty and when facing potential crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, or inevitable worsening climate related crises. Citymeals, through our Bronx warehouse, has the capacity to pre-supply both HDM clients and older adult center members with ready to eat meals in the event of an emergency closure of centers or a suspension of meal delivery services. We keep 35,000 ready to eat meals alongside food ready to package if



necessary in order to assist those we normally serve and any older New Yorker in temporary need.

We urge the council to adequately fund the existing home-delivered meal and older adult nutrition network, including a \$3.3 million infusion for Citymeals to provide weekend, holiday, and emergency meals. We urge the expansion of technology education and access programs for homebound older adults to improve their ability to register for services and provide access to online socialization and cultural programming. In all aid programs, we hope to see explicit provisions for ensuring homebound access to supportive services and support the expansion of existing programs to help older adults like the statewide NY Connects program, which connects seniors via phone to long-term services. We also support calls for an outreach campaign complete with registration assistance to raise awareness and increase engagement for the benefits programs older adults are eligible for.

Citymeals on Wheels knows that together with the Department for the Aging, and The New York City Council, we are determined to keep older adults living safely in their own communities with access to nutritious meals and comprehensive social services. We hope you, our partners in city government, will help us continue to advocate on behalf of those who are often forgotten, marginalized, and hidden behind closed doors, to support better funding and access to basic human services like food, access to the internet and technology necessary for reaching additional services, and emergency meals. Together we work to ensure no older adult goes without food for a day in our city.



## **Asian American Federation**

### **Testimony for New York City Council Committee on Aging**

*September 7th 2022*

#### Written Testimony

Thank you Chair Hudson and members of the Committee on Aging for holding this hearing and giving us an opportunity to testify. I am Lisha Luo Cai, Advocacy Coordinator 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.

We are here today to discuss the legislation that centers the needs of our older adults and the critical work of our service providers. Members of our Seniors Working Group, the first Asian older adults service-focused coalition in New York State, led by the AAF, are the experts on the ground, and understand the needs of our most vulnerable. **Language accessibility and cultural competency** is what drives their fight, and we're glad these issues are top of mind today.

The 12 Asian-led, Asian older adult-serving AAF member organizations comprising the Seniors Working Group served nearly **250,000 Asian older adults** in 2021, 87,000 of whom were low-income. Asian older adults comprise 13.9% of the city's older adult population, and the number of Asian older adults in poverty increased by 63.4% between 2010 and 2019, the largest percent increase of any major racial group. Of our older adults in poverty, 29% live alone and 80% have limited English proficiency (LEP).

The Seniors Working Group surveyed over 150 Asian older adult clients about their greatest challenges and needs in the fall of 2021. With the data of this survey, we focused on these categories:

1. Safety from anti-Asian violence,
2. Access to direct services at older adult centers,
3. Access to food programs, and
4. Combating mental health and social isolation.

Our CBOs stated that in order to meet the needs of our older adults, there must be systemic change for culturally competent, effective services. This means the City should support, reinforce, and build capacity for programming by and for marginalized communities by prioritizing cultural competence and language access throughout the policymaking process. In many cases, culturally competent programming comes directly from older adult centers, a place where many older adults' call a second home. And in many instances, these older adult centers are providing services to underserved communities and are receiving clients from across the City, not just their local neighborhoods.



## **Asian American Federation**

These centers are where our aging New Yorkers eat their meals, see their friends, and spend many of their waking hours, because our CBOs provide linguistically, culturally, and financially accessible resources that Asian older adults can actually take advantage of the way they need them. Especially in a community as diverse as our pan-Asian community, many smaller ethnic communities, or more widely-dispersed ethnic communities, struggle to find service to fit their needs. And when they do find what they need, they stay, they build relationships and roots.

### Recommendations

1. Prioritize community-led older adult center-running organizations in policy-making, especially those serving underserved and isolated ethnic and linguistic communities. Many of these communities require specific service approaches and are often dispersed throughout the City. Similarly, some organizations and older adult centers are uniquely-equipped to serve and focus on their needs.
2. Increase funding to Asian-led, Asian-serving older adult service providers, and expand this funding to include time and expenses spent on case management and digital literacy, devices and training. Even though funding has historically prioritized mainstream organizations, our marginalized older adults have always first come to our CBOs to access services they can actually take advantage of; these providers deserve easier access to funds as they provide irreplaceable services.
3. Expand funding to include culturally competent, in-language, and older adult-focused non-traditional mental health service models. This includes prioritizing CBOs that have a history of providing free or subsidized nontraditional, culturally competent services for funding opportunities.
4. Fund a network of linguistically and culturally competent food service programs that provide alternative food benefits to older adults to compensate for their loss of access to traditional government assistance programs.

On behalf of the Asian American Federation, thank you for raising up the work that needs to be done, and prioritizing the voices and needs of our older adults and our older adult service providers, the true experts in this work. We look forward to continued engagement with our Council allies on this legislation and making sure policymaking reflects the needs on the ground.



**TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIAN GONZÁLEZ-RIVERA  
OF THE BROOKDALE CENTER FOR HEALTHY AGING, HUNTER COLLEGE  
BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON AGING**

**OVERSIGHT HEARING  
"IMPROVING OLDER NEW YORKERS' ACCESS TO CITY SERVICES"**

**SEPTEMBER 7, 2022**

My name is christian gonzález-rivera and I'm the director of strategic policy initiatives at the Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging, a research and policy center based at Hunter College.

The Brookdale Center supports the spirit of all three bills, Intros. 1650, 1538, and 1696. We would like to direct our comments to Intros. 1650 and 1696.

Intro. 1650 would entitle New Yorkers age 60+ to full legal representation in housing court, expand rental arrears assistance, and establish a housing support program. The need for these services is clear. Fully 61 percent of older New Yorkers are rent burdened, compared to 53 percent of all New Yorkers. Rising rents eat into the fixed incomes of most older adults and make it difficult for them to move to a more affordable home. Also, almost half of older adults have been living in their current homes for more than a decade. In that time, many have developed social networks that they have come to depend on. Housing instability is especially destabilizing for older adults. Thank you for introducing this bill.

Intro 1696 would require older adult centers to expand their cultural and linguistic programs. While we support the premise of the bill, we have concerns about the process outlined in the proposed legislation.

Having each older adult center administer a survey would be a very burdensome way to get the service needs information you are looking for. Creating and disseminating a survey and compiling the results is a very time consuming process and most older adult centers do not have the capacity to take this work on themselves. And the effort is entirely unnecessary because you can get neighborhood-level information about languages spoken in the area around older adult centers by referring to Census data. Older adult center catchment areas also vary significantly in size, so sending a survey to older New Yorkers just a one-mile radius from the centers would not be sufficient. And underserved populations would be less likely to fill out and return a survey.

The better way of getting service needs information is to take advantage of DFTA's capable research department. They can run current demographics on each older adult center's catchment area and provide the results to older adult center directors. That way the older adult center staff can focus their efforts on what they do best: creating and administering programs in service of older New Yorkers. We therefore recommend that the legislation should direct DFTA to work closely with older adult centers to ensure that they are serving the diverse needs of the older adults in their catchment area, using Census data to help identify service needs.

With DFTA's support, older adult centers can then make the necessary partnerships and program adjustments that would allow them to successfully reach diverse populations, such as developing relationships with community organizations that are supporting those communities and conducting targeted outreach to underserved communities.

Thank you, councilmember Hudson for your careful attention to improving the lives of older New Yorkers. We believe that with the adjustments that we suggest, the legislation you have introduced can make a positive difference.

Thank you also for the opportunity to testify.

Submission to the Committee on Aging  
On behalf of Diane Rose Ministries  
(CEED and AFMCC Aging Gracefully and  
Grandparents Empowered Ministries  
G.E.M.S.)

The Phenomenal Woman by Maya Angelou  
<https://allpoetry.com/phenomenal-woman>  
Isaiah 61, Mathew 9-10, 1Chron 28:20  
Woman are Brave  
<https://youtu.be/QUQsqBqxoR4>  
Joshua 1  
Roar w/Voice Visibly  
<https://youtu.be/mwL1cohnHNE>  
Isaiah 41:10-12

Audrey Lorde is further quoted as saying:

When I Dare to be powerful, to use my strength  
(Voice & Visibly) in the service of my Vision  
(The R.O.S.E. Initiative - C.H.I.M.E.)  
Then it becomes less and less important  
Whether I am afraid (I instead seek to  
Be the Change - Dare to Believe the DReaM)  
(Parenthesis my words)

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony to the NYC Council Committee on Aging under the leadership of Crystal Hudson and her recent policy legislation to craft better outcomes and support for our 60+ Population across NYC. Particularly focused upon Housing and Human Services. The “H” in The R.O.S.E. Initiative’s acronym C.H.I.M.E.). It goes without saying the challenges we know all too well both, as a 50+ Faith Based Community, both personally and professionally, in the area of the absence of available, affordable, and accessible places to call H.O.M.E. Sustainably. Even more glaring, we recognize, are the gaps in service delivery and sometimes gaping holes in the responsiveness of same. Even more glaring are the numbers of aging populations are are ineligible for the services that do exist or find themselves confronting inexhaustible waiting list. Finally, where securing a grade at place to call home to grow old there and enjoy the many benefits of living appear to not be on the agendas of many. Across systemic hemispheres. The results are:

- Many older persons are aging into poverty
- The increase in homelessness amongst aging populations has more than quadrupled to a 250% increase
- Ageism and the absence of support has resulted in a decline in hiring older persons and or securing meaningful employment for quality experience

- Multigenerational homes are more of the norm within which older heads of households can secure - the family system is absent dialogue
- Most activities for older persons are funded at \$billions yet do not reach 70% of the population as they are poverty focused (at 100% of the Poverty Income Threshold @ \$14,000)
- Grandparent households, most of whom are working, are not interwoven into the fabric of life they experience as a result of raising grandchildren, caring for a sick child, and or caregiving of a parent or other family member and the associated burdens of the lack of support for such caregiving activities
- The over burdened nature of the above being a sharp decline in well-being as defined as a decline in:
  - Emotional
  - Physical
  - Environmental
  - Social
  - Spiritual
  - Occupational
  - Intellectual
  - Financial
- The outcome is a decrease in Human Capital who are the largest voting block, the greatest contributors to the GDP, and the ones who are the unpaid caregivers contributing to family and community stability.

Ten years ago was the last time I came before this committee to argue for a greater effort to support Grandfamilies in the areas of housing and income stability. I presented at that time as a business owner who did not qualify for “programs or services” nor could make the decisions that concerned my grandchild. Further, at that time, as a resident of a Mitchell Llama Coop, had to engage a legal battle to fight for a larger apartment that my grandchild and I could share because the “family composition” requirements did not allow us to do so. What did I do, I joined the NYC Kincare Taskforce that bought me and several others similarly situated before you at that time. We were an engaged group of individuals. Today, we have paid staff, though compassionate, presenting the challenges today and a disengaged community of Aging Gracefully residents with unmet needs.

As such, I am that voice today as the challenges experienced is more than just housing for many and its associated vulnerabilities. But it is that which enables every single one of us to Age Gracefully in our H.O.M.E.S. and Communities by preventing the need to engage an overburdened legal system to keep a roof over our heads. Yet, to prevent the need to engage such professionals down stream. By broadening the conversation and the definition of who is Aging upstream and put in place, no take action on what’s needed to prevent and intervene there because it does NOT exist currently. As a Minister and Psychotherapist by profession who has headed and consulted across a number of Social Service organizations am confident of an alternative model that we, together, can achieve and do so cross systemically that is not just governmental. As it now, again both myself and those I attempt to keep encouraged, that

you do not see. Yet, doing so will require another discussion that I welcome beginning with you Madam Chair, others on this Committee, as well as anyone, to include the broader representative community that would like to come to the table. There is a sense of urgency - I could certainly share several horrific stories. For now, however, I rest this portion of my testimony and will look forward to engaging more in the coming weeks.

I close with speaking a blessing over all who serve on this committee. That God might lead and direct your hearts to commit to Aging Gracefully in the City as it is H.O.M.E to 1.7 Million Men and Women and approximately 80,000 Grandparents affecting the lives of grandchildren daily, Have a Happy Grandma's Day today and a Grandparents week beginning this Sunday. Again, thank you for allowing to submit my testimony.

Shalom and Barakah  
Peace & Blessings  
Minister Dr. Diane Rose  
Founder & Chief  
Diane Rose Ministries  
(Center on Economic and  
Enterprise Development  
(CEED) and Anointed Faith  
Community Church Online  
(AFMCC)



253 South Street  
New York, NY 10002

Good morning/afternoon. I am Bonnie Lumagui, Assistant Executive Director for Senior Services at Hamilton-Madison House (HMH), a century plus-old multi-faceted community services organization based in Chinatown and on the Lower East Side of Manhattan focused on early childhood education, behavioral health, youth development and, the subject of this testimony, services to seniors.

For decades, HMH has been deeply dedicated to comprehensively supporting seniors, enabling them to retain their independence for as long as feasible, and helping equip them to maximize quality of life. Presently, we operate three Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs, among NYC's largest senior centers, a Social Adult Day Care program and two Caregiver Support programs. Among participating seniors are many immigrants, and we are committed to supporting them with linguistic proficiency and cultural competence.

We fully support the Housing 60+ legislation put forth by Councilmember Hudson and the Council's Aging Committee designed to better enable seniors to manage challenges and crises, navigate complex public systems, and remain independent in their residences, enjoying lives marked by vibrancy and fulfillment, and we express appreciation to Councilmember Hudson and the committee and we are prepared to continue supporting this vital effort.

We also take the opportunity of this hearing to assert our organization is contending with difficulties in recruiting and retaining senior-serving staff, especially those who speak languages other than English spoken by seniors. As such, we are calling for funding from City government that would allow us to sponsor foreign-born staff to receive H1B visas that would enable them to serve for 6 years. The City's Department of Health and Mental Health offers this provision and we request that the accommodation be extended to senior-serving organizations. We believe that implementing this practice would go far toward fulfilling our shared commitment to support NYC's immigrant communities.

Further, we also bring attention to the crucial need for additional affordable housing for seniors. Many are subsisting on fixed and limited incomes and experience housing instability due to the continuing increases of rents in many neighborhoods. So we believe it is critical that funding be directed for the development of new affordable units either entirely dedicated to seniors (similar the Federal 202 program) or in which a certain portion of apartments are set aside for seniors.

Thank you again to Councilmember Hudson and to my many colleagues here today for supporting seniors.



**New York City Council Committees on Aging  
Oversight: Improving Older New Yorkers' Access to City Services  
September 7, 2022**

Thank you Chair Hudson and members of the Committee on Aging for the opportunity to submit testimony for the Oversight: Improving Older New Yorkers' Access to City Services.

JASA is a not-for-profit agency that honors older New Yorkers as vital members of society, providing services that support aging with purpose and partnering to build strong communities. For over 50 years, JASA has served as one of New York's largest and most trusted agencies serving older adults in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. JASA has a comprehensive, integrated network of services that promotes independence, safety, wellness, community participation, and an enhanced quality of life for New York City's older adults. These programs reach over 40,000 clients of diverse backgrounds and include home care, case management services, senior centers, NORC supportive services, home delivered meals, caregiver support, continuing education, licensed mental health, senior housing, advocacy, legal services, adult protective services, and guardianship services. We welcome today's hearing focused on improving access to city services.

JASA is very appreciative to the Council for your continued support of aging services, and the needs of the human services sector. Your leadership in budget negotiations and your continued focus on the needs of older New Yorkers this year were welcome and serve as a crucial part of New York City's recovery.

According to the Center for an Urban Future, foreign-born individuals now make up more than 50% of New York City's seniors. Their research also indicates that immigrants comprise 65% of all seniors living in poverty; with 60% limited English proficient and 37% in linguistically-isolated households (nobody over 14 years old speaks English in the home). These numbers and statistics reflect JASA's experience across our aging services portfolios. JASA is a sponsor of 10 HUD-funded, affordable senior housing buildings. More than 50% of the tenants speak Russian, with the remaining tenants speaking English, Cantonese, Spanish, Polish and Korean. Residents of JASA housing hail from the Former Soviet Union, Argentina, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Mongolia, Poland, Puerto Rico, and Romania. This diversity in

backgrounds and languages spoken is reflected across all JASA programs, but is particularly visible in our 17 older adult centers, 12 NORC programs, case management, home delivered meals, home care, and Queens legal services.

In order to assist clients and program members in a culturally appropriate and linguistically proficient manner, JASA offers cuisine and programming that reflects the interests and preferences of various populations. Staff and volunteers speak dozens of languages and JASA staff regularly use on-line/telephonic language assistance as needed.

**Intro. 1696** would require the Department for the Aging to require older adult centers to expand their programming to include linguistic and cultural programs relevant to the local communities in which they reside. This bill would allow the City to work to ensure all older adults have access to equitable culturally and linguistically component services to safely age in community. Intro. 1696 aligns with DFTA's mission to eliminate ageism and ensure the dignity and quality of life of diverse older adults. JASA is supportive of DFTA in its mission as well as Intro. 1696, but we are also mindful of the current challenge hiring staff and especially bi-lingual staff. Should this Intro move forward, JASA would ask that funding be made available to hire more cultural and linguistically competent staff.

JASA is also supportive of **Intro. 1538**, which would require the Department for the Aging (DFTA) to create and maintain a know your rights pamphlet for older adults who are 60 years of age and above, to inform them of their rights on various topics. DFTA currently has a wealth of information and resources on their website, which is also accessible and easily translated into numerous languages. Many organizations and government agencies have moved away from paper flyers and pamphlets over the years, recognizing that online formats allow for additional information to be shared and make it easier to update and edit information in a timely and accessible manner. However, there remains a need for non-digital materials for those who are not comfortable on the computer or for individuals who would not know where to look for assistance and may not be aware of the vast services available to them through DFTA. A pamphlet would be helpful when meeting directly with older adults, caregivers, as well as at congregate sites and community events.

Finally, **Intro. 1650** aims to provide housing stability for older adults by entitling any person who is 60 years of age or older to full legal representation in eviction or termination of tenancy proceedings in housing court. There is a true housing crisis in the City and unfortunately, older adults have not been spared. Finding affordable housing is nearly impossible. As a provider of affordable senior housing, we see this daily with numerous inquiries and long waitlists. In order to keep people housed, Intro. 1650 looks to a preventative approach, addressing the challenges facing older adults in housing court. While JASA recognizes and supports the intent of this bill as a step forward in addressing the housing crisis, our experience is that legal representation

absent social services will not achieve the ultimate goal of housing stability and eviction prevention for older adults. We urge the City to focus on a multidisciplinary approach to solving the housing crisis. This model already exists in the form of DFTA's Tenancy and Eviction Support Services, formerly known as the Assigned Counsel Project. This model provides eligible older adults with an attorney and social worker who work as a team to help solve the client's Housing Court cases. To be eligible, older adults must be 60 years of age or older, have an identifiable social service need, and a pending Housing Court case. Such individuals could be facing eviction due to either nonpayment of rent or holdover allegations. Tenancy and Eviction Support Services provides comprehensive legal and social services in order to stabilize the older adult's living situation including free representation in housing court, social work services, including assistance with financial grants to cover arrears, obtaining entitlements such as SCRIE, Access-A-Ride and home delivered meals.

JASA also strongly urges the City Council to put a spotlight on SCRIE and DRIE in order to better educate eligible New Yorkers on the programs and qualifications. These programs need to be expanded by providing an annual adjustment of the maximum income threshold; freezing rent at original date of eligibility; and easing the requirements for recertification.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for introducing so many thoughtful pieces of legislation with the aim of improving access to City services and providing housing stability to older New Yorkers.

Molly Krakowski  
Senior Director, Government Affairs  
JASA  
[mkrakowski@jasa.org](mailto:mkrakowski@jasa.org)



**Bronx Neighborhood Office**  
Housing Justice Unit-Tenant Defense  
260 East 161<sup>st</sup> Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Bronx, New York 10451  
T (718) 991-4600  
<https://www.legalaidnyc.org/>

Tel (646) 856-0189  
Jcahilljackson@legal-aid.org

Alan Levine  
*President*

Twyla Carter  
*Attorney-in-Chief*  
*Chief Executive Officer*

Adriene L. Holder  
*Chief Attorney*  
Civil Practice

Testimony of  
**The Legal Aid Society**

on

Oversight: Improving Older New Yorkers' Access to City Services

presented before

The New York City Council's Committee on Aging

Jeannine R. Cahill-Jackson  
Supervising Attorney – Assigned Counsel Project  
Bronx Neighborhood Office  
Civil Practice  
The Legal Aid Society

September 7, 2022

The Legal Aid Society appreciates the opportunity to comment on the subject of housing NYC's seniors and thanks the Committee on Aging for convening this hearing.

### **WHO WE ARE**

The Legal Aid Society is the oldest and largest not-for-profit public interest law firm in the United States, working on more than 300,000 individual legal matters annually for low-income New Yorkers with civil, criminal, and juvenile rights problems in addition to law reform representation that benefits all two million low-income children and adults in New York City. The Society delivers a full range of comprehensive legal services to low-income families and individuals in the City. Our Civil Practice has local neighborhood offices in all five boroughs, which include robust eviction defense practices with designated attorneys representing seniors in housing court in our Brooklyn and Bronx offices, along with centralized city-wide law reform, employment law, immigration law, health law, and homeless rights practices.

#### **I. Seniors under 200% Federal Income Poverty Guidelines should be guaranteed an attorney before income eligibility is expanded.**

Under the proposed bill T2022-1650, the eligibility for the right to counsel would be expanded to include all New Yorkers 60 years of age and older regardless of income. While all seniors, regardless of income, would likely benefit from being represented by free legal services in eviction proceedings, the need for representation is the most severe and critical for the city's lowest income seniors. In our experience at The Legal Aid Society, housing court is the system that catches seniors whom have fallen through the cracks leaving them socially isolated, without adequate food, medical care, access to phone and/or internet. Additionally, they are often struggling with declining cognitive capacity and/or mental health. Through obtaining an attorney, it is not only their housing but their dignity and lives that can be preserved and maintained. For the seniors under 200% of the FIPG loss of the housing they are currently residing in would most likely result in having to go to the shelter as other affordable housing is rarely if ever available, with waiting lists for subsidized or supportive housing lasting years, far longer than the length of the average housing court case.

Currently, we do not have the capacity to provide full legal representation to all of the seniors referred to our Assigned Counsel Project through the housing courts and the Office for Civil Justice at HRA. This is a stress felt by the legal services programs across the city which all continue to manage the demand for representation which exceeds current capacity.

Accordingly, we propose that a primary focus remain on the increased provision of legal representation to these seniors before increasing the pool of eligibility to seniors of greater means.

## **II. Rent subsidy needed for seniors in addition to rental arrears**

Additionally, the proposed bill T2022-1650 proposes the creation of a rental arrears program for seniors that are not otherwise eligible for such funds under current programs. This could benefit some seniors, however without also providing an ongoing rental subsidy for seniors, rental arrears assistance alone, would not meaningfully preserve the housing of many effected seniors.

The predominant grounds for ineligibility for rental arrears assistance through the HRA One Shot Deal program are immigration status and inability to afford on-going rent. As such, it is strongly recommended that the proposed rental arrears assistance program for seniors provide eligibility, including but not limited to, those two categories of current ineligibility. Most notably however, the gap of assistance that is most crucial to providing seniors with the financial assistance for them to remain in their apartments is an ongoing rental subsidy, as no such program currently exists. We see many cases where a family member has passed away leaving the senior unable to afford the rent on their own, in a rent regulated apartment where they may have lived for over 40 years. While CityFHEPS is available for some seniors, to be eligible the seniors must be impaired, needing the assistance of Adult Protective Services. This leaves out many seniors who need help paying rent but who are not impaired. This leaves seniors with ill-suited options such as finding a roommate or soliciting help from third party family members which can be unreliable.

As such, we strongly recommend that any rental assistance program created for seniors include an ongoing rental subsidy to alleviate this gap and more effectively achieve the goal of allowing more seniors to remain in their homes.

### **III. Seniors facing eviction are in need of supportive social work services to help obtain the most favorable outcomes**

Lastly, the proposed bill T2022-1650 proposes the creation of a housing support program which would provide advice and support to seniors in eviction proceedings. The proposal would include, in sum, case management, supportive services and referrals. A program which provided social work and case management services to seniors in eviction proceedings could be extremely beneficial to both the senior as an individual and for the outcome of their case. Often the seniors that are referred to The Legal Aid Society have a multitude of issues that have led to the situation in which they find themselves in housing court. These issues can range from lack of basic needs being met, to mental or physical health issues that have not been properly addressed, familial or other social stressors or dangers, just to name a few. In order to fully assist the senior in preserving the housing, these related and underlying conditions must be remedied as well.

For the housing support program to work most effectively, the staff should work in partnership with the legal services attorney on the case. Additionally, the program should be a provider of the services not simply a referral portal to the already overburdened community organizations in existence. Also, notably, the assistance as described below as most crucially needed by the seniors we represent is NOT currently provided by any other organization.

#### **a. Older New Yorkers who are losing their homes need help finding new housing**

“Where am I supposed to go?” This is the desperate question that we hear so often from our older clients facing eviction. We see clients who come to us after decades of living in the same place, on the verge of eviction, facing no cause evictions. Often our clients have been the backbone of their neighborhoods or communities. But a new owner comes in and is interested in different tenants or an owner wants to sell and thinks an empty building will be worth more. These cases are heartbreaking because there is little we can do to stop these tenants from being evicted. Unless the Legislature reduces the risk of

eviction of vulnerable New Yorkers by passing the Good Cause eviction bill<sup>1</sup>, this desperation will continue to grow.

Because waiting lists for senior and disabled housing are years long, older people who are faced with eviction need to find affordable privately-owned housing that they can move into right away while they await an opportunity to secure subsidized housing. But as anyone who has sought housing in New York City knows, finding an apartment here is a herculean task. And it is more difficult for older people now than ever, because older people may have no facility with computers and not have undertaken an apartment search in many years. At The Legal Aid Society, we are helping older clients facing eviction who believe that the way to find new housing is to look in building windows for signs advertising vacant apartments.

But despite the obvious obstacles facing older New Yorkers who want to secure new housing, no resources exist to help them with this task. At The Legal Aid Society, we are receiving more and more requests – from older clients and from other members of the public – for help finding new housing. But we do not offer that type of assistance, and we are aware of no other organization or agency in New York City that does. Our impression is that occasionally an especially generous social worker or case worker at a well-staffed senior center will offer a member some help looking for a new home, but this is rare. This is one area of crucial assistance for older New Yorkers that could be provided through the proposed Housing Support Program through social work or case management services.

**b. Older New Yorkers need help identifying and applying for senior and disabled housing opportunities**

Older people embarking on a housing search are often stunned to learn not only that waiting lists for senior and disabled housing are years long, and that it is impossible even to apply for inclusion on *waitlists* for some properties, but also that there is neither a centralized way to identify and apply for all such housing opportunities, nor assistance available to obtain and complete applications.

The process of applying for senior housing can be daunting even for older people who are computer-literate. Imagine you are an older New Yorker looking for senior

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://legalaidnyc.org/news/lte-new-yorkers-need-housing-protections-from-albany/>.

housing options, and thus you conduct a Google search for “senior housing NYC”. Here is what you will find (in the order in which the search results appeared on December 3, 2021):

- NYC Housing Connect. This site<sup>2</sup> purports to be “New Yorkers’ portal to find and apply for affordable housing opportunities across the five boroughs of New York City”. But a site search today for opportunities for a single adult with annual income of \$12000 generated **zero** results.
- The NYC Department for the Aging (“DFTA”). Typing “housing” into DFTA’s site’s search field brings up, first, a link to NYC Housing Connect (above). Further down in the list of search results, there are links to DFTA’s five borough-specific “Alternatives in Senior Housing” publications, apparently last updated in 2017.<sup>3</sup> These ca. 30-page publications contain lists of buildings that house older people and the contact information of their buildings’ management offices; the publication instructs the reader to “contact individual developments for further information and applications”. Thus one would need to place separate phone calls to the various properties to inquire about eligibility requirements, wait list statuses, and application processes – all of which often differ from location to location.
- New York Foundation for Senior Citizens. This organization’s site, on its “affordable housing” page<sup>4</sup>, describes nine properties that the organization runs, two of which are “not accepting applications at this time”. To apply to the other seven, one must download and complete a separate 9-page application *for each location*; it is not possible to apply for all, or some subset, of the seven properties at once. And each application warns that a family must not submit more than one application; if more than one is received, all of the family’s applications “WILL BE *DROPPED TO THE BOTTOM OF THE LIST!*” (emphasis in the original).

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://housingconnect.nyc.gov/PublicWeb/>.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/dfta/downloads/pdf/publications/HousingManhattan2019.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nyfsc.org/housing-services/affordable-housing/>.

- JASA affordable senior housing.<sup>5</sup> As with the New York Foundation, only a subset of JASA’s properties are accepting applications for their waitlist. Each property requires the applicant to prepare and submit a separate application, and there is a dire consequence to applying more than one time: “You will be disqualified if more than one application is received per lottery for your household or a single person appears in two or more applications”, the site warns.

It is clear from the foregoing that the process of even finding opportunities to apply for senior housing in New York requires a degree of computer literacy, organization, and persistence that many older New Yorkers cannot hope to achieve. Yet virtually no help is available.<sup>6</sup> Thus the City should devote resources to provide older New Yorkers with this critical help.

#### **IV. The City should expand the Assigned Counsel Project because older New Yorkers need comprehensive help to maintain their tenancies**

An affordable rent-regulated apartment in New York City is, for many older people lucky enough to rent one, by far their most valuable asset, without which they would face homelessness. Therefore, maintaining those affordable homes, and thus allowing older people to age in place safely, is the core of our work with older clients at The Legal Aid Society. But the challenges these tenants face are not susceptible to legal solutions only; often a tenancy is jeopardized by an older person’s inability to fulfill some critical obligation, like paying rent, or maintaining a clutter-free environment. In many cases these challenges can be met only with a combination of intensive legal and social work assistance. Therefore, we urge the City to deepen its investment in the Assigned Counsel Project.

The Assigned Counsel Project, or ACP, is a partnership between the Housing Court and New York City agencies and legal services providers; the ACP brings together lawyers

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.jasa.org/services/housing>.

<sup>6</sup> The Housing Ambassador Program purports to “help people apply for Housing Connect affordable housing lotteries”. <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/hpd/services-and-information/housing-ambassadors.page> As previously mentioned, however, Housing Connect may show no opportunities at all for some potential applicants; and we have found that some of the CBOs that the Ambassador site lists as offering this help actually do not.

and social workers to work as a team to help resolve the Housing Court cases of New Yorkers age 60+ who present with social services needs. The small ACP social services team at the NYC Department for the Aging works with ACP legal services providers in Brooklyn and Manhattan to help ACP clients apply for or recertify their public benefits; find ways to ensure that their rent is paid on time; and reduce clutter and other hazards in their homes. The social services component of the ACP, which has always been available only in Brooklyn and Manhattan, is critical to the outcomes of ACP cases.

For many years the ACP was administered by the NYC Department for the Aging, but HRA took over the Project's administration in 2018. Given the housing-related challenges facing older New Yorkers that have been discussed today, the ACP is clearly more essential than ever and should be expanded. But we are concerned that under the administration of HRA, the ACP is instead diminishing. It seems notable that, to our knowledge, HRA has published no information about its administration of the ACP since it took over the Project; the only information about the ACP that can be found on the internet is published by the NYS Courts and the NYC Department for the Aging.<sup>7</sup>

Currently, DFTA is limiting the provision of social work assistance to only court referred cases in our Brooklyn Office of the Aging. This is creating a discrepancy in the type of service provided to our senior clients as those that are referred to our office by OCJ are not provided with the same social work support as the court referred seniors.

We therefore urge the Committee to work with HRA and DFTA to increase the scope of the ACP, by expanding:

- DFTA's ACP social services support beyond Brooklyn and Manhattan;
- the pool of eligible cases beyond only judicial referrals; and
- the nature of DFTA's social services support, from short-term crisis intervention to, in appropriate cases (such as nuisance cases settled with probationary agreements), longer-term social work support.

---

<sup>7</sup> See <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/ip/ny2j/diverseneeds/assignedcounsel.shtml>; [https://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/pdfs/acp\\_brochure.pdf](https://nycourts.gov/courts/nyc/civil/pdfs/acp_brochure.pdf); and <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/dfta/services/legal-help.page>. These pages have not been updated to reflect any of the changes to the ACP since HRA began administering the Project.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you very much for your review of our testimony and for the opportunity to comment on this bill. In sum, seniors under 200% of the FIPG should be guaranteed counsel before eligibility is expanded, any rent assistance program should include an ongoing rental

subsidy and the housing support program should provide services for seniors particularly in areas of substantial need that are not provided by other organizations.

\*\*\*

For more information, please contact Jeannine Cahill-Jackson at  
jcahilljackson@legal-aid.org, or at 646-856-0189.



**New York City Council**  
**Committee on Aging: Chair, Council Member Hudson**  
**September 7, 2022**  
**Oversight - Improving Older New Yorkers' Access to City Services**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

LiveOn NY's members include more than 110 community-based nonprofits that provide core services which allow all New Yorkers to thrive in our communities as we age, such as older adult centers, home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing, NORCs, and home care. LiveOn NY is also home to the Reframing Aging NYC Initiative, part of the national Reframing Aging Initiative aimed to counteract ageism and improve the way policymakers, stakeholders, and the public think about aging and older people. With our members, we work to make New York a better place to age.

LiveOn NY acknowledges the work of the Mayor Eric Adams Administration, the City Department for the Aging (DFTA) led by Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez, the New York City Council led Speaker Adrienne Adams and the Committee on Aging led by Aging Chair, Council Member Crystal Hudson.

**Background**

**LiveOn NY is appreciative of the City's investment for older adults and the aging sector in the FY23 Adopted Budget** by including an additional \$3.2 million to expand DFTA's Geriatric Mental Health Program (DGMH), \$60 million to provide a cost-of-living adjustment for human services workers, \$14.9 million for the home-delivered meals program, \$3 million to improve IT education for older adults, among other key investments. This budget moves the aging services sector in the right direction, from a significant human services workforce investment to additional funding for home-delivered meals to keep older adults fed.

Nonetheless, we also recognize there is more work to be done to better support older New Yorkers. While the aging population continues to be the fastest growing demographic, with 1 in 5 New Yorkers expected to be 60 and older by 2040, the City must go further to ensure all older New Yorkers regardless of their background have access to equitable aging services to safely age in community.

Therefore, we invite the City to utilize our aging policy agenda, [\*Ageing is Everyone's Business\*](#), released by LiveOn NY in partnership with Hunter College Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging,



Making New York a better place to age

which is a bold policy agenda that provides actionable policy solutions to make New York a better, more equitable place to age.

Further, LiveOn NY recommends the following to improve access to aging services for older adults and community-based organizations.

## **Recommendations**

### ***Combat Hunger***

#### **DFTA should assess and allocate funding for the significant inflationary impacts on raw food, gas prices, and other infrastructure needs for contracts**

Many of LiveOn NY's members have raised their concern of the impact inflation cost for raw food, gas prices and other infrastructure items. For example, one of our members saw a 40% increase in raw food cost due to inflation this year. The unavoidable financial strain has created challenges for providers to continue to meet the growing capacity for home-delivered meals, in addition, providing congregate meals at Older Adult Centers.

Nonetheless, LiveOn NY is appreciative of the City Council's recent announcement of \$3 million in funding for the repair and replacement of an estimated 44 hotshot vans for the City's home delivered meals program. This critical investment in the infrastructure will literally and figuratively keep the wheels in motion for providers to expand capacity and continue to meet the growing need for home-delivered meals throughout New York.

#### **The City should continue to support new models of service including grab-and-go meals.**

During the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity among older adults was deeply exacerbated by issues not only economic, but related to access as older adults were required to "stay at home" to reduce the chances of contracting COVID-19. New models of service such as grab-and-go were critical and successful in ensuring, who may not be comfortable congregating due to COVID risks, or for personal reasons are less willing to meet their nutritional needs by eating at an Older Adult Center, have the option to take their meal home, a decision that ensures one's nutritional needs can be met in the environment of one's choosing.

### ***Affordable Senior Housing***

**LiveOn NY recommends the City allocates funding to develop 1,000 units of affordable senior housing with services per year.** While the Adopted Budget included investments to support affordable housing programs, the City needs to go further to fully address the need for affordable senior housing. The investment of a minimum target of 1,000 new units of affordable



Making New York a better place to age

senior housing with services per year, is part of a total target to construct no fewer than 8,000 new units of housing dedicated to serving extremely low income and homeless households annually, as called for by the United for Housing coalition. As waitlists and limited housing stock pose an acute challenge for older New Yorkers, a considerable investment and consistent unit targets per year will be critical to paving a pathway out of this crisis.

**LiveOn NY also recommends the City increase the per unit reimbursement rate for the City's Senior Affordable Rental Assistance (SARA) services from \$5,000 per unit, to \$7,500 per unit,** to fund two housing staff positions at each building to provide support for the residents to more adequately address social isolation and significant case assistance needs.

### **Proposed Legislation**

LiveOn applauds Aging Chair Hudson for introducing a legislative package aimed at promoting critical services and supports for us all to age in our communities in New York City, and thanks Council Member Hudson and cosponsors.

LiveOn NY offers the following feedback on the proposed legislation:

### **Intro.1696**

**LiveOn NY supports the intent of Intro. 1696, which would require the Department for the Aging to require older adult centers to expand their programming to include linguistic and cultural programs relevant to the local communities in which they reside.** This bill would allow the City to work to ensure all older adults have access to equitable culturally and linguistically component services to safely age in community. This is specifically important for our growing diverse aging population in the City. Nonetheless, LiveOn offers two specific recommendations for this bill:

1. To utilize the Mayor's Office of Nonprofit Services to push for technical assistance and training directly for immigrant-focused and/or smaller, culturally diverse nonprofits. As DFTA looks to grow its service portfolio to increase linguistically diverse programs, there must be a pipeline and support system - coupled with new and additional dollars - to support expansion.
2. In addition, funding will be required to support resources and staffing capacity including the hiring of multilingual staff at Older Adult Centers. The network of Older Adults Centers already provides extensive language and culturally appropriate services throughout the City. However, given the growth of new needs, funding must be increased to ensure that new needs can be met.

### **Intro. 1538**

**LiveOn NY supports Intro. 1538, which would require a know your rights pamphlet for older adults.** Throughout the City, a variety of aging services are available for older adults yet



Making New York a better place to age

too often older New Yorkers and caregivers are unaware of the breadth of aging services available within their community. This bill will provide a culturally and linguistically appropriate know your rights pamphlets to older adults, caregivers and others, through outreach, educating them on the range of services and support available including age discrimination, elder abuse, food insecurity, housing support and more.

### **Intro. 1650**

**LiveOn NY supports the intent of Intro. 1650 which aims to provide housing stability for older adults by entitling any person who is 60 years of age or older to full legal representation in eviction or termination of tenancy proceedings in housing court.** Across the City, older adults face difficulties with finding affordable housing with rising rent prices and over half of older New Yorkers are rent-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on rent. While this bill is a step forward to address the housing crisis among older adults, we urge the City to incorporate a social services/legal services model which would provide both the legal and social services support that older adults will need to remain in their homes. We also urge the City to work in coordination with community-based organizations with existing housing programs and legal services (ex. The Assigned Counsel Project) that are an additional trusted resource for older New Yorkers. Further, while legal and social service supports to address housing insecurity are critical, LiveOn also urges the City to strengthen existing programs, such as the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) program and affordable senior housing programs, as noted above.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

---

*Testimony provided by Brianna Paden-Williams, Communications and Policy Associate at LiveOn NY  
For questions, please email [bpaden-williams@liveon-ny.org](mailto:bpaden-williams@liveon-ny.org)*

*LiveOn NY's members provide the core, community-based services that allow older adults to thrive in their communities. With a base of more than 100 community-based organizations serving at least 300,000 older New Yorkers annually. Our members provide services ranging from senior centers, congregate and home-delivered meals, affordable senior housing with services, elder abuse prevention services, caregiver supports, case management, transportation, and NORCs. LiveOn NY advocates for increased funding for these vital services to improve both the solvency of the system and the overall capacity of community-based service providers.*

*LiveOn NY also administers a citywide outreach program and staffs a hotline that educates, screens and helps with benefit enrollment including SNAP, SCRIE and others, and also administers the Rights and Information for Senior Empowerment (RISE) program to bring critical information directly to seniors on important topics to help them age well in their communities.*



**Testimony for the NYC Council Committee on Aging**

Crystal Hudson, Chair

Members: Eric Dinowitz, Linda Lee, Christopher Marte, Darlene Mealy,  
Kristin Richardson Jordan and Lynn C. Schulman

**Oversight - Improving Older New Yorkers' Access to City Services  
September 7, 2022**

**Submitted by Kimberly George, President and CEO, Project Guardianship**

Thank you, Chair Hudson, and Committee Members, for allowing me the opportunity to present testimony today. My name is Kimberly George, and I am the President and CEO of Project Guardianship.

We are a spinoff program of the Vera Institute of Justice and an independent non-profit organization providing comprehensive, court-appointed guardianship services to hundreds of limited capacity New Yorkers citywide. We serve clients regardless of their ability to pay and provide services for some of the most compelling and complex cases in the city. Our clients include older New Yorkers living with disabilities, mental health issues, dementia, substance use disorders, traumatic brain injury, and other conditions that negatively impact their ability to make decisions. We also share research and recommendations for a better guardianship system and advocate for more equitable service provision for people in need of surrogate decision-making supports or protective arrangements.

For older New Yorkers with limited capacity, the Mental Hygiene Law provides for the appointment of a guardian to help them manage their personal and/or property needs. Guardianship is a critical link between city services for older adults and those New Yorkers whose functional limitations have prevented them from accessing and benefiting from those programs. Nonprofit agencies like ours work to secure the public benefits, housing, healthcare, mental health care, and other services and supports that this population needs to improve outcomes and promote safety and stability.

To illustrate the difference a good guardian makes in the life of an individual who needs this support, I'd like to share the story of our client, Mr. S. When we first met him, he was 69 years old and living in a psychiatric unit in a hospital in the Bronx. Mr. S had been admitted to the hospital nearly a year prior, after he was found wandering the streets confused, naked, and hearing voices. He was diagnosed with major depression, anxiety, and psychosis and began an anti-depressant / anti-anxiety medication regimen that helped him greatly.

Our staff worked hard to find a more suitable and less restrictive place for him to live. We found an assisted living facility where he would have more freedom – his own room and TV, and support staff available to help him only if he needed it. He is happy in his new home and wants to



continue living there as long as possible. However, his rent exceeds his income and, knowing this, he has often expressed anxiety over the likelihood he will have to leave. Fortunately, through our enhanced budgeting process, Mr. S will be able to stay in the facility for at least another seven years.

We have already been proactive in continued financial planning for him, including monitoring when it will be possible to apply for Medicaid on his behalf. We will then find a facility that accepts Medicaid that will suit his needs and where he will also be happy and thrive. In the meantime, we have ensured that he gets the medical and mental health care he needs and have enabled him to stay in the community.

Another client who benefited greatly from our services is 60-year-old Ms. D. Like many people with mental health conditions, she was facing several challenges. Her landlord was evicting her from her apartment, an order of protection barred all interaction with her father, and she was estranged from other family. People who knew Ms. D before said she was brilliant, a graduate of Columbia University who had earned a good living as a banker. However, she was subsequently diagnosed with schizoaffective and bipolar disorder, and refused medication.

We were appointed her guardian when Ms. D violated the order of protection and was arrested and jailed. Concerned that this environment would not meet her mental health needs, we worked with her family and defense attorney to move her to a safer psychiatric unit. Upon Ms. D's release, it was clear that her condition had worsened, and her aggressive behavior and delusions were putting her at extreme risk of being rearrested or harming herself or others. We petitioned for a mental hygiene warrant to have her evaluated at a psychiatric hospital, and she was soon admitted on an in-patient basis.

While Ms. D was in the hospital, we resolved her housing issue, and coordinated with her care team to provide mental health support services once she returned to her community apartment. Perhaps most crucially, we met with her frequently to establish a relationship and build the trust that would be the cornerstone of future efforts to assist her. Ultimately, her dedication to her mental health plan succeeded in negotiating a favorable plea deal that avoided additional jail time. With her legal troubles behind her, and a sustainable plan in place to continue to meet her mental health, housing, and financial needs, Ms. D. is now focusing on the things that are important in her: reconnecting with family, spending time with her dogs, reading, and attending the opera.

These cases showcase the life-changing impact of a good guardian. For those New Yorkers who need this support, a guardian can bring safety and stability back into their lives. However, there are almost no services to help loved ones assess the need for guardianship or provide support in the petitioning process, and there are obstacles to obtaining needed guardians when necessary to connect this population to vital programs and supports. We must therefore improve supports for lay guardians, those friends and family members who step up to serve. It can be very challenging for a guardian, particularly one who is unfamiliar with the various systems that they must navigate, to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. New York City must invest in ongoing



training and support to guide non-professional guardians in identifying, obtaining, and maintaining the full scope of services available to the older adults under their care.

When no family member or friend is willing or able to serve as guardian, the appointing courts rely on a patchwork of professional guardians, which include attorneys and other professionals, non-profit organizations, and even the local Department of Social Services in certain jurisdictions. NYC must lead and create a dedicated funding stream to support nonprofit guardianship services that will thus enable older New Yorkers to access the benefits and services to which they are entitled.

We are working to create a city where everyone who enters the guardianship system does so truly as a last resort, where guardians have the resources and support to provide person-centered services that enrich the lives of those they serve, and where these expectations are met regardless of zip code, or whether the older adult has significant retirement savings or is an SSI recipient. This is only possible if we recognize and invest in guardianship as a social service and provide support to those with functional limitations and their guardians.

With your continued support, we will be able to make New York City the equitable, age inclusive, and age friendly place it strives to be; where everyone can access and benefit from city services and fulfill their potential regardless of functional limitations or other challenges.

Thank you.

Please contact Kimberly George at [kgeorge@nycourts.gov](mailto:kgeorge@nycourts.gov) with any questions or requests for additional information.



## **Memorandum in Opposition**

### **Intro. 1650**

The Rent Stabilization Association of New York City represents 25,000 diverse owners and managers who collectively manage more than one million apartments in every neighborhood and community throughout the city. We thank the Committee for giving us the opportunity to submit this Memorandum in Opposition to Intro. 1650, which would entitle any person 60 years of age or older facing eviction legal representation, provide financial assistance for rental arrears and establish a housing support to seniors who are at risk of eviction or foreclosure.

Seniors already are eligible for a number of eviction prevention services. The city provides guaranteed representation under its Right to Council law for anyone whose income is up to 200 percent of Federal Poverty Level. Further, the Office of Civil Justice has implemented the right-to-counsel law citywide, as legal provider partners have stepped up to represent all New Yorkers facing an eviction in housing court during the Covid emergency. In addition, the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) provides legal services to seniors including eviction and housing assistance through contracted legal services providers and the Human Resources Administration offers Adult Protective Services to aid vulnerable seniors confronting housing issues. Finally, the Assigned Counsel Program, a partnership program between DFTA and the New York City Civil Court, assigns attorneys and social workers to seniors with housing issues and offers legal and financial assistance to seniors facing eviction in holdover or non-payment of rent proceeds in all boroughs except Staten Island.

Intro. 1650 seeks to do more of the same. It calls for the creation of yet another free legal assistance program, to offer rental assistance if needed, and provide a support program to seniors at risk of eviction. It also seeks to provide free legal representation to all people above age 60, irrespective of their financial status. Millionaires would be entitled to free legal representation. Intro. 1650 creates the appearance of doing something without providing anything new. The tools to assist seniors already are in place. A proposal to create a new program raises the question as to whether the current programs are adequate and, if they are not, why and how they can be strengthened. But this bill does nothing to address this.

There have been public complaints that the current eviction prevention programs are not sufficiently staffed to deal with the number of evictions currently in the pipeline. This is surprising because eviction levels today are significantly below pre-pandemic levels. There have been fewer evictions in NYC during the entire first half of 2022 (1,233) than there had been in the month of January 2020 alone (1,262). In June 2022, for example, there were 295 evictions, as compared to 1,299 in June 2019. And of these June 2022 evictions, about half were defaults where no one ever appeared to contest the case, meaning these tenants most likely vacated before the case could be brought. Evictions filings, too, are significantly less than pre-pandemic; according to Evictionlab.org, eviction filings in New York city remain significantly below

historical averages. The answer to staffing shortages is to hire more staff. Creating new programs does not address this.

The simple solution to providing evictions services to seniors is for the legal service organizations to focus on seniors. Current programs should be utilized to provide seniors' legal services and the city should be fully funding those programs that help eligible seniors. There is no need to overlay yet another program open to anyone based on age, not need. The real issue is why there is a call to create more programs when so many resources already exist.

Accordingly, the RSA opposes Intro. 1650.



**Selfhelp Community Services, Inc.**  
520 Eighth Avenue  
New York, New York 10018  
212.971.7600  
www.selfhelp.net

**Testimony from Selfhelp Community Services  
New York City Council  
September 7, 2022  
Improving Older New Yorkers' Access to City Services**

My name is Katie Foley and I am the Managing Director, External Affairs and Communications at Selfhelp Community Services. Thank you to Aging Committee Chair Crystal Hudson and the members of the committee for the opportunity to testify.

Selfhelp Community Services is a non-profit serving 25,000 older and vulnerable adults each year through home health care, affordable housing, and skilled social services while remaining the largest provider of comprehensive services to Holocaust survivors in North America.

Our services are extensive and include: Citywide specialized programs for Holocaust Survivors; fifteen affordable senior housing residences; four Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NORC) programs; three intensive case management programs; five senior centers including one of New York City's first Innovative Senior Centers; home health care; the Virtual Senior Center; court-appointed guardianship; the Selfhelp Alzheimer's Resource Program (SHARP); and New York Connects in Queens.

We are grateful for the Council's long-standing and ongoing support for so many important senior programs and for always emphasizing the needs of older adults in policy decisions and budget allocations. With strong community-based programs, we are confident that older New Yorkers will be able to access the care and support they deserve and need to be able to age in their own homes and communities.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Selfhelp has continued to serve our elderly and vulnerable clients through our range of home and community-based programs. Our home health aides have provided much-needed at-home care and all of our social workers from our community-based programs have been checking on their clients to ensure access to food, safe shelter, medical care, benefits and entitlements, and more. We have expanded and enhanced our Virtual Senior Center to reduce social isolation among older adults. Selfhelp has been on the frontlines of serving the most vulnerable; ensuring all of our clients have dignified care and support during this challenging time.

In today's testimony, I will share our recommendations for how to improve access to city services for older New Yorkers.

## **Closing the Digital Divide**

We've all learned many lessons about service delivery during the COVID pandemic and an important one is the urgent need to close the digital divide. For many older New Yorkers, there is a need for more hardware (computers, phones, tablets, etc.), internet access (wifi), and the skills to use navigate online. We need a multi-fold approach to close this gap while also continuing to provide access to services via telephone and in-person services. We encourage the City to invest in innovative programs that promote digital literacy and offer a connection to the community – programs like Selfhelp's Virtual Senior Center (VSC). One of the most popular classes on our Virtual Senior Center is teaching computer skills through live, interactive classes. The VSC connects homebound and isolated older adults to their community and offers a unique way for seniors to stay connected and reduce their social isolation.

In terms of the hardware gap, we applaud the City's efforts to distribute tablets to older adults and encourage the investment in one-on-one assistance as well. Through our senior centers and NORCs, we've seen how beneficial intergenerational support can be in teaching computer skills. There is an opportunity to increase volunteer assistance programs that engage youth and younger people in tutoring older adults. These programs benefit the recipients (the older adults) as much as the volunteers (the young adults).

It is also important to keep the DFTA website up-to-date. For older New Yorkers who are computer literate, especially younger seniors, using the website is the easiest entry point for getting current and accurate information on benefits and services. Some older adults, including those still in the workforce, are adept at googling and therefore it's important to keep the website accurate.

## **Community Outreach**

We recommend increasing access points for City services at popular community locations including libraries and senior centers. One suggestion is a "city services day" on-site at high-traffic senior centers, senior affordable housing, and libraries that would help more seniors access eligible benefits. This type of community outreach ensures the City can reach older adults in their own communities where they are most comfortable.

Outreach to seniors using the existing contact information for recipients of benefits, residents of senior affordable housing, senior center members, NORC members, etc. Outreach workers could contact older adults to make sure each person is aware of available services such as Access a Ride, AccessFOOD, SCRIE, DOT/Vision Zero, Medical Clinics, Reduced Fare Metro Transportation Cards, and more. This kind of individual outreach can be very successful in connecting older adults to the services they need.

## **Advertising**

We encourage advertising on transportation and newspapers in a variety of languages. DFTA has run various advertising campaigns on the subways and buses to combat ageism and promote healthy aging. We encourage investment in a new advertising campaign that promotes available services for older adults, including the Aging Connect hotline ((212) 244-6469) and website.

### **Expanding Senior Housing Assistance and Anti-Eviction Services**

We support the NYC Council in enacting programs that expand the right to Counsel and housing assistance programs.

The expanded right to counsel and housing assistance program will allow more older adults to access the help they need to remain in their homes and community. As a developer of affordable senior housing, we are strong advocates for expanding housing assistance programs. We believe housing is a human right and therefore all older adults deserve a safe and comfortable place to live that allows them to age at home. We also support anti-eviction programs because it keeps older adults in their homes. Expanding the right to Counsel for older adults offers appropriate support where it's needed. Too often older adults are evicted from their homes because of the lack of available affordable legal assistance and not understanding their rights and/or options for rectifying their rent arrears.

We will also note that housing is a social determinant of health. Housing is a platform by which health and social services can be provided. Just as we noted above, senior housing can be used as part of service delivery for City services.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. On behalf of the 25,000 clients we serve, I am grateful for the Council's support on so many important programs.



## **NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON AGING**

**Wednesday September 7, 2022, 11:00 a.m.**

**SUBJECT: Int T2022-1650**

My name is James Fenton. I am a Senior Staff Attorney in the Senior Law Project at Volunteers of Legal Service (VOLS). VOLS was established in 1984 and our purpose is to leverage private attorneys to provide free legal services to low-income New Yorkers to help fill the justice gap.

Our Senior Law Project focuses our services on helping low-income New York City seniors plan for the future by obtaining wills and other advance directives. This planning ultimately allows seniors to make their wishes clear, empower their chosen caregivers, and allows them to age in place in the community for as long as is feasible.

In addition to our life planning services we operate a legal advice hotline for seniors. Legal issues related to fear of eviction and homelessness top the list of questions we receive.

While both New York State and New York City have taken significant steps to protect the rights of low-income tenants in recent years, landlords continue to push forward with their efforts to force out long term tenants in rent regulated housing, many of whom are seniors. The seniors who we speak with are acutely aware of the lengths their landlords will go to push them out of their apartments and are anxious about the possibility of having to fight for their apartments without the help of an attorney.

Many of our clients worry that their mobility issues will prevent them from effectively participating in any court cases brought against them. Many of our homebound clients only receive their mail periodically and worry that they will miss their time to respond to notices from their landlords or the Court. Further, even when they are properly notified, many seniors cannot travel to housing court, and cannot access the technology needed to avoid in person appearances. Because of this, expanding seniors' access to attorneys will not only help seniors effectively raise legal defenses, but will also enable them to overcome practical hurdles to their participation in the judicial process, and alleviate a great deal of their stress and anxiety.

In our experience seniors are also exceptionally worried about the possibility of having to enter the shelter system. Not only can the shelters themselves be difficult for seniors to navigate and endure, but placement in a shelter or temporary housing accommodation often requires a person to move away from medical and social services which many become increasingly reliant upon as they age. Due to our clients' aforementioned mobility issues, even a relocation which many people would consider small can create an impassible divide between a senior and their community.



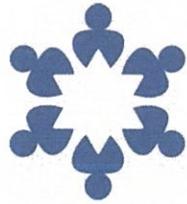
Most seniors we speak with are living on fixed incomes, many of which place them slightly above 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, leaving them ineligible for a Right to Counsel Attorney while still unable to afford a private attorney to represent them. Disabled older veterans in particular fall into this category. Currently, if an older veteran receives service connected disability at a 90% or 100% rating they are over income for the Right to Council program, meaning they are effectively denied an attorney based on injuries sustained during service. These are the veterans who scarified the most in service to our country and the compensation they receive because of their sacrifice currently shuts them out from receiving representation in an eviction proceeding. Removing this income cap would open access to a significant portion of this vulnerable population.

Our clients also report great difficulty in accessing social services. The COVID pandemic necessitated an increased reliance on remote technologies which increasingly feels like a permanent change. While “going digital” made accessing services easier for many New Yorkers, seniors were not particularly well situated for this new normal, and many still struggle. The housing support program envisioned in this bill will go a long way to closing the digital divide seniors are currently facing.

Most of all, providing support for seniors facing eviction serves the city as a whole by keeping communities together. Most of the seniors who call our hotline are long term residents of their neighborhoods who bring with them a tremendous amount of the history and culture of their communities. These individuals have formed close and longstanding bonds with their neighbors, and infuse their buildings and their communities at large with a sense of care and compassion which is invaluable in our rapidly changing city.

Allowing New Yorkers to age in place and remain vibrant members of their local communities is a goal that benefits everyone in our city. The Right to Council Program has been a great help to tenants across the city and should be expanded to meet the increased need brought on by the COVID pandemic. Specific protections for seniors, a particularly vulnerable group for the reasons discussed above, is an effective and necessary step in securing housing justice for all New Yorkers and creating sustainable communities throughout the city.

James Fenton  
Senior Staff Attorney



# MET COUNCIL

Feeding the hungry. Serving the poor.  
Changing lives.

## **New York City Council Committee on Aging Testimony by Dara Adams, Met Council on Jewish Poverty September 7, 2022**

Thank you, Chair Hudson, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Dara Adams and I'm the Director for Strategic Policy Initiatives at Met Council, I'm honored to be here today on behalf of my colleague, Susan Moritz the Senior Director for Holocaust and Geriatric Services. Met Council is America's largest Jewish non-profit organization dedicated to fighting poverty. We also run the largest kosher food distribution program in the world. For 50 years, Met Council has provided comprehensive social services to New Yorkers in need. Last year, Met Council provided food and wraparound services to more than 300,000 New Yorkers.

Met Council's Elder Abuse Prevention Program began in response to an increase in the number of older adults requesting assistance after being financially exploited. Modeled after Met Council's services to survivors of intimate partner violence, we offer wrap around services that include education, prevention, screening, care planning, assistance in obtaining orders of protection, financial assistance, and supportive counseling. Working closely with the Family Justice Centers, District Attorney's offices, and local law enforcement our Elder Abuse Prevention works with survivors in all five boroughs in English, Spanish, Russian and Ukrainian.

Older adults are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse than the average adult, a trend that has only worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>i</sup> In general, one in ten older adults (60+) experience abuse, including financial exploitation, every year.<sup>ii</sup> Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic the prevalence of elder abuse has increased to at least one in six, although exact numbers are difficult to confirm because only one in twenty-four cases of elder abuse are reported.<sup>iii</sup> A recent study found an 83.6% increase in one-year abuse prevalence for adults aged 60 and older.<sup>iv</sup>

Given the rise in elder abuse, Met Council is excited to see the New York City Council taking significant steps to protect our seniors. Seniors need to be empowered to make decisions and knowing their rights is a meaningful first step towards that. Many of our clients facing eviction will greatly benefit from legal representation and expanded rental arrears assistance for persons 60 years of age or older. We're also extremely supportive of the establishment of a housing support program for persons 60 years of age or older who are at risk of eviction or foreclosure; we believe this program will help more seniors be able to remain in their homes. We would urge the Council to pass and fully fund this legislation as it has the potential to be life changing for a countless number of older adults.

We thank you for your commitment to addressing elder abuse and look forward to partnering with you to make the city safer for all seniors.

---

<sup>i</sup> Alyssa Elman et al., "Effects of the COVID-19 Outbreak on Elder Mistreatment and Response in New York City: Initial Lessons," *Journal of Applied Gerontology* 39, no. 7 (July 1, 2020): 690–99, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0733464820924853>.

<sup>ii</sup> Joseph Snyder and William F. Benson, "Adult Protective Services and the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program," in *Elder Abuse*, ed. XinQi Dong (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 317–42, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-47504-2\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-47504-2_15).

<sup>iii</sup> World Health Organization, "Elder Abuse," June 15, 2021, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/elder-abuse>. And Storey, J. E. (2020). Risk factors for elder abuse and neglect: A review of the literature. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 50, 101339.

<sup>iv</sup> Chang ES, Levy BR. High prevalence of elder abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic: risk and resilience factors. *Am J Geriatr Psychiatry*. (2021). doi: 10.1016/j.jagp.2021.01.007

My name is Jose Vega, I am disabled and wheelchair bound, Level T-3 paraplegic, paralyzed from my chest down. I also have asthma, sleep apnea, seizures and various other medical issues.

As an older adult, and resident of New York City, changes need to be made, to improve the living conditions for the older adults of New York City.

The New York City shelter system is not equipped to house the older adult, especially ones who also have disabilities with medical issues. They are not A.D.A., Accessible to meet one's disability and medical needs. They are constantly being abused physically, threatened and their personal items are being taken from them.

Many of the New York City Housing Development that house the older adult, the housing conditions that one is being provided with are inhumane, inappropriate and not safe to house the older adults, especially those with disabilities and medical issues. The elevators are constantly breaking down for months at a time, forcing one to stay home, because they can't use the stairways. The sinks, toilets and household equipment is also breaking down and not repaired in a timely fashion. Also, during the winter months, they are not being provided with sufficient heat for the household.

As an older adult coming home from prison, as myself and being disabled, I was not provided with housing, medical, clothing or assistance. Better accommodations and assistance need to be provided for the older adult coming home from prison.

Many of the New York City Supermarkets, Stores and Entities built after 1990, do not meet the requirements of the A.D.A. of 1990, to meet the older adults of New York City, especially ones with disability needs. Changes need to be made, especially the store aisles, ramps entering the stores, many of them, one can't even enter, because they don't have ramps or the widths of the doors are not wide enough for the older adults who depend on their wheelchairs or walkers.

The Osborne Association recently provided 52 older adults coming home from prison with affordable housing at Marcus Garvey Housing Development, located at 461 Chester Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11212, that meets the conditions of one's needs. I finally was provided with appropriate housing that met my disability needs and is in compliance with the A.D.A. of 1990 after living with my parents for more than four years in an apartment that was not A.D.A. Accessible, thanks to the Osborne Association and Director Ms. Christina Green.

These are a few of many changes that need to be made for the Older Adult of New York City.

Thank You Very Much And Change Is Possible.

**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: 9/7/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez, Commissioner

Address: 2 Lafayette St., 7th Floor

I represent: Department for the Aging

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 12022-1650 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Denton

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: Volunteers of Legal Service

Address: 40 Worth St, New York, NY 10013

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. 12022-1658 Res. No. \_\_\_\_\_

in favor  in opposition

Date: 9/7/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jeanne R Cahill Jackson

Address: 760 E 165th St 8th Fl Bx NY 10451

I represent: The Legal Aid Society

Address: same above

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: 9/7/2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dara Adams

Address: 77 Water Street, NY NY

I represent: Met Council on Jewish Poverty

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: Jack Kupsteyman

Address: 77 Seneca Ave

I represent: Gray Panthers 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: Brianna Peden-Williams

Address: Colfax Ave. Rosette York, NY

I represent: Live On NY

Address: 49 W 45<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, 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: 9/7/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tanya Krupat

Address: 175 Remsen St

I represent: Osborne Association

Address: Older Nyers

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: 9/7/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Kevin Jarr

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

I represent: AARP NY

Address: 756 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave 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: Sep 7, 2022

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Christian Gonzalez-Rivera

Address: 2480 THIRD AVE., 8<sup>TH</sup> FL, NYC 10035

I represent: BROOKDALE CTR. FOR HEALTHY AGING

Address: HUNTER COLLEGE, CUNY

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: 9/7/22

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Blaine Rose

Address: 1050X 747832-Corona

I represent: NY 11308 CEED-ANointed Faith

Address: SWB

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