



Testimony of

Stephanie Gendell, Esq.  
Associate Executive Director  
For Policy and Government Relations  
Citizens' Committee for Children

Before the  
New York City Council  
General Welfare Committee

Regarding  
Proposed Res. No. 123-A

March 26, 2014

Good morning. My name is Stephanie Gendell and I am the Associate Executive Director for Policy and Government Relations at Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC). CCC is a 70-year-old independent, multi-issue child advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring every New York child is healthy, housed, educated and safe.

I would first like to thank Chair Levin and the members of the General Welfare Committee for holding this important hearing and providing us with the opportunity to comment. I would also like to thank Council Members Wills, Palma, Deutsch, Cohen, Menchaca, Johnson, Lander, Levine, Reynoso, Chin, Mendez and Van Bramer for introducing Resolution Number 123-A, calling on the New York State Assembly and Senate to pass, and the Governor to sign, a State budget which does not bar the City of New York from using State reimbursement for rental subsidy programs for the homeless, and calling on the City of New York and State of New York to work together to create a rental subsidy program for the homeless.

CCC strongly supports the resolution and urges the City Council to pass it. We also appreciate the Chair's efforts to help impact the State budget by traveling to Albany with DHS and other advocates yesterday. Removing the barrier in law and starting a new subsidy are important priorities for CCC and we are eager to work with the State, City Administration and City Council to start the new program as soon as possible.

### **The Need for a Rental Subsidy in New York City**

With unprecedented numbers of families and children living in homeless shelters for dramatically increased lengths of stay, family homelessness in New York City has truly reached a crisis. This crisis requires immediate action on the part of the City and State officials, including the creation of a new rental assistance program to help families move out of shelter. While a housing subsidy is not the solution for every homeless family, it needs to be in the City's toolkit for those families who cannot secure permanent housing without rental assistance. Therefore, CCC is in full support of the resolution calling on the State to remove the prohibition on a new program and for the City and State to work together to create a new rental assistance program. We believe this program must be robust enough in scale and scope to effectively combat the current homelessness crisis and help families prepare, transition, and connect to long-term independence.

In April 2011, the State withdrew its funding for the Advantage rental subsidy program in the State Fiscal Year 2012 budget. Advantage had been funded jointly with City (30%), State (50%) and Federal (20%) dollars, and when the State withdrew its funding, it precluded the City from using Federal funds as well. As a result, New York City ended the Advantage program.

Since the end of Advantage, the number of children in New York City homeless shelters has increased by 33 percent – from 16,637 in December 2011 to 22,063 in December 2013. This dramatic increase is in large part because families with children are living in shelters for increasingly longer periods of time, because without a subsidy, it is very difficult for homeless families to obtain permanent housing. The average length of stay in NYC homeless shelters has increased 66% since the elimination of the Advantage subsidy program- from 258 days in April

2011 to 429 days as of December 2013.<sup>1</sup> According to the New York City's Independent Budget Office's February 2014 report, without a replacement for the Advantage program, this trend is likely to continue.<sup>2</sup>

Housing subsidies have proven to be an effective way to enable homeless families to move out of shelter and into affordable housing and it is well-past time that we provide this aid to homeless New York City families. According to the report by the coalition, United to End Homelessness (which CCC is a member of), in 2010, 9,864 families exited the shelter system to permanent housing and 7,678 exited with an Advantage subsidy.<sup>3</sup> This is compared to the first year after the Advantage program ended when only 4,930 families exited shelter into permanent housing and zero families had a city rental subsidy.<sup>4</sup> Without the creation of a new rental assistance program, families will continue living in shelters for increasing periods of time without an available affordable housing option to move into.

### **The Resolution**

CCC is grateful that the City has recognized the need for a new rental assistance subsidy, and we are in full support of implementing a new rental assistance program to help families and children secure housing.

CCC is grateful to the Council for including language in the resolution urging the State to lift the current ban on New York City being permitted to use State funding to create a new rental subsidy program. Eliminating this language from the State budget bill is a high priority for CCC and we urge the Council to pass this resolution. Similarly, CCC believes that the State should contribute a share to the program, and thus fully supports the Council's call for State funding for the program to be included in the budget.

We agree that denying the City flexibility in how it allocates State funding for rental assistance to homeless families prevents families from leaving the shelter system and contributes to New York City's homelessness crisis. In order to alleviate the record number of families with children living in shelter for increasingly longer periods of time, the State budget must include funding for a rent subsidy. CCC also agrees that this program should be designed to help families prepare, transition, and connect to resources for long-term independence.

It is critical that the new subsidy program be robust enough to meet the needs of all types of homeless families and be able to meet the needs of those on fixed incomes, protect the safety of domestic violence survivors, and meet the needs of families with children.

In conclusion, CCC is grateful to the City Council for holding this hearing and introducing this much needed resolution and we urge the City Council to pass it. We are also grateful to the Mayor for making rental assistance a priority for his administration. We look forward to working

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<sup>1</sup> New York City Department of Homeless Services, Local Law 37 Report, *supra*, note 2.

<sup>2</sup> New York City Independent Budget Office, Focus on the Preliminary Budget, February 2014. Available at: <http://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/2014marchfopb2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> United to End Homelessness, A Roadmap to Ending Homelessness, September 2013. Available at: <http://endhomelessnessnyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/A-Roadmap-to-End-Homelessness.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

with the City and the State on designing and implementing a program that will help thousands of families and children in New York City move out of shelter and into permanent housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.





**Testimony Prepared by  
Sally Greenspan  
for the General Welfare Committee  
On Proposed Resolution 123-A  
Wednesday 3/26/14  
on behalf of  
Enterprise Community Partners**

**Introduction**

Good morning and thank you to Chairperson Levin and the members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of a new local rent subsidy program for the homeless, as outlined in City Council Resolution 123.

My name is Sally Greenspan, and I am the Program Director for Vulnerable Populations at Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. Enterprise creates and preserves affordable housing connected to opportunity for low-income individuals and families. Since 1987, we have created 44,000 affordable homes in New York, nearly a quarter of which have been set aside for vulnerable populations. At Enterprise, we understand that our city's homelessness crisis is caused largely by a lack of housing accessible to the lowest-income New Yorkers.

**The Need**

Over 52,000 people are homeless each night in New York City, including more than 22,000 children. From 2012-2013 alone, homelessness in the City increased 13%, even as national rates of homelessness declined.

Driving this crisis, median rent in the city has increased by almost 9% over the past half-decade while wages have dropped by 7% after adjusting for inflation. Today, roughly half of low-income New Yorkers pay more than 50% of their monthly income on rent, often leaving them one paycheck away from losing their home.

As federal housing subsidies are increasingly unavailable, there are very limited options for homeless New Yorkers to find permanent housing. The absence of a local rental subsidy program targeted to homeless households has had a dramatic negative impact on both the number and length of stay of those in emergency shelter, at untold costs to families and their children.

### **Proposed Solution**

There is no one-size-fits-all solution to homelessness - unquestionably, some households with permanent disabilities, fixed incomes, or high service needs will require a permanent housing voucher or supportive housing. However, the majority of households in shelter face primarily economic barriers to housing, and national best practices demonstrate they can be helped with time limited rental assistance coupled with services.

A new local rent subsidy program must be developed in cooperation between public and non-governmental partners. It must be large enough to adequately address the pronounced need, and flexible enough in enrollment criteria to allow numerous households to access it. It should include a service component to help families secure and maintain housing. In order to ensure the greatest possible success for participants, it should be calibrated to family's needs both in terms of amount and duration, and include features to ensure that families that are in danger of returning to homelessness at the conclusion of the subsidy are transitioned to other programs and resources.

In order to fund an effective rent subsidy, the City must secure the State's financial support and associated Federal matching funds. The City, together with their non-governmental partners, must work actively in the coming days both to secure a change in State budget language and to ensure robust funding for an essential rental assistance program in New York City.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we strongly support City Council Resolution 123. We urge the City to continue to do everything possible to ensure that the prohibitive language is removed and that a rent subsidy is funded in this year's State budget. However, in the event that the State's final budget does not include either or both of these components, we urge the City not to give up on this essential priority. We remind the Council that the Advantage Program was created and funded mid-budget-year. Regardless of the outcome of this year's State budget negotiations, we must all push forward together on this essential policy priority. Homeless and at risk families in our City are counting on us. Thank you.



**new destiny**  
housing

**Testimony of New Destiny Housing Corporation  
New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare**

**In Support of Res. No. 123-A: Resolution calling on the New York State Assembly and Senate to pass, and the Governor to sign, a State budget which does not bar the City of New York from using State reimbursements for rental subsidy programs for the homeless, and calling on the City of New York and State of New York to work together to create a rental subsidy for the homeless.**

**March 26, 2014**

Good morning, my name is Catherine Trapani and I am the HousingLink Director at New Destiny Housing Corporation, a 20 year old nonprofit organization dedicated to the long term safety and stability of survivors of domestic violence and others at risk of homelessness. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

New Destiny is the only nonprofit in the City exclusively dedicated to the permanent housing needs of survivors of domestic violence. During a recent hearing before this committee we heard DHS Commissioner Gilbert Taylor testify to something that we have known all along: domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness in our City. According to the 2010 Consolidated Plan, the last time such figures were made available, as many as 31% of homeless families using New York City shelters were there because of domestic violence, the largest counted sub-population of homeless families. Yet, historically, City policy regarding housing and homelessness has routinely ignored survivors of domestic violence using the HRA domestic violence shelter system from their planning of housing subsidies or excluded them from available resources outright (as is the case with HPD's homeless housing resources). We are hopeful that with the new administration that this will change.

The lack of housing resources is taking a terrible toll on survivors and their families. New Destiny's research indicates that as many as 80% of survivors, most of whom are mothers with young children, leave time limited emergency domestic violence shelter still homeless and at risk of abuse. It should therefore come as no surprise that lack of housing resources has been cited in reports by New York City's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board as a deterrent for survivors considering leaving abusive relationships. This is cause for grave concern given that while other major categories of crime are down in our City, domestic violence rates are holding steady and in some precincts is on the rise. In fact, according to NYPD statistics, domestic violence is the leading cause of murder for women in the City of New York.

No one should ever have to choose between abuse and homelessness. Victims of domestic violence need to know that if they choose to leave an abusive relationship, there will be a place for them to go in the long term. It is for this reason that New



Destiny strongly supports the creation of a housing subsidy for homeless New Yorkers including those residing in HRA domestic violence shelters.

The subsidy's design must be sensitive to survivor needs, coupled with available voluntary support services for those who need them and flexible such that those who cannot attain self sufficiency before any associated time limit is reached are not thrust back into homelessness or abusive situations. Working collaboratively with the Coalition of Domestic Violence Residential Service Providers and other stakeholders, New Destiny is confident that there is broad support for such a subsidy and urge the council to adopt the resolution in support of changing state budget language that would facilitate its creation. Doing so will send a powerful message to our partners in Albany and allow the City and State to work together to craft a responsible program for the many homeless New Yorkers in need.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**Contact:**

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**Testimony of  
Supportive Housing Network of New York  
For the New York City Council's Committee on General Welfare Hearing on  
Proposed Resolution 123-A  
March 26, 2014**

Good morning Chair Levin and members of the General Welfare Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Johanna Walczyk and I am here today testifying on behalf of the Supportive Housing Network of New York. We strongly support Resolution 123 and want to thank you for making this a priority.

The Supportive Housing Network is a statewide nonprofit membership organization representing over 220 nonprofits that develop and operate supportive housing, affordable housing linked to on-site social services that help formerly homeless, disabled and at-risk individuals and families become, and remain, stably housed.

Since its inception in the 1980s, supportive housing has become one of the most effective - and cost-efficient - interventions ever devised to end homelessness among the most vulnerable, including individuals and families coping with mental illness, trauma/abuse, addiction, chronic illness and most recently, youth who have aged out of foster care.

Supportive housing is also at a crossroads with the NY/NY III initiative ending next year - the city's main vehicle for providing funding for supportive housing, but unlike this rental subsidy crisis, there isn't a legal restriction keeping the City and State from negotiating a new program.

And supportive housing should not be the only solution to homelessness; many of our 60,000 homeless men, women and children simply cannot make ends meet in a city where, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2014 Out of Reach Report, the average wage needed to afford a two bedroom apartment is \$25 an hour.<sup>1</sup> For them they just need a rental subsidy that can make up the difference between their low wages and high rent.

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<sup>1</sup> 60,000 includes census data from the city's five shelter systems - HPD, DHS, DYCD, HRA and HASA, plus the most recent street homeless count.

City Council Resolution 123 rightly calls on the State to sign a budget that once again allows the city to use state funding to create a local rental assistance program. And if as we all hope, the state lifts this restriction, then we urge the General Welfare Committee to begin work with the Administration immediately to ensure that we fund and implement a new program as soon as possible. We also ask that the Committee and Administration work with the providers and advocates that have experience with rental subsidies to shape this new and improved program. Many of us testifying today have done extensive research on local rental subsidy programs here and across the country and hope to help make this program a successful one.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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*Don't Talk About Us: Talk WITH Us*

# **PICTURE THE HOMELESS**

Good morning,

My name is Arvernetta Henry and I am presently in the New York City shelter system. I thank you for allowing me to have this time to speak about rental subsidies and how homeless people are in dire need of such subsidies today. We have so many families that are housed in the shelter system and living on the street. We also have too many people on fixed income who are being evicted from their homes because the rent is so outrageously high. I have recently met an 87 year old senior citizen who was evicted from her home. Although she had Section 8, she had her rent increased, and she was unable to pay her portion. The landlord proceeded to evict her and she came into the shelter system last week.

If we had a permanent rental subsidy program, a family with a low annual income should have to pay no more than 20-30% of their income on rent. They could be living in a decent space and provide meals for their loved ones. With a rental subsidy, families would stay together and united. Children wouldn't have to be uprooted from their schools and it would give the family a helping hand, preserving communities in the process.

While new shelters are opening up all over the City – some costing over \$3,500 a month per person – many properties remain vacant. We could renovate and rehabilitate some of the City's vacant properties and use rental subsidies to pay people's rents instead of warehousing them in shelters. The Department of Homeless Services' budget was close to \$1 billion last year. If we took even a small percentage of this budget and put it towards housing people in permanent housing, we could reduce the shelter population and house thousands of men, women, and children.

For myself, being on a fixed income of \$1200 per month, every apartment I'm looking at costs too much. If I pay rent of \$900 or more, I couldn't afford to pay utilities or buy food. If I had a rental subsidy that would allow me to pay less, I could live in an apartment and I wouldn't have to be in the shelter system or move out of the City I have been in all my life. I have a lot of medical expenses but I am ineligible for either Medicaid or Medicare. Those

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payments come out of my own pocket. I have medical bills coming out of my ear, so I'm stuck in the shelter because I have to make these payments. I also have student loans to pay off, and I could use some assistance.

I applaud the City Council in encouraging both the Governor and the State Assembly to amend the language in the current budget to allow State reimbursements to go towards rental subsidies for homeless New Yorkers. The City Council should continue to meet with the people directly facing these struggles. Both the City and State should involve homeless people and those at risk of homelessness in these conversations so we can create an effective, flexible, and permanent rental subsidy program in New York City.

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Testimony of  
Coalition for the Homeless  
and  
The Legal Aid Society

on

**Proposed Resolution No. 123-A**

Presented before

The New York City Council  
Committee on General Welfare

Patrick Markee  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Coalition for the Homeless

Joshua Goldfein  
Staff Attorney, Homeless Rights Project  
The Legal Aid Society

March 26, 2014

Coalition for the Homeless and The Legal Aid Society welcome this opportunity to testify before the New York City Council in support of Proposed Resolution No. 123-A, a resolution calling on the New York State Assembly and Senate to pass, and the Governor to sign, a State budget which does not bar the City of New York from using State reimbursements for rental subsidy programs for homeless people, and calling on the City and State to work together to create a rental subsidy program for homeless people.

#### About the Coalition and The Legal Aid Society

Coalition for the Homeless: Coalition for the Homeless, founded in 1981, is a not-for-profit advocacy and direct services organization that assists more than 3,500 homeless New Yorkers each day. The Coalition advocates for proven, cost-effective solutions to the crisis of modern homelessness, which now continues past its third decade. The Coalition also protects the rights of homeless people through litigation around the right to emergency shelter, the right to vote, and life-saving housing and services for homeless people living with mental illness and HIV/AIDS.

The Coalition operates twelve direct-services programs that offer vital services to homeless, at-risk, and low-income New Yorkers, and demonstrate effective, long-term solutions. These programs include supportive housing for families and individuals living with AIDS, job-training for homeless and formerly-homeless women, rental assistance which provides rent subsidies and support services to help working homeless individuals rent private-market apartments, and permanent housing for formerly-homeless families and individuals. Our summer sleep-away camp and after-school program help hundreds of homeless children each year. The Coalition's mobile soup kitchen distributes 900 nutritious meals each night to street homeless and hungry New Yorkers. Finally, our Crisis Intervention Department assists more than 1,000 homeless and at-risk households each month with eviction prevention assistance, client advocacy, referrals for shelter and emergency food programs, and assistance with public benefits.

The Coalition also brought the landmark litigation on behalf of homeless men and women in Callahan v. Carey and Eldredge v. Koch and remains a plaintiff in Callahan. In 1981 the City and State entered into a consent decree in Callahan in which it was agreed that, "The City defendants shall provide shelter and board to each homeless man who applies for it provided that (a) the man meets the need standard to qualify for the home relief program established in New York State; or (b) the man by reason of physical, mental or social dysfunction is in need of temporary shelter." The Eldredge case extended this legal requirement to homeless single women. The Callahan consent decree and the Eldredge case also guarantee basic standards for shelters for homeless men and women. Pursuant to the decree, the Coalition serves as court-appointed monitor of municipal shelters for homeless adults.

The Legal Aid Society: The Legal Aid Society, the nation's oldest and largest not-for-profit legal services organization, is more than a law firm for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel. It is an indispensable component of the legal, social, and economic fabric of New York City – passionately advocating for low-income individuals and families across a variety of civil, criminal and juvenile rights matters, while also fighting for legal reform.

The Legal Aid Society has performed this role in City, State and federal courts since 1876. It does so by capitalizing on the diverse expertise, experience, and capabilities of 1,100 of the brightest legal minds. These 1,100 Legal Aid Society lawyers work with some 700 social workers, investigators, paralegals and support and administrative staff. Through a network of borough, neighborhood, and courthouse offices in 26 locations in New York City, the Society

provides comprehensive legal services in all five boroughs of New York City for clients who cannot afford to pay for private counsel.

The Society's legal program operates three major practices — Civil, Criminal and Juvenile Rights — and receives volunteer help from law firms, corporate law departments and expert consultants that is coordinated by the Society's Pro Bono program. With its annual caseload of more than 300,000 legal matters, The Legal Aid Society takes on more cases for more clients than any other legal services organization in the United States. And it brings a depth and breadth of perspective that is unmatched in the legal profession.

The Legal Aid Society's unique value is an ability to go beyond any one case to create more equitable outcomes for individuals and broader, more powerful systemic change for society as a whole. In addition to the annual caseload of 300,000 individual cases and legal matters, the Society's law reform representation for clients benefits some two million low-income families and individuals in New York City and the landmark rulings in many of these cases have a State-wide and national impact.

The Legal Aid Society is counsel to the Coalition for the Homeless and for homeless women and men in the Callahan and Eldredge cases. The Legal Aid Society is also counsel in the McCain/Boston litigation in which a final judgment requires the provision of lawful shelter to homeless families.

#### **Proposed Resolution No. 123-A**

We support Proposed Resolution No. 123-A, which calls for changes in State budget language that currently restricts the use of State funds to finance a much-needed rent subsidy program to help homeless families and children move from the shelter system to permanent housing.

#### **Background: New York City's Unprecedented Family Homelessness Crisis**

As we recently testified, and the Coalition's recent "State of the Homeless 2014" report (see copy attached) documented, the current City Administration has inherited an unprecedented homelessness crisis. There are currently more than 53,600 homeless New Yorkers sleeping in the municipal homeless shelter system each night, including more than 12,700 families and well over 22,700 children. (Please see charts attached to this testimony.) These are the highest numbers since the City began keeping records of the homeless population three decades ago and the highest since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Homeless families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. While the overall homeless shelter population has increased by more than 71 percent since 2002, the number of homeless families has risen by 83 percent. Families now constitute nearly four-fifths (79 percent) of the NYC homeless shelter population, compared to two-thirds in the 1980s.

There are two major causes of the current family homelessness crisis. First, the housing affordability gap in New York City has widened significantly in recent years. This is in part due to the lingering effects of the economic downturn and high unemployment, and in part due to soaring rental housing costs. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, between 2007 and 2011 the median monthly apartment gross rent citywide increased by 8.5 percent while median household income decreased by 6.8 percent.



The second major factor responsible for the all-time record NYC homelessness is the previous Administration's series of failed policies. In 2005 the previous administration eliminated priority use of Federal housing programs (public housing and Section 8 vouchers) for homeless children and families, followed by the replacement of those proven and successful Federal programs with wasteful and ineffective time-limited rent subsidy programs (Housing Stability Plus and Advantage), and ultimately the termination of all housing assistance for homeless families in March 2011.

By doing this, the previous Administration eliminated all housing-based policies that helped stabilized homeless families in permanent housing. This triggered longer shelter stays – average shelter stays for homeless families with children have soared to 435 days (14.5 months) and for homeless childless families to 518 days (17 months). Failed policies under the previous administration also forced more and more families to make repeated trips through the costly shelter system.

### **Moving Forward: Reinstate Housing-Based Solutions**

The lack of housing subsidies to help homeless families secure permanent housing is at the heart of the current homelessness crisis. That is why it is so essential that the City and State partner to create a new rent subsidy to supplement existing Federal and City housing resources.

As we testified recently, following are highlights of the steps that can be taken to reverse the ineffective and counter-productive policies from the previous administration and implement housing-based policies to reduce record-high family homelessness:

1. Utilize existing Federal and City housing resources to move a designated number of homeless families and individuals from the shelter system into permanent housing:
  - Resume priority referrals of eligible homeless households to the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) public housing waiting list.
  - Resume referrals of eligible homeless households to Section 8 voucher waiting lists so that when Section 8 becomes available this could be resource.
  - Reinstate the NYCHA waiting list priority status previously granted to homeless applicants for both the public housing and Section 8 voucher programs.
  - Resume priority referrals of homeless families and individuals to a designated number of vacancies in existing housing units assisted by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development.
  
2. Work with the State to create an effective City-State rental assistance program for homeless New Yorkers to supplement existing Federal and City housing resources. The program should:
  - Assist at least 5,000 households annually,
  - Offer at least five years of rent subsidy per eligible household,
  - Be otherwise modeled on the proven Federal Section 8 voucher program (this includes provisions that rent subsidies are not linked to welfare benefits, program participants pay no more than 30% of their income towards rent, apartments must meet Section 8-style housing quality standards, and rent levels are in line with Section 8 "Fair Market Rents"),
  - Provide a mechanism to ensure ongoing housing stability for those homeless households with members with disabilities or the barriers to employment, who cannot otherwise afford to retain housing after the five-year subsidy has expired, and
  - Be administered by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA).

Proposed Resolution No. 123-A urges the State Legislature and the Governor to act quickly to remove restrictive language currently in the State budget that prohibits the use of State funds and State-controlled TANF funds to finance a new rent subsidy program to help homeless shelter residents secure permanent housing. We support this resolution, and look forward to working with City and State officials to help create a much-needed rental assistance program for homeless New Yorkers.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony. And, as always, we look forward to working with the committee and the City Council in the coming months and years on efforts to reduce New York City's homeless population.



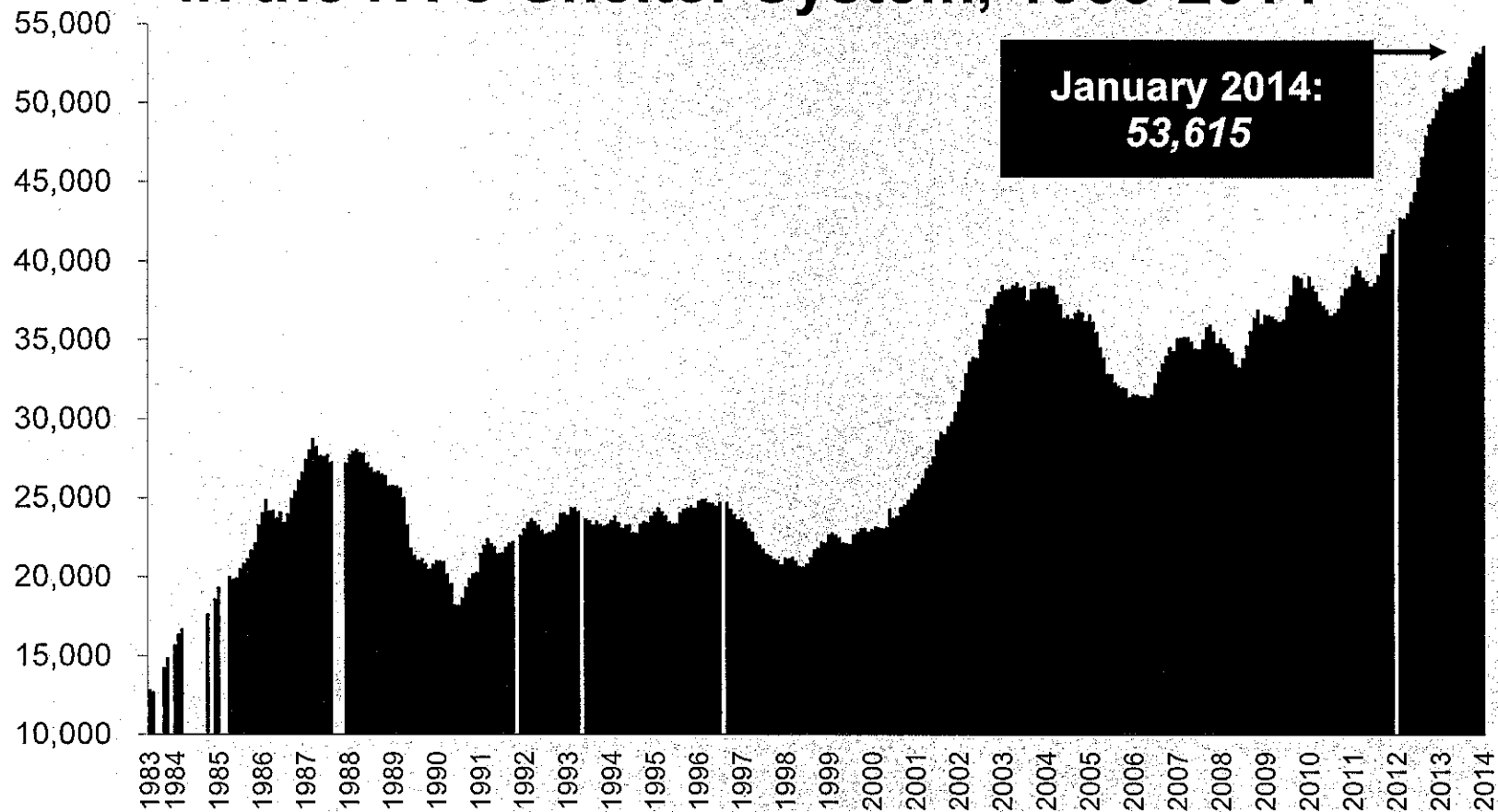
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## Homelessness in New York City

Updated March 2014

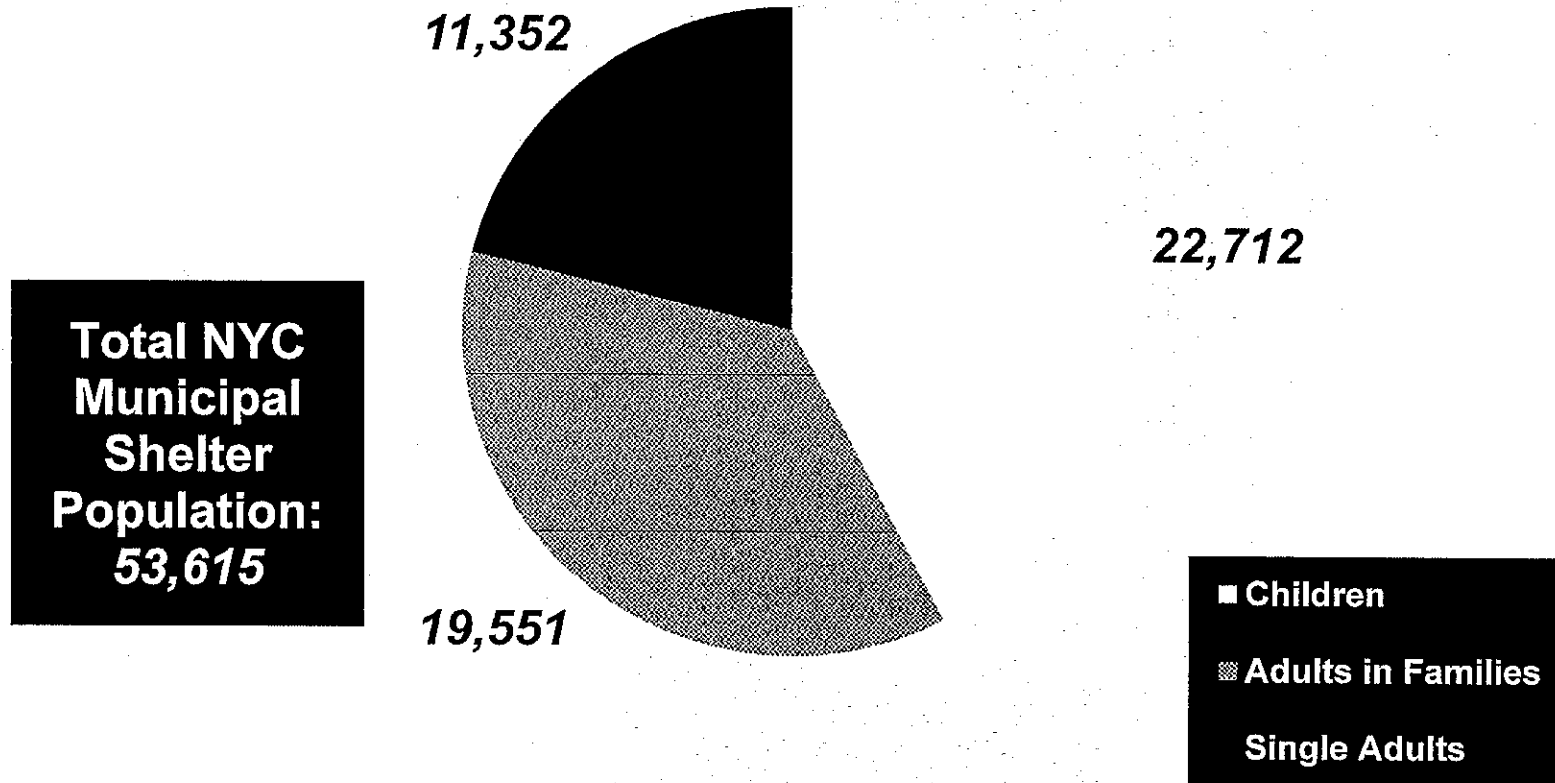
Chart 1

### Number of Homeless People Each Night in the NYC Shelter System, 1983-2014

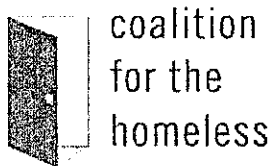


Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration and NYCStat, shelter census reports

## Number of Homeless People Each Night in the NYC Shelter System, January 2014



Source: City of New York, NYCStat

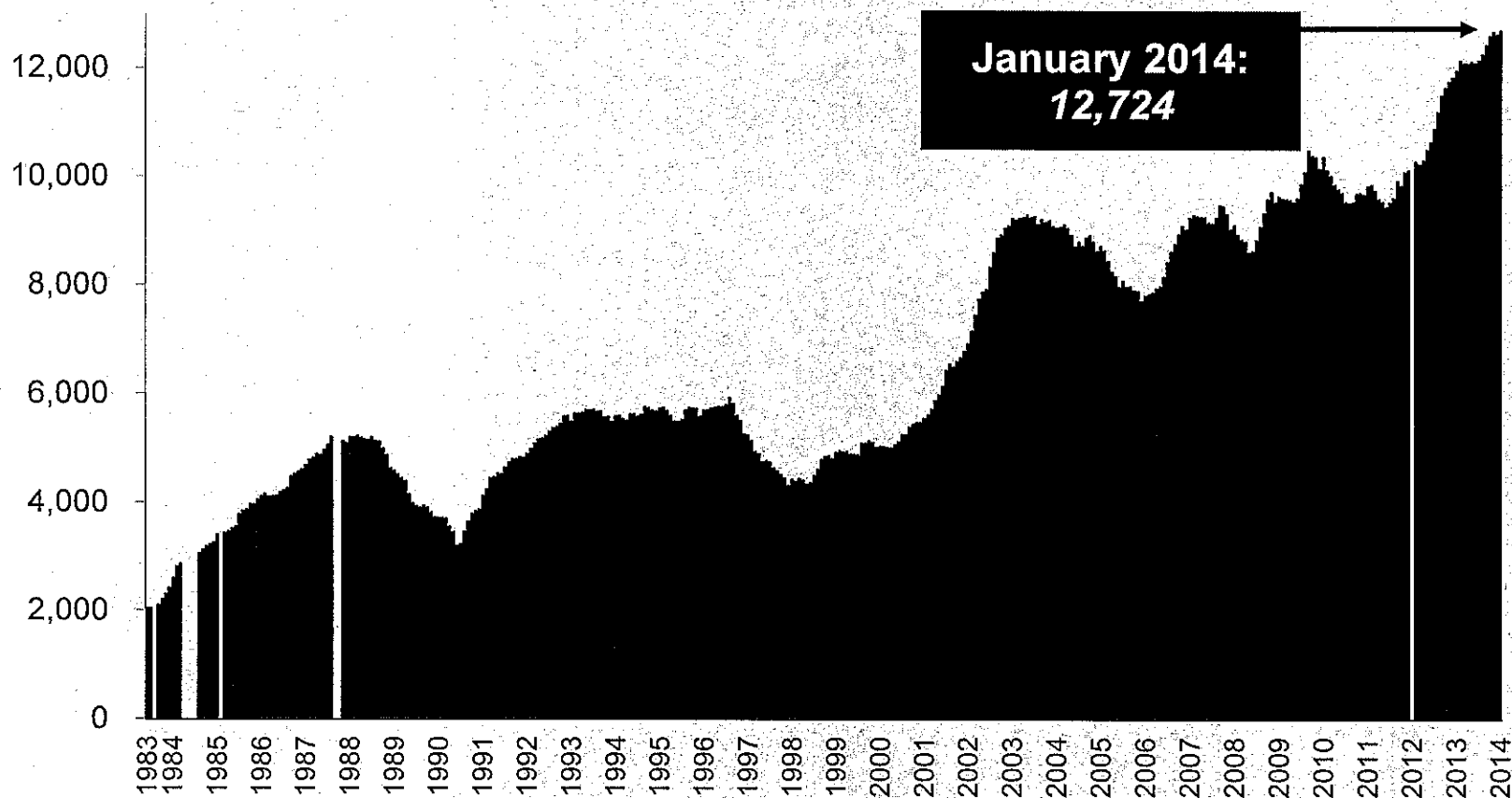


## Homelessness in New York City

Updated March 2014

Chart 3

### Number of Homeless Families Each Night in NYC Shelter System, 1983-2014



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration and NYC Stat, shelter census reports



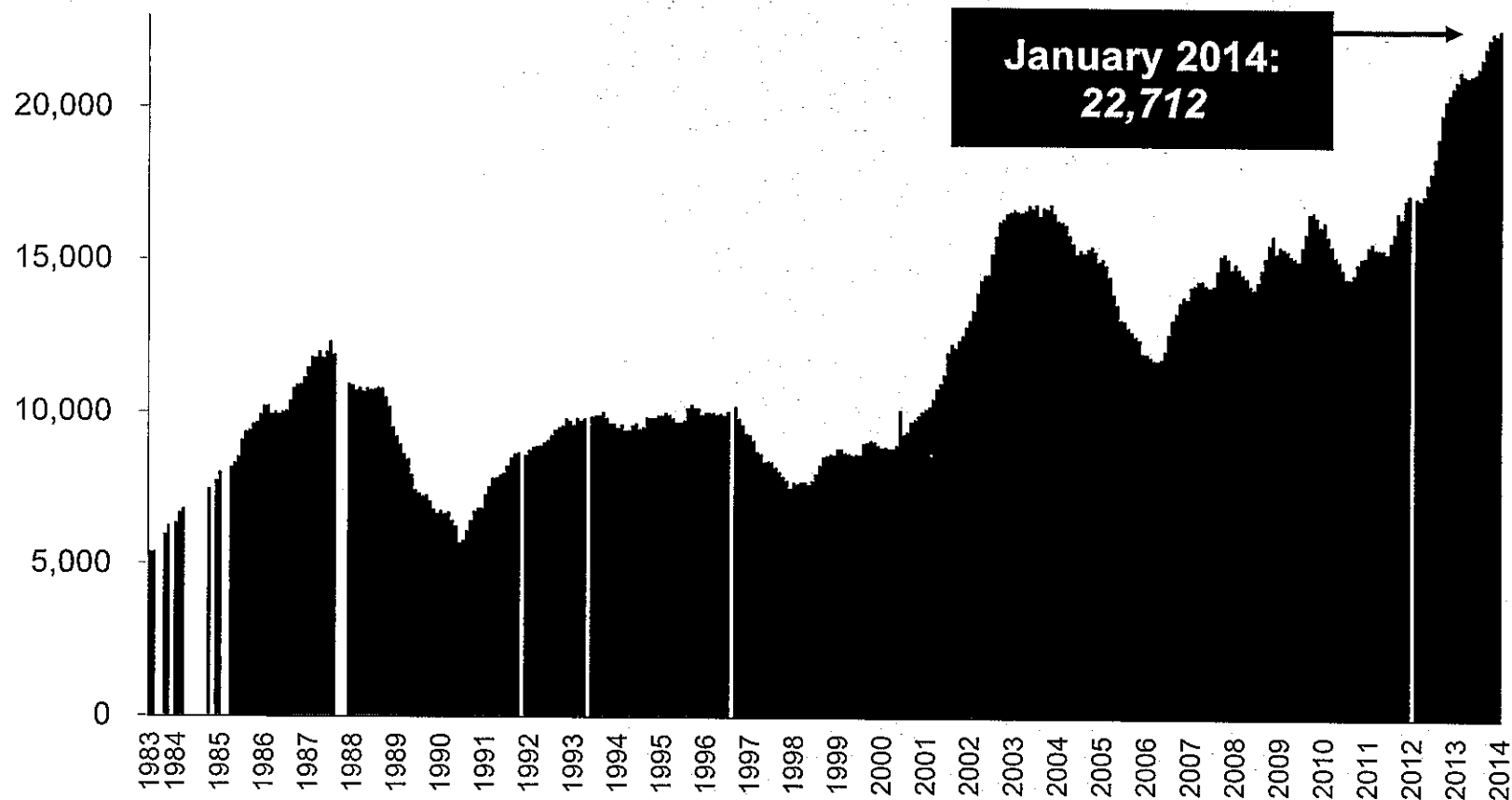
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## Homelessness in New York City

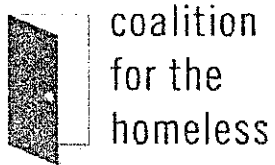
Updated March 2014

Chart 4

### Number of Homeless Children Each Night in NYC Shelter System, 1983-2014



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration and NYCStat, shelter census reports

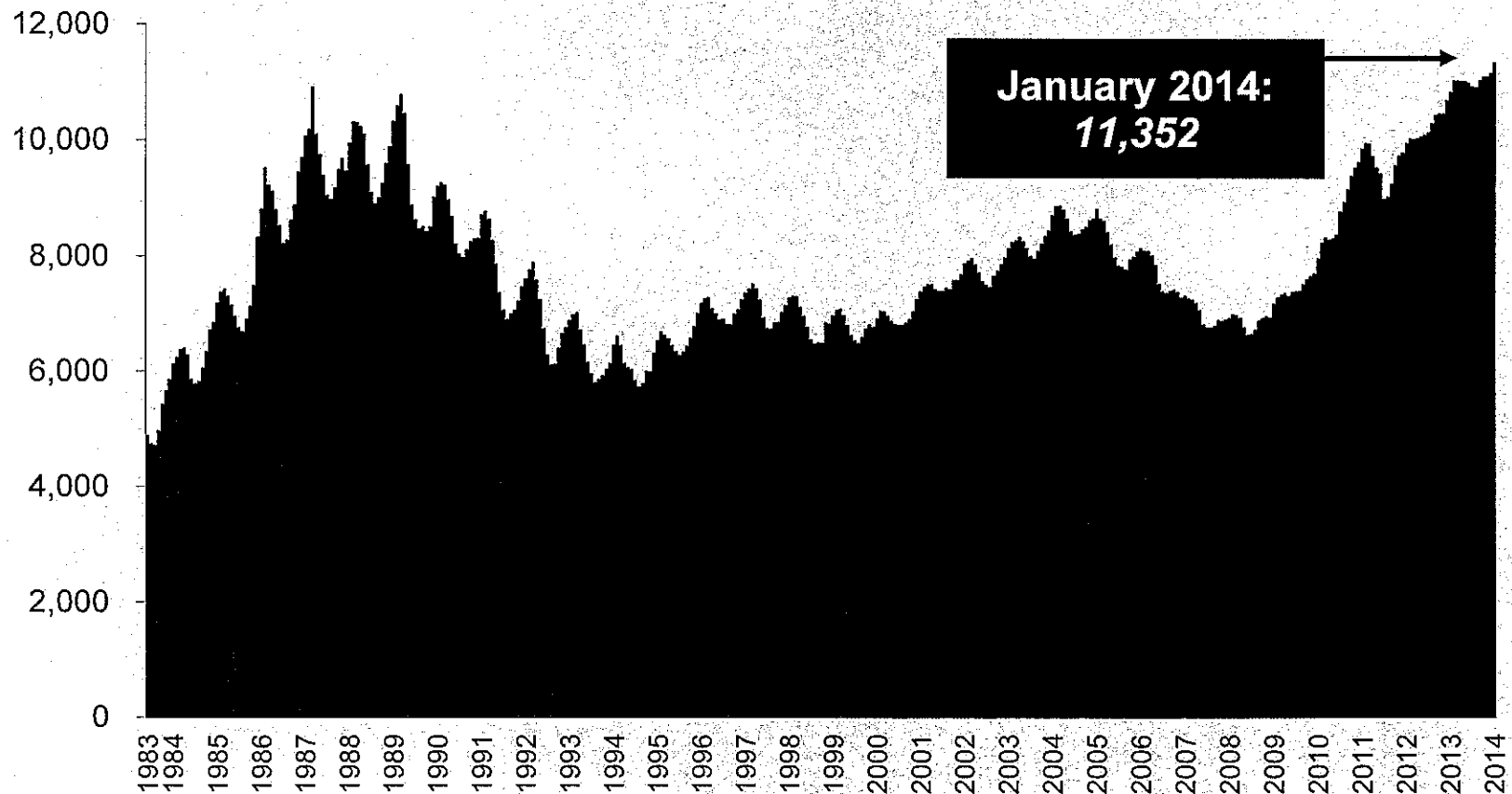


# Homelessness in New York City

Updated March 2014

Chart 5

## Number of Homeless Single Adults Each Night in NYC Shelter System, 1983-2014



Source: NYC Department of Homeless Services and Human Resources Administration and NYCSStat, shelter census reports

**Testimony Prepared by Jeff Foreman, Director of Policy  
Care for the Homeless**

**For New York City Council General Welfare Committee  
Public Hearing on Council Resolution 123-A  
March 26, 2014**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the City Council General Welfare Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I am Jeff Foreman, Policy Director of Care for the Homeless. We are a nonprofit organization operating more than 30 Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHCs) in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and Queens, all of them state licensed Article 28 health facilities that delivered 33,627 primary and specialty clinic medical visits to people experiencing homelessness in 2012.

Care for the Homeless also delivers street medicine alongside street outreach teams in some areas, as well as behavioral healthcare, health education and prevention services. We also operate a 200-bed shelter for medically frail and mentally ill women in the Bronx.

All our services are targeted to people experiencing homelessness in New York City.

Care for the Homeless and every person who advocates fighting, preventing and ending homelessness should have the same two words on their lips for this Committee today: THANK YOU.

It's refreshing that this Committee, this City Council and this City administration are aggressively taking on the fight to diminish, prevent and end homelessness. Thank you.

We also recognize and thank Council Member Ruben Wills for authoring this resolution; Committee Chair Stephen Levin for moving it; and Chairman Levin and Council Members Gibson, Palma, Deutsch, Cohen, Menchaca and Johnson for sponsoring it. We thank every Committee Member for your work to fight homelessness in New York City.

With the right tools we're confident we can end modern day homelessness as we know it in our city. One absolutely necessary tool is an appropriate and adequate rental subsidy. We can't make a real dent in our homelessness crisis without it.

As an advocate I know there's a tendency to fight over details because they are so important. People say the devil is in the details. But let me be clear: today we recognize first how dramatic and vital a step our city is taking and we are full of thanksgiving for it.



Of course there are details we urge you as policy makers to consider, and I'll have more to say on that later. But we will not make the perfect the enemy of the good in this essential work.

We wholeheartedly support Resolution 123-A in the call on the state to enact a budget "which does not bar the City of New York from using State reimbursements for rental subsidy programs for the homeless, and calling on the City of New York and State of New York to work together to create a rental subsidy program for the homeless."

New York City cannot effectively fight our homelessness crisis and cannot end modern day homelessness without an adequate long-term and flexible rental subsidy program to assist people experiencing homelessness in transitioning from shelter to stable housing.

For more than three decades New York City had, in effect, a targeted subsidy program to move people experiencing homelessness to housing. First it was a priority for a portion of federal housing resources – Section 8 Vouchers and NYCHA Public Housing Units – to move homeless families and individuals to stable housing.

Shortly after that priority ended, in response to the dramatic increase in homelessness and in the DHS shelter census as a result of it, the city partnered with the state in a rental subsidy program. That program had several iterations culminating in the Advantage rental subsidy program that ended in 2012.

Though Advantage had real deficiencies, which we can learn from, certainly no advocate ever wanted that program eliminated with no replacement at all. Having no subsidy program has been the main cause for the catastrophic increase in homelessness in New York City and the record high DHS census in January explained so well in the Coalition for the Homeless "State of the Homeless" report issued this month.

The DHS census numbers themselves, and their dramatic increase, are the best arguments for Resolution 123-A.

- In January of this year the DHS shelter census was 53,615 – a record high
- That included 22,712 children, another record
- Families with children set a record duration of stay mark, too, with average shelter stays growing from less than a year to 14 ½ months
- In 2013 over 111,000 New Yorkers slept in DHS shelters for some period of time
- Most of the growth in homelessness is among families; In 2002 there were an average of 7,111 homeless families in shelter daily – two months ago it was 12,712 – an almost 79% increase during the last administration

The basis of our Care for the Homeless advocacy is that policy choices created modern day homelessness and better policy choices can end homelessness as we know it. Your effort to permit state and federal funding for a targeted subsidy and for the City and State to implement an effective subsidy to assist people experiencing homelessness from shelter to housing is that better policy.

With that in mind we offer a number of points to be considered in creating any rental subsidy program as the City works with the State.

Our first concern is that the solution be big enough to diminish the problem.

It's an immense problem, but it's not beyond our ability to solve. The city and state must partner to create a robust enough program. More important, we must get started even if the program must be enlarged as it goes along.

Of course the rental subsidy program is not sufficient nor expected to solve homelessness on its own. It will work best with the reinstatement of a priority for a meaningful portion of federal resources – Section 8 vouchers and NYCHA housing – for homeless families and individuals and a commitment to continued supportive housing for those who need it. Success also requires greater focus and resources for prevention programs and better coordination of the desperately needed programs, agencies and resources that impact homelessness in New York City.

Length of the subsidy is also a critical issue. One proposal has been a rental subsidy of up to 5 years. The concern most advocates had about the old Advantage rental subsidy program was its short 2 year duration. We can learn from Advantage that 2 years is not a sufficient time limit.

In fact the most successful rental subsidy programs, like Section 8 vouchers or the currently highly successful Utah program that features a Section 8 like voucher, do not have a proscribed time limitation.

Longer is better. More flexible with no "hard" time limit is better still.

Another Advantage lesson is that any subsidy must be accompanied by a program of after care and supports. Advantage had no real program to improve conditions for the families involved, to foster changes or create alternative sources for subsidy. While Advantage was better than no subsidy, it wasn't really transitional as much as temporary. It was a one or two year respite from shelter that sent half of its recipient families right back to shelter.

The need for a supportive program is widely accepted as crucial to stabilizing families or individuals in transition. This includes medical and mental health supports, addiction services, vocational and other training, financial management assistance and training, child care support and numerous other kinds of support. Development of a support program can best be accomplished by including consumers and their advocates in a meaningful way in developing programs and vetting procedures.

Some families, with that kind of program, will be capable of moving beyond a rental subsidy in five years; some in less than two years. Nonetheless, we urge you to consider what happens to families who can't afford unsubsidized housing at the end of a time limitation through no fault of their own. That outcome is unfortunate, but it will happen in some cases.

Consideration should be given, if there is any time limitation, to creating an alternative, certainly for exceptional cases. Any time limit should include a process allowing for extension or exemption.

Thought must be given about those cases where people are disabled and find it very difficult or impossible to maintain stable housing without a subsidy. Many of our clients are disabled and unable to work. In these cases a Section 8 type ongoing voucher is the most effective and efficient method to provide housing. Importantly, it is also the most cost effective method compared to alternatives like shelter.

Transitioning people experiencing homelessness from shelter to housing without subsidy is a laudable goal, and for many families an achievable one. But it's not possible for everyone. In cases where it is not possible our guiding principles should be creating the best outcomes and being good stewards of public resources. Maintaining stable housing through subsidies when required is the right thing to do for those caught in homelessness; it produces better health, quality of life and community outcomes; and over time saves substantial tax dollars.

Any subsidy should be both affordable and stable for those it seeks to assist. Housing subsidy programs typically use the HUD affordability definition which caps the cost of housing at no more than 30% of gross household income.

That sliding scale typically works for low income people. Unfortunately, we haven't always stuck to it. Mayor de Blasio and Governor Cuomo recently adopted a policy to rescue some of our most vulnerable neighbors, those living with HIV/AIDS in HASA housing, from the nightmare of rents of over 40% or even over 50% of gross income. A rent subsidy program to assist people experiencing homelessness must ask no more than the HUD 30% affordability index.

In this vital step to move people from shelter to housing we must assure that the housing placements aren't problematic in and of themselves. In a market with too little housing for very-low income households we must assure subsidies go for decent, safe and reasonably maintained units. As federal Section 8 housing vouchers require not just that recipients meet guidelines, but also that properties meet standards, we must develop a system requiring that city subsidies fund housing meeting a sufficient standard.

I want to end where I started today. Thank you for your outstanding commitment. We're confident you're on the right policy path and that as a community we'll be better for it.

Jeff Foreman, Director of Director  
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**McSilver Institute** | **NYUSilver**  
**for Poverty Policy and Research** | Silver School of Social Work

Testimony of **Mary M. McKay, Ph.D.**

**Director, McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research**

before the

**New York City Council General Welfare Committee**

regarding

**Proposed Resolution No. 123-A.**

in partnership with



*People Get Better With Us*

**The Institute for Community Living**

9:30 AM  
March 26, 2014

City Hall Council Chambers  
New York, NY 10007

Good morning and thank you to Council Member Levin and the members of the General Welfare Committee for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research, with the support of our partners at the Institute for Community Living, about Proposed Resolution No. 123-A.

The McSilver Institute is housed in the Silver School of School Work at New York University and oversees numerous applied research studies aimed at addressing the root causes and consequences of poverty. McSilver's work is defined by research partnerships with policy makers, service organizations, and community stakeholders in New York and globally. An understanding of the links between individuals, families, and communities to their external environments, as well as the interrelatedness of race and poverty, guide our research efforts.

Despite an improved general economy following the financial crisis of 2008 and the following recession, homelessness is still on the rise in New York. According to the Coalition for the Homeless, 53,615 individuals used city shelters in January 2014, a 7% increase from the same time the previous year and the highest level ever recorded.<sup>1</sup> In 2011, housing subsidies for homeless New Yorkers were eliminated due to the need to close of a \$10 billion state budget gap. Federal matching funds were also lost, and the program could no longer be maintained. Since Advantage housing funds were eliminated, 8,500 families and 18,000 children who had subsidized housing under the program have been forced back into the shelter system.<sup>2</sup>

At McSilver, we approach homelessness as a serious physical and mental health issue, which ultimately becomes an expensive living condition from which people seek services. In addition to it costing New York City \$3,000 to house a homeless family for one month and \$2,300 for an individual adult, emergency room visits, temporary incarceration, and other realities, all too familiar to homeless New Yorkers, are far more costly than investment in subsidized housing and preventative services. Research has shown that investing in subsidized housing in New York City can reduce health costs by 40 to 60%.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to significant health care costs, lack of housing is a significant barrier to employment for homeless individuals. Coordinated efforts linking job training and preparedness along with housing assistance have shown positive results. Our partners at the Nathan S. Kline Institute created an extensive literature review on children and

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<sup>1</sup> Coalition for the Homeless, "State of the Homeless 2014." March 12, 2014

<sup>2</sup> Coalition for the Homeless, "The Revolving Door Keeps Spinning," December 28, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Salit, S., Kuhn, M., et al. "Hospitalization Costs Associated with Homelessness in New York City." *N Engl J Med* 1998; 338:1734-1740, June 1998.

homelessness.<sup>4</sup> The report highlights recent research that found that homeless and “highly mobile” children who changed residence three or more times in a twelve month period did significantly worse in school than their peers who were also living in poverty, but in more housing secure situations.<sup>5</sup> Dating back to the mid-90s, studies have found homeless families who receive housing subsidies are far less likely to return to the shelter system<sup>6</sup> and far more likely to attain long-term stability.<sup>7</sup>

Per the Center for Housing Policy, an astonishing 59% of low-income New Yorkers spend over half of their incomes on housing. Under this unfortunate and unsustainable reality, more than 1 in 4 homeless adult New Yorkers are employed, yet without a place to live.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, homelessness has decreased nationally, including in the forty-eight largest cities, other than New York and Los Angeles. New York’s lack of affordable housing options is a leading cause of the record-level homeless and shelter populations in all five boroughs.

In closing, now is not the time for finger-pointing or assigning blame, even though with tens of thousands of homeless New York families, there is plenty to go around. The City and State must work together to ensure access for all to shelter and assistance through subsidies or other programs. The evidence is clear that having a place to live is a critical component to helping get housing insecure families back on their feet. The McSilver Institute strongly supports any city, state, or federal effort, and ideally the coordinated partnership of resources and services from all three, that will help make this a reality.

Thank you.

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<sup>4</sup> Samuels, J., Shinn, M., Buckner, J., “Homeless Children: Update on Research, Policy, Programs and Opportunities.” <http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/10/homelesschildrenroundtable/index.shtml> (May 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Obradovic, J., et al. “Academic achievement of homeless and highly mobile children in an urban school district: Longitudinal evidence on risk, growth, and resilience.” *Development and Psychopathology*, 2009: 21 (02), 493-518.

<sup>6</sup> Wong, Y., et al. “Predictors of exit and reentry among family shelter users in New York City,” *Social Services Review*, Volume 71, Issue 3, September 1997, pgs 441-462.

<sup>7</sup> Shinn, M., et al. “Predictors of Homelessness Among Families in New York City: From Shelter Request to Housing Stability,” *American Journal of Public Health*, Volume 88, Number 11 (November 1998), pp. 1651-1657.

<sup>8</sup> Mireya Navarro, “In New York, Having a Job, or 2, Doesn’t Mean Having a Home,” *New York Times*, September 17, 2013.

**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: Arvernetta Henry

Address: 2427 Morris Avenue Bronx NY

I represent: Picture the Homeless

Address: 2427 Morris Ave, Bronx NY

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Name: Jeff Foreman

Address: 30 E. 33rd St. NY NY

I represent: Care for the Homeless

Address: 30 E 33rd St. NY, NY

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in favor  in opposition

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

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Name: Ted McCourtney

Address: PO Box 1783 Bronx NY 10457

I represent: The New York City Coalition of Domestic  
Violence Residential Providers

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

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Name: Gary Parker (PLEASE PRINT)

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

I represent: NYU Silver Institute

Address: 41 E. 11<sup>th</sup> St. 704, NY NY 10003

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in favor  in opposition

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

Name: PATRICK SWARLEE (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 124 CALISTO ST, NY, NY 10039

I represent: ~~CANTONMENT HWY HOWELL ST~~

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

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 3/26/13

Name: Joshua Goffein (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 199 Water St NY, NY 10038

I represent: Legal Aid Society

Address: Same

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Appearance Card

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in favor  in opposition

Date: 3.26.14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Johanna Walczyk

Address: 247 West 37<sup>th</sup> Street, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor, NY, NY 10018

I represent: Supportive Housing Network of NY

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

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in favor  in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Stephanie Gentell

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

I represent: Citizens Committee for Children

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

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Appearance Card

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 in favor     in opposition

Date: 3/26/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Catherine Trapani

Address: 12 West 37<sup>th</sup> St., 7<sup>th</sup> Fl, NY, NY 10018

I represent: New Destiny Housing Corporation

Address: (same as above)

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

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 in favor     in opposition

Date: 3/26/14

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sally Greenspan

Address: 1 Whitehall St. NY NY 10004

I represent: Enterprise Community Partners

Address: 1 Whitehall St. NY NY 10004

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