



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS  
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS  
MARCH 15, 2023**

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Good afternoon Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. I am Kazimir Vilenchik, Acting Commissioner for the New York City Department of Buildings (“the Department”). I am joined today by Sharon Neill, our Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration, Nadya Stevens, our Chief of Staff, and Guillermo Patino, our Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs. We are pleased to be here to discuss the Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget and the Department’s priorities for the upcoming year.

Construction and real estate are the backbone of New York City, a built environment unlike any other. As the primary regulator of these vital industries, the Department helps facilitate the creation of new residential and commercial space for our growing City, all while promoting safety on tens of thousands of active construction sites and at the City’s nearly 1.1 million existing buildings. Through its work, the Department strives to strike the right balance between compliant development and safety. To further its mission, the Department, with approximately 1,600 dedicated public servants, enforces the City’s Construction Codes, the Zoning Resolution, and the New York State Multiple Dwelling Law, to protect those who live, work, or visit the City.

The Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget allocates approximately \$188 million in expense funds to the Department. Of this funding, approximately \$155 million is for Personal Services, which supports 1,833 budgeted positions, and nearly \$33 million is for Other Than Personal Services, which primarily supports contractual services, equipment, and supplies. This funding is critical to supporting the Department’s mission and priorities. The Department continues to make tremendous progress in key areas, including to facilitate compliant development in an efficient manner, to improve safety at construction sites, and to ensure building owners implement

aggressive emissions reductions and energy conservation measures, all while continuing to improve the services we offer to our customers and members of the public.

In Fiscal Year 2022, the last full fiscal year, approximately 150,000 construction jobs were filed with the Department, and we issued nearly 164,000 initial and renewal construction permits combined. This represents an uptick from the previous fiscal year, which indicates that construction activity is picking up as the construction industry recovers from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which included a pause on non-essential construction. So far, this fiscal year, we are already seeing an uptick over the construction jobs filed and permitted last year, which indicates that the industry is hard at work.

The number of construction jobs filed online in DOB NOW continues to grow year over year as we continue our shift from the Buildings Information System, a three-decades-old mainframe system. The majority of construction jobs are currently being filed in DOB NOW. Earlier this month, the Department took steps to further phase-in DOB NOW by requiring full demolition jobs to be filed in DOB NOW. When fully implemented, DOB NOW will allow our customers to conduct all of their business with the Department online, which will lead to greater efficiency and more transparency by allowing building owners, business owners, design professionals and contractors to determine exactly where a construction project is in the approval process.

Despite recent increases in construction activity, we continue to review plans for new buildings, major renovations, and minor renovations expeditiously. Last year, we completed initial plan reviews for new buildings in eight days, which is an improvement over nine days the previous year. The time it took the Department to review applications involving major renovations was six days, which is also an improvement over nine days the previous year. Applications involving minor alterations continue to be reviewed within two days. We are on track to maintain and improve upon these strong service levels this year. Our goal is to continue to promptly complete our initial plan reviews and to ensure that customers know what to expect when their plans are being reviewed by continuing to train our plan examiners to ensure that plan review is efficient and consistent.

We have also launched new programs to create greater efficiencies for certain projects, including larger construction projects and those pursued by small businesses. We have launched our Major Project Development Program, which provides larger construction projects with dedicated resources at the Department. The goal of this program is to engage with larger construction projects even before they begin their project to review the project scope and to work together to find the best path forward. The Department is continuing this hands-on approach to help prevent delays on these larger construction sites, with the goal of keeping the industry working on safe and code compliant development projects. We also recognize that businesses may face hurdles when embarking on a construction project. As such, we recently launched a Small Business Support Team, which provides businesses with dedicated resources at the Department, who they can rely on even before they start a construction project or at any time during the process if they have any questions or face any hurdles. This innovative program eliminates any construction-related uncertainties a business may face as they operate their business or work towards opening their business.

The wait time between a construction inspection request and an inspection, which occurs after a construction project is completed by a contractor, also continues to be short. Development inspections are being completed within three days of a request in most instances, which includes inspections involving general construction, electrical work, and plumbing work. This progress on development inspection service levels can be attributed to the efficiencies gained from DOB NOW, which allows for all types of development inspections to be scheduled online. This makes it easier for our customers to schedule inspection appointments and offers more precise inspection scheduling.

To help our customers understand what to expect when starting a construction project, we have launched a Customer Service Dashboard, which we continue to improve upon. This online tool allows our customers to view a variety of metrics that are updated regularly, including the average wait times for plan review by job type, the number of appointments to plan approval, and the time it takes the Department to complete inspection requests.

We also continue to respond to complaints from members of the public expeditiously. We are responding to the most serious complaints, Priority “A” complaints, which are those complaints that relate to conditions that may present an immediate threat to the public, within hours. We are responding to Priority “B” complaints, which capture violating conditions that if occurring, while serious, do not present an immediate threat to the public, within ten days. As a result of responding to these complaints, and our proactive inspections concerning construction safety, we issued nearly 67,000 OATH summonses last fiscal year.

To ensure that safety regulations are being complied with at construction sites, the Department continues to conduct proactive, unannounced inspections of large construction sites. Since these inspections began in late 2018, the Department has conducted over 95,000 proactive inspections at nearly 38,000 unique construction sites. During these inspections, we ensure that workers and supervisors have received the construction safety training they need to work on such sites. While the Department will continue to conduct proactive inspections at sites that pose the greatest safety risk, we recognize that incidents can occur at sites of any size. As such, late last year we announced the start of a construction safety campaign that will involve enforcement sweeps and educational outreach to all active construction sites, regardless of size. To date, we have already visited over 4,000 sites to look for unsafe conditions and to distribute multilingual educational materials to construction workers about avoiding common work site hazards.

The Department is also prepared to fulfill its obligation to address greenhouse gas emissions coming from buildings. We are well positioned, with a dedicated team of energy and sustainability experts, to support the City’s goal of achieving carbon neutrality. In addition to enforcing the Energy Code, enforcing existing laws that require certain buildings to report their energy and water use and to perform retro-commissioning, we are also implementing the Climate Mobilization Act. The Climate Mobilization Act requires all new buildings and existing buildings undergoing certain major roof renovations to install a solar photovoltaic system, a green roof system, or a combination of the two, and regulates greenhouse gas emissions at large buildings starting next year. At the end of last year, the Department released the Local Law 97 of 2019 Advisory Board report, which includes a collection of recommendations for the City to consider regarding the implementation of Local Law 97. We also finalized the first comprehensive set of rules that support the

implementation of this groundbreaking law and plan on issuing additional rules throughout this year to ensure building owners have the guidance they need to comply with this law.

While I am proud of the strong service levels we are maintaining and of the ambitious goals we are pursuing, I understand that more can be done to better serve New Yorkers. As such, we are partnering with the industry to craft recommendations for structural improvements at the Department. Late last year, the Department launched the Adams Commission, which convened stakeholders from labor, industry, the nonprofit sector, and city government to produce recommendations for improving the work of the Department. The Department is in the process of finalizing these recommendations and expects to share them with the City Council in the coming weeks. Further, we look forward to your support to implement any recommendations that might require changes to the law.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. We look forward to partnering with you to improve the work of the Department for the benefit of all New Yorkers.

We welcome any questions you may have.



**Testimony of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development  
to the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings**

**FY2024 Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**March 15, 2023**

Good morning, Chairwoman Pierina Sanchez and members of the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings. I am Adolfo Carrión Jr., Commissioner of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD). I am joined by members of our agency's senior leadership team.

Last year, when I testified before the Council on the agency's budget, we were finalizing *Housing Our Neighbors: A Blueprint for Housing and Homelessness*. Today, we're nine months into our plan, and our dedicated team has been working diligently and resourcefully to tackle the housing affordability crisis and get New Yorkers into safe, high-quality, and affordable homes. This Administration has made an unprecedented \$23 billion investment in affordable housing, and the preliminary budget funds many of our Blueprint strategies to expand access to affordable housing, advance equity and fair housing, and keep New Yorkers safe in their homes.

I will begin my testimony by providing a brief overview of HPD's fiscal year 2024 proposed budget before describing how the funding will help us meet our mission. I will then be happy to take your questions.

## **FY 2024 Budget Overview**

HPD's preliminary fiscal year 2024 expense budget is **\$1.19 billion**, which includes **\$223 million** in pass-through funding for the New York City Housing Authority. This leaves our agency with an actual expense budget for the coming fiscal year of **\$971 million**.

Roughly 80% (\$789 million) of our agency's \$971 million fiscal year 2024 expense budget comes from federal grants appropriated annually by Congress and can only be used as outlined in federal regulations. Most of this funding is allocated for Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers and other rental assistance programs. The bulk of the remaining federal grants we receive come from the Community Development Block Grant program and HOME Investment Partnerships program, which must be used to support specific objectives related to neighborhood revitalization and housing development. This funding supports the core of HPD's programs and operations.

The balance of our agency's expense budget consists of \$180 million in City funds, and a relatively small amount of state and other grants amounting to \$1.7 million. City funds are used for the administration of our agency and to fill gaps in programs and services that are not eligible for federal reimbursement or require a local matching contribution. This requires us to be creative when designing and implementing new programs and services in order to maximize limited City resources.

HPD's capital budget for fiscal year 2024 is **\$1.65 billion**, of which \$156 million is a pass-through to NYCHA's Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) program, leaving us with a balance of **\$1.49 billion**. Almost 100% of our capital plan is funded by City sources, and the remaining 2% is funded by the federal HOME block grant for affordable housing.

## **Expanding Access to Affordable Housing**

One of our core priorities as an Administration is to expand access to affordable housing to all New Yorkers. We cannot meet the scale of the housing crisis we face without significantly increasing the supply of new housing everywhere in the city. In Mayor Adams' *Get Stuff Built* plan, the Mayor set a moonshot goal to build 500,000 new homes in New York City over the next 10 years and proposed zoning changes through the "City of Yes" plan to help meet this ambitious goal. With your help, we can unlock the potential for tens of thousands of new homes by increasing

the floor area ratio for all types of affordable housing, making commercial conversions easier, allowing more housing types and sizes, and reducing costly parking mandates in favor of housing. The Council is also a critical partner in the land use process, and we rely on your support to deliver much needed housing to all New Yorkers, in every neighborhood, and make New York City a “City of Yes.”

Last fiscal year, of the total number of affordable homes we created and preserved, nearly 10,000 were new construction, the second highest on record for the agency. We remain committed to deepening the affordability of the homes we finance—last fiscal year, 64% of the new homes we subsidized were affordable to those earning up to 50% of Area Median Income, and 95% were for those earning up to 80% of Area Median Income. I want to thank this City Council for being a great partner to HPD so we can continue to ramp up production to meet demand. Despite supply chain challenges and national labor shortages, we are making strides in creating new affordable housing. We hired 218 new employees in 2021; 442 new employees in 2022; and so far this year, we’ve hired 138 new employees to aggressively fill vacancies. We’re also excited about the tentative agreement with DC 37, which would benefit a huge part of our workforce. There’s still more to do, but the team at HPD continues to expand the supply of affordable housing to meet demand.

We also want to be responsive to the immediate housing needs of New Yorkers today. As we committed to in the Housing Blueprint, we’re working to move New Yorkers into housing more quickly and seamlessly. Last year, we connected more New Yorkers to HPD-financed affordable housing than ever before: 11,000 households, including 2,300 households experiencing homelessness. We’ve eliminated overly burdensome or redundant steps to improve the lease-up process: for example, we now allow Section 8 or CityFHEPS voucher holders to prove their eligibility with their subsidy qualification rather than having to resubmit documents to the City all over again. We’re continuing to work to make every part of the lease-up process as efficient and user-friendly as possible.

### **Advancing Equity and Fair Housing**

Ultimately, our efforts to reduce administrative burden are not just about efficiency. This work is all about advancing equity and fair housing for all, and the City has taken several actions

in recent years to advance fair housing as a part of the *Where We Live NYC* plan. This plan was first released in 2020 and was inspired by the 2015 rule issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to guide cities and counties to “affirmatively further” the goals of the federal Fair Housing Act. We recently published our first progress report, which shows over three-quarters of our 81 commitments are either complete or underway, including increasing down payment assistance to break down barriers to homeownership and expanding anti-displacement initiatives citywide.

Our Administration is committed to making the dream of homeownership a reality for more New Yorkers, particularly in lower-income communities and communities of color that have been historically excluded from opportunities to build and maintain wealth. The Mayor has committed \$53 million in City tax levy and Federal HOME funds over FY23- FY27 to expand homeownership initiatives, including our HomeFirst Downpayment Assistance program, which has leveraged more than \$50 million to date to help over 3,000 low-income families purchase their first homes. Additional funding will allow us to serve twice as many first-time homebuyers—about 200 every year. Our other homeowner programs, HomeFix and the Homeowner Help Desk, are also funded to help even more homeowners keep and maintain their homes, a critical service for homeowners at risk of displacement due to rising operating and maintenance costs, foreclosure, scams, and other challenges. These programs also assist many older New Yorkers, who may be more likely to live on a fixed income, to remain in their homes and neighborhoods by providing access to forgivable home repair loans and estate planning services.

In his State of the City address, the Mayor committed to investing in tenant protections, and the preliminary budget includes \$22 million in new funds for a fair housing testing contract and funds to expand our Partners in Preservation program and Anti-harassment Unit.

- New Yorkers who rely on rental assistance are still facing source-of-income discrimination in the housing market today, so HPD will use these new funds to work with partners to design, test, and implement strategies to more effectively identify and root out housing discrimination.
- We are also expanding our Partners in Preservation program into priority areas citywide. Through this program, we work in partnership with community-based organizations, legal services providers, and other government agencies to identify and proactively address

tenant harassment in rent-regulated buildings. The initial pilot reached over 3,000 households, formed 72 tenant associations, and trained more than 350 new tenant leaders. This expansion will allow us to protect even more New Yorkers.

- Finally, we're also adding additional staff to our Anti-Harassment Unit, which identifies buildings where owners harass tenants, conducts inspections, and refers buildings to our Housing Litigation Division. Our Enforcement and Neighborhood Services team works tirelessly to protect tenants and ensure landlords meet their responsibilities, so we are glad to add staff to this important unit.

### **Enforcing Housing Quality and Safety**

As the Council knows, HPD enforces the New York City Housing Maintenance Code on behalf of tenants by responding to 311 complaints from New Yorkers and proactively identifying buildings where there may be more systemic problems. We respond to every complaint while prioritizing immediately hazardous conditions such as lack of heat and hot water as well as fire safety and lead-based paint hazards. Last year, we conducted more than 738,000 inspections and issued more than 731,000 violations. When owners failed to correct emergency violations, we stepped in to enforce emergency repairs in more than 42,000 homes. I'm very grateful to our Housing Inspectors, who are critical to this work, and we continue to build up this team. Thanks to the support of many Council Members, over 400 people attended our most recent job fair for Housing Inspectors. We hired 44 inspectors, who completed training last week and are now ready to go into the field, and we established start dates for another two classes of inspectors. On the neighborhood services side, our mobile outreach team is gearing up for another round of "HPD in Your District" in collaboration with the Council. Please reach out to schedule time for our Outreach Van to visit your district and share housing resources directly to your constituents.

Finally, we have also been hard at work to ensure that homes financed by the City meet our high standards for design and climate resiliency, and that property owners have the resources and support to meet those goals. We recently released new Design Guidelines for Preservation, which ensure that buildings we finance:

- Reduce carbon emissions through strategic building electrification and efficiency measures;

- Are more resilient to flood and heat risks by incorporating requirements like cooling for seniors and resources for tenants in flood-prone areas; and
- Improve indoor air quality by setting standards for ventilation, material safety, mold, and pest control.

The new guidelines will help the City meet its ambitious climate goal of 40% greenhouse gas reduction by 2030, while incorporating best practices for resiliency, health, and safety in existing multifamily buildings.

We will soon be releasing important updates to our Design Guidelines for New Construction projects. I was glad to join Council Member Hudson last month for the signing of Intro 676-A, which requires new homes financed by the City to incorporate universal design. We wholeheartedly agree that our homes must be adaptable to the needs of New Yorkers with disabilities and older New Yorkers to make this a fairer city that works for all.

### **Opportunities to Work Together**

Ultimately, that's what we're all here to do—to ensure New Yorkers can afford to live, work, and thrive in this great city. But we cannot do it alone. We must work in lock step at the local, state, and federal levels to secure more resources to stably and safely house more families and individuals in need.

On the federal front we are facing a fiercely divided Congress, which makes the proposals for additional affordable housing resources in the President's budget unlikely to be enacted this year. With the threat of very real funding cuts from the House of Representatives, it is critical that the Council raise its collective voice to fight for a fully-funded Housing and Urban Development (HUD) budget. At the state level, we are calling on Albany to unlock several tools that will make a real difference in our work to create and preserve safe, affordable housing: regulatory changes to facilitate commercial conversions and legalize basement apartments; reformed tax incentives to help create and preserve affordable housing; an increased floor-area-ratio cap to allow more affordable housing; and long overdue improvements to HPD's loan authorities.

I want to thank the Council for being a critical partner in fighting to get the resources we need and in advancing legislative priorities and reforms. I look forward to continuing to work with

you to bring more high-quality, affordable housing to New Yorkers—and doing so in a way that meets our shared fair housing goals. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. My team and I look forward to your questions.



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

# Jumaane D. Williams

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**STATEMENT OF PUBLIC ADVOCATE JUMAANE D. WILLIAMS  
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND  
BUILDINGS  
MARCH 15, 2023**

Good afternoon,

My name is Jumaane D. Williams, and I am the Public Advocate for the City of New York. I would like to thank Chair Sanchez and the members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings for holding this hearing. My testimony will address housing issues as well building code enforcement as overseen, respectively, by the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (hereinafter “HPD”) and the Department of Buildings (“DOB”).

With a deteriorating housing stock and a worsening affordability crisis, preserving and building new income-targeted affordable housing in the city of New York is now more important than ever. As of February, the city’s homeless population reached a high of 77,000 people, a concerning number that coincides with the loss of thousands of rent-stabilized apartments in the city<sup>1</sup> and loss of thousands of income-targeted affordable units as a whole.

The Mayor's current proposal allocates \$36 million dollars for HPD’s Office of Development, earmarking funds for homeowner assistance programs, supportive housing and emergency rental vouchers. An additional \$660,000 is allocated towards rental subsidy programs, reflecting a critical need to support rent-burdened households. Staffing the departments in charge of these programs is key; a recent report by the Comptroller’s office found that amid high vacancy rates, HPD only met 33% of its targets, the Office of Administration ranking as one of the units of appropriation with the highest vacancy rate across city agencies<sup>2</sup>.

In addition to supporting homeowners and renters, the city must invest in efforts to legalize, regulate and ensure the safety of converted accessory dwelling units (“ADUs”). The conversion of ADUs can help meet the need for housing stock. There are currently an estimated 400,000 people living in basement and cellar dwellings across the five boroughs<sup>3</sup>. In addition to this, the city and state have explored converting empty office buildings into housing as an alternative to building on public land, which proves difficult given the shortage of publicly-owned land. I urge the Council to pass Resolution 503, which calls for the conversion of commercial units to residential units. We have to make sure that affordability is key there, and that those

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<sup>1</sup> New York Times. “*New York City’s Social Services Commissioner Will Resign.*” February 7, 2023. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/07/nyregion/gary-jenkins-resign-nyc-homeless.html>

<sup>2</sup> Office of the NYC Comptroller Brad Lander. “*Understaffed, Underserved: Impact of Staff Vacancies on Agency Performance.*” March 6, 2023. Available at: <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/understaffed-underserved/>

<sup>3</sup> Office of the NYC Comptroller Brad Lander. “*Bringing Basement Apartments Into the Light: Establishing a NYC Basement Board to Provide Basic Rights, Responsibilities, and Protections for Basement Apartment Residents and Owners.*” August 30, 2022, available at: [comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/bringing-basement-apartments-into-the-light/](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/bringing-basement-apartments-into-the-light/)



PUBLIC ADVOCATE FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK

## Jumaane D. Williams

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neighborhoods have what they need to live comfortable lives. The creation of the Affordable Housing from Commercial Conversions (AHCC) tax benefit program would stimulate more funding for conversion projects, funding often cited as a key barrier to conversion efforts. DOB staffing should be increased to move this process forward quickly and create new housing.

Furthermore, with recent legislation seeking to amend building codes, DOB must commit to enforcing code compliance. Code enforcement will not only equip our city's buildings with the means to weather the impact of climate change, as it pertains to new green energy-efficient initiatives, but it will also ensure the lives and safety of New Yorkers as it relates to fire prevention. In this, I commend the administration for allocating additional city funds to reinspecting buildings with existing self-closing door violations.

I will say, as the Chair has mentioned, in both of these agencies there seems to be a high rate of vacancies, and I do agree with trying to find efficiencies where possible in terms of vacancies, but not every vacancy is the same. Vacancies at DOB and HPD are very harmful, particularly if we don't have enough people to inspect housing, for people to go into, or inspect construction sites, where we sadly have seen an uptick in deaths. I'm proud to have worked on [Local Law 196] so it does concern me to see what we can do to prevent those deaths.

Lastly, I would also like to know what is the total revenues received from issuing After Hours Variances ("AHV") for this fiscal year and the previous fiscal years before and during the pandemic. In closing, I would like to know whether the AHV revenues ends up in NYC's general funds or does it remain in the agency.

Thank you.



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## **Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice**

### **To the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings**

### **Regarding The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2024**

Dear Committee Chair Pierina Ana Sanchez and Committee on Housing and Buildings:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice is writing to testify on the need to invest in programs and interventions that protect children from lead poisoning – absent in the Mayor’s The City of New York Preliminary Budget Fiscal Year 2024. Also the current Administration has committed to, “Accelerating projects tied to meeting greenhouse gas reduction targets set by Local Law 97”.<sup>1</sup> The City must hold the Administration accountable by funding the decarbonization of the City’s buildings through The City of New York fiscal year 2024 budget.

### **Eliminating Lead Exposure and Poisoning in New York City**

WE ACT for Environmental Justice, an organization based in Harlem, has been fighting environmental racism at the city, state, and federal levels for more than 30 years. WE ACT led advocacy to pass [Local Law 1](#) (LL1) of 2004 – aimed to eradicate childhood lead poisoning by 2010. Also, alongside New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP), we have passed several new lead bills into law to close loopholes left in LL1. However, there has been a lack of enforcement for this law for over a decade, as found by the Comptroller in a 2019 report.

Lead poisoning is an entirely preventable problem that has long-term [effects](#) on children’s health and well-being and can contribute to what is sometimes called the “[poisoning to prison pipeline](#).” Because both the causes and prevention methods are so well-established, New York City must take urgent steps to completely eliminate childhood lead poisoning as well as adult lead exposure. Lead poisoning is [racial justice issue](#) with [links](#) to [criminalization](#) as well, as alluded to above. Living in substandard housing that exposes young children to lead creates a terrible legacy with high obstacles for children to overcome, but investing in preventative

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/omb/downloads/pdf/sum1-23.pdf>



measures is a [cost savings](#) measure: **Every dollar spent on prevention results in a return of \$17 – \$221.**

We know the primary source of lead poisoning is lead paint in NYC's old housing stock. Old lead paint can crack, chip, and peel and create dust, especially on friction surfaces like doors or windows, or be dispersed through a building from poor construction and renovation practices. Drinking water is another significant pathway of lead exposure. It can make up at least 20% of a person's total exposure to lead, and up to 80% of total exposure for formula-fed babies under 1 year old.

While [Local Law 1 of 2004 \(LL1 of 2004\)](#) has done much to combat lead poisoning, there are still thousands of children found to have high blood lead levels every year. To enforce LL1 of 2004 and the provisions that have been added to city code in the intervening years, the city must fully fund agencies in order to conduct inspections, test dust and paint for lead, remove lead service lines that deliver water,<sup>2</sup> and other necessary functions that address lead concerns of New York City's families. The City's budget must reflect the needs of this unnecessary and long-standing crisis.

The city has already [committed to eliminating lead poisoning](#), so should ensure resources are available to meet the goal by ensuring the following programs are funded and staffed:

- Department of Buildings (DOB)
  - Code enforcement (complaints and lead violations)
  - [Office of Tenant Advocate](#)
- Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
  - [Lead Hazard Reduction and Healthy Homes Program](#) (formerly, Lead Paint Primary Prevention Program)

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) [reported](#) that 67% of children under six years of age with elevated blood levels are from high poverty neighborhoods. Furthermore, Black, Latino, and Asian children represent 82% of all newly identified cases of elevated blood levels in children under age six. It is imperative that this City Council sees this as an environmental health injustice and should make ending lead poisoning and exposure in New York City a top priority. This can be achieved by funding City agencies to administer lead poisoning prevention

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<sup>2</sup> Complete lead pipe removal is, according to EPA, urgently needed to protect the public from lead exposure from drinking water.



and intervention programs and lead service line replacement; funding staff to collect data and enforce current lead laws; and supporting legislation that closes the gaps in existing lead laws.

### **Ensure the equitable implementation of New York City's nation-leading buildings emissions law, Local Law 97 of 2019 (LL97)**

LL97 will reduce the emissions produced by the City's largest buildings 40% by 2030 and 80% by 2050. The City must bolster the law with increased funding for the rollout and expansion of supporting programs such as property assessed clean energy ([PACE](#)) financing options, the [Retrofit Accelerator](#), and green jobs training programs. Additionally, the City should explore the use of alternative compliance mechanisms for buildings that cannot meet the emission cap, such as an [Equitable Buildings Fund](#). This fund would go towards energy efficiency and electrification upgrades to designated affordable housing.

WE ACT supports the Climate Works for All Coalition's (CW4A) call to commit to funding the following:

**Dedicate \$975,000 to fund and staff 10 positions at OBEEP for LL97 compliance and enforcement.** The first major compliance period for LL97 is fast approaching at the beginning of 2024. The Office of Building Energy Emissions Performance (OBEEP) under DOB, which is responsible for "Overseeing implementation of building energy and emissions performance laws and policies for existing buildings, new construction and major renovations"<sup>3</sup> among other tasks, must be fully staffed and adequately funded to ensure that building owners are assisted. OBEEP's responsibilities will only grow past 2024 as building owners will have to be assisted with the numerous reporting requirements and ensuring timely submissions, as well as evaluating the building owner's overall compliance (ex: good faith efforts). For the FY 2022 budget, we demanded 15 additional positions, but only 5 were funded. We estimate that 10 additional positions would require \$975,000 in DOB's budget for OBEEP. Some public sector Energy Auditors have already been hired in accordance with LL97. Others will certainly be needed along with public sector Engineers, Project Managers, and Inspectors. There will be no effective implementation of LL97 without public sector oversight and enforcement.

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<sup>3</sup> Local Laws of the City of New York for the Year 2019, No. 97. [https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/buildings/local\\_laws/ll97of2019.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/buildings/local_laws/ll97of2019.pdf)



**Redirect more funding (~\$6M) from NYC Accelerator to local NYC-based organizations to provide education, outreach, and technical assistance services on LL97 compliance for the first compliance period in 2024.** There needs to be greater transparency on the workings and progress of the NYC Accelerator. It is unclear where and how \$36 million has been spent, on what specific aspect of outreach, and how many buildings with emissions over the cap set for 2024 have been assisted through the NYC Accelerator. With input from local organizations working on the ground, CW4A estimated that there should be a minimum of \$6 million allocated in the FY 2024 budget for local NYC organizations to carry out education and outreach initiatives on LL97 compliance. Local NYC organizations and community groups should be funded to conduct outreach and education initiatives on LL97, as they are the best suited to carry out this work more effectively in their communities. Moreover, the NYC Accelerator is in need of translation services that reflect the multilingual nature of New York City.

**Fund 3-5 staff positions at Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to increase staff capacity dedicated to affordable housing LL97 compliance.** CW4A estimates that 3 new positions at the Office of policy and strategy at HPD would require \$292,500 in HPD’s budget.

**Advocate for state and federal funding for financing LL97-related building upgrades and retrofits.**

Vacancy rates across all city agencies is in a state of crisis. If the City is serious about tackling the climate crisis and improving the health and safety of New Yorkers, there must be a sense of urgency when it comes to staffing. According to the Committee Report, “Staff salaries are increasingly less competitive as a tight labor market pushes private sector salaries higher. DOB must be able to recruit and retain staff who are able to fulfill the agency’s mission to regulate the safe and lawful use of buildings and construction sites”.<sup>4</sup> HPD – responsible for the Lead Hazard Reduction and Healthy Homes Program – has had a higher-than-average vacancy rate when compared to its other City agencies.

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<sup>4</sup> “Report on the Fiscal 2024 Preliminary Plan and the Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report for the Department of Buildings”. <https://legistar.council.nyc.gov/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11739446&GUID=D665DC28-5AF5-451D-B95F-6C3BFBB93122>



**The Committee on Housing and Buildings should hold an oversight hearing focusing on DOB’s progress on implementing (including funding and staffing) LL97. Additionally, this committee should do a deep investigation on funding and staffing all programs related to lead exposure and poisoning prevention during the [upcoming oversight hearing](#) on lead paint lead-based paint hazards.**

We are in the midst of a worsening climate crisis and the City must do everything it can to reduce emissions, decarbonize our buildings, remediate environmental health hazards and more; all with environmental and climate justice as the foundation of this work. This Council has the opportunity to make this budget as climate forward as possible by making bold, necessary investments.

**Lonnie J. Portis**

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## NYCCELP • LEAD ROUNDTABLE



### New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP) Fiscal Year 24 Budget Statement

New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP) is a New York City coalition of organizations that work to eliminate lead poisoning in New York City through a holistic, multi-city agency approach. In 2022 NYCCELP released our [Roadmap to End Lead Poisoning](#) which calls for the policymakers to invest in programs and interventions that protect children from lead poisoning through the City's budget.

We urge the New York City Council to enforce the City's [commitment to eliminating lead poisoning](#) by ensuring resources are available to the following agencies in order to meet that goal:

- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)
- Department of Buildings (DOB)
- Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
- Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
- Department of Education (DOE)
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
- New York Housing Authority (NYCHA)

Lead poisoning is an entirely preventable problem that has long-term [effects](#) on children's health and well-being and can contribute to what is sometimes called the "[poisoning to prison pipeline](#)." Because both the causes and prevention methods are so well-established, New York City must take urgent steps to completely eliminate childhood lead poisoning as well as adult lead exposure. Lead poisoning is [racial justice issue](#) with [links](#) to [criminalization](#) as well, as alluded to above. Living in substandard housing that exposes young children to lead creates a terrible legacy with high obstacles for children to overcome, but investing in preventative measures is a [cost savings](#) measure: **Every dollar spent on prevention results in a return of \$17 – \$221.**

We know the primary source of lead poisoning is lead paint in NYC's old housing stock. Old lead paint can crack, chip, and peel and create dust, especially on friction surfaces like doors or

windows, or be dispersed through a building from poor construction and renovation practices. Drinking water is another significant pathway of lead exposure. It can make up at least 20% of a person's total exposure to lead, and up to 80% of total exposure for formula-fed babies under 1 year old. While [Local Law 1 of 2004 \(LL1 of 2004\)](#) has done much to combat lead poisoning, there are still thousands of children found to have high blood lead levels every year. To enforce LL1 of 2004 and the provisions that have been added to city code in the intervening years, the city must fully fund agencies in order to conduct inspections, test dust and paint for lead, remove lead service lines that deliver water,<sup>1</sup> and other necessary functions that address lead concerns of New York City's families. The City's budget must reflect the needs of this unnecessary and long-standing crisis.

The city has already [committed to eliminating lead poisoning](#), so should ensure resources are available to meet the goal. Multiple separate city agencies have been identified in playing a key role in combating lead poisoning:

- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)
  - [Healthy Homes Program](#)
- Department of Buildings (DOB)
  - Code enforcement (complaints and lead violations)
  - [Office of Tenant Advocate](#)
- Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)
  - [Lead Hazard Reduction and Healthy Homes Program](#) (formerly, Lead Paint Primary Prevention Program)
- Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
  - Water monitoring (lead monitoring)
  - [Lead Service Line Replacement Program](#)
  - [NYC Clean Soil Bank \(CSB\)](#)
- Department of Education (DOE)
  - [Spaces and Facilities Report](#) (Paint Inspections and Water Safety)
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
  - Remediating hazardous lead paint chips that [fall to the streets and sidewalks from elevated train lines](#)
  - Removing lead paint in subway stations and other infrastructure throughout the city
- New York Housing Authority (NYCHA)
  - [Lead-Safe Housing Policy](#) (Lead-Based Paint Abatement and Dust Wipe Sampling)

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<sup>1</sup> Complete lead pipe removal is, according to EPA, urgently needed to protect the public from lead exposure from drinking water.

New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP) Fiscal Year 24 Budget Statement

- [XRF Testing Initiative](#)
- [Team for Enhanced Management Planning and Outreach \(TEMPO\)](#)

Crucial agency work, some of which was outlined in the [LeadFreeNYC Plan](#) (2020 [progress report](#)), needs appropriate funding and staffing to audit reports, update construction codes, inspect high-risk areas, expand testing, remove lead service lines, and other critical work to ensure the eradication of lead poisoning.

**NYCCELP is concerned that sweeping cuts in the budget through the Program to Eliminate the Gap (PEG) could negatively impact the efficacy of lead poisoning prevention policies and programs due to hiring freezes and vacancy reductions across all of the agencies listed above. And recent and future lead laws will lack the funding necessary to properly enforce and to reach the goal of eliminating lead poisoning in New York City.**

The DOHMH [reported](#) that 67% of children under six years of age with elevated blood levels are from high poverty neighborhoods. Furthermore, Black, Latino, and Asian children represent 82% of all newly identified cases of elevated blood levels in children under age six. It is imperative that this City Council sees this as an environmental health injustice and should make ending lead poisoning and exposure in New York City a top priority. This can be achieved by funding City agencies to administer lead poisoning prevention and intervention programs and lead service line replacement; funding staff to collect data and enforce current lead laws; and supporting legislation that closes the gaps in existing lead laws.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the importance of including lead poisoning prevention in the Fiscal Year 24 budget. The New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning Lead Roundtable is always open to having more detailed conversation on this issue.

Sincerely,

New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP)

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### List of New York City Lead Laws and Bills

Since LL1 of 2004, there have been additional lead laws implemented:

- [Local Law 27 \(2020\)](#) – Soil lead testing in certain department of parks and recreation capital projects.
- [Local Law 28 \(2020\)](#) – Permanent removal of lead-based paint.
- [Local Law 29 \(2020\)](#) – Lead poisoning prevention and control in certain dwellings.
- [Local Law 30 \(2020\)](#) – Investigations by the department of health and mental hygiene in connection with reports of pregnant persons with elevated blood lead levels.
- [Local Law 31 \(2020\)](#) – Investigations of lead-based paint hazards by independent and certified inspectors, and contractor certifications for construction activities that disturb lead-based paint.
- [Local Law 39 \(2021\)](#) – Investigations by the department of health and mental hygiene in connection with lead poisoning incidents.
- [Local Law 40 \(2021\)](#) – Improving tenant notification, interagency cooperation, conducting inspections and issuing stop work orders, in connection with lead paint and construction work.

There are currently five bills that aim to close remaining loopholes in existing lead laws. When passed, these bills will also require funding for continued enforcement:

- [Int 0006-2022](#) – Permanent removal of lead-based paint on friction surfaces in child-occupied dwellings.
- [Int 0005-2022](#) – Records of lead-based paint investigations.
- [Int 0193-2022](#) – Lead-based paint hazards in common areas of dwellings.
- [Int 0200-2022](#) – Quarterly reporting on objections to orders for the abatement or remediation of lead conditions.
- [Int 0750-2022](#) – Proactive identification and inspection of dwellings where children are at risk of lead poisoning.



**NYSFAH Testimony before the Committee on Housing and Buildings  
2022-2023 New York City Budget  
Housing Priorities and Funding  
15 March 2023**

Thank you, Chair Sanchez and other members of the Housing and Buildings Committee for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing regarding the 2023-24 New York City budget.

NYSFAH is the trade association for New York's affordable housing industry statewide. Its 400 members include for-profit and nonprofit developers, lenders, investors, attorneys, architects and others active in the financing, construction, and operation of affordable housing. Together, NYSFAH's members are responsible for the vast majority of the housing built across the City and State that uses federal, state and local subsidies and incentives. Founded in 1998, NYSFAH is the nation's largest affordable housing trade group.

**Capital Budget**

NYSFAH strongly supports continued, robust levels of City housing subsidy in order to continue housing affordable production at current levels. In fact, it will be necessary to appropriate even larger amounts of housing capital in order to maintain the current rate of housing production. This is because rapidly increasing interest rates, construction costs, and maintenance costs mean that HPD has to spend more money to get the same housing. Furthermore, developing deeply affordable housing, a major priority of the Council, requires exceptionally robust subsidy due to the lower rents associated with such units. We encourage the Council to grow the HPD capital budget to keep the affordable pipeline flowing while achieving deeper levels of affordability.

**Staffing**

However, capital funding is only part of the story. HPD lost 37 positions in the latest PEG and it currently has more than 400 vacant positions. This staffing crisis has meant that the slowed the affordable housing development pipeline, with 45% less production year on year according to the most recent Mayor's Management Report. Part of the reason for this is inadequate pay, as many HPD employees can double their pay in the private sector. To the City's credit, OMB now allows HPD to hire above the minimum salary for certain critical positions. This flexibility should be extended to all positions at HPD. Additionally, many private employers are offering increased flexibility, meaning that a municipal agency that restricts remote work cannot compete. Even the federal government is now allowing civil servants to work remotely. We have seen news reports that the City will begin to allow hybrid work schedules – we look forward to the implementation of this policy in HPD.

## **Costs**

As costs increase on affordable housing production, maintenance, and operation, the housing becomes less affordable. While some costs result from state law, or the market for building supplies, a huge source of costs lies in building, construction, and maintenance codes, which are directly controlled by the Council.

For example, Local Law 11, and the City's implementation of it, requires destructive façade probes every five years. Because the affordable buildings are not underwritten for this requirement, sidewalk sheds end up staying for years until the next capital cycle.

Similarly, NYC building and construction code has resulted in construction costs 50% higher than outside the City. While each individual bill improves safety or accomplishes another laudable public goal, the overall effect is much less affordable housing overall, smaller apartments, and a larger carbon footprint.

Additionally, every bill that imposes a new requirement on HPD removes their focus from their core mission of the development and preservation of affordable housing. With finite funds and personnel, any new mandate “robs Peter to pay Paul.” NYC has the largest homeless population of any city in the nation, and one of the highest per capita homelessness rates as well. We therefore ask that you carefully consider each proposed local law and evaluate its benefit given the costs it may impose on HPD and affordable housing construction and operation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and for your consideration of our budget requests. I welcome any questions or comments you may have.

**Contact: Jolie Milstein, NYSFAH President and CEO, at [jmilstein@nysafah.org](mailto:jmilstein@nysafah.org) and (646) 473-1208.**



**March 15, 2023**

## **New York City Environmental Justice Alliance Testimony on the Preliminary Budget to NYC Council Committee on Housing and Buildings**

Good afternoon Chair Sanchez and members of the council, my name is Shравanthi Kanekal and I am the Resiliency Planner at the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance (NYC-EJA). Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a non-profit citywide membership network linking 11 grassroots organizations from low-income neighborhoods and communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice.

The proposed investments towards climate and resiliency in the FY 2024 preliminary budget are concerning to say the least. The climate crisis is here, and this is no time to avoid necessary investments in climate policy and programs. The City must do everything it can to reduce emissions and prioritize climate action, including but not limited to, expanding our renewable energy generation capacity, decarbonizing our buildings, being better prepared for extreme weather events, and protecting EJ communities, who are first and worst hit by climate disasters. This year's budget must be climate forward with essential investments towards climate resiliency, mitigation and adaptation.

Our priority this year is to ensure the City work with key agencies to advance a climate agenda to invest directly in our communities through the City budget. In order to deliver climate action and environmental justice, DOB must work effectively with other key agencies such as DEP, HPD, DCAS and others. Coming out of last session, the Climate Works For All coalition (CW4A) asked for key investments directed towards the full and equitable implementation of Local Law 97 (LL97). This year we are building on those demands.

We call on the administration to commit to fund the following:

- **Dedicate \$975,000 to fund and staff 10 positions at OBEEP for LL97 compliance and enforcement**
  - The first major compliance period for Local Law 97 is fast approaching in less than 10 months. The Office of Building Energy Emissions Performance (OBEEP) under DOB, which is responsible for "Overseeing implementation of building energy and emissions performance laws and policies for existing buildings, new construction and major renovations"<sup>1</sup> among other tasks, must be adequately

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<sup>1</sup> Local Laws of the City of New York for the Year 2019, No. 97.  
[https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/buildings/local\\_laws/ll97of2019.pdf](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/buildings/local_laws/ll97of2019.pdf)

staffed and adequately funded to ensure that building owners are assisted in order to comply with LL97. OBEEP's responsibilities will only grow past 2024 as building owners will have to be assisted with the numerous reporting requirements and ensuring timely submissions, as well as evaluating the building owner's overall compliance (ex: good faith efforts). For the FY 2022 budget, CW4A demanded 15 additional positions, but only 5 were funded. We estimate that 10 additional positions would require \$975,000 in DOB's budget for OBEEP.

- While some public sector Energy Auditors have already been hired in accordance with LL97, others will certainly be needed along with public sector Engineers, Project Managers, and Inspectors. There will be no effective implementation of LL97 without public sector oversight and enforcement.
- **Redirect more funding (~\$6M) from NYC Accelerator to local NYC-based organizations to provide education, outreach, and technical assistance services on LL97 compliance for the first compliance period in 2024**
  - There needs to be greater transparency on the workings and progress of the NYC Accelerator. It is unclear where and how \$36 million has been spent, on what specific aspect of outreach, and how many buildings with emissions over the cap set for 2024 have been assisted through the NYC Accelerator.
  - With input from local organizations working on the ground, CW4A estimated that there should be a minimum of \$6 million allocated in the FY 2024 budget for local NYC organizations to carry out education, outreach, and technical assistance services on LL97 compliance, as they are the best suited to carry out this work effectively in their communities.
- **Fund 3-5 staff positions at Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to increase staff capacity dedicated to affordable housing LL97 compliance**
  - Affordable housing is a key piece of LL97 and should not be left behind when it comes to being sufficiently supported in order to comply. HPD should be adequately staffed to ensure that affordable housing buildings are being assisted. We estimate that 3 new positions at the Office of policy and strategy at HPD would require \$292,500 in HPD's budget.
- **Establishing a Green Affordable Housing Fund for building owners to pay into, that would deliver additional support for energy efficiency upgrades in affordable housing in order to comply with LL97.**

New York City needs to genuinely embark on a rapid and funded effort to achieve a just transition to a decarbonized and renewable energy economy. False solutions such as carbon capture technology should not be a compliance pathway for LL97. This technology is dangerous, unregulated and threatens the intent of LL97. We must ensure that NYC adopts well-demonstrated approaches that avoid fossil fuel combustion as a means to decarbonize and make our city more sustainable.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy  
New York League of Conservation Voters  
City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings  
FY24 Preliminary Budget Hearing  
March 15, 2023**

Good afternoon, my name is Alia Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization representing over 30,000 members in New York City. Thank you, Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee on Housings and Buildings for the opportunity to comment.

NYLCV urges the Council to work with the Mayoral Administration to provide robust funding for the NYC Department of Buildings' (DOB) Local Law 97 (LL97) implementation as well as DOB's and the NYC Department of Housing Preservation & Development's (HPD) efforts to end lead poisoning.

**Local Law 97 Implementation**

In New York City, [buildings](#) account for over 70% of the City's greenhouse gas emissions. This is one of the reasons why the City Council passed and NYLCV strongly supported Local Law 97 in 2019—to directly combat this source of climate change and reduce harmful pollutants that disproportionately impact low income and communities of color.

NYLCV urges the Administration and City Council to ensure the speedy, effective, and equitable implementation of LL97. As we near the first deadline for LL97 implementation, the City must provide adequate funding for DOB hiring and staffing. With a vacancy rate of 22.7%, DOB is the largest agency with a greater-than 20% vacancy rate according to the [Comptroller's Title Vacant report](#). DOB's Office of Building Energy and Emissions Performance (OBEEP) must be prioritized when funding decisions are made in order to handle the full scope of work needed to implement this law effectively and efficiently.

We also recommend increased funding to support the outreach and education needed for this transition. This should include funding for translating materials into multiple languages. Additionally, to help building owners comply with the new regulations without burdening low- and middle-income owners and tenants, the City should expand financing programs such as property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing options. The City should also explore the use of LL97 alternative compliance mechanisms such as an Equitable Building Fund for buildings

that cannot meet the emission cap, which would go towards energy efficiency and electrification upgrades to designated affordable housing.

As we implement LL97, the City must also increase funding for an equitable, green workforce training and development program—with an emphasis on investment in frontline communities. This law has the potential to create more than [140,000 jobs by 2030 in NYC](#). These jobs should be well-paying, union jobs, which will help reduce unemployment and raise wages. However, unless there is significant expansion of workforce training and development programs, many workers will not have the skills and experience needed. This means there should be increased access to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs across schools and certification programs, as well as increased investments in union-linked pre-apprenticeships, apprenticeships, and direct-entry programs. These programs would also expand access to workers traditionally underrepresented or systematically excluded from this industry.

Local Law 97 is a critical step towards reducing carbon emissions and combating climate change, and we cannot afford any missteps or delays.

### **Eliminating Lead Poisoning**

As a member of the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP), NYLCV stands with advocates calling for the elimination of lead poisoning in NYC through a holistic multi-agency approach. We must eliminate all sources of lead exposures in the City because no level of lead exposure is safe, as even small amounts can cause neurological damage and other health problems especially in children. Furthermore, lead exposure disproportionately affects children in low-income and communities of color, and it will continue to do so until we take the necessary steps to ensure it ends. Despite passing Local Law 1 of 2004—the most ambitious lead poisoning prevention law in the county with the stated goal of ending childhood lead poisoning by 2010—lead poisoning is still a major concern.

The City must invest in programs and interventions that will especially protect children from lead poisoning. We know the primary source of lead poisoning is lead paint in NYC's old housing stock. As advocated by NYCCELP, to enforce LL1 of 2004 and the provisions that have been added to city code in the intervening years, the City must fully fund agencies in order to conduct inspections, test dust and paint for lead, remove lead service lines that deliver water, and other necessary functions that address lead concerns of New York City's families. The City's budget must reflect the needs of this unnecessary and long-standing crisis.

This includes measures funding proactive inspections and notification for tenants exposed to lead hazards. The City must ensure sufficient funding goes towards DOB's code enforcement and Office of Tenant Advocate. Additionally, HPD needs sufficient funding for its Lead Hazard Reduction and Healthy Homes Program. Both HPD and DOB, which have vacancy rates of 18.2% and 22.7% as of December 2022, respectively, need robust funding to prioritize hiring and staffing for these programs.

NYLCV urges the Council to provide robust funding for DOB and HPD hiring and staffing to fully implement LL97 and work to end lead poisoning. Without this, the City cannot adequately address existing public health inequities and future climate threats.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



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## **Testimony Before the New York City Council Housing and Buildings Committee Regarding Priorities for the New York City Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget**

March 14, 2023

Thank you to Committee Chair Pierina Sanchez and members of the Housing and Buildings Committee for the opportunity to testify on the housing-related proposals in the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget.

### **About the Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development (ANHD)**

ANHD is one of the City's lead policy, advocacy, technical assistance, and capacity-building organizations. We maintain a membership of 80+ neighborhood-based and city-wide nonprofit organizations that have affordable housing and/or equitable economic development as a central component of their mission. We are an essential citywide voice, bridging the power and impact of our member groups to build community power and ensure the right to affordable housing and thriving, equitable neighborhoods for all New Yorkers. We value justice, equity and opportunity, and we believe in the importance of movement building that centers marginalized communities in our work. We believe housing justice is economic justice is racial justice.

ANHD's work directly supports the needs of our members who develop, manage, and organize to preserve affordable housing, and who fight to bring equity into low-wealth communities in New York City—especially communities of color. Our groups rely on us for technical assistance and capacity-building resources that allow them to maximize their resources, skills and impact. The support services, research, analysis, public education and coalition building we do helps to identify patterns of local neighborhood experiences and uplift citywide priorities and needs. Our work translates into the capacity to win new programs, policies and systems that ensure the creation and preservation of deeply and permanently affordable housing, and economic justice.

### **Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative**

New York City's housing availability and affordability crisis has continued to grow, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, job and economic instability, and rampant inflation. A majority of NYC households are rent burdened, half of those with extreme rent burden, a figure growing over the last several years, while the homeless population grew by 68% in the last year.

As NYC neighborhoods face persistent housing stresses that are exacerbated for communities of color, low- and moderate-income communities, and immigrant communities, this moment demands increased support and services to do what is necessary.



We seek the Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative to be funded at \$4.95 million in the FY 24 budget, advancing the program city-wide to serve unique housing challenges in all 51 districts, and ensuring a needed cost of living increase for the front-line workers who have been working side-by-side with marginalized tenants fighting unfair evictions and offering direct aid and support to other NYC residents at risk of displacement from their home.

The fifteen-plus years of funding to local groups under this initiative is determined by City Council Members who help select the CBOs most able to help address housing issues plaguing their neighborhoods and should be distributed equitably across neighborhoods and districts. This investment is strengthened by additionally providing support to the Association for Neighborhood & Housing Development, Inc. (ANHD), which offers individual and group technical assistance and capacity-building support to the CBOs, as well as general contract management support. ANHD's expertise in this housing initiative ensures funded CBOs have direct access to current trends and solutions for affordable housing, and information that can increase effectiveness at the local level.

**\$4.95 million for the Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative in FY 24 will fund ANHD and 45+ CBOs to protect low-income, BIPOC, and immigrant tenants and homeowners across New York City. Collaboratively, we will fight evictions and displacement, and protect tenants – especially on safety issues like fire prevention and heating, support code enforcement, offer housing court assistance, support apartment repossession, and provide other housing-related public education.** The Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative, funded at \$4.95 million in FY 24, will ensure:

- *Each New York City Council Member with the opportunity to fund one or more tenant-focused non-profit housing providers in their council district to address their unique tenant support housing needs.*
  - *45+ tenant support housing providers can employ front-line workers to work directly with tenants in apartments and small homes. These staff will ensure:*
  - *17,600+ tenants and homeowners engage in culturally competent training, meetings, and events.*
  - *18,900+ tenants and homeowners receive counseling support services in their community.*
  - *5,400+ tenants and homeowners have referrals to and connections with additional support services.*
  - *450+ tenant associations receive support.*
- *ANHD coordinates and supports the 45+ funded CBOs with individual technical assistance and capacity-building support, assistance in using data to support their work, related group-based training and convenings that will help them improve their tenant protection skills and strategic housing research capacity.*
- The creation of an [AMI Cheat Sheet](#) to provide information on how Area Median Income relates to New York City housing need.

ANHD will maintain the Displacement Alert Project, supporting advocates in better targeting their outreach, engagement, and support. Continued funding of DAP will allow us to create a smoother mobile and web experience for users, increase capacity for additional trainings, continue to update political boundaries to ensure accuracy given new maps, and continue to produce original analyses and visualizations of displacement threats in our City.

### **Agency Staffing**

As our City continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is absolutely essential that we deepen our commitment to investing in affordable and supportive housing. The past few years have made abundantly clear the critical role that safe, stable housing plays in our ability to withstand crises, whether related to public health or to climate change. When it comes to housing, now is not the time for austerity.

ANHD continues to be deeply concerned about ongoing staffing shortages at HPD and other housing-related agencies, including DHS, HRA and DOB. This understaffing is affecting affordable housing projects and services. Staffing shortages have slowed the responsiveness and effectiveness of critical programs. Lack of staffing at HRA is causing slow-downs in processing one-shot deals, CityFHEPS vouchers, and other critical resources to prevent homelessness or reduce homelessness. Insufficient inspectors on staff at HPD and DOB means tenants are continuing to suffer from critical health and safety issues in their homes. Insufficient staffing at the NYC Human Rights Commission means illegal discrimination due to source of income, race, and other criteria is rampant, which further compounds the challenges vulnerable New Yorkers - especially those with vouchers - face in trying to find safe, permanent, affordable housing.

In addition, HPD's understaffing means that the City is producing and preserving less affordable housing, at a time when our housing and homelessness crises continue to get worse.

Both new construction and preservation are vital to the city's affordable housing goals. It is therefore distressing that HPD is falling short in both of these areas. Lack of staffing to engage with affordable housing developers, process financing, and move deals through the pipeline means thousands of units of housing did not receive the HPD subsidy needed to make repairs or refinance and preserve housing, regardless of whether the money was there. Thousands of tenants are living in buildings with serious capital repair needs, and thousands more new yorkers will remain homeless or in overcrowded or unsafe conditions due to delays in the construction of new affordable housing. As of now, it appears likely the agency will once again fall short on housing production this fiscal year, which ends in June.

### **Housing Capital Funding**

The loss of staffing has meant that HPD did not spend all of its capital budget last year – leaving \$600 million unspent as housing production decreased. While understaffing remains, housing costs are growing. Construction costs increased 25 percent over the past two years and interest



rates are the highest they've been in 20 years. We are concerned that HPD will not have sufficient capital funding, even with reduced staff, to cover rapidly growing costs. The city has moved the unspent money from last year, as well as the bulk of the \$5 billion in new funding, far into the future – five years from now. The city should move some of that funding in the current years to meet rising costs.

Countless studies have shown that it is much more costly to rely on police and emergency rooms to address homelessness rather than directly providing housing to those who need it. Now more than ever, we need to invest in staffing and capital that facilitate the creation and preservation of housing that will create and maintain jobs, improve health and economic outcomes, and decrease overall costs to our city.

### **NYCHA Capital Funding**

Public housing remains New York City's most important source of deeply and permanently affordable housing. Ongoing, chronically poor housing conditions impact residents' employment, children's schooling, and increase healthcare needs. NYCHA residents, like all New Yorkers, are entitled to safe and healthy homes. New York City must prioritize NYCHA residents as core members of our communities and NYCHA housing as a key piece of the City's affordable housing plan.

To that end, we ask that the City contribute \$2 billion this year towards our public housing stock's capital needs.

Currently, NYCHA is limited to converting 25,000 units to the Preservation Trust that was created by the State Legislature last session. NYCHA has also committed to converting 62,000 units to private management through the PACT program. This leaves approximately 130,000 units, many of which have serious capital repair needs – including issues that cause serious harm to the health and safety of NYCHA residents (lack of heat/hot water, leaking and flooding, mold, lead remediation, elevator outages, etc). The city must do its part to take responsibility for the preservation of these NYCHA buildings for both current tenants and for the long term future of our city.

### **Fully Funding Right to Counsel**

Following the expiration of COVID eviction protections, evictions have accelerated at alarming speeds: over 82,000 residential evictions were filed in New York City between March 23, 2020 and January 15, 2022 and over 110,000 evictions have been filed since then.<sup>1</sup> These evictions are highly racialized: ANHD found that throughout the pandemic, landlords have filed evictions over twice as often in majority-people of color zip codes versus majority-white zip codes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Data from the New York State Office of Court Administration (OCA) [via the Housing Data Coalition](#) in collaboration with the [Right to Counsel Coalition](#).

<sup>2</sup><https://anhd.org/report/new-yorks-pandemic-rent-crisis>



Access to an attorney monumentally increases a tenant's ability to stay in their home.<sup>3</sup> However, out of all eviction cases that have been filed in New York City since eviction protections ended on January 15, 2022, only 47% of tenants who appeared in court have received representation in their case, equating to over 17,000 households who are facing eviction in court alone. In contrast, it has been estimated that 82% of households facing eviction should be eligible for Right to Counsel.<sup>4</sup> This is happening because too many cases are moving too quickly throughout the courts, faster than the network of legal services providers can handle. Tenant attorneys are facing the impossible choice of either turning tenants away, meaning that tenant may unnecessarily lose their home, or taking on so much work that they simply cannot do all of it with integrity. As a result, they are experiencing intense burnout, meaning that attorneys are leaving their organizations in droves, only exacerbating the problem.

It is a lack of support and resources for representation and organizing that undermines the efficacy of our New York City Right to Counsel. New York City must respond to the current crisis of tenants' lack of access to Right to Counsel by **increasing the budget for RTC by at least \$70 million** and ensuring that future funding matches the need. Additionally, HRA must release its Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Proposals for \$3.57 million to implement Local Law 53.

### **Emergency Rental Assistance for NYCHA and Non-Profit Affordable Housing Providers**

The enormous mismatch between the need for rent relief statewide and available funds has been an ongoing and enormous challenge for New York. New York State has been able to move \$2.8 billion to renters since Emergency Rental Assistance funds were first available, which is a remarkable achievement.

At the same time, the economic impact of the pandemic has not disappeared. An estimated 593,000 New York State households remain behind on rent, 80% of them people of color and 77% of them low income.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, the fact that income-restricted housing was deprioritized in rental assistance has led to the unsurprising result that non-profit, mission-driven developers have been left in the lurch and are not able to pay vendors, to contribute to capital reserves, to renovate units for re-rental, or even to pay their mortgages. By deprioritizing affordable and public housing for relief, we have further hamstrung the ability of NYCHA to safely house its residents. Affordable, supportive, and public housing are the providers of the most deeply affordable housing in our City, and if they cannot operate their buildings, New York City's lowest income tenants will take the hit and face eviction. We cannot let that happen. **The City must collaborate with the Federal and State governments to fill the gap.** We must ensure our non-profit affordable and public housing providers can fulfill their mission.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ\\_UA\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2021.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hra/downloads/pdf/services/civiljustice/OCJ_UA_Annual_Report_2021.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>

<https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/4408380/PDF/Cost-Benefit-Impact-Studies/SRR%20Report%20-%20Eviction%20Right%20to%20Counsel%20%203%2016%2016.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://nationalequityatlas.org/rent-debt>



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### **Reforming the Tax Lien**

While authorization for the tax lien sale expired in 2022, New York City needs to continue to improve its municipal debt collection strategies in order to increase equity and allow more senior, disabled, and other vulnerable homeowners to stay in their homes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. If you have any questions or for more information, please contact Stephanie Barreto-Lastra at [stephanie.bl@anhd.org](mailto:stephanie.bl@anhd.org).

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The Center for Justice Innovation is a non-profit organization that seeks to transform the policies and practices of the justice system to make it fair, effective, and humane. The Center operates the following sites throughout New York City.

■ Family     
 ■ Criminal     
 ■ Community Development     
 ■ Civil/Housing

Click on the name of any program to learn more.

**STATEN ISLAND**

- 1. Staten Island Justice Center

**MANHATTAN**

- 2. Harlem Community Justice Center
- 3. Headquarters
- 4. Manhattan Justice Opportunities
- 5. Midtown Community Court

**MULTI-BOROUGH**

- 6. Legal Hand (Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens)

**BRONX**

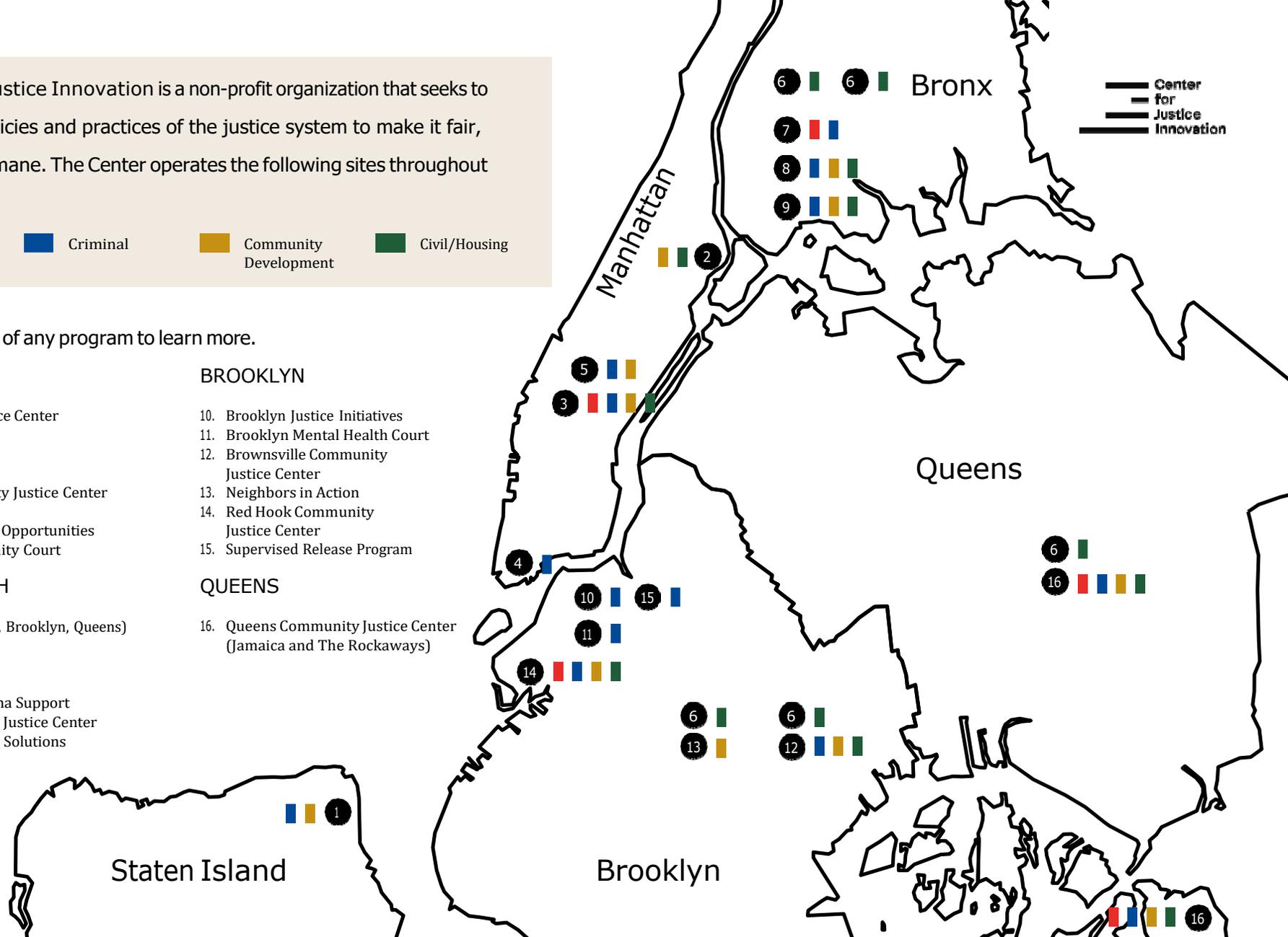
- 7. Bronx Child Trauma Support
- 8. Bronx Community Justice Center
- 9. Bronx Community Solutions

**BROOKLYN**

- 10. Brooklyn Justice Initiatives
- 11. Brooklyn Mental Health Court
- 12. Brownsville Community Justice Center
- 13. Neighbors in Action
- 14. Red Hook Community Justice Center
- 15. Supervised Release Program

**QUEENS**

- 16. Queens Community Justice Center (Jamaica and The Rockaways)



**Citywide**

- Access to Justice
- Neighborhood Safety Initiatives
- RISE Project
- Alternatives to Incarceration
- Parent Support Program
- Strong Starts Court Initiative
- Driver Accountability Program
- Project Reset
- Youth Action Institute
- Gender and Family Justice
- Restorative Justice Practices
- Youth Impact

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Courtney Bryan. Executive Director

**Center for Justice Innovation  
New York City Council  
Committee on Housing and Buildings – Preliminary Budget Hearing  
March 15, 2023**

Since its inception, the Center for Justice Innovation (formerly the Center for Court Innovation), referred to as ‘the Center’ throughout these remarks, has supported the vision embraced by Council of a fair, effective, and humane justice system and public safety built through sustainable, community-driven solutions that cultivate vibrant neighborhoods. The Center’s longstanding partnership with Council over the past 25 years has helped bring this vision to life through evidence-based and racially-just programming that spans the justice continuum.

Our firsthand experience operating direct service programs and conducting original research uniquely positions us to offer insights that Council can look to as it considers the development of initiatives that respond to needs of all New Yorkers. In addition to our annual renewal awards, the Center asks for Council support in achieving the following goals in FY24:

- Return to prior funding levels for Supervised Release Program, considering recent cuts to funding for existing contracts.
- A \$250,000 increase to the Innovative Core Funding partnership between the Council and the Center, to represent the first increase of this award in over a decade.
- \$550,000 to expand access to comprehensive support and prevent housing instability.

In each instance, our aim is to provide a meaningful and proportionate response, treat all people under our care with dignity and respect, prioritize public safety, and produce much-needed cost savings for the City. And, as an anti-racist organization, we work to ensure the needs of marginalized New Yorkers are addressed.

**Restoring Supervised Release to FY22 Levels to Respond to Increasing Referral Volume**

Community-based pretrial supervision is a critical component in the implementation of bail reform and safely shrinking the jail population to close the Rikers Island Jail Complex by the intended date. After a comprehensive assessment, the Center's Supervised Release Program removes people from the harmful environment of incarceration through community-based supervision and refers participants to relevant voluntary social services, including addressing supportive housing needs. **We are seeking a return to FY22 funding levels, as the FY23 contract was reduced by 10% while caseloads for the most intensive category of cases are already double the contracted caseload.** The Center operates the **Supervised Release Program** in Brooklyn and Staten Island, and citywide nearly 17,000 participants were served by all providers in 2022. The programs continue to grow, reflecting judges’ confidence that clients in Supervised Release show up for court dates at a

very high rate. Additionally, with this growth, the number of participants with higher needs has increased; in our two boroughs, 1,600 individuals had potential mental health needs in 2022 compared to 430 in 2019<sup>1</sup>. This reflects just under a third of all participants assessed in 2022 flagging for mental health needs.

After program eligibility expansion and initial budget increases, the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice *reduced* the budget for Brooklyn and Staten Island from 2022 to 2023 by approximately 10%. This reduction in budget occurred amidst an over 60% increase in volume of participants. With the reduction in budget and increase in the number of participants with substantial needs, the program cannot function as intended. Lower caseloads are crucial for staff to provide quality time with each participant to ensure case management is responsive to their individual needs. With twice the caseload, it is difficult for case managers to have more frequent and intensive supervision with individuals, including at community locations closer to the participants' work/home. Rising caseloads prevent staff from working with participants who voluntarily seek or might benefit from enhanced support, including supportive *housing* and peer support, services that can have positive life-changing impacts. In addition, case managers experience stress and burnout, leading to a low staff retention rate and resources spent on continually recruiting, hiring, and training new staff that could be spent on programming. The Center seeks Council support and guidance on this urgent issue.

### **Innovative Core Funding**

This year, we ask Council to continue and expand support for the Center's **Innovative Core Funding to \$750,000 from \$500,000, an amount not raised in over a decade**. Each year, the Center uses this funding to flexibly respond to the immediate needs of New Yorkers by piloting novel and effective community-based pilots to test for scalable solutions. Enhanced support would allow the Center to float programming despite delayed contract payouts from city agencies, which delays hiring and implementation across our programs. The Innovative Core Funding allows us to ensure programming doesn't get interrupted. In FY23, this contract transitioned from the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) to the Department of Youth & Community Development (DYCD), and we call on Council to ensure there is a long-term plan in place to sustain this funding. Council's Innovative Core Funding supports public safety and criminal justice responses in all five boroughs.

The Center makes deep investments in engaging individuals as far upstream as possible by meeting young people where they are, promoting *housing stability*, preventing gun violence, and working at the intersection of the justice and behavioral health systems. Center programs currently serve thousands of young people citywide each year, offering meaningful off-ramps and justice system alternatives through counseling, academic support, and workforce development. The Center's Youth Impact program, for example, provides peer-led diversion that invests in youth leadership and restorative alternatives to detention. In Harlem and Red Hook, the Center works with tenants in community to increase housing stability and reduce evictions by helping tenants navigate housing court. Similarly, our Legal Hand program serves Crown Heights, Jamaica, and Tremont residents facing housing, immigration, and employment issues by training local residents to empower their neighbors with legal information. In both Brooklyn and the Bronx, the Center works to prevent gun violence by actively engaging those at risk of being involved in violence, building community

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<sup>1</sup>Center for Justice Innovation. (2023). [Supervised Release Program data file]. Retrieved from the Justice Center Application case management system.

movements against violence, and providing supports and opportunities to community members in need. The citywide Reimagining Intimacy through Social Engagement (RISE) Project addresses the intersection of intimate partner violence and gun violence.

The Center has a particular expertise in providing trauma-informed social services, which continue to be crucial given the increasing number of justice system-involved individuals facing mental health and/or substance use challenges. Through our Staten Island Justice Center, for example, the Center provides clinical support and restorative programming for court-involved youth who have mental health needs. Our Midtown Community Court's Misdemeanor Mental Health Court works with some of Manhattan's most vulnerable individuals—those with extensive histories of mental illness and/or substance use disorders—to resolve cases while reducing the use of incarceration and continued cycling through systems. The Center's Bronx Child Trauma Support provides therapeutic and court accompaniment services to children who have been victim or witnesses to violent crime.

### **Preventing Eviction through Comprehensive Housing Support**

**The Center seeks \$550,000 in new Council funding to expand comprehensive support to address the many interconnected factors that impact housing instability in New York City.** Access to quality, sustainable, and safe housing is a crucial element to the conversation around social justice and equity. By proactively addressing factors like access to housing and housing resources, we hope to reduce the likelihood of individuals intersecting with the justice system. Three Center programs—the Red Hook Community Justice Center, the Harlem Community Justice Center, and Legal Hand—work directly with New York City residents who are facing housing instability, whether through the threat of eviction, the need for permanent housing, or living conditions that pose risks to their safety and well-being.

While New York City has made significant investments in attorneys for low-income residents, tenants are more likely to remain stably housed when they have assistance beyond legal representation in Housing Court. The Center's **Housing Navigators** work at Legal Hand sites, or out of the Center's Housing Resource Centers, to connect directly with residents who are facing housing instability. Housing Navigators support tenants in obtaining critical home repairs, preserving affordability, preventing evictions, and finding justice and fair treatment in housing court. We have found that a problem-solving approach in and beyond Housing Court helps both tenants and landlords connect to resources to address challenges like building repairs and back rent. Support with organizing files, evidence-gathering, and other written requests prior to legal filings have been noted to improve legal representation.

The Center's unique positioning—a community-based organization with programs across all five boroughs and individuals already engaging in this work—means that we can bridge those gaps to ensure that our most vulnerable residents do not fall through. We seek new Council funding to support Housing Navigators in Staten Island and the neighborhoods of Harlem, Brownsville, Red Hook, Crown Heights, Jamaica, and Tremont. Known as the **Housing Justice Community Navigator Program**, the initiative is dedicated to preventing evictions while promoting housing stability, affordability, and tenant protections for vulnerable tenants and public housing communities through a network of trained housing navigators and mobile pop-up events in all five boroughs. The Housing Justice Community Navigator Program is currently supported by congressional funding that is due to sunset in late 2023.

## **Conclusion**

By partnering with the Center, Council can go beyond transforming the justice system to cultivating vibrant and prosperous communities that center public safety and housing stability for all who live here. We thank Council for its continued partnership and are available to answer any questions you may have.



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Courtney Bryan, Executive Director

## Center for Justice Innovation FY24 City Council Housing Proposal Summaries

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**Center for Justice Innovation Innovative Core Funding (formerly Center for Court Innovation) #151226 - \$750,000 (Renewal/Expansion)** This is an application to support the continuation of the Center for Justice Innovation’s innovative criminal justice responses, community-based public safety initiatives, and access to justice programs across all five boroughs in New York City. City Council’s support allows us to serve tens of thousands of New Yorkers with mental health services, family development, youth empowerment, workforce development, and housing, legal, immigration and employment resource services. Our goal continues to be improving safety, reducing incarceration, expanding access to community resources, and enhancing public trust in government to make New York City stronger, fairer, and safer for all.

**Initiative:** Innovative Criminal Justice Programs

**Brownsville Community Justice Center: Housing Resource Center and Housing Navigator #153364 - \$100,000 (New)** Brownsville Community Justice Center (Justice Center) is seeking funding to bolster its Housing Resource Center—including through the hiring of a new Housing Navigator—in order to prevent homelessness and help community members maintain safe, affordable, and stable housing. With City Council support, the Housing Resource Center, in addition to providing direct tenant support, will conduct community education campaigns around important issues, like NYCHA’s new portal and HP Actions. Additionally, the Housing Navigator will work with a team of Housing Navigators across the Center to address a wide range of housing needs. Although the Justice Center has long provided services that help prevent evictions via annual recertification, support residents secure benefits, and provide assistance overcoming homelessness, this dedicated Housing Navigator will expand and deepen its housing work in Brownsville.

**Initiative:** Community Housing Preservation Strategies

**Harlem Community Justice Center: Housing Help Center and Housing Navigator #153428 - \$100,000 (New)** The Harlem Community Justice Center’s Housing Help Desk seeks funding from the Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative to support a Housing Navigator who will help seniors, non-English speakers, and other public housing tenants living in Harlem obtain critical home repairs, preserve affordability, prevent evictions, and find justice and fair treatment in housing court.

**Initiative:** Community Housing Preservation Strategies

**Legal Hand: Crown Heights– Housing Navigator #153220 - \$100,000 (New)** City Council funding will support a dedicated Housing Navigator at Legal Hand: Crown Heights, which will be a part of a network of Housing Navigators across the City at other Center for Justice Innovation sites to address a wide range of housing needs. Although Legal Hand: Crown Heights has always provided services that help prevent evictions, assist residents to secure benefits, and support community members overcoming homelessness, this dedicated Housing Navigator role will expand and deepen its housing work in Crown Heights, in response to rising need.

**Initiative:** Community Housing Preservation Strategies

**Legal Hand: Jamaica – Housing Navigator #153254 - \$100,000 (New)** City Council funding will support a dedicated Housing Navigator at Legal Hand: Jamaica, which will be a part of a network of Housing Navigators across the City at other Center for Justice Innovation sites to address a wide range of housing needs. Although Legal Hand: Jamaica has always provided services that help prevent evictions, assist residents to secure benefits, and support community members overcoming homelessness, this dedicated Housing Navigator role will expand and deepen its housing work in Jamaica, in response to rising need.

**Initiative:** Community Housing Preservation Strategies

**Legal Hand: Bronx – Housing Navigator #153284 - \$100,000 (New)** City Council funding will support a dedicated Housing Navigator at Legal Hand: Bronx, which will be a part of a network of Housing Navigators across the City at other Center for Justice Innovation sites to address a wide range of housing needs. Although Legal Hand: Bronx has always provided services that help prevent evictions, assist residents to secure benefits, and support community members overcoming homelessness, this dedicated Housing Navigator role will expand and deepen its housing work in the Bronx, in response to rising need.

**Initiative:** Community Housing Preservation Strategies



**Testimony of Juan Diaz**  
**Policy and Advocacy Associate**  
**Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**  
**Presented to the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings**  
**March 15th, 2023**

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York is a 79-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization. CCC does not accept or receive public resources, provide direct services, nor represent a sector or workforce; our priority is improving outcomes for children and families through research and advocacy. We document the facts, engage, and mobilize New Yorkers, and advocate for solutions to ensure that every New York child is healthy, housed, educated, and safe.

CCC is also a co-convener of the Family Homelessness Coalition, a coalition of 20 organizations representing service and housing providers and children's advocacy organizations united by the goal of launching a coordinated, collaborative, multi-agency effort focused on preventing family homelessness, improving the well-being of children and families in shelters, and supporting the long-term housing stability of families with children who leave shelter.

Thank you Chair Sanchez and all the members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings for holding today's important hearing. Below, I provide recommendations related to improving housing stability for families with children, highlighting the importance of ensuring sufficient funding in the FY 2023-24 to address citywide staffing shortages and the urgent need to address rental arrears assistance, affordable housing shortages, and CityFHEPS access and expansion.

**Housing Insecurity in New York City**

The City is facing a severe housing affordability crises, without adequate alternatives to mitigate this public issue that disproportionately affect families with children of color. Rising rent and basic needs costs, administrative backlogs, and lack of reforms to accelerate relocation to affordable housing and to preserve affordable units have all contributed to thousands of evictions, pending rental arrears, and housing court cases. Since the end of the eviction moratorium in January 2022, thousands of families with children have been evicted and entered the already strained DHS-shelter system. The housing insecurity that low-income families in New York City face is exacerbated by the high housing cost of housing, which is 358% higher than the national average cost.<sup>i</sup>

**Vacancies at Social Services and Housing Assistance Agencies**

CCC and citywide advocacy organizations are deeply concerned with the Mayor's announcement of austerity measures that would impact staff vacancies at essential human services agencies citywide. Overall, the Preliminary Executive Budget outlines PEG reductions across agencies amount to \$340.6 million in FY24, rising to \$2 billion when combined with reductions in the November Budget Modification. Within key social service and housing

assistance agencies, the following PEG amounts in the Preliminary Budget are due to vacancy reductions:

- **DSS: \$20,274,000 for vacancy reductions in FY24 and outyears**
- **DHS \$4,270,000 for vacancy reductions in FY24 and outyears**
- **DYCD: \$2,308,000 for vacancy reductions in FY24 and outyears**
- **HPD: \$1,355,000 for vacancy reductions in FY24 and outyears**

The proposed staff reductions will further exacerbate housing insecurity among the city’s most vulnerable families, who are already suffering from severe delays in accessing cash assistance, food support, and housing assistance in a timely manner due to understaffing at HRA. CCC strongly supports City Council Speaker Adams' call for legislation to remove the bureaucratic inefficiencies that block access to housing rental arrears and vouchers assistance. **We urge the City Council to not only oppose staffing reductions, but to advocate that the city provide the resources and support necessary to fill existing vacancies quickly.**

### **Funding for Rental Assistance**

Emergency rental assistance provides households at risk of eviction with immediate one-time support that alleviates the suffering that comes with the risk of eviction and subsequent homelessness. In New York City, there are currently over 200,000 pending housing court cases that are mostly related to rental arrears.<sup>ii</sup> Moreover, it is estimated that the total amount of rental arrears at affordable housing units amount to over \$145 million,<sup>iii</sup> and NYCHA rental arrears total amounts to over \$443 million.<sup>iv</sup> Close to \$600 million in rental arrears assistance is needed to prevent a further larger number of families from experiencing homelessness and the emotional and socio-economic impact that it has on children. With uncertain Federal and State rental assistance on sight, we urge the City Administration to create a plan to address the rental arrears crisis.

**CCC strongly supports the following rental assistance funding in FY2024:**

- **Restore and enhance \$118.5 million for rental arrears assistance included in FY2023.** As mentioned above, the amount of rental arrears funding needed to cover the estimated amount owed by low-income households is far greater than what was included in FY2023. As such, the City Administration should prioritize additional rental assistance funding and actively advocate at the Federal and State levels for emergency funding assistance.
- **Enhance Homebase rental assistance.** Homebase are neighborhood-based programs administered by non-profit organizations and funded by Federal grants and the Human Resources Administration. These programs provide emergency rental arrears assistance for households that are experiencing potential housing eviction. Because of its proximity and knowledge of low-income communities, Homebase can provide immediate rental assistance so families with children can avoid the complicated process at HRA offices when requesting rental assistance. In recent public hearings and media outlets, elected government officials and advocates have shared their concern over Homebase’s severe understaff and underfunding issues. Therefore, we urge the City Administration to

evaluate the importance of Homebase in preventing homelessness and enhance funding so more families with children could access emergency rental arrears assistance and stay in their homes.

### **Enforce and Fund Access for Affordable Housing**

Insufficient affordable housing stock in New York City prevents thousands of low- and moderate-income families with children from securing housing and economic security. We welcome the Mayor's Executive Budget inclusion of funding for Housing Blueprint initiatives, which include \$17.29 million in FY24, \$16.87 million in FY25, and \$21.47 million in outyears. Enhanced funding would allow the Housing Preservation and Development department to support home down payments, expand enforcement against tenant harassment, and loans for home repairs. CCC also supports Speaker Adams proposals to increase affordable housing development by creating legislation to modify zoning codes, and to allow more households to access affordable housing by increasing the income limits to qualify. **All these proposals are positive steps to increase the stock of affordable housing in New York City. However, enhanced funding and enforcement of existing program regulations need to be prioritized in FY2024.**

- **Restore funding reductions for HPD supportive housing realignment that were made in the November budget modification by including \$5 million in FY24, \$2.5 million in FY25, and \$1.2 million in FY26.** In New York City, domestic violence is the leading cause of homelessness for families with children. Supportive housing offers an alternative for families that have experienced trauma and housing displacement. Victims of domestic violence receive essential ongoing services that provide social, economic, housing stability in times of recovery from abuse. Therefore, we urge the City Administration to expand supportive housing funding in FY2024.
- **Enforce the compliance of unit vacancies reduction and repairs at NYCHA.** Interagency support and accountability are imperative to address the considerable number of vacant apartments at NYCHA throughout the city. In January 2022, NYCHA had 486 units considered vacant and available for relocation, however, there are currently close to 6,000 vacant apartments, a 640% increase. Moreover, nearly 1,000 other units have been taken off the list of apartments considered rentable because they need such significant repairs.<sup>v</sup> With a shelter population at an all-time high and tens of thousands of children suffering from unstable housing, the City Administration must work together with NYCHA to rapidly make these units available for low-income households.
- **Ensure that existing affordable housing is made available to low-income households.** The Housing Stability and Tenant Protection Act was enacted in 2019 to implement tenant protections including protecting tenants from unlawful evictions and income discrimination and ensuring that landlords make rental apartments available in a reasonable amount of time. Yet it is estimated that over 20,000 affordable apartments remain vacant due to either slow or no action from landlords to make these apartments available.<sup>vi</sup> We urge the City Administration to coordinate interagency communication

and efforts so that tens of thousands of households facing housing insecurity across the city have

### **Improve Access to CityFHEPS**

Recently proposed reforms to increase access to CityFHEPS assistance are imperative to accelerate the relocation process of families with children to affordable housing, secure housing stability in the community and reduce unnecessary shelter costs. **We urge the City Council to prioritize funding City FHEPs and to pass legislation to remove several restrictions that prevent -expeditious access to the critical housing assistance.**

- **Eliminate the 90-day waiting period for CityFHEPS eligibility (Int 0878 by Sanchez, Ayala, Hanif, Bottcher & Won).** A key strategy for improving families with children's access to CityFHEPS housing eligibility is to eliminate or modify the 90-day shelter stay rule that requires individuals and families to be in shelter for 90 days before becoming eligible for CityFHEPS. We urge you to continue your support for eliminating this illogical and costly administrative rule.

- **Permit accepting a rent-demand letter from landlords instead of a housing court eviction to qualify for CityFHEPS (Intro 2864 by Sanchez).** This eligibility requirement was temporarily implemented during the pandemic, and it helped many families prevent eviction. This change should be made permanent.

- **Remove the requirement that individuals must have had a shelter stay before qualifying for CityFHEPS (Intro 2862 by Ayala).** Residing in shelters can create a harmful environment for children and affects their educational development, among other areas. Additionally, providing CityFHEPS assistance while in the community instead of requiring shelter entry would save the City hundreds of millions of dollars.

- **Require HRA to designate housing specialists within all temporary shelters and to submit an annual report on housing specialists (Intro 0124 by Salamanca Jr.).** Advocates and shelter residents have expressed concerns over the lack of housing specialists to help them find apartments and to inspect apartments in a timely manner.

- **Make youth categorically eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers.** Youth experiencing homelessness in both DYCD-funded Runaway and Homeless Youth and those youth transitioning out of ACS care should be made categorically eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers without first having to enter a DHS shelter. This will prevent young people from unnecessarily entering shelter, make vouchers easier to access, and support the Administration's goals of eliminating youth homelessness.

- **Expand CityFHEPS eligibility to undocumented families.** Currently, only applicants with a valid social security number qualify. This leaves mixed-status families at a disadvantage as their CityFHEPS voucher only covers a portion of the rent for qualifying individuals.

- **Expand CityFHEPS eligibility to families and individuals that enter city shelters through pathways other than just DHS.** This should include HPD, domestic violence and runaway

youth, who currently are ineligible for CityFHEPS unless they enter the system through DHS. While in the DHS shelter system, individuals and families staying in shelters other than DHS must remain 90 days before they qualify for CityFHEPS assistance. This unnecessary use of City resources could be allocated to supporting families to find suitable housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and your advocacy efforts in improving the housing stability of New York City families.

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<sup>i</sup> Cost of Living in New York City. Payscale website. 2023. <https://www.payscale.com/cost-of-livingcalculator/New-York-New-York>

<sup>ii</sup> NYC Eviction Tracker. "New York City Eviction Cases". Eviction Lab. March 2023. Retrieved from: <https://evictionlab.org/eviction-tracking/new-york-ny/>

<sup>iii</sup> Greg B. Smith. "NYCHA Rent Bailout Proposed for State Budget, With \$466 Million Owed". The City. March 13, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.thecity.nyc/2023/3/13/23638854/nycha-rent-bailout-erap-new-york>

<sup>iv</sup> Janaki Chadha and Danielle Muodio Dunn. "NYC's affordable housing struggles with rent arrears". Politico. March 13, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.politico.com/weekly-new-york-real-estate-infrastructure/2023/03/13/nycs-affordable-housing-struggles-with-rent-arrears-00086639#:~:text=Beat%20Memo&text=Affordable%20housing%20buildings%20across%20the,nonprofit%20New%20York%20Housing%20Conference>.

<sup>v</sup> Ari Ephraim Feldman. "Vacant NYCHA units jumped more than 600% in a year, stranding residents". Spectrum News 1. February 22, 2023. Retrieved from: <https://www.ny1.com/nyc/all-boroughs/politics/2023/02/22/vacant-nycha-units-jumped-more-than-600--in-a-year--stranding-residents>

<sup>vi</sup> Jay Martin. "There are 20,000 affordable empty apartments in NYC — let's get them unlocked". AMNY. April 27, 2022. Retrieved from: <https://www.amny.com/opinion/op-ed-there-are-20000-affordable-empty-apartments-in-nyc-lets-get-them-unlocked/>



**The Community Preservation Corporation**

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## **New York City Council Preliminary Budget Hearing Housing and Buildings Committee, March 15, 2023**

### **Testimony on behalf of The Community Preservation Corporation**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC), a nonprofit affordable housing and community revitalization company that was formed in the early 1970s to help New York City and State restore and rebuild communities that had been devastated by deterioration and abandonment.

Today, CPC uses its unique expertise in housing finance and public policy to expand access to housing and drive down the costs of affordable housing production, advance diversity and equity within the affordable housing development industry, and address the effects of climate change in our communities through the financing of sustainable housing. Since our founding, CPC has invested over \$14 billion to finance the creation and preservation of more than 225,000 units of housing through our lending and investing platforms. As a long-term lender to HPD, we are a strong partner in the City's efforts to tackle some of the most pressing problems facing communities today. CPC is also an equity partner in the PACT Renaissance Collaborative, the team selected by NYCHA to renovate and preserve 16 NYCHA properties located in Manhattan. As an affordable housing lender with a significant footprint in New York City, CPC can provide insight on housing financing and feasibility to help the City Council fully address the City's housing crisis.

The work undertaken by New York City's Department of Housing Preservation and Development has been and continues to be critically important to New York City. CPC supports the Mayor's proposed capital budget for HPD of \$1.653B. While we recognize and support the Mayor's commitment to increasing efficiency across government, we appreciate the limited staffing cuts directed at HPD. The city must prioritize the hiring and retention of housing staff to ensure the smooth implementation of programs and the efficient construction of homes.

We also applaud the Mayor's financial commitment to implementing the "Housing our Neighbors" and the Get Stuff Built plans, especially the new needs funding committed to the HomeFirst program for down payment assistance to low-income households buying their first home, the implementation of HomeFix 2.0 to provide homeowners unable to get traditional home repair financing with alternative funding mechanisms to make urgent maintenance and repairs, and the multiple efforts to streamline processes and approvals across agencies. We urge the City Council to support the funding for the Department of Housing Preservation and Development included in the Governor's Preliminary Budget.

In partnership with the Mayor's agenda, we would also encourage the City Council to partner with State agencies and elected officials to support Governor Hochul's New York Housing Compact, a bold funding and legislative plan to increase New York State's housing supply by 800,000 units over the next decade. The tools proposed by the Governor's Compact and Executive Budget will mobilize statewide action and expand the menu of options available for development in New York City, notably expanded eligibility for conversions of office buildings to residential, extending the completion deadline for vested 421-a projects, and a reimagined tax incentive for multifamily rehabilitation. Reinstating a modernized rehab tax incentive would support owners of aging affordable housing in updating and modernizing their buildings, providing a much needed solution to the issues of housing quality, affordability, and energy efficiency. We applaud this administration's alignment and coordination with their partners in Albany, and encourage the City Council to be equally vocal supporters.



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**The Testimony of The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) for the NYC Council Housing  
Committee Hearing March 15, 2023**

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony before you all today. My name is Lauren Velez and I'm the Associate Director for NY at CSH. CSH is a national non-profit that works with communities all over the country to devise and implement supportive housing solutions as a response to homelessness. Supportive housing is an effective, long-term intervention that pairs permanently affordable units with voluntary, individualized wrap-around services, to offer our most vulnerable and behaviorally complex community members an opportunity to stabilize and thrive in safe, affordable housing. Supportive housing has been proven to increase public safety, and create more inclusive, and resource rich communities. It's also far more cost effective than crisis systems such as jail, shelter, and improper emergency department use.

We all know New York City is experiencing a housing and mental health crisis unlike anything we have seen in recent history. With over 70,000 people experiencing homelessness and increased concerns around public safety, it's clear that we need more investment in solutions that we know work. One of those solutions is supportive housing, which directly helps at risk New Yorkers gain access to the right services and supports.

All New Yorkers deserve a safe home and to be connected to resources in their community- not just those who have the most at their disposal. If we are truly committed to increasing public safety and creating a healthier New York, we must invest in accessible housing options for all.

The populations that are most heavily impacted by this housing crisis are exactly the people that need our support the most- those with severe mental health challenges and other chronic conditions, those with histories of generational trauma and marginalization, targets of historic and systemic racism, and those impacted by the criminal legal system. Supportive housing is an evidence-based intervention that has proved to be effective with all of these populations. Although NY has dedicated funding streams to pay for supportive housing, it is not enough. More and more we are hearing directly from providers, tenants, and advocates that the funding we have allotted for these programs is not enough. Rental subsidies are too low for the competitive rental market, ensure we are placing people in quality units, and the service dollars are too low to provide adequate services and pay staff acceptable wages. The impact of the funding gap goes well beyond this, though: impacting city agencies like HPD that are severely understaffed, creating a ripple effect of bottle necks in our systems.

While new units are needed, this is not just an issue we can build our way out of. In addition to the need for more affordable and supportive housing units, we must protect and preserve the ones that we have. We must ensure these units are safe, quality units and that we are not letting the most at risk NYers live in squalor. Increased vulnerability and need should not equal a decrease in quality of life and subpar living conditions.

*We respectfully ask that this committee urge city council to invest in the housing needs of the most at-risk New Yorkers by:*

**Investing \$103.8 Million in Housing Subsidies and Supports:**

- **Increase funding for Justice Involved Supportive Housing**
  - JISH currently only has 120 out of 500 possible beds in operation. This is directly due to unacceptable rental and service rates
  - We recommend that NYC set service rates at \$25,596 for each unit (matching the service allocation for the 15/15 youth population) and subsidy rates be set at current FMR and with a 2% yearly escalator, to keep up with current market rates.
  - **The total recommended investment for 500 JISH (120 current and 380 future units) units is \$12.8 Million**
- **Investing \$45 Million into NY 15/15** to support rental subsidy increases, higher services rates for the remaining units yet to be brought online
- **Supporting MOCJ Hotels-** MOCJ Emergency Hotels currently house around 480 individuals leaving incarceration. This effort began during the pandemic to reduce the number of people being held in Rikers. These hotels have served as a transitional setting, allowing residents to stabilize and access support before finding permanent housing. This resource has become a critical part of our housing continuum and these contracts are set to run out by June 30, 2023. We request the following continued investment:
  - \$28 million for services, food and security residents of 480 rooms across 4 hotels
    - Services \$4.2 Million annually
    - Food Vendors \$6 Million annually
    - Security Vendors \$18 Million annually
  - \$17.5 Million for the cost of the rooms at \$100/room per night)
  - **Total ask: \$46 Million/year**
    - This works out to be roughly **\$95k per person per year**, which is *less than 1/5 of the current cost of incarceration*

**Reallocating Funding to Increase Congregate Units and Preserve Existing Units Through 15/15**

- **Reallocate \$162 Million in 15/15 funding to the development of more congregate units and preservation/rehabilitation of existing units.** There is currently funding that is allotted for the development of about 6,000 scattered site units. We know from experience that congregate site settings are far more preferable and promote better outcomes and more stabilization due to the presence of onsite services and support

**Supporting the Fair Chance for Housing Bill**

- **This bill will limit landlords' ability to discriminate against applicants with histories of engagement with the legal system** by eliminating most background checks. Even after people have paid their debt to society, they continue to be shut out of the housing market. There are no current protections in place that support people trying to rebuild their lives. This leads to an increase in crimes of poverty and necessity, stress on our crisis and shelter systems, an increase in street homelessness, and fears around public safety.

### Support the Closure of Rikers

- **Riker's is a dangerous and inhumane place** with far too many avoidable deaths and deplorable conditions for inmates. The lack of structure and support creates unsafe conditions and has led to a lack of adequate discharge planning, lack of access to care, and lack of connection to housing options for people re-entering. As stated above, supportive housing is an effective solution that can help the city get people out of incarceration and into more stable settings- reducing recidivism and alleviating some of the stress on crisis systems (including jail). Continuing to support and invest in Rikers is in direct opposition to supporting the needs of extremely vulnerable New Yorkers, is more expensive, and moves us further away from a healthier, safer NYC.

The case for investing in housing can be made both ethically and financially, and the conclusion is the same: safe, affordable housing with services and connections to community resources is how we will increase public safety, get people connected to the resources they need to achieve stabilization, and help move people beyond often generational cycles of poverty and crisis.

Respectfully,

Lauren Velez

Associate Director NY, Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)

lauren.velez@csh.org



My name is Rami Dinnawi, I am the Environmental Justice Coordinator for El Puente, a human rights & Environmental Justice Organization based in South Williamsburg & has been on the frontline for over 40 years.

I am here to talk to you about our stance on the proposed budget & its lack of investment in achieving our bold local & state climate mandates. As part of Climate Works for All Coalition, a convening of labor, community, faith , Environmental Justice & climate organizations we have seen first hand what our city lacks to address the current climate crisis.

We call on the administration to dedicate an additional \$1 million to fund & staff the office of Building Energy & Emissions Performance under Dept. of Buildings to ensure Local Law 97 compliance & Enforcement is achieved. This is our city's primary office tasked with ensuring LL97 compliance, and if it remains in its current state we can all be confident that we will not achieve targets set by the law.

In addition to OBEEP, we are calling for funding to the Department of Housing Preservation & Development to increase staff capacity dedicated to affordable housing. Furthermore, the city needs to invest in long term deep retrofits in public school buildings to ensure resiliency of the foundations of our society; Our youth's education!

What we have been hearing today, is the need for this administration to invest in our present and our future through remediating the errors of our past.

The current budget is NOT how 'Stuff Gets Done'. We need investment not divestment.



## **Testimony of Baaba K. Halm**

**Vice President and New York Market Leader, Enterprise Community Partners, Inc.**

**For the New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings**

**Preliminary Budget Hearing**

**March 15, 2023**

My name is Baaba Halm, and I am the Vice President and Market Leader for the New York office of Enterprise Community Partners, a national nonprofit that exists to make a good home possible for the millions of families without one. We support community development organizations on the ground, aggregate and invest capital for impact, advance housing policy at every level of government, and build and manage communities ourselves. Since our New York office opened in 1987, we have committed more than \$5 billion in equity, loans and grants to affordable housing and community to create or preserve over 81,000 affordable homes across New York State. On behalf of Enterprise, I want to thank Chair Sanchez for the opportunity to testify today on the 2023-2024 city budget and what advocates agree is needed this year to meet the tremendous housing challenges we face.

### **Rental Arrears**

Due to being deprioritized by the New York State Emergency Rental Assistance Program, many residents in affordable housing and within NYCHA are dealing with high and mounting levels of rental arrears. As reported by the New York Housing Conference, about [31 percent of the 49,121](#) affordable housing units in their data set are in arrears of at least two months of rent. On average, each household in arrears owes around \$9,500 in rent for a total of more than \$145 million. This is a crisis for both tenants and owners of affordable housing. Tenants in arrears face the risk of eviction, and owners are without critical rental income needed to keep their buildings afloat, pay staff and maintain good conditions.

We urge the City to work with advocates and property owners to devise solutions that will promote housing stability for tenants and provide operational relief for owners.

### **Agency Staffing**

The Administration has set lofty affordable housing production goals and has committed to streamlining zoning and approval processes through the [Building and Land Use Approval Streamlining Task Force](#) (BLAST). However, we are concerned that these goals cannot be



realized with current staffing levels at relevant agencies. As detailed in the New York City Comptroller's [March 6 report](#), the Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) has an overall vacancy rate of 18.2 percent. HPD's Office of Development, which provides financing for both affordable new construction and preservation, has an overall vacancy rate of 29 percent. This understaffing is directly affecting project timelines.. In 2022, the city produced around 16,000 units toward its goals, which is 43% fewer than the roughly 28,000 units the year before.

With city homelessness numbers at [record highs](#), creative solutions are needed to address the workforce shortage. We urge the City to reform its outdated and lengthy hiring processes and to make changes that will encourage employee retention so that agencies can fill their open positions and keep staff.

### **NYC 15/15 Supportive Housing Program**

In 2015, New York City announced NYC 15/15, a bold plan to support 15,000 units of supportive housing over 15 years. The plan includes both congregate and scattered site supportive housing. While progress has been made on the congregate housing portion, the city is behind on the scattered site goal, as very few providers have responded to the RFP. To meet NYC 15/15 goals, we echo the Supportive Housing Network of New York's recommendation that the city redistribute three quarters of the unawarded scattered site units into three groups: congregate (adding to the single-site stock), preservation of older stock, and "non-traditional" scattered site (identified units in city-owned affordable housing with homeless set-asides).

### **Source of Income Enforcement**

Rental assistance vouchers are a lifeline to many families, allowing them to afford the cost of apartments in our high-cost city. While recent years have seen more resources dedicated to allow more families in need to access these tools, progress is undermined by source of income (SOI) discrimination, which remains pervasive despite strong laws forbidding it. The city must continue to prioritize enforcement against housing discrimination by funding the SOI work conducted by the Commission on Human Rights (CCHR). We applaud the city's commitment of \$3.1 million over four years to combat SOI and we look forward to ensuring streamlined collaboration between HPD and CCHR.

### **90-day Shelter Rule**

As a co-convenor of the Family Homelessness Coalition, we believe strongly in upstream prevention, such as fostering greater housing stability before people fall through the cracks and arrive at a crisis point.. We must make a valuable resource like CityFHEPS available to households who need it without requiring a stay in the shelter. To that end, we support Int. 2862, which would eliminate the 90-day shelter stay requirement and make the important change of not requiring an applicant to have lived in shelter as a precondition to receive a rental assistance voucher. Current policy adds unnecessary shelter residency time for families with children who



are already spending an average of eighteen months in shelter. The city can reduce shelter costs and improve child and family wellbeing by taking this important step. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and for your continued leadership on housing issues. We look forward to working with you this budget season to ensure that every New Yorker has access to safe, stable and affordable housing.



## Commitment to Improve the Quality of Life

March 14, 2023

**To: New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings**  
**From: India Home, Inc.**  
**Re: Housing Programs for South Asian Older Adults**

Good afternoon, and thank you for providing this opportunity for India Home to testify in front of the City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings.

I am here today on behalf of India Home, a Queens-based senior center non-profit organization dedicated to serving South Asian and Indo-Caribbean immigrant older adults in New York. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for older adults in NYC by providing quality care in a culturally appropriate environment. Since 2007, we have touched the lives of over 5,000 older adults through our culturally competent congregate meals program, creative aging and education services, case management, mental health services, and advocacy opportunities.

100% of the seniors India Home serves are foreign born and nearly 80% of them have Limited English Proficiency (LEP), as such many are dependent upon their adult children/ spouse/ nearest of kin and government programs for basic needs including housing. To secure housing, many senior South Asians in NYC live with family members and depend on them for food, shelter, and other basic needs. **One of the long-existing housing problems faced by older adults from the South Asian community is overcrowding, especially since many live in multigenerational households in rented homes or buildings.** According to a recent report conducted by the Asian American Federation (AAF), South Asian ethnic subgroups such as Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Nepalese households experienced the highest rates of severe overcrowding in 2020, at 21.8%, 20.6%, and 13.8%, respectively. Bangladeshis (35.8%) and Pakistanis (35.6%) also rank in the top five ethnic Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) groups to live in the highest % moderate to severe rent burdened households. Overcrowding and stress from rent hardship, particularly for those on low to fixed incomes, are adversely affecting the health of our seniors, taking a toll on their physical and mental health and limiting their independence in and outside of their homes.

Many of our Bangladeshi immigrant seniors rent small studio apartments and/ or do not have their own space within the homes they live in if they are living in a shared space with their adult children and grandchildren. Oftentimes, they experience emotional and financial abuse in these housing settings, yet because they have few affordable and appropriate housing options available, they are forced to continue experiencing this ill treatment. Approximately 60% - 65% or more of our members from this group are on low to fixed incomes and, therefore, cannot afford to live in higher quality housing. **NYCHA is an option such seniors are commonly directed to apply for in order to address their housing needs, however, it has major shortcomings that render it ineffective for and highly underutilized by our seniors.** Firstly, receiving NYCHA housing can take a long time; secondly, and more importantly, the subsidized/ rented housing options offered to

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## Commitment to Improve the Quality of Life

eligible residents are usually in an entirely different borough and/ or very far away (i.e. Manhattan, Far Rockaways, etc.) from the South Asian community enclaves in Queens, in which our seniors feel closely connected to and have a great sense of belonging. They do not want to relocate to these far off areas, especially as the homes are not only far, but also oftentimes still of low-quality and not culturally sensitive since traditional South Asian grocery stores & markets, house of worship, cultural centers, and other such neighborhood amenities would not be available. As such, it is hard for them to take the NYCHA housing voucher even though they could have had their own living space and rental support. We recently had a case in which two of our Bangladeshi elders each received NYCHA housing vouchers after having waited six years. They did not submit their paperwork to accept NYCHA housing because the locations were only offered in Manhattan. To these elders, just like many of the other seniors we serve, aging-in-place in a community where they are culturally and linguistically comfortable and attached to in a meaningful way is much more important than compromising on their limited living space, rent, and other such housing challenges. With regards to city housing vouchers, these are accepted by a select number of buildings and building owners and are up to their discretion on whether or not they will accept it. This is problematic for many of our seniors because, similar to the limiting-NYCHA housing locations, city housing vouchers oftentimes are not accepted among building/ building owners in the communities they currently reside in within Queens. Furthermore, some seniors have experienced age and cultural discrimination when trying to use these vouchers.

With housing issues especially having exacerbated over the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, India Home is embarking on several housing projects to bring high quality, affordable, and culturally sensitive housing catered to the South Asian older adult community. **We are establishing a 50-unit supportive/senior/workforce residence with related communal resident spaces and a 2,000 sq ft community facility which will be used as a senior center for local residents at 170- 11/13/15 89th Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11432 (located in Community Board 12, District 27).** The proposed new construction residence will be sited on a 75' by 100' deep lot. The building will contain 7 stories and a full cellar. The residence will house thirty (30) studios and twenty (20) one-bedroom units with amenities (i.e. a multipurpose common room, meeting rooms, laundry, fitness room, and bicycle equipment space) for enriched programming. The development will contain workforce housing units that address the affordable housing needs of low-income and/ or recently arrived working-class immigrant households. Housing issues abound in the SA senior population: more than half of Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani seniors live in overcrowded housing and Bangladeshi/Pakistani seniors are 2x as likely to live in overcrowded housing than Asian seniors in general (Asian American Federation, 2016). South Asian seniors need accessible housing, with culturally sensitive programming and case management. This building will provide this opportunity for frail elderly, low income seniors and non-age restricted working-poor residents. A 2,000 SF senior community center is also planned. Thirty units (60%) will be supportive housing units for residents at 0-30% of the Area Median Income (AMI) who will receive supportive services via on-site case management, chronic disease management, prevention education, and recreational services.

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## Commitment to Improve the Quality of Life

For FY24, we have requested a total of \$2,000,000 in capital funding through HPD from the Queens Borough President's Office, Speaker Adams, and City Council Members Williams, Lee, Krishnan, Gennaro, and Ung to contribute to the hard construction costs of this novel housing innovation that will undoubtedly positively impact NYC's housing landscape in the near future and generations to come. In addition to this project, we are also pioneering a first-of-its-kind culturally competent Coliving Home in Floral Park, Queens and an Enriched Housing & Assisted Living Facility, 5-story development in Jamaica, Queens. We are confident that with our expertise and knowledge of the community and with the City's help, we will improve the City's existing housing infrastructure to be more inclusive and culturally-responsive.

I ask that the Committee on Housing and Buildings support our innovative senior housing project at 170- 11/13/15 89th Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11432, as well as work more closely together with culturally competent and immigrant serving CBOs such as India Home to help improve our city's current NYCHA/ housing vouchers programs. We understand and have witnessed firsthand the housing needs and living conditions of our seniors. It is our hope that, with capital funding support for our innovative housing projects as described above as well as opportunities to collaborate with city government and urban planning groups, NYC's housing landscape can be reshaped to be more adequate, affordable, and culturally sensitive while also paving the way for more sustainable housing models and structural interventions to be made.

For my final closing remarks, I wanted to share that India Home is a proud member of the **Coalition for Asian American and Children Families 18% & Growing Campaign**, a diverse coalition bringing together over 90 AAPI-led and serving organizations across the city to fight for an equitable budget protecting the needs of our vulnerable community members. As part of this Coalition, I would like to [urge that NYC Council support the collective fiscal requests of the greater AAPI community as outlined in our Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Priorities](#) to take further steps in not just envisioning, but truly creating a more inclusive, safe, healthy, and sustainable society for our diverse diaspora - establishing blueprints that lead to a more value driven, culturally representative, and human centered New York City.

Thank you so much for your time and cooperation!

Sincerely,

Vasundhara D. Kalasapudi, M.D.  
Executive Director

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## Mechanical Contractors Association of New York, Inc. Testimony

New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings

T2023-2994 – March 15, 2023

**New York City Council Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2024, The Preliminary Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2024-2027, Fiscal 2024-2033 Preliminary Ten-Year Capital Strategy and The Fiscal 2023 Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report**

The Mechanical Contractors Association of New York, Inc. (MCA), representing union fire sprinkler and HVAC mechanical contractors as well as industry suppliers and manufacturers, would like to use this regular budget hearing as an opportunity to underscore the importance of quality inspections, fire safety, and continuing to encourage dialogue with the industry to ensure the best standards possible for safety and fire prevention. The City of New York will create the most conducive environment for safe, inclusive development when all agencies of government—from the Department of Buildings-to-NYCHA-and-FDNY—are all acting in coordination.

One area where it is critical for coordination and collaboration is in the understanding and enforcement of the building codes. The effectiveness of a building sprinkler system—or any other crucial building service or fire life safety system—is predicated on the quality of installation and maintenance. Ensuring the laws around building codes are being enforced should continue to be the top priority for the Department of Buildings. A critical element for ensuring the proper enforcement of the laws is through the proper training, staffing, and resourcing of the workers within the agency.

The continued development of codes and education for owners therein should also remain a proactive priority for the agency. It is important to see what is being implemented around the country, examine how our current codes are performing in comparison, and adjust where there is value. Our codes are a dynamic process of change that should always be adapting to respond to the evolving needs of the city’s building owners and tenants.

The Department of Buildings has signaled a deep desire to expedite construction and developments—the agency should be commended for this effort. It is crucial as we seek opportunities for new developments, we move things safely. Our contractors in the MCA and the unionized workers doing installation and maintenance are prepared to collaborate on ensuring work is done to the safest, highest qualities and standards. Look no further than the recent Twin Parks fire in the last year to see how critical comprehensive building safety—including from fire—is for all tenants and neighborhoods.

We urge the New York City Council to ensure the Department of Buildings has the necessary resources to enforce the laws on the books. We believe by working together, we can create a safer and more resilient city for all our residents. The Mechanical Contractors Association of New York, Inc. is prepared to be a proactive partner in constructing a safer, more equitable city, and to be a partner to the Department of Buildings.

Thank you.

Melissa Barbour  
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**Testimony to the New York City Council  
Committee on Housing and Buildings**

**Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY2024**

**March 15, 2023**

Good evening, Chair Sanchez and members of the committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Deyanira Del Rio and I am the Co-Director at New Economy Project, a citywide organization that works with community groups to build a just economy based on cooperation, equity, social and racial justice, and ecological sustainability. New Economy Project co-founded and coordinates the NYC Community Land Initiative, a citywide coalition working to expand community land trusts (CLTs) to ensure permanently affordable housing and equitable, neighborhood-led development.

Four years ago, the City Council launched a groundbreaking discretionary funding initiative – the Citywide Community Land Trust Initiative – to support the growth of CLTs across the five boroughs to create and preserve deeply and permanently-affordable housing and other neighborhood-led development. Groups have made massive strides with relatively modest amounts of Council funding, and today nearly 20 CLTs are organizing from the South and Northwest Bronx to Western Queens, Harlem, Lower East Side, East New York, and Staten Island’s North Shore.

**We thank the Council for its support of CLTs and urge enhanced funding of \$3 million in FY2024 for the CLT Initiative.** This enhancement is crucially needed to meet the growing demand for CLTs citywide and will continue to yield massive results for the City. FY2024 funding will support 20 organizations, including 16 community groups and four citywide technical assistance organizations, who will engage thousands of low income New Yorkers in community education, organizing, and neighborhood planning; deliver more than 60 legal and technical assistance consultations to emerging and establishing CLTs; develop tenant and community leaders; establish developer and other strategic partnerships; and develop community-driven plans to bring vacant and underutilized land into productive use. With enhanced funding in FY2024, we will engage two new organizations – including a new CLT in

Edgemere, Queens that was recently selected by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to develop multiple lots – and an emerging CLT in Flatbush, Brooklyn.

CLTs are a social housing model that NYC desperately needs to tackle root causes of our city’s affordability crisis, combat displacement and build collective wealth in historically redlined Black and brown neighborhoods. CLTs are community-governed nonprofits that own and steward land – taking it out of the speculative market. Through 99-year renewable ground leases, CLTs enforce housing affordability and other terms of development on CLT land. CLTs engage residents and other stakeholders in ongoing organizing, land stewardship, and democratic decision-making to promote equitable development without displacement.

By giving communities shared ownership and control over land, CLTs serve as a bulwark against predatory development and displacement. They advance racial equity in housing and land use. And they protect public investments in affordable housing and other community development – in perpetuity.

More than 1,200 homes are in CLT portfolios or pipelines, according to HPD. And CLTs stand to gain much more, as New York City and State advance policies to expand social housing and CLT land ownership, including the Community and Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Acts (COPA and TOPA) and Public Land for Public Good Act. While these policies will help level the playing field for CLTs and other nonprofits, CLTs will need sustained operating support – as well as capital funding – to ensure they can seize opportunities and meet their communities’ housing needs. The Citywide CLT Initiative is an especially critical source of support.

We urge the City Council also to ensure robust capital funding in New York City’s FY2024 budget for the acquisition, development and preservation of affordable housing, and to prevent budget cuts to HPD that would threaten the housing security of thousands of New Yorkers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.

## Testimony before the NYC City Council

### Housing

3/15/2023

Good afternoon. My name is Rabbi Barat Ellman and I am submitting testimony today on behalf of Tirdof: New York Jewish Clergy for Justice. Our new group is a project of Jews For Racial & Economic Justice, and T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights, and our inaugural campaign is centered on housing - housing for the unhoused and the housing insecure.

While this topic is clearly a top priority for our city which is experiencing a housing crisis, it's also a central concern for me as a Jew. The dignity of every human being, people made in the image of God, is a central principle in my tradition, and the crisis of homelessness is assault on human dignity. Without housing – and there are close to 55,000 homeless adults in NYC – it's difficult to keep clean. And when you can't keep clean, it's hard to hold, or even get, a job. For children – and there are over 20,000 homeless children in our city – it's difficult to get to school and succeed in school.

A *bayit*, or home, is foundational to a person's ability to survive, thrive, and live with dignity, health and humanity in this world. But on any given night, tens of thousands of New Yorkers are sleeping in shelters and on the streets.

In synagogues this week, Jewish New Yorkers are going to read in the Torah about the construction of the Tabernacle around which the ancient Israelites centered their worship of God. And in the prophetic reading that accompanies the Torah reading, we will read about Solomon's construction of the Temple.

There are two different words used for these structures. The Tabernacle is called a *Mikdash* – which means “a place of holiness.” God requests this so that God can dwell among the Israelites, and this means creating a space – a community for God to dwell in. The Temple is a *Bayit*, literally a house. Their juxtaposition teaches us that communities are made of houses, and houses need communities. Housing needs communities that welcome the less affluent and value the supportive systems that many of our unhoused neighbors need. Our city budget is

our community budget, and it has the capacity to address the housing crisis in our city.

There are solutions before us. The city owns land across the five boroughs which can be developed for affordable housing, supportive housing, and subsidized housing purposes. There are empty rent-stabilized apartments and apartments in NYCHA housing that can be made available to unhoused families. One of the obstacles to carrying out these solutions is understaffing in the departments of Housing Preservation, of Homelessness, and Health & Mental Hygiene. I urge the City Council to dedicate more funds for staffing in these areas.

We must increase our stock of supportive housing and decrease the barriers to it. And we need to ensure that the stock of affordable housing, supportive housing, and subsidized housing is distributed fairly across all five boroughs. I urge the City Council to make housing a top priority in this year's budget. Foundations are essential to structurally strong buildings. Housing is the foundation essential to a dignified life in our city. Thank you for your time and attention.

Testimony of Brendan Cheney, New York Housing Conference

New York City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings  
 Hearing on FY2024 Preliminary Budget

March 15, 2023

Good afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Operations at the New York Housing Conference (NYHC). I would like to thank Chair Sanchez as well as the other members of the City Council Committee on Housing and Buildings for the opportunity to testify about the preliminary 2024 budget.

NYHC is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. As a broad-based coalition, our mission is to advance City, State and Federal policies and funding to support the development and preservation of decent and affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

As you know, New York City has an affordable housing crisis that continues to get worse. There is a record number of people staying in New York City shelters – more than 71,000 a couple nights ago while at least 3,400 were unsheltered at one point last year. And more than half of New York City renter households earning less than \$50,000 are severely rent burdened (paying more than 50% of their income on rent). We will also discuss a growing crisis of rent arrears in affordable and public housing, threatening mass evictions and the stability of our affordable housing stock.

We remain concerned therefore about continuing staff shortages at HPD and other housing-related agencies. We also believe HPD needs to add funding to its capital budget to meet rising costs.

As of January, HPD, DHS and HRA remained in a staffing crisis. HPD had 400 vacancies in January and 177 fewer people on staff than before the pandemic. We have seen some progress – HPD’s headcount increased 1% from October to January. We hope progress around hiring will continue and accelerate. And while HPD was spared significant staffing cuts in the preliminary budget, other housing-related agencies like DHS, HRA, and DOB saw significant proposed staff cuts.

| <b>Staffing Shortage and Cuts at Housing Agencies</b> |                        |                    |                   |                       |
|---|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Agency  | FY 2024                | Actual             | Current Vacancies | Prelim Budget PEG Cut |
|   | Appropriation (Prelim) | Headcount Jan 2023 |                   |                       |
| Department of Housing Preservation and Development    | 2,638                  | 2,233              | -405              | -37                   |
| Department of Homeless Services                       | 1,920                  | 1,804              | -116              | -107                  |
| Human Resources Administration                        | 12,127                 | 10,401             | -1,726            | -773                  |
| Department of Buildings                               | 1,833                  | 1,546              | -287              | -94                   |
| Department of City Planning                           | 341                    | 274                | -67               | -6                    |
| Source: NYHC Analysis of OMB data                     |                        |                    |                   |                       |

We are pleased to see that the Mayor recently [announced changes to improve hiring](#), including increasing salaries by 15 percent for high-attribution jobs and the Office of Management and Budget committing to responding faster to hiring requests. These are good steps but more is necessary to speed hiring and improve retention. Last May we released a [report with detailed recommendations](#) that should be considered including finding flexibility in the civil service system, increased work flexibility, more discretion on salaries and reduced OMB oversight.

Make no mistake, understaffing is affecting services. At HRA, the staffing shortage means slower processing of one-shot assistance, City FHEPS packets, and other public assistance benefits. This leaves people at risk of homelessness, rent arrears piling up, and staying in shelter longer than necessary.

Due to understaffing HPD is producing less affordable housing – building less new housing and preserving less affordable housing. According to new data, HPD produced just 13,990 units of affordable housing in calendar year 2022, the first full year of Mayor Eric Adams’s administration, 51 percent less than the average over the previous five years. This includes financing 8,159 units of new construction of affordable housing, 15 percent less than the recent average. And it includes just 5,831 units preserving existing housing, 69 percent less than the recent average.

| HPD Affordable Housing Production |                  |              |               |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------|
|                                   | New Construction | Preservation | Total         |
| Previous 5 Year Average           | 9,586            | 18,780       | <b>28,366</b> |
| CY 2022                           | 8,159            | 5,831        | <b>13,990</b> |
| Change                            | -15%             | -69%         | <b>-51%</b>   |

Both new construction and preservation are vital to the city’s affordable housing goals. It is therefore distressing that HPD is falling short on building new desperately needed affordable housing. And it is also very distressing that HPD is falling very short on preserving existing affordable housing. This means that thousands of units of housing did not receive the HPD subsidy needed to make repairs or refinance and preserve housing. And so thousands of tenants are living in housing that could not be made improved and protected.

Without significant increases in staffing, it is likely the agency will once again fall short on housing production this fiscal year, which ends in June.

The loss of staffing has meant that HPD did not spend all of its capital budget last year – leaving \$600 million unspent as housing production decreased. While understaffing remains, housing costs are growing. Construction costs increased 25 percent over the past two years and interest rates are the highest they’ve been in 20 years.

We are concerned that HPD will not have sufficient capital funding, even with reduced staff, to cover rapidly growing costs. The city has moved the unspent money from last year, as well as the bulk of the \$5 billion in new funding, far into the future – five years from now. The city should move some of that funding in the current years to meet rising costs.

We are also alarmed about a growing rental arrears crisis that threatens massive evictions and the financial stability of affordable and public housing. In a [recent report](#), we gathered and analyzed data from nearly 50,000 units of private affordable housing (government subsidized) and found that 31 percent of tenants owe more than two months of rent, owing on average \$9,565. In addition, 10 percent of households owe more than \$10,000, owing on average \$22,000.

This level of arrears leaves affordable housing buildings, operated by nonprofit and for-profit providers, with significant financial risk. Our analysis showed that individual buildings with this level of arrears, on top of growing costs and flat revenue, are facing negative net operating income and difficulty paying of their loans. It also means that thousands of tenants are at risk of eviction. Financial assistance from multiple levels of government will be desperately needed.

Finally, we are concerned about the prospect of deteriorating housing conditions and the need for greater code enforcement as signs of financially distressed housing begin to emerge. The Sugar Hill Capital portfolio underwritten by Signature Bank before the 2019 HSTPA is an example of a overleveraged multifamily housing portfolio, with significant code violations. Monitoring the housing stock and protecting existing housing through code enforcement will be crucial. We were pleased to see that code enforcement activity, including the number of inspections, was able to increase in FY 2022 and only a slight 4% decrease in the first 4 months of FY 2023, despite staffing shortages at the agency. We encourage HPD to increase enforcement capacity in expectation of coming challenges.

We are facing significant crises right now. But the good news is that if we invest now – invest in staffing, in building housing, and preserving housing and keeping tenants in their homes, we can make real progress towards ensuring everyone has safe and decent housing.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions.



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## TESTIMONY OF NEW DESTINY HOUSING TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS

Gabriela Sandoval Requena, Director of Policy and Communications

March 15, 2023

Thank you, Chair Sanchez, Chair Brannan, members of the City Council Committees on Housing and Buildings and Finance, and Council Staff for holding this Oversight Hearing on the Preliminary Budget and the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Founded in 1994, New Destiny's mission is to end the cycle of domestic violence and homelessness for low-income families and individuals by developing and connecting them to safe, permanent, affordable housing and services. We build and manage supportive housing, and, through our innovative programs, we assist survivors in finding permanent housing and remaining stably housed. New Destiny is currently the largest provider of supportive housing for domestic violence survivors in New York and a leading advocate in the effort to obtain the resources needed to end family homelessness.

New Destiny is a co-convener of the [Family Homelessness Coalition \(FHC\)](#), a broad group of organizations and impacted advocates committed to tackling homelessness among families in our city.

**Domestic violence has been the number one driver of family homelessness in New York City for years, followed by evictions.**<sup>1</sup> In FY 2022, 39% of families who entered the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) shelter system identified domestic violence as the primary reason for their homelessness.<sup>2</sup> The separate domestic violence shelter system, managed by the Human Resources Administration (HRA), was used by 10,201 adults and children in 2021, 95% of whom were families with minors.<sup>3</sup> With so few housing resources, once in shelter, survivors are far more likely to remain in shelter rather than to move to an apartment. Fifty three percent of survivors with minors that left HRA emergency domestic violence shelter in 2021 moved to another shelter instead of permanent housing. That is more than 1 in 2 families that left shelter for shelter.

The affordable housing shortage only exacerbates the plight of survivors as they strive to regain stability. Across New York State, there is no county or locality where a renter earning minimum wage can afford a one-bedroom apartment.<sup>4</sup> In New York City, over half of renters pay more than 30% of their monthly income in rent and one third pay more than 50%.<sup>5</sup> The median rent for a one-bedroom unit in the five boroughs has risen 20% to \$3,267 over the last three

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<sup>1</sup> Silkowski, A. (2019). Housing Survivors: How New York City Can Increase Housing Stability for Survivors of Domestic Violence. New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer. Retrieved from [https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Housing\\_Survivors\\_102119.pdf](https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Housing_Survivors_102119.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> New York City Department of Social Services. (2022). Reasons for Eligibility for Families with Children for Department of Homeless Services Shelter.

<sup>3</sup> NYC Department of Social Services (2022). 2021 Annual Report on Exits from NYC Domestic Violence Shelters.

<sup>4</sup> Aurand, A., Clarke, M., Emmanuel, D., Foley, E., Rafi, I., & Yentel, D. (2022). Out of Reach: The High Cost of Housing. National Low Income Housing Coalition. Retrieved from <https://nlihc.org/or>

<sup>5</sup> New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development. (2022). 2021 New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey Selected Initial Findings. Retrieved from <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/2021-nychvs-selected-initial-findings.pdf>

years, and in Manhattan it surpassed \$5,000 in June of last year.<sup>6</sup> While strides have been made in recent years toward improving rental subsidies and developing more supportive and affordable housing, domestic violence survivors continue to be excluded from critical housing resources. This is most stark in the lack of access to both city’s homeless set-aside units and the city-funded supportive housing.

**New Destiny urges Mayor Adams to implement two budget-neutral, administrative modifications to provide survivors more equitable access to housing resources:**

- **Expand access to homeless set-asides to survivors in the HRA domestic violence shelter system**
- **Open NYC 15/15 supportive housing to domestic violence survivors**

**Similarly, we call on the Council and the Mayor to fund the newly established housing stability program for survivors of domestic violence at \$6 million in FY 2024, as well as to quickly address the staffing issues at the Department of Buildings and Department of Housing Preservation and Development.**

The New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) creates a critical pipeline from shelter to permanent housing for homeless New Yorkers by requiring most developers who receive funding to set aside at least 15% of their apartments for individuals and families in shelter. These units are commonly referred to as HPD homeless set-asides. In FY 22, HPD moved 1,600 homeless households into newly constructed units and more than 600 into re-rental apartments, none of which were made available to survivors living in the HRA domestic violence shelter system.<sup>7</sup> Despite committing “to even the playing field for all New Yorkers” in the Housing Our Neighbors Blueprint in April 2022, the Adams administration continues to only allow individuals and families in the DHS shelter system access to these units, with rare exception. By expanding access to homeless set-asides, the city would not only make this valuable housing resource more equitable, but would likely fill vacancies more quickly, leading to significant potential cost-savings. **New Destiny urges the city administration to allow survivors in HRA domestic violence shelter equal access to this housing.**

Unlike New York State supportive housing programs, the city supportive housing initiative, NYC 15/15, does not include domestic violence survivors as an eligible population. For survivors to qualify for city-funded supportive housing, they must meet the “chronicity” requirement, which means they must have a lengthy stay in DHS shelter and a diagnosed disability, such as serious mental illness or substance use disorder. This effectively keeps survivors out of this important housing resource. The 180 days survivors may spend in HRA emergency domestic violence shelter are not counted toward the DHS length of stay and, while research shows that domestic violence causes a myriad of negative health outcomes, survivors rarely divulge a diagnosis for fear of losing custody of their children to their abuser. At least half of survivors experience post-traumatic stress disorder and depression;<sup>8</sup> moreover, survivors can sustain head trauma more often than football players, but they are rarely diagnosed.<sup>9</sup> Permanent, affordable, supportive housing is a lifeline for domestic violence survivors who need housing and some level of support

<sup>6</sup> Brand, D., Faye, M., Mariam, Q., Lozano-Velez, M., Rahman, N., Soto, T., & Jimenez, J. (2022, September 13). It’s Not Just Manhattan: Rents Are Still Rising Across NYC. City Limits. <https://citylimits.org/2022/09/13/its-not-just-manhattan-rents-are-still-rising-across-nyc/>

<sup>7</sup> New York City Mayor’s Office of Operations. (2022). Mayor’s Management Report 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.nyc.gov/site/operations/performance/mmr.page>

<sup>8</sup> Nathanson, A. M., Shorey, R. C., Tirone, V., & Rhatigan, D. L. (2012). The Prevalence of Mental Health Disorders in a Community Sample of Female Victims of Intimate Partner Violence. Partner abuse, 3(1), 59–75. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1946-6560.3.1.59>

<sup>9</sup> Hillstrom, C. (2022, March 1). ‘The Hidden Epidemic of Brain Injuries From Domestic Violence.’ The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/01/magazine/brain-trauma-domestic-violence.html>

to attain and maintain stability. **New Destiny urges the city administration to open its supportive housing program to domestic violence survivors and their families, who are among the most vulnerable.**

We are grateful to Speaker Adams, Council Member Cabán, and members of the Council for passing, and to Mayor Adams for swiftly signing, Intro 153-A into law, which creates a housing stability program for domestic and gender-based violence survivors that provides low-barrier grants and connection to supportive services, with the goal of helping them maintain housing. New Destiny witnesses the beneficial impact of microgrants every day. Our rapid re-housing program, HousingLink, receives small federal service funding that can be used to cover most emergency needs, such as utility arrears, moving costs, and healthcare.

Additionally, a privately funded microgrant pilot, which was overseen by the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence and administered by Sanctuary for Families, further demonstrated that flexible funding can significantly improve survivors' financial situation, help them remain housed, and foster financial stability.<sup>10</sup> Implemented in 2020, the pilot illustrated the high demand for low-barrier financial support among survivors of domestic violence in New York City. The half a million dollars in funding was quickly depleted and forced the program to cease receiving applications in less than 2 months. For some survivors, an immediate, but otherwise manageable, financial or health crisis can quickly snowball into a catastrophe causing homelessness. This newly created housing stability program has the potential to be a lifesaver for survivors, especially for non-citizen New Yorkers; help bridge the gap for existing federally funded initiatives that do not cover essential items, like furniture or groceries; and prevent homelessness and shelter recidivism for a fraction of the cost of shelter and re-housing efforts. **New Destiny urges the Mayor and the City Council to fund the Housing Stability program at \$6 million dollars.**

We are also concerned about the staffing shortages at the Department of Buildings (DOB) and HPD, both of which are critical for the creation of housing. As of October 2022, DOB had a 22.7% vacancy rate, while HPD had a rate of 18.2%.<sup>11</sup> Limited capacity caused by hiring deficits has delayed affordable housing projects significantly. Less staff means less affordable units for low-income New Yorkers. **We urge the administration to ensure that DOB and HPD receive the resources and support necessary to rapidly fill vacancies.**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. New Destiny looks forward to continuing to collaborate with the Council.

We welcome any questions you may have.

**Gabriela Sandoval Requena**  
Director of Policy and Communications  
[gsrequena@newdestinyhousing.org](mailto:gsrequena@newdestinyhousing.org)

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<sup>10</sup> Holmes, K. (2021). Evaluation Summary Report: Emergency Financial Relief Microgrants Program for Survivors of Domestic and Gender-Based Violence. Retrieved from <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/ocdv/downloads/pdf/Emergency-Financial-Relief-Microgrants-Program-Evaluation-Summary-Report.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Callahan, R. (2022). Title Vacant Addressing Critical Vacancies in NYC Government Agencies. New York City Comptroller Brad Lander. Retrieved from <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/wp-content/uploads/documents/Title-Vacant-Addressing-Critical-Vacancies-in-NYC-Government-Agencies.pdf>

**NYC City Council Committee  
on Housing & Buildings**

**FY24 Budget Hearing**

March 15, 2023

Wendell Walters  
Manager, Policy and Advocacy  
Osborne Center for Justice Across Generations  
Osborne Association



My name is Wendell Walters and I am the Manager for Policy and Advocacy at the Osborne Association's Center for Justice Across Generations. Osborne is one of the largest and oldest criminal justice organizations in the state. We serve 10,000 people each year across the full spectrum of the criminal legal system, from arrest to reentry. We have offices in Brooklyn, Harlem, Newburgh, and Buffalo, with our headquarters located in the Bronx. We have programming in more than 30 correctional facilities, including New York State prisons and NYC's Rikers Island.

For thousands of people returning to their communities, housing is by far the most prevalent and pressing reentry issue. The steady stream of people re-entering our communities face enormous challenges when they come home, ranging from health and mental health concerns to unemployment and navigating a fast-paced, digital world, all while enduring the overwhelming stigma of having a criminal record. Upon release, these immediate challenges can be all-consuming and many individuals need support and resources to reach just a minimum level of stability. While the fastest road to stability is to return home to family or to a safe and stable place to live, far too many people are released with no place to call home and in too many cases, directly into the NYC shelter system. According to the Coalition for the Homeless's State of the Homeless 2022 report, **in each year since 2015, more than 40 percent of people released from State prisons to New York City were released directly to shelters.**<sup>1</sup>

We all know that the shelter system in NYC is overburdened and expensive. At their best, shelters still feel institutional; at their worst, they increase the likelihood of rearrest or parole violations, as individuals may not be allowed to stay at shelters during the day or may not feel safe when there. A range of reentry housing – including continuing the use of transitional hotel rooms initiated in the height of the pandemic – is needed. Some people leaving prison and jail may be ready for permanent supportive or affordable permanent housing. For others, transitional supportive housing is a stepping stone to a permanent home, allowing them to gain stability and adjust to life outside. There is nowhere near enough housing of any kind to meet the need, and a discriminatory housing landscape persists. At Osborne, we are expanding our housing efforts to

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<sup>1</sup> State of the Homeless, Coalition of the Homeless, March 2022.  
<https://www.coalitionforthehomeless.org/state-of-the-homeless/>

include a comprehensive range of housing, as well as working to develop new housing projects, and advocating for housing policies that open up access for those with previous convictions. These efforts and our related funding requests are described below.

In the Bronx, Osborne is contributing a desperately needed housing solution with the redevelopment of a former NY State prison into transitional reentry housing. Opening in the spring, the **Fulton Community Reentry Center** will provide 140 beds to those leaving a correctional facility, with an emphasis on older returnees who have been away for many years – too often decades – and have particular re-integration challenges. The building will include space to share meals, foster community, and hold classes, training sessions, support groups, social events, and private counseling.

To support the services at **Fulton Community Reentry Center**, we are requesting City Council funding in the amount of \$10,000 for: 1) programs for the surrounding community and general public, including an “internet cafe” with free broadband internet access; 2) video visiting programs, connecting families with their incarcerated loved ones; and, 3) community meeting space for additional activities. We ask you to please continue and increase our Council funding for Fulton. We are proud to partner with the Council to increase supportive transitional housing options.

At the same time, we recognize the importance of a permanent home and have also partnered with affordable housing developers and other advocates to dedicate permanent supportive reentry housing units as part of larger projects. One such success now housing older adults is our Marcus Garvey Supportive Housing program.

Our **Marcus Garvey Supportive Housing program** in Brownsville, Brooklyn provides 52 units of permanent housing for the previously incarcerated, specifically older adults who have served lengthy sentences. These 52 apartments were filled almost immediately and we now have a significant waitlist. This is not just the first stable home for many residents. It is also now their community, where they find support and acceptance; resources, training and information; and camaraderie and joy. While efforts like these are important, they represent only a small portion of the need when thousands are returning to New York City each year after being released from prison and jail.

Addressing the housing crisis requires imagination and innovation, since we cannot solely build our way out of this. In recognition of the fact that many families want to or could welcome loved ones home from incarceration into their homes *if* they had additional funds to cover the added costs of doing so, Osborne developed the **Kinship Reentry Program**. This innovative, first-of-its-kind program leverages existing housing (families' homes) to fill a gap in reentry housing, ensuring stability for people returning from incarceration. Kinship also invests in the stability of the family, a protective factor in keeping people home post-release. The program provides counseling and case management, peer support, and financial assistance to household members as they house and support their returning loved ones. At a fraction of the cost of a shelter, the stipend to families in the Kinship Reentry Program is \$500 per month, or \$6,000 per year. The total budget for the program is \$1 million to serve 100 families (this compares to estimates of \$40,000 - \$50,000 per year per person to live in NYC shelters).

As of the close of 2022, ninety-four families were enrolled in this program. The program is currently being evaluated by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago (funded by Arnold Ventures). The program had an 80% successful exit rate (defined as the returning person being housed throughout program enrollment, which is up to 12 months, and completion of financial literacy training) in the first half of this fiscal year.

While we work to develop and implement innovative and effective reentry housing models, we also advocate to end the discrimination that formerly incarcerated people often face when searching for housing. Osborne is a member of the **Fair Chance for Housing** campaign, which aims to pass anti-discrimination legislation protecting the previously incarcerated when they apply for housing. There are an estimated 750,000 New York City residents who have a conviction record. Most of them are people of color who are being denied housing at an alarming rate. Individuals who have been released from prison many years ago, transformed their lives, and are otherwise eligible for housing still carry that burden along with their families. We call on the City Council to pass the Fair Chance for Housing bill ([Intro 632](#)) currently under consideration by this body.

To continue to develop new housing projects and address urgent policy changes, Osborne is requesting City Council funding for our **Housing Justice Project** in the amount of \$250,000.

This funding would support staff to focus on policy development, community outreach, technical assistance, and public engagement designed to generate widely-supported solutions to the pressing homelessness and housing challenges the City currently faces, particularly for those who are formerly incarcerated. Staff would also work to strengthen and form partnerships to implement these solutions. We have a proven track record of achieving this, and this funding would allow us to continue and to expand our efforts.

The city, with support from the state, should consider all available options to address the extraordinary need for reentry housing. We call on the city to dedicate specific capital and operating funding to meet the need for the development of both transitional supportive and permanent supportive housing for the previously incarcerated.

While housing is expensive, we are now spending enormous resources to house people on Rikers and in shelters at far greater human and financial cost. According to the previous NYC Comptroller, it costs more than \$556,000 per person per year to house people on Rikers, and shelters can cost \$9,000 per month per person. Efforts to decarcerate can directly fund affordable and stable housing. For all of these reasons and more, we cannot afford to ignore this glaring and growing crisis in this great city. Simply put: housing provides stability and stability promotes public safety.

Thank you.

**The Osborne Association  
New York City Council Discretionary Funding Requests  
FY24**

| <b>Program</b>   | <b>Description</b>  | <b>FY24 Request</b> | <b>FY23 Funding</b> |
|--|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Alternatives to Incarceration</b>                                   | Court advocacy services, video visiting and family-strengthening activities, expansion of job training and placement, and reducing the Rikers Island population.  | \$1,952,074         | \$1,852,074         |
|  | <b>Parole Violation Mitigation Program</b> <sup>2</sup> that reduces the number of people being held on Rikers Island (200+ per day) for technical parole violation (TPV) warrants and people on parole with new open criminal cases, and reduces the detention time for people on parole.  | \$380,117           |                     |
| <b>Bronx Osborne Gun Accountability and Prevention Program (BOGAP)</b> | Strengthen an effective diversion program developed with the Bronx DA for 16 to 30-year-olds that provides an accountability-based alternative to the 3.5-year mandatory minimum prison sentence for carrying a loaded gun in the absence of any other crime.                               | \$60,000            | \$60,000            |
| <b>Elder Reentry Initiative</b>  | Increasing support to older adults on Rikers Island and after their release to the community by providing pre-release cognitive behavioral therapy, transitional planning, and post-release reentry support.  | \$85,000            | \$85,000            |
| <b>FamilyWorks Harlem</b>  | Relaunch FamilyWorks Harlem programming for youth, families, and adults impacted by the criminal legal system, including afterschool programming and restorative justice services for youth, and financial literacy, employment, parenting, and healthy relationships resources for adults. | \$5,000             | \$0                 |

<sup>2</sup> This program is currently supported with \$380,117 that is included in our total FY23 ATI award of \$1,852,074.

|  |   |           |           |
|--|---|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Fulton Community Reentry Center</b>   | Establish programs at Fulton for the general public: video visiting programs, an internet cafe with free broadband internet access, and community meeting space for other activities.   | \$10,000  | \$10,000  |
| <b>Health and Wellness – Ending the Epidemic</b>   | Community-based HIV/HCV prevention services and support for people living with HIV to become and stay virally suppressed, focusing on formerly incarcerated people returning to the Bronx and specialized services for LGBTQIA+ people in that borough.   | \$60,219  | \$60,219  |
| <b>Housing Justice Project</b>   | Support policy development, community outreach, technical assistance, and public engagement designed to generate widely-supported solutions to the problem of homelessness after incarceration and form partnerships to implement these solutions.  | \$250,000 | \$0       |
| <b>Improving Behavioral Health and Wellbeing for Youth</b>                                     | Assessing and addressing mental health and trauma in youth impacted by the criminal legal system through treatment options that alleviate stress, improve functioning, and reduce trauma symptoms.  | \$200,000 | \$158,000 |
| <b>Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents Implementation</b>                                | Implementation of Local Law 1349-A, enacted to reduce trauma to children when NYPD arrests the parent of a child by providing necessary training and administrative support to the NYPD and building a network of CBOs that can provide post-arrest support to children.  | \$265,000 | \$265,000 |
| <b>See Us, Support Us (SUSU): Improving the Well-Being of Children of Incarcerated Parents</b> | Establish an NYC-based See Us, Support Us (SUSU) Youth Team to increase support for and engagement of young people with incarcerated parents by informing and planning NYC-based education and outreach activities and increasing opportunities for young people to network, shape policy, heal, and support one another. | \$60,219  | \$0       |



*fighting predatory equity and tenant harassment  
organizing nyc tenants for the right to stay in our homes and communities*

**Testimony Concerning:**

The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2024

**Presented To:**

The New York City Council's  
Committee on Housing and Buildings

March 15, 2023

**Presented By:**

Jackie Del Valle

Stabilizing NYC Coordinator

TakeRoot Justice

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## **FY 2024 Initiative Funding Requests**

- **\$4 million for Stabilizing NYC**
- **\$3 million for Community Land Trust (CLT)**
- **\$4.95 million for the Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative**

Hello and Thank you to Chairperson Sanchez and the Committee on Housing and Buildings for your leadership.

My name is Jackie Del Valle and I am the **Coordinator of Stabilizing NYC at TakeRoot Justice**.

**TakeRoot Justice** provides legal, participatory research, and policy support to strengthen the work of grassroots and community-based groups in New York City to dismantle racial, economic, and social oppression. TakeRoot has a twenty one year history of partnering with grassroots and community-based organizations that build leadership and power within New York City's low-income communities, particularly communities of color, immigrant communities, and others traditionally excluded from policymaking.

TakeRoot Justice works side-by-side with community organizations, tenants & community leaders as they fight against gentrification to demand better living conditions, affordable rents, and a voice in the policies that shape their neighborhoods. This advocacy has resulted in millions of dollars' worth of repairs in low-income housing and has kept New Yorkers in their homes.

TakeRoot is a founder and coordinator of Stabilizing NYC, a coalition of grassroots organizations that combines tenant organizing with legal representation to combat tenant harassment and preserve affordable housing for the New Yorkers who need it most. The City Council has funded Stabilizing NYC every year since 2014.

We are requesting \$4 million to allow a modest COLA increase to each of the 20 coalition members, helping to ensure that we can continue to do the same amount of work as business and living costs have risen sharply. With the increase of \$300,000, we can protect more homes, win more building improvements and strengthen community organizing across the City.

Further, our work would not be possible without funding from the **Community Housing Preservation Strategies Initiative (CHSPI), and Community Land Trust (CLT)** and **we ask for your continued, and enhanced support for these initiatives**. My colleague Visnja Vujica is testifying today on the (CLT) initiative, whose work is critical to help build equity and limit speculation in our neighborhoods. With CHSPI, we fight alongside 45+ CBOS to prevent evictions, win repairs, empower tenants and protect homes. With CHSPI, we run a warmline on tenant rights for Council District (CD) 4; hold NYCHA accountable for repairs with resident leaders in CD5; and conduct monthly tenant clinics and workshops with Goddard Riverside SRO Project in CD6.

TakeRoot Justice and the 19 grassroots groups that are part of Stabilizing NYC **form and strengthen hundreds of tenant associations** to fight against predatory equity tactics. Despite the limits of the pandemic, SNYC groups continued to organize tenant associations and represent tenants across the City. Many groups organized outreach programs aimed at those vulnerable to evictions, ensuring that tenants in the communities not only know their rights about housing court, evictions, and accessing rent arrears funds like ERAP and the Excluded Workers Fund, but also had hands-on assistance to access these and other resources.

As a result, the tenant associations we organize won rent strikes, held their landlords accountable for incorrect rent amounts and received the ERAP protections that they're entitled to in housing court. Through organizing, tenants are stopping evictions from moving forward in court and fighting to keep one another in their homes. Tenants connect their individual building experiences to the wider fight for housing justice. Through mass

rallies and trips to Albany, tenant leaders connect with fellow members of the working class to fight for racial and economic justice and to build power for the tenant movement.

Despite all these efforts, tenants and communities still find themselves under attack. Safe, affordable housing continues to be threatened as we emerge from the pandemic. **Courts have been overwhelmed with eviction cases since the moratorium was lifted and tenants struggle to pay rent.** SNYC tenants grapple with predatory landlords who:

1. use a variety of harassing tactics to displace tenants to flip buildings out of regulatory status in order to maximize profits over people.
2. aggressively pursue eviction cases even where back rent has been paid by ERAP or where there are ERAP stays
3. refuse to make repairs, forcing tenants to live in dangerous & unhealthy conditions
4. warehousing vacant apartments, hoping to ultimately circumvent rent regulations

Our organizing across portfolios targets bad lenders as well. Predatory Equity would not exist without the highly speculative loans. Signature Bank, who is in the news today for unscrupulous banking practices, has been one of the more egregious multi-family lenders, having provided loans to Steve Croman, Raphael Toledano and [Ved Parkash](#). Landlords who faced allegations of tenant harassment from the Stabilizing NYC tenants.

Additionally, I am opposed to the cuts made to the housing and buildings budget by Mayor Adam!

I support #CareNotCuts and a #PeoplesBudget, and oppose the deep cuts and reductions proposed by Mayor Adams in the preliminary budget.

Both of these departments are facing potential cuts and vacancy reductions in the upcoming budget. Any reduction in services could lead to an increase in displacement, homelessness, and unsafe living conditions.

The NYC Comptroller's report on vacancies in the NYC government highlights the impact of these vacancies on the city's ability to provide essential services, including housing. Another report shows these vacancies leading to lower performance at agencies performing key city functions, including HPD and DOB.

The reports note that the HPD has the highest vacancy rate of any city agency, with over 18% of positions unfilled. This has a direct impact on the agency's ability to provide critical services such as enforcing housing codes, conducting inspections, and responding to tenant complaints.

The DOB is the largest agency with a greater-than 20 percent vacancy rate. 500 positions are listed in budget codes devoted to inspections, but DOB only employs 355.

As we continue to face the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising housing costs, and more housing insecurity, it's more important than ever to prioritize care over cuts. Cuts to these departments would only exacerbate the problems we face and make it harder for New Yorkers to access the care and support they need.

I urge you to reject any cuts to the HPD and the DOB in the Fiscal Year 2024 budget. Let's work together to ensure that all New Yorkers have access to safe, affordable, and healthy housing and public spaces.

Thank you for your attention and your commitment to our communities.

*fighting predatory equity and tenant harassment*



*organizing nyc tenants for the right to stay in our homes and communities*

## **FY 2024 Initiative Funding Request For \$4,000,000**

**Stabilizing NYC requests \$4,000,000 in City Council initiative funding** for the tenth year of our highly successful program to combat harassment, evictions, and the loss of affordable housing at the hands of predatory equity and speculative investors. *Stabilizing NYC (SNYC) is a citywide coalition combining legal, advocacy and organizing resources to organize tenant associations and landlord coalitions.* SNYC members provide outreach, tenant rights education, leadership development, and legal defense and support.

Safe, affordable housing continues to be under threat as we emerge from the pandemic. Courts have been overwhelmed with eviction cases since the moratorium was lifted and tenants struggle to pay rent. **Predatory Equity & Speculation disproportionately forces out tenants in BIPOC communities and turn to smaller properties for investments.** SNYC tenants grapple with landlords who use a variety of harassing tactics to displace tenants to flip buildings out of regulatory status in order to maximize profits over people.

- aggressively pursue eviction cases even where back rent has been paid by ERAP or where there are ERAP stays
- refuse to make repairs, forcing tenants to live in dangerous & unhealthy conditions
- warehouse vacant apartments, hoping to ultimately circumvent rent regulations

**Housing justice is racial justice.** Decades of government disinvestment in communities of color has been exacerbated by redlining, speculation, and overleveraging. Landlords continue to benefit from systemic racism by going unpunished, face little accountability, and are rewarded for their negligent behavior. Landlords wield power over communities through denial of services, neglect repairs, illegal construction, etc and are rarely held accountable by city and state agencies. Private equity companies and speculators are working every day to find “opportunities” in this crisis as

they commodify housing and seek to displace our communities for their profit.

## **Organizing is essential to keep tenants safe and to address the unjust impacts on the communities we organize.**

### **STABILIZING NYC MEMBERS:**

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Manhattan:</b> | CAAAV: Organizing Asian Communities ● Cooper Square Committee ● Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) ● Housing Conservation Coordinators ● Met Council on Housing                        |
| <b>Bronx:</b>     | Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA) – New Settlement ● Mothers on the Move ● Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition ● Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association |
| <b>Brooklyn:</b>  | Fifth Avenue Committee ● Flatbush Tenant Coalition ● IMPACCT Brooklyn ● Neighbors Helping Neighbors ● St. Nicks Alliance ● Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB)                |
| <b>Queens:</b>    | Asian Americans for Equality (AAFE) ● Catholic Migration Services ● Chhaya CDC ● Woodside on the Move  |
| <b>Citywide:</b>  | TakeRoot Justice   |

Over the last 9 years, Council funding has allowed us to create and strengthen vast networks of tenant associations across the city. Our work results in an **improved and well-maintained NYC housing stock that's kept affordable for our working-class families and seniors.**

**SNYC has organized & supported hundreds of tenant associations throughout the City. From this base we have...**

- ➔ Formed coalitions across building portfolios, building campaigns to thwart predatory equity tactics through direct & legal action
- ➔ Forced unscrupulous landlords to make improvements and provide tenant protections across their portfolios
- ➔ Held landlords accountable for incorrect rent amounts and won ERAP protections for tenants that they're entitled to in housing court.
- ➔ Won rent strikes & stopped evictions

Tenant organizing builds community, where people with varying levels of vulnerability or marginalization, including immigration status, support each other. Members organizing Tenants on the ground creates lasting networks that are crucial when our communities face crises - such as COVID-19 - and need access to resources and information beyond housing as well. **Funding will continue to allow SNYC to fight speculation & displacement, develop dynamic tenant leadership and neighborhood structures.**

Last year, the City Council generously awarded us \$3,700,000 to continue our work. We are requesting \$4 million to allow a 9% COLA increase to each of the 20 coalition members, helping to ensure that we can continue to do

the same amount of work as business and living costs have risen sharply. *With the additional increase of \$300,000 we can protect more homes, win more building improvements and strengthen community organizing across the City.*

[www.stabilizingnyc.org](http://www.stabilizingnyc.org)

[@stabilizingnyc](https://twitter.com/stabilizingnyc)

# TAKEROOT JUSTICE

**Testimony to the NYC City Council**

**Committee on Housing and Buildings**

**Preliminary Budget Hearing for FY 2024**

March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Sanchez and members of the Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Višnja Vujica, and I am speaking today as Staff Attorney in the Equitable Neighborhoods practice of TakeRoot Justice. TakeRoot works with grassroots groups, neighborhood organizations and community coalitions to help make sure that people of color, immigrants, and other low-income residents who have built our city are not pushed out in the name of “progress.”

My testimony today will be focused on the Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative, and the redesign of our municipal debt collection system to support housing and neighborhood stability. My colleague Jackie del Valle is also testifying today, with a focus on the Stabilizing NYC initiative and TakeRoot’s work in support of tenants.

**We urge the Committee and Council to support \$3 million in funding for the Citywide CLT Initiative in the FY2023 budget.** (Please see attached one-pager.)

TakeRoot is a member of the New York City Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI), an alliance of grassroots, affordable housing, environmental and economic justice organizations working to promote community land trusts (CLTs) and neighborhood-led development. NYCCLI members include CLTs organizing for deeply-affordable social housing, commercial and community spaces, and other needs in low income Black and brown neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

We at TakeRoot support this growing CLT movement for affordable community-controlled housing, commercial and community spaces through legal services to CLT members of the initiative and other groups exploring the CLT model. We provide everything from education on orientation and incorporation, to transactional representation in negotiating ground leases and joint venture agreements. Our work and the work of our clients would not be possible without a contract with HPD that is the result of this Council’s Community Land Trust Initiative. Since FY20, when the Council established the initiative, we have seen demand for our services grow exponentially and CLT organizing flourish in every borough of the City.



The amount allocated to the CLT Initiative, under the preliminary budget, is proposed to remain the same for the third fiscal year in a row despite the reality that several new neighborhood-based community land trust organizations have emerged, and that the City itself has expanded opportunities to partner with CLTs on crucial preservation and development projects that stabilize housing and other key types of real estate across New York City neighborhoods. More than 1,200 homes are now in CLT portfolios or pipelines, according to HPD, and New York City and State have proposed policy changes that would help CLTs bring more land and housing into community stewardship. With an enhancement, the initiative could support new CLTs in Edgemere, Queens, and Flatbush, Brooklyn, and expand citywide education, organizing, and technical assistance to meet the growing and urgent need for CLTs. The final FY24 budget should support that expansion and increase funding the HPD has available for community land trust contracts to \$3 million.

### **Capital Funding is Needed for CLTs to Successfully Reverse Decades of Disinvestment in Public Properties**

Equally importantly, the budget must include capital funding commitments to support CLT-driven revitalization of buildings that fell into disrepair while under City ownership like the Tenant Interim Lease buildings recently-acquired by our clients at the East Harlem El Barrio Community Land Trust and the Kingsborough Armory, for which a community visioning process is now underway.

This Council has made great strides towards ensuring that such public properties are disposed of to CLTs and other not-for-profits so that they can be used for the public good, but without capital commitments to support those new owners as they work to reverse decades of disinvestment, such dispositions are at best a gesture and at worst the offloading of the City's problems onto community-based organizations.

### **The Budget Must Be Amended to Reflect a Replacement of the Tax Lien Sale**

Finally, there is an adjustment that must be made on the revenue side of the budget. While the majority of this Council has been clear that it will not authorize any lien sale in the future, the sale still appears in the Mayor's budget. That line item must be removed. Instead, in FY24, the Department of Finance must have additional resources to bring debt collection into the ambit of the City, incentivizing timely payments and allowing owners who simply cannot pay to resolve their debt in a manner that increases the City's supply of affordable housing.

The City's growing number of Community Land Trusts ("CLTs"), located in nearly every neighborhood, would be ideal partners for such a system: the City could forgive the debts of owners who voluntarily transfer the land beneath their properties to CLTs. This would allow them and their tenants to stay while preserving some equity. For owners who do not accept that voluntary preservation strategy, the City will need to take an active role in foreclosure and disposition to CLTs partnering with preservation owners like the Not-for-Profit developers Housing Preservation and Development already engages through the Third Party Transfer program.



The Committee can find a detailed framework developed by the Abolish the Tax Lien Sale coalition, with insight from the housing preservation and development sector as well as many Council members here: [https://www.eastnewyorkclt.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Leaving-the-Speculators-in-the-Rear-View-Mirror\\_Feb-2-2023-2.pdf](https://www.eastnewyorkclt.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Leaving-the-Speculators-in-the-Rear-View-Mirror_Feb-2-2023-2.pdf). TakeRoot and the rest of the Coalition look forward to being a resource as the Department and the Council put a new system in place this year.

**Contact:**

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## Advancing Racial, Social and Economic Justice in NYC Communities

TakeRoot Justice provides legal, participatory research and policy support to strengthen the work of grassroots community-based organizations in New York City to dismantle racial, economic and social oppression. We partner with dozens of grassroots community-based organizations each year (see partial list on reverse) that build leadership and power within New York City's low-income communities, particularly immigrants, communities of color and others who are traditionally excluded from policy-making. Founded in 2001 as a project of the Urban Justice Center, TakeRoot has been an independent, 50-person nonprofit organization since July 2019.

Our current areas of work include:

- Tenants' Rights
- Workers' Rights
- Immigrants' Rights
- Consumer Justice
- Equitable Neighborhoods & Cannabis Equity
- Participatory Research and Policy
- Technical and Capacity Building Assistance for Nonprofits and Small Businesses

### FY24 Funding Requests

TakeRoot participates in several citywide council funding initiatives designed to provide critical services to low-income NYC communities. They include:

- Stabilizing NYC
- Legal Services for the Working Poor
- Low Wage Worker Support
- The Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative
- Community Land Trust (CLT) Initiative
- Community Housing Preservation Strategies (aka Housing Preservation Initiative and Community Consultant Contracts)

TakeRoot's innovative research, legal services and support for community-based organizations have played a crucial role in underserved NYC communities for over 20 years, and with the Council's support we look forward to engaging in the hard but necessary work of helping these communities recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic.

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123 William Street, 16th Floor | New York, NY 10038  
[www.takerootjustice.org](http://www.takerootjustice.org)



TakeRoot collaborates with 70+ groups organizing low-income, BIPOC and immigrant communities throughout NYC to serve 2100+ New Yorkers per year and share \$20 million+ in support for work toward racial, social and economic justice. We are proud to work with the following organizations:

### The Bronx

- Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association
- Crotona Community Coalition
- Green Worker Cooperatives\*
- Mary Mitchell Family and Youth Center
- Mothers on the Move/ Bronx Organizing Neighborhoods & Development (BOND)
- New Settlement Apartments/Community Action for Safe Apartments (CASA)
- Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition & the Bronx Community Land Trust
- Pan-African Community Development Initiative
- South Bronx Tenant Movement

### Brooklyn

- Brooklyn Movement Center
- Carroll Gardens Association
- Carroll Gardens Nanny Association
- Center for Family Life in Sunset Park
- Cypress Hills LDC
- East New York Community Land Trust
- Equality for Flatbush
- Fifth Avenue Committee
- Flatbush Tenant Coalition
- Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees\*
- IMPACCT Brooklyn
- Neighbors Helping Neighbors
- Red Hook Initiative
- St. Nicks Alliance
- Worker's Justice Project/Proyecto Justicia Laboral\*

### Queens

- Adhikaar\*
- Chhaya Community Development Corporation
- Desis Rising Up and Moving\*
- MinKwon Center for Community Action
- New Immigrant Community Empowerment
- Project Hajra
- Ridgewood Tenants Union
- Woodside on the Move

### Manhattan

- African Communities Together\*
- Asian Americans For Equality\*
- CAAAV Organizing Asian Communities\*
- Chinese Staff and Workers' Association
- Cooper Square Committee
- East Harlem El Barrio Community Land Trust
- Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)
- Harlem Solidarity Defense
- Little Sisters of the Assumption
- Movement for Justice in El Barrio
- The Residents to Preserve Public Housing
- University Settlement

### Staten Island

- La Colmena

### City-wide

- Arab American Association
- Asian Americans for Equality
- Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development
- Black Alliance for Just Immigration
- Damayan Migrant Workers Association
- Domestic Workers United
- Flanbwayan Haitian Literacy Project
- Laundry Workers Center
- Make the Road NY
- National Domestic Workers Alliance
- National Mobilization Against Sweatshops
- NYC Network of Worker Cooperatives
- Participatory Budgeting Project
- Right to Counsel NYC Coalition
- Rise
- Sylvia Rivera Law Project
- Tenants and Neighbors
- VOCAL-NY
- Urban Upbound

*\*These organizations also offer services to communities in other borough(s) in addition to the borough under which they are listed.*

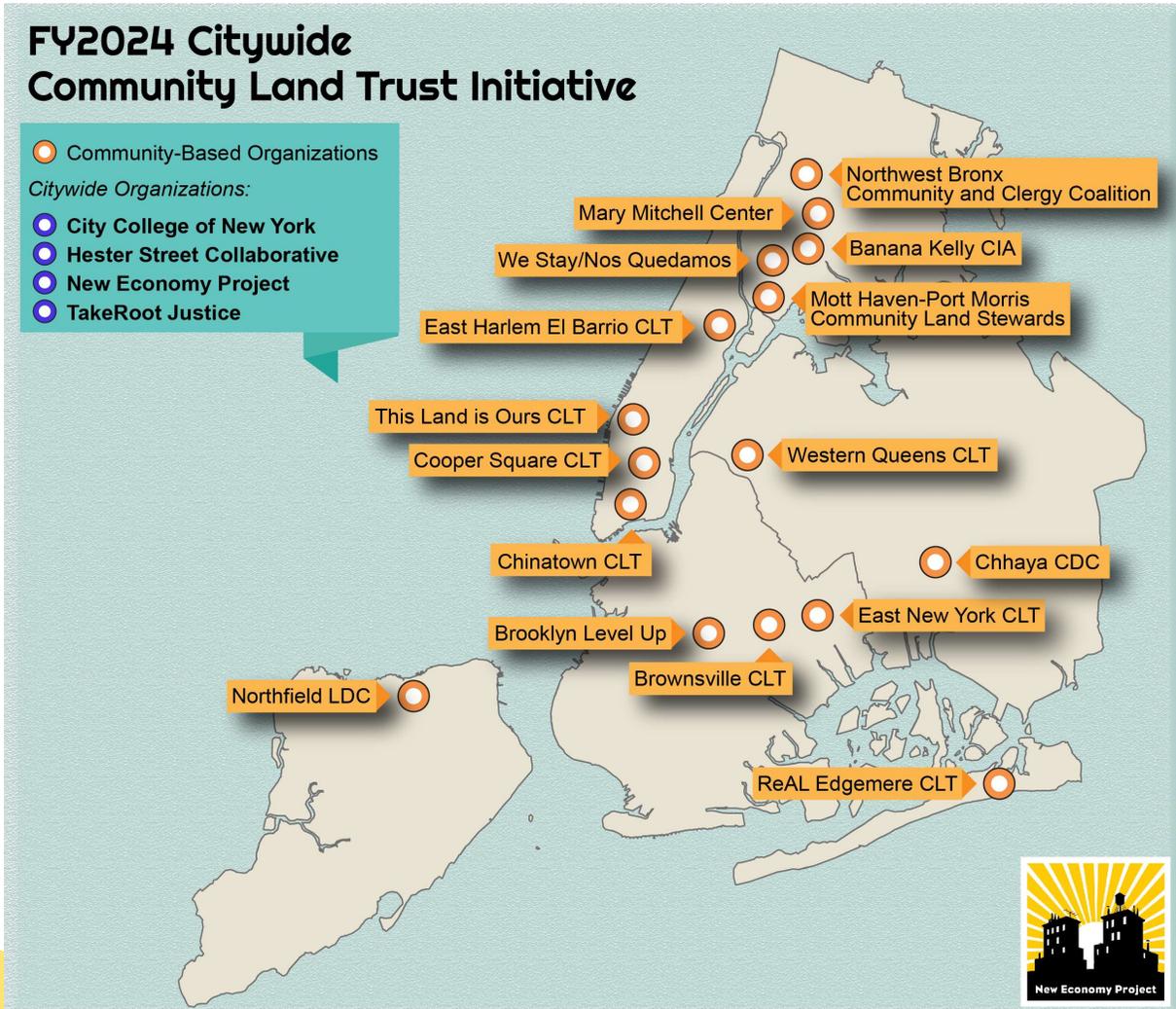


# Community Land Trust Initiative

## FY2024 Discretionary Funding Request

The **citywide Community Land Trust Initiative** requests **\$3 million** in FY2024 City Council discretionary funding to support 20 organizations working to develop community land trusts (CLTs) and permanently-affordable housing, commercial and community spaces. The Initiative delivers comprehensive outreach, education, organizing, and legal and technical assistance to support the formation and expansion of CLTs in historically-redlined Black and brown neighborhoods. By giving communities ownership of land, CLTs foster democratic resident control, combat displacement, and build collective community wealth.

Launched in FY2020, the initiative has catalyzed the growth of dynamic neighborhood-led CLTs across the five boroughs. Groups have organized and educated thousands of New Yorkers, preserved hundreds of units of permanently-affordable social housing, and generated broad support for CLTs and community-controlled development.



## Enhanced funding in FY2024 is needed to meet the growing demand for CLTs.

### This year, the CLT initiative will:

- ◆ Support two new CLTs in Edgemere, Queens, and Flatbush, Brooklyn, and expand organizing and technical assistance citywide.
- ◆ Provide 150+ education, organizing and planning sessions – in multiple languages – for tenants, homeowners, small businesses, and community partners.
- ◆ Provide ongoing training and support to 100 CLT board and steering committee members, to support community and tenant governance.
- ◆ Provide 60 technical assistance engagements to CLTs on matters such as incorporation, bylaws, establishing developer partnerships, securing financing, and more.
- ◆ Complete property feasibility studies, expand partnerships with nonprofit and MWBE developers and other stakeholders, and bring more properties into CLT stewardship.

Over time, the CLT initiative will preserve thousands of units of deeply and permanently affordable social housing, including rental, shared-equity and supportive housing. CLTs also will develop community and cultural spaces, affordable storefronts for small and worker-owned businesses, community solar projects, and other infrastructure.

**CLTs are urgently needed to stabilize neighborhoods, keep New Yorkers safely housed, and advance racial equity in housing and land use.** CLTs work in tandem with mutual housing, limited-equity cooperatives, worker cooperatives, and other democratic ownership models to maximize affordability and resident control. Manhattan's Cooper Square CLT and East Harlem El Barrio CLT, for example, steward mutual housing that is affordable to families earning 30-35% AMI, as well as storefronts for two dozen community-serving small businesses.

Learn more about CLTs at [nyccli.org](http://nyccli.org).



# TRINITY CHURCH WALL STREET

## **03.15.23 - Trinity Church Testimony - Housing & Buildings Committee - FY24 Preliminary Budget**

Wednesday, March 15, 2023 | **Subject:** FY24 Preliminary Budget Priorities - Housing & Buildings

To Chair Sanchez and Members of the Housing & Buildings Committee.

My name is Bea De La Torre and I am the Managing Director for Housing and Homelessness at Trinity Church Wall Street. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for the Committee's preliminary budget hearing for Fiscal Year 2024. Below, I offer an overview of some of the investments and policies necessary to meet the housing needs of New Yorkers.

Trinity Church Wall Street is an Episcopal Church in Lower Manhattan with a congregation of more than 1,600 parishioners who represent all five boroughs and form an ethnically, racially, and economically diverse congregation. In addition to our ministry, we carry out our mission of faith and social justice through direct services, grantmaking, and advocacy. In 2022, Trinity provided over \$30 million in grants and mission investments to support affordable housing development and address homelessness.

Trinity Church is deeply concerned about the housing crisis and its acute impact on our most vulnerable residents. Over half of all renter households in New York City are rent burdened, and nearly a third of renters spend more than 50% of their income on rent. Median rents have reached [historic highs](#), as the supply of affordable units available for median and low-income households has reached a 30-year low. According to the City's [vacancy survey](#) released last year, less than 1% of all New York City apartments priced at \$1,500 a month or less were available for rent.

This tight housing market is further compounded by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With the eviction moratorium expiring more than a year ago, recent [reporting](#) shows that landlords filed over 100,000 eviction notices in Housing Court citywide in 2022 alone. With the future funding of the State's Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) uncertain, residents who have been unable to repay their rental arrears now face the very real threat of eviction and homelessness.

As the number of families and individuals residing in New York City shelters continues to rise at an alarming pace, our elected leaders must ensure solutions are put in place to expand the supply of safe and affordable housing, as well as protect New York City's most vulnerable families and individuals from homelessness.

# TRINITY CHURCH WALL STREET

We encourage the Administration and City Council to make the following commitments in the FY24 budget to prevent more people from entering the shelter system, help those already in it to leave it faster, and ensure that all New Yorkers have access to safe and affordable housing:

**1. Expand and enhance New York City's supply of supportive housing units by:**

- **Ensuring the City upholds its commitment under NYC 15/15 to create 15,000 units of supportive housing by 2030.** This should include attention to scatter site units by increasing the service rate to \$17,500 per unit to match the congregate care rate
- **Enabling thousands of people returning from jail or prison to access 15/15 supportive housing by allowing stays in jail and prison of *more* than 90 days to count toward time "homelessness"**
- **Investing [\\$57.8M in expense funding for supportive housing](#) for people who are currently cycling in and out of the City's jail system (\$12.8 million for Justice-Involved Supportive Housing and \$45 million to support rental subsidy increases and higher service rates for supportive housing)**
- **Allocating \$152 million for the development, preservation, and rehabilitation of congregate supportive housing units**

**2. Increase the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) budget to address source-of-income (SOI) discrimination.** Although New York City's strict laws bar landlords from refusing tenants with housing vouchers or related subsidies, SOI discrimination remains far too common. We urge the Mayor and City Council to allocate more funding to CHR so it can expand outreach and education on SOI discrimination, as well as increase enforcement against landlords who reject prospective tenants because of their housing vouchers. In addition, the Council should determine if the Law Department's affirmative litigation unit has sufficient staffing to support CHR's work.

**3. Allocate more resources to the Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) to help resolve the agency's staffing shortage.** Ever since New York City implemented a hiring freeze amid the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, HPD has remained significantly understaffed. This staffing shortage has especially affected the agency's development office, which manages the production of the City's affordable housing projects. In order to achieve the housing goals Mayor Adams outlined in his "Get Stuff Built" blueprint, the Administration and City Council need to provide HPD with more

# TRINITY CHURCH WALL STREET

resources so it can offer competitive salaries, provide staff with more opportunities for promotions and merit-based raises, and improve the agency's overall recruitment practices.

Additionally, we urge the City Council and the Mayor to enact the following pieces of legislation in tandem with the FY24 budget to help New Yorkers gain access to more permanent housing and achieve long-term savings on shelter costs and related expenses:

- 1. Fair Chance for Housing Act, [Intro 632-2022](#).** For far too long, New Yorkers with a criminal record (11% of the City's adult population) have been denied access to permanent and affordable housing long after their arrest or incarceration. Conviction-based housing discrimination frequently forces individuals returning from jail or prison with few options for housing except the shelter system or the streets, driving a vicious cycle of homelessness and incarceration. The passage of the Fair Chance for Housing Act would unlock new opportunities for New Yorkers with a criminal record to access permanent housing and likely reduce the overall length of shelter stays for individuals reentering society.
- 2. Legislation to End the CityFHEPS '90-Day' Eligibility Rule, [Intro 878-2023](#).** Before becoming eligible for CityFHEPS vouchers, households must reside in a shelter for 90 days to qualify for the program. This rule unnecessarily delays the process of finding permanent housing and leads to extremely long and harmful lengths of stay in shelter. As New York City's shelter system experiences unprecedented strain from the influx of asylum seekers and the looming wave of evictions, we urge the Council to pass this legislation and reduce the amount of time that families and individuals spend in shelter.

**Testimony by Thomas Gogan before the Committee on Housing and Buildings/  
Hearing Date: March 15, 2023**

Good afternoon. Thank you Council Member Pierina and all your Council colleagues for your good work on these important housing and building matters so crucial to our entire city.

My name is Tom Gogan and I am with the Move the Money-NYC campaign. In my younger days I worked for HPD's predecessor agency HDA as a Junior Project Developer in the Morningside Urban Renewal Area office. Later I became an active supporter of Upper West Side squatters seeking to preserve buildings for low-income mostly-immigrant families. Some 17,000 or more people had been displaced by Urban Renewal, most never to return.

Still later, I worked several years as Coordinator of the Union of City Tenants, which organized hundreds of tenants in City-owned *in rem* housing in the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn. We helped push the City to fix up and maintain many of those buildings as decent affordable housing, again for poor/ working class families. That was during the Koch and Dinkins Administrations.

The Mayor's Buildings and Housing proposed budget cuts are unconscionable. In so many important aspects, when it comes to affirmative efforts to preserve and restore decent affordable 's 2024 Preliminary Plan falls far short. I say this from my own experience as a Rent Stabilized tenant and in solidarity with the many hard-working City employees working in those agencies as well as the many community-rooted people working in non-profits such as those in the People's Plan coalition, with which Move the Money-NYC is in substantial agreement, especially when it comes to helping our frontline hardest-hit communities of color in every borough.

The Mayor's own documentation shows that our chronic housing crisis truly has morphed into an all-out housing disaster for poor/working class and even moderate-income families that can no longer or barely afford to live in this great city. Yes, there is of course a need for new housing, and yes we need aggressive code enforcement; we need vigorous anti-eviction programs and free legal

assistance. Yet our inspection workforce is at a historic low and the free legal program at Housing Court can't meet the demand.

And – with all due respect for a fine report by the Council Legislative Division's excellent staff, we must look back not just to the past few years to grasp the full scope of this multifaceted disaster. As an example: my own building went seventeen years between housing inspections! And then nine years after that. Heat complaints generated no inspections during that time that I can recall. And that's in a well-off community. What about in poorer parts of town? I know from my work in Washington Heights how very difficult it was to get the City to step in when the landlords were not providing basic services like heat and hot water.

The Federal IRA and other federal funds will run out by next year, so an even deeper crisis can only be avoided if proper budgetary decisions are made. It's good that the Council has already managed to negotiate promise to restore a couple dozen positions at HPD. But in reality we need a far more robust well-resourced workforce at HPD, not the nearly 15% employee shortfall that exists now. Much the same goes for the Buildings Department.

The public sector is crucial and it is hemorrhaging badly. We need to turn that around! 1.2% of the total City budget for HPD, for example, is way off what it should be, given the importance of housing to community and family stability. The catastrophe of 70,000+ homeless persons in this the richest City on earth is shameful! We need FAR more rapid response, not just in emergencies that might affect the wider public, but in ANY emergency. Far too many of our tenants – in private buildings and in Public Housing – go without heat for days or weeks at a time in this city. That is a travesty!

Public Housing itself is heavily dependent y on Federal money, and that's a great example of where our Move the Money campaign could make a difference. We need far more Federal support for this, the most important low- income housing program in New York City , where we *founded* Public Housing. Add to that the many non-profit community groups supporting HDFCs, tenant co-ops, community land trusts and so forth. New York City pales in its social housing effort when compared to other world cities like Vienna or Bologna.

In short, we need a FAR more robust multipronged effort – public and non-profit – at every level of HPD and the Buildings Department, in coordination with other City agencies like HRA for example, to preserve, reclaim, and rehabilitate existing housing in neighborhoods experiencing the dual contradictory push and pull of disinvestment on the one hand and hyper investment on the other. A balance must be struck, and it will take a massive coordinated effort with clear goals to accomplish community stability and reasonable growth that satisfies key stakeholders. We need good jobs creating truly and deeply affordable housing: that takes everything from architects to construction managers to hod-carriers to carpenters and electricians --- and those jobs (and job training) must be opened up faster to people from our hardest-hit communities.

So whether it's restoration of Public Housing or creating new code-compliant basement apartments or building brand new housing (which should immediately be subject to community-sustaining rentcontrols), or converting commercial buildings to residential, all of this will take a billions of dollars for years to come. From that perspective, the proposed 10-year Capital budget lacks imagination and urgency.

Importantly, we must absolutely fight for new revenues. Wall Street transaction taxes collected by the State are not adequately returned to New York City. Pied-a-terre taxes need to be instituted. Taxes on the very wealthy and on large corporations are crucial.

Where else should the money come from? The State, for one, is not doing its share. Pressure on the Governor to do better must be unrelenting.

Likewise the Federal Government is not helping enough. Led by a fatallly flawed but slowly weakening bipartisan consensus in Congress. it prefers over and over again, year after year, to spend more on weapons and warfare than on housing and healthcare and all manner of human needs.

This year alone the military baseline budget has ballooned to \$858 billion – a \$100 billion more than just two years ago! --and is swiftly approaching a TRILLION dollars. That is madness!

Our City Council needs to speak up for right-sizing the Pentagon and returning some of the tens of billions of dollars NYC sends to Washington which goes straight to the military – while short-changing our veterans too, by the way. Our Move the Money campaign in which I participate calls on the Council to pass Resolution 423-2022, which as of today already has twenty co-sponsors all together. We thank all of the Council Members who have seen the importance of standing up and telling Congress to *Move the Money from war to our communities!*

Thank you.

COUNCIL HEARING ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS COMMITTEE

TESTIMONY: AUTHOR **VICTOR M HERRERA, LEADER, AND MEMBER FREEDOM AGENDA**

To: [testimony@council.nyc.gov](mailto:testimony@council.nyc.gov)

**March 15, 2023**

**DEAR CHAIR AND COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is **Victor M Herrera**. I am a Leader and member of **Freedom Agenda and longtime advocate for the closure of Rikers Island**.

In this Budget Hearing I see that there is not much strength in acknowledging the severity of trauma that is the result of funding Criminal Justice measures versus Treatment and housing. As a directly impacted constituent and community member, I am committed to voicing support for funding the underserved community that is the result of many of the tortured and tormented citizens of our communities that are confronted with an unfair and highly racist criminal justice system that preys on the differing factors impacting people of color and demographically stereo-typed members.

If the City of New York is to benefit from change, it needs to invest in our communities that have suffered decades of trauma that is clearly the product of systemic ideology starting with the traumatic institutional practice from childhood (ACS) to the racial profiling of our youth and young and the criminalization of Mental health, Trauma that can only be blamed on the specific funding of agencies that exacerbate Homelessness, mental illness and recidivism. If we continue to fund Profit over people concepts, the problem does not fade but becomes worse as it progresses.

The Department of Corrections is a well-known institution of tragedy and travesty that takes our constituents into a tomb like environment as tormenting as it is and returns the constituent a broken dismayed individual, unsure of a future in our society on account of the experiences forced to endure in pre-trial detention that can be diverted and prevented, funding resources that focus on Treatment not Jails, Housing and employment. Returning citizens that have no resources are left in a worse crisis, with no structured setting such as housing, the risk of economic hardships becoming tragic costing the city more in the future. The mayor's budget proposes cutting 10% from HPD while DOC is set to get \$35M more. HPD is already moving far too slowly to build affordable housing and move people into it – a process I experienced while waiting more than 4 years to move into my current apartment. Cutting HPD's budget with further delay the processing of affordable housing applications and new development, whereas further investments in really affordable and accessible housing can reduce the DOC jail population and meeting the closure of Rikers by 2027. IN CLOSING, NOTHING CHANGES UNLESS THERE IS CHANGE.

**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: Brendan Cheney

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

I represent: New York Housing Conference

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/15/2023

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: SHARON NEILL

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

I represent: Department of BUILDINGS

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3-15-23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nancy Stevens

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

I represent: Dept of Medicines

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

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

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Name: Guillermo Patino

Address: NYC Department of Buildings

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: KAZIMIR VIENCHIK

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

I represent: DOB

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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 in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/15/23

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: VISNJA VUKICA

Address: 123 William St, 16<sup>th</sup> fl NY 10038

I represent: Take Root Justice

Address: 123 William St

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

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

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Name: Ahmed Tigan

Address: 100 Gold Street

I represent: HPD

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: Gaidea Capant

Address: 100 Gold Street

I represent: HPD

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

Thank you for this which is part of my book  
Irvina Moody World:  
First Trillionaire LLC  
91 Leonard Street LLC  
Tribeca, NY 11101  
other properties

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Dr. Irvina Moody M.D./PHD/JS/MBA LLC

Address: Long Island City City, NYC 11101

I represent: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 3 Court Square Long Island City NY 11101

IRVINA Moody ENTERPRISES, LLC and much, much, much

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

Also thankful  
to Ben  
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**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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in favor  in opposition

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Name: Adolfo Carrion

Address: 100 Gold Street

I represent: HPD

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

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Name: Julie Valpey + SAC of Housing Services

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

I represent: HPD

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: Brendan McLaughlin DC of Policy +

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

I represent: HPD

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: Ann Marie Schrago - PC of Enforcement

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

I represent: HPD

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: Kim Darga - PC of Development

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

I represent: HPD

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

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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Name: Aileen Reynolds - AC of Housing Opportunities

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

I represent: HPD

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