



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 797

Resolution calling upon the Federal Government to set poverty levels that reflect the high cost of living in New York City.

By Council Members Moskowitz, Avella, Baez, Brewer, Comrie, Fidler, Gennaro, Gerson, James, Koppell, Liu, Martinez, Nelson, Quinn, Reed, Sanders Jr., Sears and Weprin

Whereas, The United States poverty threshold, also known as the “poverty line,” is published each year by the United States Census Bureau in order to calculate the number of persons living in poverty in the United States; and

Whereas, The 2003 poverty threshold for a family of three comprised of one adult and two children is \$14,824 per year; and

Whereas, At the beginning of each calendar year, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (“HHS”) uses the poverty thresholds from the previous year to issue poverty guidelines for the current year, which are used for administrative purposes such as determining financial eligibility for federal programs; and

Whereas, The 2004 poverty guidelines that apply to residents of New York City are as follows:

<u>Size of family unit</u>	<u>Poverty guideline</u>
1	\$ 9,310
2	12,490
3	15,670
4	18,850
5	22,030
6	25,210
7	28,390
8	31,570; and

Whereas, According to the “State of NYC Housing & Neighborhoods 2003,” a study published by the

Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Housing Policy at New York University, the average median rent in New York City in 2002 was approximately \$700 per month, or \$8,400 per year, which exceeds the take-home income of a single person significantly above poverty threshold, and, given the higher cost of renting an apartment suitable for a family, likely exceeds the take-home income of families who earn income significantly above the poverty threshold; and

Whereas, Moreover, the federal government's calculation of poverty does not reflect regional differences in the cost of living, and thus sets the same level of poverty for people living in New York City as for people living in places where the cost of living is lower; and

Whereas, Data from a January 11, 2005 report by the United Way of New York City and the Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement entitled "2004 Self-Sufficiency Standards for the City of New York," indicates that a family of three needs an average of at least \$56,204 to be self-sufficient and make ends meet in New York City; and

Whereas, Specifically, the report indicates that in order to make ends meet and attain self-sufficiency, a family of three would need an annual income of \$49,874 in the Bronx, \$51,567 in Brooklyn, \$54,961 in Queens, \$53,874 in Staten Island, \$48,995 in northern Manhattan and \$77,957 in southern Manhattan; and

Whereas, The report also found that over the last four years housing costs have increased an average of 17% and child care costs have risen 10%, indicating that the cost of living is increasing at a fast pace in New York City; and

Whereas, Numerous other studies criticize the federal poverty threshold model, which was developed in 1963 and factors in the price of food but not the price of child care or other basic needs, as outdated and too low to meet the needs of low-income families; and

Whereas, Hundreds of thousands of families living above the poverty threshold are still living in abject poverty in New York City; and

Whereas, As a result of this blindness to the actual costs of living in New York City, many thousands of

New Yorkers who are above the poverty threshold but in fact live in poverty are ineligible for essential government supports and benefits that would dramatically assist their efforts to pull themselves out of poverty and obtain better lives for themselves and their families; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the City Council calls upon the Federal Government to set poverty levels that reflect the high cost of living in New York City.

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