

**Testimony from NYCHA's Chief Executive Officer Lisa Bova-Hiatt**  
***Preliminary Budget Hearing – Public Housing***  
**Committee on Public Housing**  
**Monday, March 10, 2025 – 10:30 a.m.**  
**New York City Hall Committee Room**

Chair Chris Banks, members of the Committee on Public Housing, other distinguished members of the City Council, NYCHA residents, community advocates, and members of the public: good morning. I am Lisa Bova-Hiatt, NYCHA's Chief Executive Officer. I am pleased to be joined by Chief Operating Officer Eva Trimble, Executive Vice President of Finance and Chief Financial Officer Annika Lescott-Martinez, Chief Asset and Capital Management Officer Shaan Mavani, and other members of NYCHA's leadership team. Thank you for this opportunity to present the Authority's adopted budget, which was approved by NYCHA's Board of Directors in November. I would also like to discuss our efforts to transform NYCHA as an organization and improve residents' quality of life.

**Rent Arrears Remain a Significant Challenge**

My colleagues and I are laser-focused on the work required to keep NYCHA on the stronger, sustainable path that we are currently on, so that we can better serve residents now and into the future. We have overcome significant challenges and continue to make progress in critical areas that most impact residents, including mold and lead abatement and comprehensive renovations through innovative housing preservation programs. At the same time, substantial challenges persist: On top of the escalating impacts of decades of federal disinvestment, rent arrears remain enormous.

Rent arrears have increased four-fold since the year before the pandemic – they currently stand at over half a billion dollars across approximately 67,000 families, which is nearly half of all households. NYCHA is collecting only 63 percent of the rent owed, including arrears, over a 12-month period, and HUD expects housing authorities to collect 100 percent of the rent. Our top priority is to keep residents housed – and so we continue to inform residents about the various ways they can get assistance with rent payment, and we continue to work with residents experiencing economic hardship.

We are implementing two new and crucial rental assistance programs – the State's CRA program and the federal HOME-ARP program – which will provide up to \$185 million to cover

arrears that resulted from the pandemic. And thanks to our tireless advocacy in collaboration with our partners, including residents and elected officials, NYCHA has received \$161 million in ERAP funding from the State; we have applied \$150 million to over 25,000 households to date. Together, these much-needed programs are helping to stabilize rent arrears.

Rent payments constitute one-third of NYCHA's operating budget, and this revenue is essential for maintaining our developments and providing residents with the quality of life they deserve. We are also grappling with the fact that our rapidly aging developments need about \$80 billion in major repair work. To address these challenges, and considering the limited federal funding available, we are pursuing innovative programs that are bringing top-to-bottom renovations and repairs to a significant portion of our portfolio.

## **Budget Outlook**

### *Operating Budget*

I would now like to discuss a few details related to NYCHA's budget. Please keep in mind that NYCHA's budget runs on a calendar year rather than the City's fiscal year. Thanks to the hard work of every department, especially our Finance Department, we adopted a balanced budget for 2025. This is a significant achievement, and it follows a balanced budget in 2024, despite an initial forecast of a \$35 million deficit. However, with the increased needs and continued rent arrears, an annual deficit is expected in the coming years.

Federal funding comprises two-thirds of NYCHA's operating revenue. This year, we expect to receive about \$1.29 billion in federal operating subsidy. As I mentioned, rent revenue accounts for the other third of our operating revenue, and we expect to collect about \$1.05 billion in rent revenue this year, including approximately \$125 million in HOME-ARP funding. Rent revenue is approximately \$110 million less than we should be collecting. Our 2025 budget assumes a proration factor of 97.5 percent for the operating subsidy – \$32 million less than what NYCHA is eligible to receive. We anticipate \$287 million in City operating funds for Calendar Year 2025.

We expect to receive about \$2.29 billion this year for Section 8 vouchers and the associated administrative fees. It is anticipated that HUD will announce the funding renewal rate by May 2025. Current proposals range from 88.6 to 97.5 percent of our Calendar Year 2024

expenditures. This falls short of the current funding level of 99.5 percent and could impact the number of households served by the program.

The projected expenses for 2025 are approximately \$2.1 billion in Section 8 payments to landlords; \$1.86 billion in salaries, fringe benefits, and overtime; \$410 million in contracts; \$585 million in utility payments; and \$426 million for expenses such as leases, supplies, vehicles, and equipment.

Chief Financial Officer Annika Lescott-Martinez will now provide some additional information about NYCHA's 2025 budget and financial outlook.

### ***Budget Presentation from CFO Annika Lescott-Martinez***

#### ***Capital Investments***

Thank you, Annika. I will now discuss a few details regarding NYCHA's capital investment program. In 2025, about \$3 billion is available for capital investments in our properties, including approximately \$731 million in expected 2025 federal capital funding; \$1.3 billion in City capital funding available in the 2025 City Fiscal Year; and other federal, State, and City funds allocated from prior-year awards. We greatly appreciate the City's support, which is helping us transform residents' homes and quality of life. We are also grateful for the State's commitments of over \$1 billion for boilers, elevators, and façade improvements.

Although this capital funding is only a fraction of the \$80 billion needed to fully restore our properties, we are making a difference for residents with the funding we receive. Last year, we expended \$1.03 billion – about \$86 million per month – on major physical renovations, completing 135 capital projects. More than 650 capital projects are currently underway across the city, and we are targeting \$1.1 billion in expenditure and completion of 135 projects this year. We have spent almost \$3.2 billion on Sandy recovery work, providing thousands of residents with new roofs, floodproofed electrical equipment, boilers, backup power generators, and flood protection, along with exterior lights, CCTV cameras, and security systems. In support of our HUD Agreement targets, we have replaced 138 boilers and 192 elevators through capital investments; in 2025, construction work is underway at scores of developments to replace an additional 100 boilers and 83 elevators. We have renovated 405 interior trash compactor rooms

with new equipment and 21 waste yards with new exterior compactors; 30 waste yards are currently in construction. We have replaced 545 roofs through our roof replacement program since 2018, and an additional 275 roof replacements are in progress.

We have also completed or advanced a range of smaller projects – from CCTV and lighting to playgrounds and community and senior centers – funded through Mayoral, discretionary City Council, or Borough President allocations. This includes 38 of the City Council-funded projects that we had to pause two years ago due to staffing constraints. Overall, we more than doubled our City capital funds commitments in City Fiscal Year 2024 to \$862 million, or 89 percent committed.

Over the next five years, we plan to invest an additional approximately \$1.3 billion to update heating systems; \$1.1 billion for Comprehensive Modernization projects; \$700 million to repair roofs; \$400 million to repair facades; \$409 million to replace elevators; \$150 million for plumbing upgrades; and \$400 million in waste management systems – along with many other critical capital improvements.

### **Transforming Our Organization and Residents' Quality of Life**

Our mandate is not only to strategically invest limited funding in residents' homes to improve their quality of life but also to transform our organization, improving how we operate. Our Transformation Plan guides our efforts to better serve residents in various ways. For instance, it has enabled us to create smaller property management portfolios that are easier to manage and offer increased accountability and resources. We have also applied this "Neighborhood Model" to operations like heat and pest management, enhancing oversight and fostering better coordination with property management. Through our Work Order Reform initiative, work orders are being scheduled more efficiently and we are making progress in closing them, including skilled trades repairs.

Last year, HUD inspection scores regarding our properties improved in every borough. We achieved another important milestone last year: abating lead in more than 10,000 apartments, providing families with the peace of mind they deserve. To date, we have tested more than 100,000 apartments for lead using the City's new and stricter standard. We completed over 32,000 mold inspections since the beginning of 2023, and mold complaints are down by 23



percent since then due to our work to replace roof fans, clean vents in apartments, and install fire dampers. And we continue to significantly reduce both the number and duration of heat and elevator outages.

We are not only addressing the issues of the past but are also strategizing for the future. For instance, our Sustainability team is helping to address the climate crisis while enhancing residents' quality of life. The Clean Heat for All Challenge is spurring the production of new energy-efficient heating and cooling systems for apartments; two manufacturers completed pilots in NYCHA apartments and are currently scaling the initiative for full-building installations. The Induction Stove Challenge is similarly catalyzing production of energy-efficient electric induction stoves to explore the possibility of replacing gas stoves in NYCHA apartments. At Polo Grounds Towers, we are in the final stages of construction of the first-ever pneumatic waste collection system in a public housing development. Once fully complete, the system will reduce the time staff spend transporting trash, enabling them to focus their efforts elsewhere.

We are forging new frameworks for bringing our aging developments the funding they desperately need. Last year, PACT closed on the financing for eight developments, representing \$1.7 billion in comprehensive renovation for nearly 7,600 residents. In October, we announced that the next phase of work is beginning at one especially notable PACT project, at Fulton and Elliott-Chelsea Houses, following years of community engagement there. A total of nearly \$7 billion has been invested in NYCHA properties to date thanks to PACT. Overall, 146 NYCHA developments (representing nearly 39,000 apartments) are in pre-development, are under construction, or have completed construction through the program. We are on track to bring comprehensive repairs and upgrades, along with enhanced property management and social services, to a total of more than 142,000 residents through PACT.

The NYC Public Housing Preservation Trust will also dramatically improve the quality of life for residents. The Trust and NYCHA recently released RFPs for major capital renovations and repairs at Bronx River Addition and Nostrand Houses, the first two developments whose residents voted to join the Trust. Resident votes have also been held, or will soon be held, at Throggs Neck Addition, Randall Avenue-Balcom, Hylan Houses, Coney Island Houses, and Coney Island I (Site 1B).

Developed in collaboration with residents, both the Trust and PACT bring developments the more stable Section 8 federal funding, which is worth nearly double what Section 9 apartments receive. These initiatives also ensure that NYCHA developments remain public and that residents maintain their rights and protections, including permanently affordable rent.

Our Comprehensive Modernization program will also complete holistic capital improvements instead of simply repairing individual building components. Launched at four developments so far, the program is supported by \$678 million in our City Capital Action plan and \$212 million from the Gowanus Neighborhood Rezoning. Design-build teams are on site initiating renovations at Saint Nicholas and Todt Hill Houses, and teams have been selected for Gowanus Houses and Wyckoff Gardens.

### **Moving Forward in Service to Residents**

NYCHA is confronting serious challenges: rental arrears are at record levels while federal funding is not keeping pace with the ever-increasing costs of repairing and maintaining decades-old buildings. Yet, we know that NYCHA is a venerable institution serving a vital role in our city – providing decent and affordable homes to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers – and so it must be strengthened and preserved. That is why we are hard at work to make the best use of limited funding while also implementing creative strategies for generating desperately needed new revenue, such as PACT and the Trust.

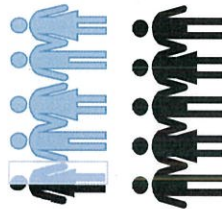
Thank you for your partnership as we continue to make progress in addressing the challenges and ensuring NYCHA is here to serve the coming generations of New Yorkers. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

## NYCHA 2025-2029 Financial Plan





## Rent Arrears through February 28, 2025



Approximately 67,000 households (46%) owe arrears as of February 28, 2025



This is after NYCHA successfully advocated for and received \$161 million in ERAP funds (with \$150 million already having been applied to 25,320 tenant accounts).

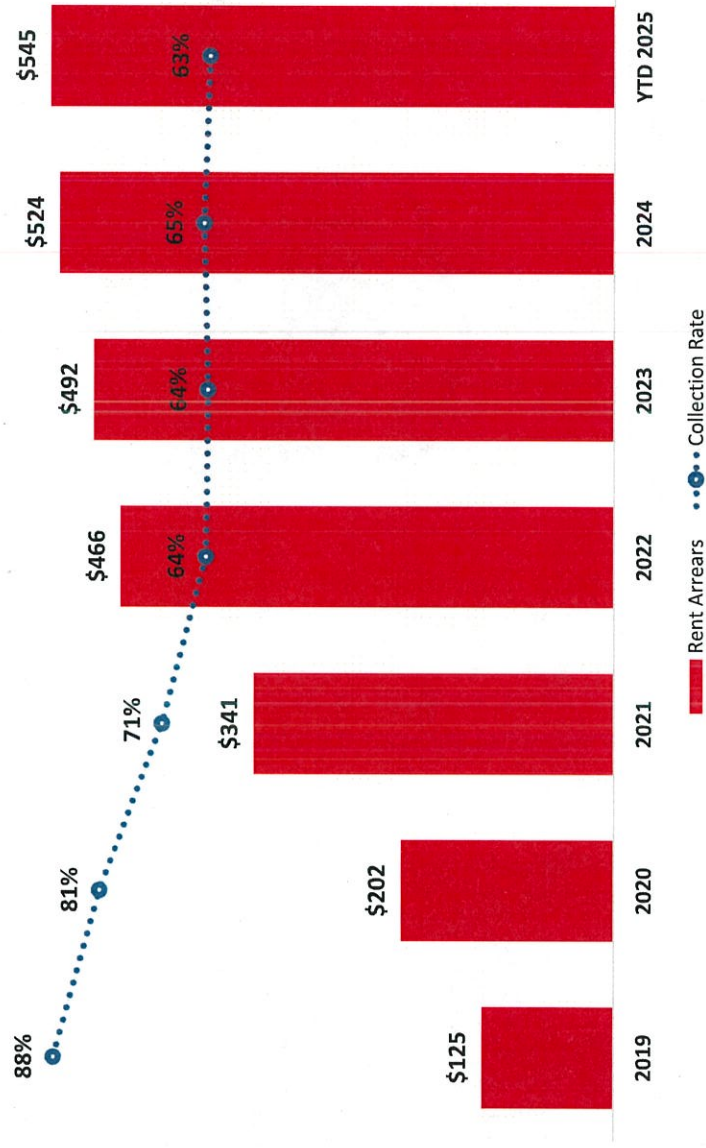
This does not yet reflect the application of any funds that will be received through the CRA or HOME-ARP programs.



Data indicates that the cumulative (12-month) rent collection rate is relatively steady at 63%.

This may mean that while some households have not yet been able to completely catch up on their arrears, more households are back to making regular rent payments, which demonstrates an important step in the right direction.

Cumulative Tenant Rent Arrears



|  | Calendar Year<br>2025 |
|--|-----------------------|
| (\$ in millions)                           |                       |
| <b>Sources</b>                             |                       |
| Tenant Rental Revenue                      | \$1,045               |
| Operating Subsidy                          | \$1,292               |
| Section 8 Program Subsidy                  | \$2,292               |
| Capital Transfer/Mgmt. Fee                 | \$256                 |
| City Funds                                 | \$287                 |
| All Other                                  | \$184                 |
| <b>Total Sources</b>                       | <b>\$5,356</b>        |
| <b>Uses</b>                                |                       |
| <b>Personal Services (PS)</b>              |                       |
| Salaries                                   | \$939                 |
| Overtime                                   | \$182                 |
| Fringe                                     | \$724                 |
| All other Salaries                         | \$14                  |
| <b>Total PS</b>                            | <b>\$1,858</b>        |
| <b>Other than Personal Services (OTPS)</b> |                       |
| Leases                                     | \$60                  |
| Supplies                                   | \$122                 |
| Utilities                                  | \$585                 |
| Contracts                                  | \$410                 |
| Section 8 Landlord Payments                | \$2,077               |
| All Other OTPS                             | \$244                 |
| <b>Total OTPS</b>                          | <b>\$3,498</b>        |
| <b>Total Uses (PS &amp; OTPS)</b>          | <b>\$5,356</b>        |
| <b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>                   | <b>\$ (0)</b>         |

## 2025 Sources and Uses

### Sources

- The adopted operating budget estimates \$1.05 billion in tenant rent revenue, including \$125 million of HOME-ARP funding to support tenant rent arrears
- Estimates \$1.29 billion in federal operating subsidy to support public housing units
- Assumes growth in the Section 8 program with \$2.3 billion in Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and admin fee revenue and \$2.1 billion in corresponding Section 8 landlord payments

### Uses

- \$1.86 billion in personnel expenditures provides for salaries and fringe for 12,051 full-time staff, and \$182 million in overtime
- We anticipate a balanced budget at the end of calendar year 2025



## Adopted Five-Year Operating Plan

- While we anticipate a balanced budget in calendar year 2025, significant deficits loom in the outyears. NYCHA will implement additional cost saving to mitigate the deficits in 2026 and beyond.

|  | 2025           | 2026            | 2027            | 2028            | 2029            |
|--|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Sources</b>                             |                |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Tenant Rental Revenue                      | \$1,045        | \$920           | \$921           | \$928           | \$935           |
| Operating Subsidy                          | \$1,292        | \$1,246         | \$1,275         | \$1,307         | \$1,372         |
| Section 8 Program Subsidy                  | \$2,292        | \$2,474         | \$2,627         | \$2,761         | \$2,917         |
| Capital Transfer/Mgmt. Fee                 | \$256          | \$256           | \$256           | \$256           | \$256           |
| City Funds                                 | \$287          | \$332           | \$350           | \$358           | \$358           |
| All Other                                  | \$184          | \$102           | \$104           | \$80            | \$79            |
| <b>Total Sources</b>                       | <b>\$5,356</b> | <b>\$5,330</b>  | <b>\$5,533</b>  | <b>\$5,689</b>  | <b>\$5,916</b>  |
| <b>Uses</b>                                |                |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| <b>Personal Services (PS)</b>              |                |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Salaries                                   | \$939          | \$934           | \$934           | \$934           | \$933           |
| Overtime                                   | \$182          | \$182           | \$182           | \$182           | \$182           |
| Fringe                                     | \$724          | \$741           | \$756           | \$774           | \$783           |
| All Other Salaries                         | \$14           | \$14            | \$14            | \$14            | \$14            |
| <b>Total PS</b>                            | <b>\$1,858</b> | <b>\$1,871</b>  | <b>\$1,886</b>  | <b>\$1,903</b>  | <b>\$1,912</b>  |
| <b>Other than Personal Services (OTPS)</b> |                |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Leases                                     | \$60           | \$60            | \$60            | \$60            | \$60            |
| Supplies                                   | \$122          | \$122           | \$122           | \$122           | \$122           |
| Utilities                                  | \$585          | \$590           | \$643           | \$643           | \$643           |
| Contracts                                  | \$410          | \$403           | \$402           | \$402           | \$402           |
| Section 8 Landlord Payments                | \$2,077        | \$2,253         | \$2,405         | \$2,533         | \$2,685         |
| All Other OTPS                             | \$244          | \$249           | \$207           | \$208           | \$208           |
| <b>Total OTPS</b>                          | <b>\$3,498</b> | <b>\$3,676</b>  | <b>\$3,839</b>  | <b>\$3,968</b>  | <b>\$4,120</b>  |
| <b>Total Uses (PS &amp; OTPS)</b>          | <b>\$5,356</b> | <b>\$5,547</b>  | <b>\$5,725</b>  | <b>\$5,871</b>  | <b>\$6,032</b>  |
| <b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>                   | <b>\$ (0)</b>  | <b>\$ (217)</b> | <b>\$ (192)</b> | <b>\$ (182)</b> | <b>\$ (116)</b> |

(\$ in millions)

## 2025-2029 Adopted Capital Plan: Sources and Uses

- The plan provides for \$7.8 billion over five years -- \$6.0 million is invested in minor and major capital repairs at the properties.
- \$3.4 billion total will be available in 2025 -- \$3.0 billion will be invested in major and minor capital repairs.
- Federal Capital: \$665 million in unspent funding and \$731 million new annual grant in 2025 and the outyears.
- City Capital: \$1.7 billion specifically for the HUD/SDNY Agreement and an additional \$1.0 billion of Mayoral funds.
- State Capital: \$561 million left to be committed of the \$1.25 billion awarded by the State for boilers, elevator and brickwork improvements.
- NYCHA has achieved \$1.7 billion in capital expenditures in 2024 year to date, at a rate of about \$142 million per month Authority-wide.

| Sources   | 2025           | 2026           | 2027           | 2028         | 2029         | Total<br>2025 - 2029 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Federal Public Housing Capital                      | \$1,396        | \$731          | \$731          | \$731        | \$731        | \$4,318              |
| City Capital  | \$1,261        | \$706          | \$299          | \$211        | \$267        | \$2,743              |
| State Capital                                       | \$561          | \$0            | \$0            | \$0          | \$0          | \$561                |
| Federal Disaster Recovery                           | \$137          | \$0            | \$0            | \$0          | \$0          | \$137                |
| Community Development Block Grant (via City)        | \$34           | \$0            | \$0            | \$0          | \$0          | \$34                 |
| Emergency/Safety & Security/Lead-Based Paint Grants | \$19           | \$0            | \$0            | \$0          | \$0          | \$19                 |
| Other   | \$28           | \$0            | \$0            | \$0          | \$0          | \$28                 |
| <b>Total Sources</b>                                | <b>\$3,437</b> | <b>\$1,436</b> | <b>\$1,029</b> | <b>\$941</b> | <b>\$998</b> | <b>\$7,841</b>       |
| Uses  |                |                |                |              |              |                      |
| Asset & Capital Management                          | \$2,616        | \$784          | \$431          | \$391        | \$543        | \$4,765              |
| Transfer to Operating & Management Fees             | \$256          | \$256          | \$256          | \$256        | \$256        | \$1,278              |
| Operations-Managed Capital Projects                 | \$69           | \$21           | \$21           | \$21         | \$21         | \$155                |
| Property Emergencies                                | \$17           | \$0            | \$0            | \$0          | \$0          | \$17                 |
| Healthy Homes                                       | \$328          | \$282          | \$228          | \$181        | \$85         | \$1,104              |
| Information Technology                              | \$42           | \$21           | \$21           | \$21         | \$21         | \$126                |
| All Others (Debt Service, Contingency, Etc.)        | \$109          | \$72           | \$72           | \$72         | \$72         | \$395                |
| <b>Total Uses</b>                                   | <b>\$3,437</b> | <b>\$1,436</b> | <b>\$1,029</b> | <b>\$941</b> | <b>\$998</b> | <b>\$7,841</b>       |

\* 2025 Capital Budget includes \$1.558 million in unspent funds from prior years that will roll.

(\$ in Millions)



Testimony before the New York City Council Committee on Public  
Housing  
March 10, 2025

**Laura Lazarus**  
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Anthos | Home  
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Good afternoon, Chair Banks and members of the Committee on Public Housing. My name is Laura Lazarus, and I am the Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Anthos | Home. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and share insights on how we can expand housing opportunities and improve outcomes for New Yorkers.

Anthos | Home is committed to helping New Yorkers with housing vouchers find and move into permanent housing as quickly as possible. We know that housing vouchers are one of the most effective tools to address homelessness and housing instability, but too often, they are difficult to use. In New York City, it takes families an average of at least a year to secure housing after receiving a voucher. This delay prolongs shelter stays and forces families to remain in unstable and challenging conditions. This isn't a problem that is unique to New York City – nationally, nearly 40 percent of federally-issued housing vouchers are not used.

New York City has made tremendous progress in addressing homelessness, particularly through the CityFHEPS voucher program. In the past year alone, the Department of Social Services (DSS) has helped move 14,000 households into permanent housing—a 45 percent increase over the previous year—making it the second-largest rental subsidy agency in the nation. This achievement is a testament to the city's commitment to tackling homelessness at scale and ensuring that a housing voucher is a pathway to a home.

Despite this progress, persistent barriers prevent voucher holders from accessing stable housing. These challenges include finding landlords willing to accept vouchers, delays in processing approvals and payments, and the need for more robust support services to help tenants maintain their homes. Tackling homelessness cannot be the responsibility of one program or agency. A crisis of this magnitude requires strong partnerships between government, nonprofits, and the private sector – particularly the real estate community.

That's where we come in. Anthos | Home's model is designed to help tenants and landlords overcome these obstacles so that vouchers can be utilized quickly and effectively. Our approach includes proactively securing apartments through a network of landlords and brokers, ensuring that families with vouchers have immediate access to housing options. Additionally, our flexible funding model allows us to cover necessary repairs for inspection approvals, moving costs, application fees, and other expenses that frequently hinder rapid rehousing.



Anthos | Home also provides critical support for both tenants and landlords throughout the process. From assisting with paperwork to ensuring units and tenants are move-in ready, we help streamline what can otherwise be a slow and disjointed system. Once families are housed, we offer ongoing support for at least a year, including monthly check-ins, help with repairs, and intervention if payment issues arise. This wraparound approach reduces the burden on landlords while ensuring tenants have the resources needed to maintain stable housing.

Our model has proven especially effective for vulnerable populations, such as former foster youth and individuals with complex health needs, who often require additional guidance and support. In partnership with the NYC Administration for Children's Services, we have helped young people aging out of foster care secure stable housing, with all remaining housed long-term. To date, Anthos | Home has helped more than 250 families and individuals move into housing, and every single one remains stably housed.

We urge the City Council to continue strengthening and expanding the voucher system to ensure that more New Yorkers can transition from shelter into permanent housing. Streamlining the voucher process, addressing inspection delays, and enhancing landlord engagement will significantly improve voucher utilization and housing stability. At Anthos | Home, we've seen firsthand how these improvements lead to faster transitions and better outcomes for both tenants and landlords.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I welcome any questions you may have.

Courtney Bryan. Executive Director

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- Summary of FY26 Center for Justice Innovation Proposals

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

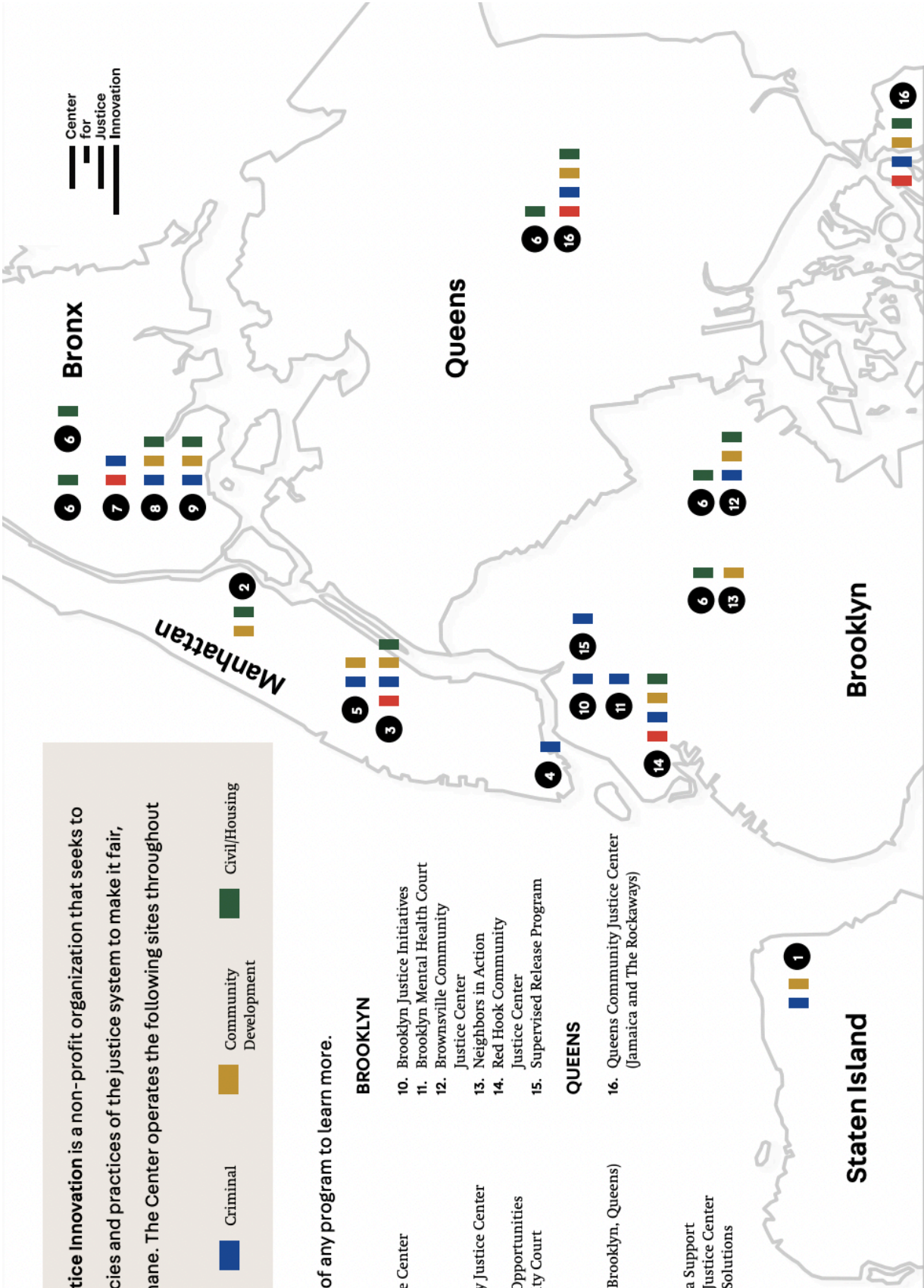
QUEENS

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

Citywide

For More Information  
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Senior Director of Government Relations  
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- Access to Justice
- Alternatives to Incarceration
- Driver Accountability Program
- Gender and Family Justice
- Neighborhood Safety Initiatives
- Parent Support Program
- Project Reset
- Restorative Justice Practices
- RISE Project
- Strong Starts Court Initiative
- Youth Action Institute
- Youth Impact



Courtney Bryan. Executive Director

Good afternoon Chair Banks and esteemed members of the Public Housing Committee. My name is Daren Sealey, and I serve as the Associate Director of the Housing Resource Center at the Red Hook Community Justice Center, an initiative of the Center for Justice Innovation (the Center).

Access to a safe and affordable home creates economic and community stability. Across the Center, we work to prevent evictions, respond to hazardous repair conditions, and increase tenant financial and legal well-being. By addressing issues early, we help keep people safely housed and avoid legal system involvement that can affect employment, family security, and future access to stable housing. The Center often serves as a bridge between the court system, city agencies, legal service providers, and communities, developing comprehensive strategies to advance access to housing and reduce housing insecurity. Our neighborhood-based work supports tenants taking actions on repairs, rent, and lease issues in NYCHA.

The Center supports NYCHA residents across multiple projects, ranging from assistance with housing court, to community development projects. In the upcoming fiscal year, we are asking for support to maintain these vital programs. Supporting NYCHA, where 90 percent of residents are people of color, is directly supporting the equitability of our city, and some of our communities' most vulnerable residents.<sup>1</sup>

## **Housing Resource Centers**

The Center operates two Housing Resource Centers out of our Community Justice Centers in Harlem and Red Hook. Here, staff are able to provide court navigation, one-on-one assistance, and direct connection to a variety of resources and legal services for tenants. Our housing resource centers help tenants, supporting them in documenting and tracking their repair needs, as well as accessing and navigating the court system when needed to hold NYCHA accountable. Last year, Harlem's Housing Resource Center served 1,349 clients, while Red Hook's served 1,266 clients.<sup>2</sup> We also work to achieve systemic reform through advocacy for open data on NYCHA's housing code violations and for improvements to NYCHA's work order systems.

### *In-House Housing Courts*

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<sup>1</sup> Gavin, P. (2021, February 11). *NYCHA Now*. Philanthropy New York.  
<https://philanthropynewyork.org/news/nycha-now>

<sup>2</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. (2025). Justice Center Application and Reset referral database. [Data file].

The Housing Resource Centers in Harlem and Red Hook have included in-house Housing Courts since 2001. These courts are intentionally and seamlessly integrated within the community, creating a sense of accessibility and approachability not often found in traditional courts. Our in-house housing courts emphasize the tenets of procedural justice, such as transparency about the legal process and humanizing language from court staff, including the judge. In addition, the Center adamantly supports Right To Counsel for NYCHA residents facing termination of tenancy and eviction in housing court. However, when Right To Counsel attorneys are not available due to limited funding, the Center actively supports unrepresented NYCHA tenants in the neighborhoods we serve as they navigate housing courts and find solutions to keep their families housed.

### *Virtual Court Access Network*

In partnership with the Office of Court Administration, the Center also operates the Virtual Court Access Network in Harlem and Red Hook, helping tenants respond to housing court notices and file Housing Part Actions for repairs. VCAN facilitates access to housing court clerk desk services and support filing while addressing underlying and complicated needs with the range of on-site Help Desk resources. The design allows tenants and the Help Center to interface directly with court clerks at New York County Civil Court to help tenants file Housing Part “HP” Actions against their landlords for repair hazards or harassment, answer Eviction/Landlord-Tenant petitions, file Orders to Show Cause, and initiate cases of illegal lockouts and roommate holdovers.

### **Housing Navigators**

Building off of the impactful program models in Red Hook and Harlem, in the beginning of 2024 the Center launched a city-wide housing navigator initiative. Housing Navigators are now working in public housing communities throughout the City to address the most pressing issues threatening the housing stability of public housing residents including, rental arrears, evictions, health and habitability. Navigators are based out of Community Justice Centers in East Harlem; the South Bronx; Far Rockaway, Queens; and Red Hook, Brooklyn. Simultaneously, the Center has been partnering with the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) and artists to create high-quality, multi-lingual, informative guides for public housing residents navigating lease and rent issues.

### **Community Justice Connect**

Community Justice Connect (formerly Legal Hand) trains volunteers from the communities it serves to provide free legal information, assistance, and referrals to help New Yorkers resolve civil legal issues that affect their lives. Volunteers, who are not lawyers, operate

out of easy to find, neighborhood storefronts, and are supervised by attorneys from partnering legal services organizations. While Community Justice Connect offers assistance in areas like family, immigration, domestic violence, and benefits, by far, the greatest area of support given is on housing. Our trained local volunteers directly support eviction prevention, addressing habitability issues and assistance finding housing. In 2024, 1,324 residents utilized Community Justice Connect to receive legal guidance regarding housing concerns.<sup>3</sup>

Our Community Justice Connect project has become a model in the city for increasing access to justice for tenants outside of the courts by bringing justice to the neighborhoods they live in. Community Justice Connect empowers community residents to support their neighbors with free legal information. Many of our volunteers know someone who has been through similar situations as our visitors or have been affected by housing issues themselves. Community Justice Connect is also engaged in community outreach and conducts Know-Your-Rights sessions and workshops. This is more important now than ever as residents face rocky transitions under RAD/PACT and Trust lease conversions.

### **The Pro Se Support Project**

The Pro Se Support Project (PSSP) is a novel concept to increase access to justice in civil court for historically marginalized communities, prevent mental health crises by decreasing the presence of risk factors upstream, and conserve court resources by connecting pro se litigants with services they need to address the underlying issues bringing them to court. By providing case management and resource coordination for pro se litigants (i.e., individuals who are representing themselves in court without the assistance of an attorney), PSSP addresses longstanding roadblocks to civil justice for those who cannot access or afford attorneys. The model offers a way to solve disputes for an underserved population whose issues often run deeper than their litigation presents, while reducing risk factors that could lead to worsening mental health conditions down the road.

The Pro Se Support Project began when Judge Anne Swern of Kings County Civil Supreme Court noticed a concerning trend among pro se litigants in her court. After spending decades in criminal court, Judge Swern recognized that these litigants in civil court faced many of the same hardships as criminal defendants. In response, she reached out to the Center to develop a pilot program that would provide eligible pro se litigants access to voluntary service referrals, case management, and, where appropriate, legal navigation—similar to the types of services criminal defendants access through the Center’s alternative-to-incarceration (ATI) and voluntary services programming.

Many pro se litigants turn to the legal system to address larger underlying issues that are much better addressed through connections to resources and services in housing, behavioral and mental health, and workforce development—to name a few examples—than they could be through available legal remedies. Without the ability to provide pro bono full scope legal

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<sup>3</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. (2025). Justice Center Application and Reset referral database. [Data file].



representation to every eligible pro se litigant in civil court, the Pro Se Support Project attempts to address underlying issues while aiding courts in efficiently and effectively adjudicating the matters in front of them.

The pilot currently operates out of Judge Swern's court. After achieving success initially, the Center now wants to explore expanding the program to a Manhattan courtroom to study scaling and operating the program across multiple courtrooms and boroughs. Judge Suzanne Adams, Administrative Judge of Manhattan Civil Supreme Court, has already volunteered her courtroom for the next phase of the pilot as she has identified a similar need in her court.

## **Neighborhood Safety Initiatives**

Neighborhood Safety Initiatives (NSI) supports the implementation of NeighborhoodStat (NSTAT), a resident-driven community organizing initiative and comprehensive strategy to enhance public safety and strengthen community well-being in 30 public housing developments. We are seeking support to amplify our work in the Castle Hill and Linden Housing Developments.

NSI enlists residents, City agencies, and community-based partners to help move beyond enforcement and address the factors underlying safety – providing opportunities for work and play, health and well-being, and youth development; promoting activated, well-maintained spaces through community and human-centered design; and improving trust between neighbors with a responsive and just government. Their mission is to improve community safety in places impacted by historic disinvestment by creating opportunities for residents to identify key issues underlying crime and participate in the decision-making to address these priorities. Through NeighborhoodStat (NSTAT), we harness the collective expertise of residents, government, and community partners to drive meaningful dialogue, problem-solving, and, ultimately, create positive change at both the neighborhood and administrative levels.

NeighborhoodStat connects residents to social services and community resources; increases the security and quality of shared community space by working with residents to physically improve and maintain public space, thereby enhancing a positive sense of ownership; increases civic engagement; and enhances the capacity of residents to improve public safety and wellbeing in their communities. Adopting a participatory justice model, NeighborhoodStat works with local organizers to provide direct investment into historically underserved communities and ensures that those most affected and most marginalized, especially those who have been historically left out of these conversations, have a say in improving health and wellbeing, safety and justice, economic stability, physical space, and youth development policies that affect their lives.

The program has reached over 60,000 residents of the New York City Housing Authority utilizing the following strategies:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Center for Justice Innovation. *Neighborhood Safety Initiatives*. New York, NY.  
<https://www.innovatingjustice.org/programs/neighborhood-safety-initiatives/more-info>



- **Invest in Residents:** Neighborhood Safety Initiatives hires, trains, and supports community organizers; recruits and organizes resident leadership teams; designs and implements social programs; manages community action plans; and implements data collection and evaluations. Social programs include youth mentorship, coding courses, music mentorship, adult entrepreneurship training and support, intergenerational green space stewardship, healing and justice events, public education campaigns like those around COVID-19, summer time basketball series, economic mobility events, and more. Neighborhood Safety Initiatives also respond to residents' immediate needs. The program coordinates collaboration across city agencies and other non-profit partners to answer food needs, connect residents to resources, and host conflict resolution events. In 2023, more than 465 intergenerational residents were actively involved in resident stakeholder teams, taking the lead in identifying both the issues plaguing their communities and driving positive change.
- **Transform Public Spaces:** Neighborhood Safety Initiatives works with residents to re-envision public spaces to make them more welcoming and promote people's well-being. In the last five years the program has designed and implemented a series of community gardens and recreational public spaces, wayfinding projects, murals, creative lighting installations, and a pop-up outdoor program with movable kiosks where partner agencies can provide information and supportive services to the community. Since 2017, Neighborhood Safety Initiatives has overseen the co-creation and implementation of over 65 built environment projects and social programs. These initiatives include murals, open plazas, community gardens, pop-up modular resource hubs, music programs for youth, and adult entrepreneurship programs in collaboration with NYCHA community stakeholders.

## Conclusion

Community-based organizations, such as the Center for Justice Innovation provide vital services to residents of NYCHA. Decades of divestment has resulted in poor living conditions, marginalization, and a lack of social cohesion among residents. Our programming addresses these needs, providing residents with the tools they need to address the repair crisis in NYCHA, connecting them with a broader network of resources, and uniting neighborhoods to create safer communities. We thank the City Council for their investment thus far, and look forward to continuing to partner in the coming fiscal year .

Courtney Bryan. Executive Director

### **FY26 Center for Justice Innovation Housing Proposals**

- **#197482 - Center for Justice Innovation General Funds - \$750,000**

#### **Innovative Criminal Justice Programs; Speaker's Initiative (Renewal/Redesign)**

**Description:** 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, 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. With expanded funding, the Center will be able to make deeper investments in housing justice: a key priority area that underpins our efforts at large to build community justice.

- **#195412 - Pro Se Pilot Program - \$188,917**

#### **Information and Referral Services; Mental Health Services for Vulnerable Populations (New)**

This application seeks to expand an ongoing pilot program to provide holistic case management and legal navigation services for pro se litigants in civil court (i.e., individuals who are representing themselves in court without the assistance of an attorney). Currently housed in Judge Anne Swern's Kings County Civil Supreme Courtroom, the Pro Se Support Program connects unrepresented litigants with a case manager/social worker who works to address the underlying needs which bring these litigants to court. Judge Swern brought this idea to the Center for Justice Innovation as a response to the types of cases pro se litigants in her court were bringing, noticing that almost always an underlying resource gap was the true source of the issue before the court, and that a legal resolution often failed to address these underlying issues. By providing case management and legal navigation services to unrepresented litigants, The Pro Se Support Program seeks to increase civil access to justice for indigent, marginalized populations, prevent mental health crises and criminal offending upstream, and save the court time and resources.

- **#192497 - Bronx Community Solutions NYC Clean Up - \$50,000**

#### **NYC Clean Up (Renewal)**

**Description:** Bronx Community Solutions' (BCS) Community Service Initiative seeks to beautify the Bronx and develop healthy, engaging public spaces for its residents. BCS creates projects that target local needs and connect participants to resources in their community. BCS partners with the criminal court system, local volunteers, city agencies, and community-based organizations to conduct graffiti and street cleanup, park revitalization, community garden upkeep, art installations and more. Through BCS's Community Service Initiative, individuals with low-level criminal charges have an opportunity to reconnect with their community rather than serve jail time. Additionally, BCS empowers local residents and organizations to sustain their own projects by providing expertise, supplies, volunteers, and existing partnerships to support community-led projects. Continued City Council funding will support these community service projects, including special projects conducted with partner organizations throughout the Bronx.

- **#192581 - Brownsville Placemaking and Community Cleanup - \$60,000**

#### **NYC Clean Up (Renewal)**

**Description:** Brownsville residents are disproportionately affected by major quality of life issues, which have a negative effect on public health and safety. The Brownsville Community Justice Center's Placemaking and Community Cleanup program will engage participants ages 14-24 in community service and placemaking activities, such as crime prevention through environmental design and various innovative and tested strategies, which address public safety concerns and build community. Participants attend regularly scheduled workshops, which provide training on environmental stewardship, leadership, communication, organizing, and strategies for reinvestment within the community. Youth will be involved in identifying, designing, and implementing community projects, in conjunction with the community board and local community-based organizations. Participants will work with Justice Center staff to plan, develop, and facilitate various program projects to support community. Projects may include graffiti removal, art installations, greening, street cleaning, lighting projects, and more.

- **#192555 - Harlem Community Justice Center Housing Help Center - \$50,000**

#### **Community Safety and Victim Services (New)**

**Description:** The Harlem Community Justice Center's Housing Help Center seeks funding from the City Council's Community Safety and Victim Services Initiative to help residents who have experienced violence or victimization, seniors, public housing residents and non-English speakers to obtain emergency safety transfers, critical home

repairs, preserve affordability, prevent evictions, and find justice and fair treatment in housing court.

- **#192673 - Community First - \$60,000**

**Community Safety and Victim Services (Renewal)**

**Description:** This funding would ensure continuity of Midtown Community Justice Center's (MCJC's) Community First program, which serves community members experiencing varying levels of housing insecurity and homelessness in the Times Square area. The program likewise serves housing insecure participants from across MCJC's programs, including the Manhattan Misdemeanor Mental Health Court, Emerging Adult Court, Community Court, and Project Reset. While New York City is service-rich, the field often operates in silos, creating a disjointed system of care for the most vulnerable populations. Often, those who need support exist under the radar until a moment of crisis like an arrest or an emergency room visit forces a response. As a pre-crisis intervention, Community First seeks to facilitate continuity of destigmatizing and client-centered care for some of the city's most disconnected residents through mobile case management, street outreach, and assistance for court-involved and diversion participants. Community First's Community Navigators share lived experience with participants, offering peer support to help clients achieve participant-identified goals such as obtaining transitional and permanent housing, substance use treatment, mental and physical health care, identification, financial benefits, employment, and legal assistance. MCJC requests funding to support the Community First program through City Council's Community Safety and Victim Services Initiative.

**Chinese-American Planning Council, Inc.  
Testimony at the New York City Council Public Housing Committee  
Honorable Chris Banks, Chair  
March 10th, 2025**

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

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

To that end, we are grateful to testify about issues that impact the individuals and families we serve, and we are grateful to the Council for their leadership on these issues.

A community member that we have worked with named KJ was incarcerated in 1973 and released in 2001, has struggled with unstable housing and relies on a loose support system of friends and family, though they have been in and out of shelters. He resides in a housing unit for the formerly unhoused at 64 Norfolk, but has faced several health setbacks, including hospitalizations for high blood pressure and diabetes. KJ has an expired State ID, which led to the expiration of his housing subsidy during a CityFHEPS recertification. Additionally, he was unaware of over \$800 in late fees and legal charges, which had been sent to collections, and had also fallen behind on a Con Edison bill. With assistance from his case manager at CPC, his subsidy has been renewed, a payment plan for the utility set up, and his arrears are being addressed through an HRA One Shot Deal.

The "Housing First" model has proven to be a vital step in providing stable housing for formerly homeless seniors. Under this model, we place seniors in permanent housing with a limited-term housing voucher, specifically through the CityFHEPS program. The assumption is that, after five years, these seniors will be able to transition to independent management of their housing resources. However, this approach fails to adequately address the unique needs of seniors who are no longer on an employment track and rely primarily on fixed incomes such as Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and State Supplemental Payment (SSP).

Our program serves 28 units specifically set aside for seniors with histories of long-term homelessness. Each of these seniors has been designated as a "long-term stayer," meaning

they have spent many years in the shelter system, often with one persistent case, cycling in and out of shelters. Given their histories and the limited financial resources available to them, the five-year housing voucher provided by CityFHEPS does not offer a sustainable solution for long-term stability.

Seniors in our program face significant challenges, and the five-year time frame does not account for the complexities of their circumstances. For example, managing CityFHEPS cases often involves dealing with frequent missed payments, complicated recertification processes, and difficulties in ensuring clients make their required contributions to rent. These ongoing issues create instability, rather than supporting the transition to independent housing management.

We have also heard from community members that they have not received their CityFHEPs housing vouchers despite the law mandating that they should have received them by January 10th, 2024.

We are urging the City to ensure that there are meaningful investments in the FY26 budget that creates affordable housing.

If there are any questions or concerns, please reach out to Ashley Chen, Policy Analyst at [achen9@cpc-nyc.org](mailto:achen9@cpc-nyc.org).



**Testimony of Juan Diaz**  
**Citizens' Committee for Children of New York**  
**Submitted to The New York City Council Subcommittee on Public Housing**  
**Preliminary Budget Hearing – Public Housing**  
**March 10, 2025**

Thank you, Chair Banks, and members of the Committee on Public Housing for the opportunity to submit testimony at this hearing regarding FY26 Preliminary Budget Hearing on Public Housing.

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

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

A recent NYC Comptroller's office report found that limited Federal funding in recent decades has contributed to a deterioration of New York City's public housing, with current capital needs estimated to be nearly \$80 billion. Many NYCHA residents regularly live without heat and hot water, experience elevator outages, and are exposed to mold and lead.<sup>i</sup> The same report highlights that Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) developments have a much higher number of evictions compared to NYCHA and citywide numbers. The investigation found that PACT management offices did not follow adequate practices to prevent housing court evictions due to rental arrears.

Additionally, several advocacy organizations and NYCHA tenants have expressed concerns over lack of timely repairs and lack of rental arrears assistance, which further exacerbates both housing and economic burdens at low-income communities where public housing is concentrated.

**Therefore, we urge the City Council to advocate for the following recommendations to ensure that public housing residents maintain their apartments and live in a safe environment:**

- **Restore \$325 million in rental assistance that was cut in the FY25 Budget.** With the mounting number of housing court evictions cases and the exclusion of NYCHA households in the first round of ERAP rental assistance, it is imperative to support emergency rental assistance funding to enhance housing stability for NYCHA households.
- **Allocate an additional \$900 million in funding for the FY26 budget for NYCHA to address major capital improvements.** Federal divestment and disrepair of NYCHA buildings has led to thousands of vacant apartments being considered too uninhabitable to rent. According to a recent study by Community Service Society (CSS), it would cost \$4.5 billion over the next 5 years (or \$900 million annually) to preserve 15,000 NYCHA units and 25,000 units of public housing outside of NYC, as well as build 8,000 new units across the state.<sup>ii</sup>
- **Increase the Budget for Homebase by \$37.9 million to a total of \$100 million.** In recent years, Homebase providers have taken on tremendous increases in caseload as well as an ever-expanding set of responsibilities, including submitting rental assistance applications, legal assistance and transfer requests for NYCHA residents. Although several Homebase locations are closely located to NYCHA developments and continue to provide more services, this has not been accompanied by funding levels to match the new post-Covid reality.
- **Ensure that repairs are completed in a timely manner.** A cross-agency effort should support completion of much needed repairs at both occupied units and empty apartments to help low-income families relocate to affordable housing.
- **Ensure that PACT developments align with regulations** to support tenants housing stability and reduce the rental arrears cases and housing evictions, which are higher than NYCHA developments.
- **Implement and fund the CityFHEPS expansion,** which would significantly remove administrative and eligibility barriers and would expedite access to housing support for families in the community and in shelters, regardless of immigration status.

**Finally, we urge the city administration to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated in the incoming FY26 Executive Budget to offset federal budget cuts to HUD and other critical federal housing programs.**

We look forward to standing with our city leaders as you fight for New Yorkers residing in public housing. Thank you for your consideration.



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<sup>i</sup> NYC Comptroller's Office. "Audit Report on the New York City Housing Authority's Eviction Processes". December 18, 2024. <https://comptroller.nyc.gov/reports/audit-report-on-the-new-york-city-housing-authoritys-eviction-processes/>

<sup>ii</sup> Community Services Society. Preserving New York's Public Housing: A sustainable future for government-built housing". 2024. [mhttp-ssl  
58547.nexcesscdn.net/nycss/A\\_new\\_Homes\\_and\\_Community\\_Renewal\\_\(HCR\)public\\_housing\\_programi.Promoting\\_Resident\\_management\\_corporationsii.Requiring\\_a\\_resident\\_voteiii.Promoting\\_increases\\_to\\_the\\_affordablehousing\\_supplyiv\\_.Requ\\_.pdf](http://58547.nexcesscdn.net/nycss/A_new_Homes_and_Community_Renewal_(HCR)public_housing_programi.Promoting_Resident_management_corporationsii.Requiring_a_resident_voteiii.Promoting_increases_to_the_affordablehousing_supplyiv_.Requ_.pdf)

**TESTIMONY OF NEW DESTINY HOUSING  
TO THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING HEARING  
ON THE PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026**

**Gabriela Sandoval Requena, Director of Policy and Communications  
March 10, 2025**

Thank you, NYC Council Public Housing Committee Chair Banks, Committee Members, and Council Central Staff for the opportunity to submit written testimony on the preliminary budget for Fiscal Year 2026.

**ABOUT NEW DESTINY**

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

New Destiny is the only organization in New York City solely dedicated to the solution of permanent housing for survivors of domestic violence. We are the largest provider of supportive housing for survivors in New York and a leading advocate in the effort to increase housing resources for New Yorkers impacted by domestic violence.

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

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND HOMELESSNESS**

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

Due to the lack of permanent housing options, which are compounded by the devastating long-lasting effects of abuse, survivors may linger in shelter for years. In 2023, only 9% of survivors moved to a permanent home and more than half left Human Resources Administration domestic violence emergency shelter for another shelter, upon reaching the State-mandated limit of 180 days. One in four survivors and their children had to move to a Department of Homeless Services family shelter, where the average length of stay is over a year, according to the Fiscal Year 2025 Preliminary Mayor's Management Report.

With no certainty of when they might be able to find a safe home, survivors are forced to make the impossible choice between entering the shelter system or remaining in abusive situations, putting their lives at risk. In 2023, 1 out of every 5 homicides were domestic violence homicides

in New York City (73 of 386), where the victim was either an intimate partner or a family member.

## **FEDERAL FUNDING CUTS**

The proposed federal budget and staffing cuts will be devastating for survivors. Specifically, the cuts to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD.

HUD funds most of the [operating expenses](#) of the New York Housing Authority (NYCHA), and a substantial part of its budget for capital repair projects. Additionally, HUD funds other essential housing programs. Since 2018, New Destiny has received HUD funding through the New York City Continuum of Care (CoC) to provide housing navigation services to hundreds of survivors and, in many cases, also temporary rental assistance. But our program, and hundreds of others like it in New York City, are at risk of disappearing.

As of today, HUD is withholding over \$3.57 billion in CoC funding nationwide, including nearly \$174 million for New York City. This year, more than ever, we need our city leaders to step up and protect New Yorkers impacted by domestic violence by:

### **Expediting NYCHA emergency transfers for domestic violence survivors**

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

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

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

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

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



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy  
New York League of Conservation Voters  
City Council Committee on Public Housing  
FY26 Preliminary Budget Hearing  
March 10, 2025**

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 Banks, and members of the Committee on Public Housing for the opportunity to comment.

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) has been long-neglected due to significant underinvestment and mismanagement. Chronic issues such as lack of heating and hot water, mold, lead paint, rats and other pests, and little to no recycling access have plagued NYCHA residents for years. Compounding this, NYCHA residents are disproportionately impacted by climate change. Many campuses are located in flood zones, exposing residents to sea level rise, coastal storm surge, and inland flooding. Many NYCHA campuses also lack access to air conditioning, leaving residents, especially seniors, more vulnerable to heat-related illnesses and death during extreme heat events. NYLCV stands with advocates calling for increased funding for long-needed building upgrades and public health improvements, as well as significant funding to address the impacts of climate change.

As advocated in NYLCV's recently-released [2025 NYC Policy Agenda](#), the City must prioritize safeguarding the health and safety of NYCHA residents by (though not limited to) eliminating lead-based paint, mold, and pests from NYCHA residences, all of which contribute to adverse health impacts such as asthma and lead poisoning. We echo calls by the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP) advocating for sufficient funding for NYCHA's [Lead-Safe Housing Policy](#) (Lead-Based Paint Abatement and Dust Wipe Sampling), [XRF Testing Initiative](#), and the [Team for Enhanced Management Planning and Outreach \(TEMPO\)](#).

NYLCV echoes the call by the City Council for New York State to increase its capital contribution for NYCHA restoration and maintenance, especially given the uncertainty surrounding federal funding.

Relatedly, NYCHA should explore opportunities to pair building capital repairs such as elevator improvements and mold and lead abatement with energy efficiency retrofits and zero-emission heating, cooling, and cooking systems installation. NYCHA's Capital Commitment Plan for

Fiscal 2025-2029 by category includes elevator repair (\$412.0 million), façade repairs and sidewalk sheds (\$517.0 million), roofs (\$588 million), lead and asbestos abatement and mold (\$1.1 billion), and heating upgrades (\$1.2 billion).

While the Public Housing [Committee Report](#) states, "NYCHA is taking steps towards Local Law 97 compliance, to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, by decarbonizing heating systems, gas stoves, and improving insulation," the City must ensure that NYCHA is sufficiently funded in order to continue implementing its [Sustainability Agenda](#) and to ensure that NYCHA campuses are on track to meet emissions reduction targets and procurement commitments for renewable energy, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050. NYLCV also urges NYCHA to explore the possibility of investing in thermal energy networks to decarbonize campuses to aid in reaching these emissions reduction goals. The City also must work with State and Federal agencies to identify sustainable funding streams to make NYCHA campuses resilient to climate hazards such as sea level rise, storm surges, and extreme rainfall. This includes protecting mechanical, electrical, and plumbing infrastructure, floodproofing buildings, and installing new, more efficient boilers and back-up generators.

NYCHA should continue working with DEP to fund and improve NYCHA's stormwater management and implement green infrastructure projects such as permeable pavement, porous asphalt, porous concrete, rain gardens, and subsurface storage systems. Funding should also be prioritized for mitigating extreme heat for NYCHA residents. In addition to increasing and maintaining NYCHA's tree canopy and comprehensively retrofitting NYCHA buildings, there should be funding allocated to restart the [Get Cool NYC Program](#), which provided air conditioners, free of charge, to senior residents who are 65 or over or have a qualifying underlying condition. This program [helped seniors](#) who participated less likely to report feeling sick from the heat compared to those who didn't participate in the Get Cool NYC Program. To complement this program, the City should also identify funding sources to help qualifying residents in this program with their summer utility bills. NYLCV urges the City to provide long-term funding for composting and recycling for all NYCHA campuses, especially as the City is implementing the residential curbside organics program. An organic waste collection program that leaves out NYCHA cannot be called a citywide or universal program.

Lastly, as with other City agencies, NYLCV calls on the City to prioritize long-term hiring and staffing at NYCHA. With historic underinvestment and constant quality of life issues, NYCHA residents deserve significant funding and investment not only to address existing public health and building maintenance problems but to prepare for the impacts of climate change.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



**March 10, 2025**  
**New York City Council**  
**Hearing Before the Committee on Public Housing**  
**Re: Preliminary Budget**  
**Written Testimony of the New York Legal Assistance Group**

Greetings Chair Banks and members of the New York City Council Committee on Public Housing. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the urgent need for increased capital funding for NYCHA. The New York Legal Assistance Group (“NYLAG”) uses the power of the law to help New Yorkers experiencing poverty or in crisis combat economic, racial, and social injustices. We address emerging and urgent needs with comprehensive, free civil legal services, financial empowerment, impact litigation, policy advocacy, and community partnerships. We aim to disrupt systemic racism by serving clients whose legal and financial crises are often rooted in racial inequality.

NYLAG works closely with community organizations, agencies, and elected officials, and operates numerous legal clinics in locations such as community centers, courthouses, and hospitals. With the full implementation of Right to Counsel at the NYCHA Office of Impartial Hearings (“OIH”), NYLAG created the Public Housing Justice Project (“PHJP”) within its Tenants’ Rights Unit (“TRU”). NYLAG’s PHJP is the first team of attorneys in New York City solely dedicated to representing NYCHA tenants. PHJP represents tenants in both Section 9 and Permanent Affordability Commitment Together, known as PACT, developments. We urge the City Council to take decisive action to prioritize public housing investment in this year’s budget.

NYCHA is the largest landlord in New York City. It is responsible for approximately 7% of New York City’s rental stock and is home to 1 in 17 New Yorkers. NYCHA apartments are family homes: tenancies are intergenerational and long term, averaging approximately 26 years. As NYCHA correctly notes in its 2025 Fact Sheets, these deep-seated communities are the equivalent of a city unto themselves, with more residents than Miami or Atlanta.<sup>1</sup>

However, while analogies to prominent big cities around the country are helpful for illustrating the sheer size of NYCHA, it is *not* actually a city itself, separate from the rest of New York. Public housing residents are integral members of our communities: they are our neighbors, colleagues, friends, and classmates. The success of New York City is bound up in the success of NYCHA. For this reason, we are calling on City Council to ensure that NYCHA is fully funded, with safeguards put in place to ensure greater accountability to tenants in order to increase efficiency.

Year after year, NYCHA continues to face the same issues caused by rising expenses and deteriorating conditions. However, while the age and physical status of NYCHA’s housing stock are a reality we must contend with, the mismanagement that exacerbates them is not. More often than not, our clients in Section 9 and PACT developments are subjected to unacceptable living conditions. As their advocates, we see

firsthand how NYCHA's persistent mismanagement and resistance, on the individual level, to performing basic, needed repairs, exacerbates poor housing conditions and health inequalities.

The current state of NYCHA's housing stock requires full funding in order to ensure that the homes of hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers are safe and free from hazardous conditions. Equally as urgently, NYCHA residents deserve development management staff that are responsive to their needs, well-versed in their rights, and accountable to the residents they serve. Currently, a lack of effective oversight and training has created a pervasive problem of misinformation among development staff, who are the effective gatekeepers of repairs and due process for our clients.

We submit the following testimony because NYCHA is home to hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers and the health and preservation of these homes and communities matters. With the Trump administration's policies and priorities, and its slashing federal spending, it is unlikely that the federal government is going to fund public housing meaningfully. It is incumbent on New York City to ensure that NYCHA's capital repairs and operational budgets are fully funded. We also strongly urge the City Council to ensure specifically that NYCHA Section 9 developments are funded and not rely on privatization through PACT to save the future of public housing in New York City. Time and time again, this "public-private partnership" has proven that in its current iteration it cannot meet the requirements of resident services and repairs. We call upon the City Council to increase oversight of all NYCHA programs in order to increase accountability, efficiency and effectiveness.

NYCHA's Precarity Requires a Budget that Fully Funds Operations and Capital Repairs and Ensures that Funds Are Spent Effectively

A stable future for public housing in New York City requires a robust and consistent capital commitment from the City to complement state-level investments and ensure the modernization of thousands of NYCHA buildings that will not be included in the PACT program. It also requires that City Government take meaningful steps to ensure that money is used efficiently and effectively.

In our practice, we work with NYCHA and PACT residents across the city in a wide range of matters: from terminations of tenancy or remaining family member grievances at the NYCHA Office of Impartial Hearings, to nonpay and holdover eviction cases in Housing Court, to HP Actions seeking repairs or the remediation of hazardous conditions in our clients' homes. Invariably, our clients are subjected to unacceptable living conditions or misinformation from building management. Before clients connect with our team, they have often contended with numerous bureaucratic obstacles, leaving them without any effective tools to hold their management or NYCHA accountable.

NYCHA's developments are plagued by both large, systemic repair needs that would be addressed under the capital repairs budget as well as smaller, individual repair needs that are addressed through the operations budget. These budgetary needs are in competition with each other, but the practicalities of these repairs means that they must be addressed in concert. By way of example: A development may require the replacement of a line of a stack-pipe system. This is a significant undertaking that would be addressed through the capital repairs needs budget. However, an individual living in that

development may be dealing with the fallout from years of having a corroded stackpipe behind their wall and may have related carpentry issues, such as falling cabinets as a result. This smaller repair would be addressed through the operations budget. Similarly, we have had clients with asthmatic children who contend with chronic elevator outages, which force them to climb seventeen flights of stairs, a repair that would be covered by the capital repairs budget. However, once they get to their apartments, they are then met with habitability conditions that exacerbate asthma, such as mold, poor ventilation, broken windows, or pest infestations.

Hazardous living conditions at NYCHA are compounded by mismanagement and misinformation. Before retaining an attorney from NYLAG to assist them, our clients often feel that they are left with no recourse due to misinformation from NYCHA staff. For instance, one client was told that she had no right to mold remediation because she was currently seeking Remaining Family Member status. Another client was told she would have to wait for repairs until her Termination of Tenancy case was resolved. In another case, a client was told his Remaining Family Member grievance was going to be denied because of the immigration status of a family member. In each of these scenarios, the information provided to residents by NYCHA staff was incorrect under the law and NYCHA's own policies.

NYCHA's mismanagement extends beyond headline-grabbing news stories about corruption. Inefficient management leads to duplicative efforts and an unnecessary strain on resources for both NYCHA and its residents. For instance, we have a client who recently connected with our office through Right to Counsel intake at NYCHA's administrative venue, the Office of Impartial Hearings ("OIH"), for a case based on charges of Chronic Rent Delinquency. After completing the intake with our client, we learned that she also had an active case in Housing Court based on nonpayment of rent that had recently been settled. In another case, we connected with a client in a Housing Court holdover after his tenancy had been terminated after defaulting at a chronic rent delinquency hearing at OIH. There, our client had defaulted at the OIH termination hearing because he had already been evicted from his NYCHA apartment through a nonpay case in Housing Court. He was restored to his apartment through post-eviction advocacy and the payment of outstanding rental arrears, only to be served with another Housing Court petition because NYCHA was simultaneously pursuing cases in two venues. In still another example, clients facing administrative Terminations of Tenancy proceedings or seeking Remaining Family Member succession at OIH such as the ones mentioned above, are told that the NYCHA attorneys at OIH cannot negotiate repairs, and instead the residents and their counsel must file an HP Action in Housing Court in order to speak to a different NYCHA attorney who can arrange repairs. In these cases, NYCHA does not even dispute that the conditions exist, but regardless insists that the parties maintain two proceedings, in two separate venues with at least three attorneys litigating an issue that should not even require litigation. This costly dysfunction and mismanagement diverts critical resources from essential repairs, which are often required by the Housing Maintenance Code. Empowering the NYCHA OIH hearing officers and attorneys to address repairs would increase efficiency and decrease the litigation burden on residents and NYCHA alike.

The stability of the families and homes of the hundreds of thousands of people who live in NYCHA demands a fully funded capital and operational budget. We implore the

City Council to provide the necessary oversight to ensure that the funds allocated to NYCHA are used in an efficient and effective manner, and residents are empowered to hold NYCHA accountable to fulfill its obligations to them.

#### Resident Choice: PACT Cannot Be the Solution

The implementation of resident voting on the funding structures for their NYCHA developments has been a profound step forward in tenant empowerment and democracy. However, City Council must not ignore the very clear message being sent by the results of these votes. Out of the four developments given the opportunity to vote for either converting to PACT, converting to NYCHA Preservation Trust, or remaining in Section 9, not one selected PACT. One development chose to remain in Section 9 and three developments opted for the Preservation Trust. The City must fully fund NYCHA in order to ensure that a vote against PACT does not mean no repairs and no improvements in management.

Thousands of residents live in PACT developments, but none of them chose to do so. As Comptroller Lander's recent audit made clear, the current administration of PACT is inefficient and fails to provide residents with the promised safeguards.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the current federal administration has announced intentions to severely cut HUD funding. These combined circumstances mean that PACT cannot be relied on for the future of public housing.

The Comptroller's audit reflected an increase in evictions in PACT developments; the failure of PACT project managers to perform adequate outreach to at-risk residents as required; and the failure of PACT property managers to report all eviction and pre-eviction activity as required. Simply put, NYCHA and the managers of PACT developments have failed at every turn to make good on their obligations to PACT residents. These compounding failures mean increased evictions and decreased due process for residents who did not even have the opportunity to vote on the funding structure of their homes or whether they wanted to live in PACT developments. The City Council should make clear that PACT funding comes with the requirement of meaningful, effective, and accessible resident safeguards, and a promise from NYCHA that it will exercise effective oversight over PACT partners.

#### Public Housing and Public Health

NYCHA residents are disproportionately impacted by environmental racism due to conditions caused by both the internal and external environments of their homes. Many developments are located near high-diesel corridors, contributing to poor air quality. Other developments, such as Red Hook Houses, are built on marshland and are more susceptible to climate-related flooding.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, developments such as Cooper and Gowanus Houses are located in close proximity to superfund sites.<sup>4</sup> Indoors, NYCHA apartments are plagued by lead paint, mold, failing heat systems, cockroaches, rodents, leaks, and crumbling appliances. These conditions are often left unaddressed for long periods of time, even after tenants place tickets and work orders are opened. In 2023, NYCHA issued a report finding that between 2019 and 2023, the average number of days to address work orders increased from 38 to 295 days.<sup>5</sup>

The combination of external and internal environmental conditions has a profound impact on NYCHA residents' health. NYCHA developments have higher rates of particulate matter 2.5 (PM 2.5) than Section 8 developments and beyond what is acceptable according to the Environmental Protection Agency.<sup>6</sup> PM 2.5 is caused by proximity to diesel exhaust, highways, poor air circulation and filtration, pest infestation, and mold spores.<sup>7</sup> Long-term exposure increases the risk of heart disease, asthma, low birth weight, and dementia.<sup>89</sup> Indeed, children in NYCHA experience disproportionately high rates of asthma. Between 2010 and 2014, preventable asthma hospitalizations among NYCHA residents were 300% higher than the citywide average.<sup>10</sup>

The adverse environmental conditions at NYCHA are creating an ongoing health crisis. The City Council must take affirmative steps to prevent these crises from worsening by creating plans for large capital repairs and comprehensive modernizations that go beyond cosmetic changes and that will improve the indoor air quality and the lives of NYCHA residents.

#### Funding Requests

The City Council must fully fund NYCHA in order to protect the future of all public housing developments in New York City. We strongly urge the Council to:

1. Increase annual NYCHA capital funding to \$1.5 billion – a necessary increase from the \$779 million in the previous year's budget.
2. Ensure an equitable distribution of funds for both capital repairs and operations budgets: Developments should receive fair funding regardless of whether they opt into the PACT Program, Preservation Trust, or remain in Section 9. Last year, only 2% of allocated funds went to Section 9 developments, well below the amount estimated by NYCHA's Physical Needs Assessment.
3. Create a dedicated sustainability and environmental justice capital fund. The City Council must allocate dedicated funds to create healthier, safer, and climate resilient developments for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

During an uncertain time, City Council must act to fully fund NYCHA and ensure the future of the hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers who call its developments home. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Luft  
Project Director, Public Housing Justice Project  
Tenants' Rights Unit  
New York Legal Assistance Group

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Trenton Price

**Testimony to Committee on Public Housing**  
*From Trenton Price – Executive Director, Salvadori Center*  
*Monday, March 10, 2025*

Thank you, Chair Banks and members of the Committee on Public Housing. My name is Trenton Price, and I am the Executive Director of the Salvadori Center. I am a former middle school teacher, school leader, and district leader for arts education here in New York City before joining Salvadori two years ago. I am passionate about education and facilitating experiences for young people to work together and empower their creative and analytical voices.

At Salvadori, we provide STEAM education services – that is STEM plus the A for Arts, and in our case, Architecture – to schools, after-school sites, and NYCHA community centers across the five boroughs focusing on the built environment. For context, last year, Salvadori taught over 12,000 students in 145 schools and NYCHA community centers. Our goal is to make STEM and the arts come alive for students, and to foster the soft skills of collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving – just like real-life architects, designers, and engineers.

We are grateful to have the support of the Council through multiple CASA and Digital Inclusion & Literacy grants as well as After School Enrichment and the Speaker's Initiative at numerous NYCHA sites across the City. It is this work from the Speaker's Initiative that brings me here today.

As a long-time partner of NYCHA for over 15 years, we see first-hand the need for robust out-of-school time programming for children and youth. In our programs, young people clamor for the opportunity to work together and build solutions to design challenges that impact their communities.



These real-life challenges engage their brains, foster collaboration, and make connections to career pathways they may not have considered. Last summer, for example, Salvadori worked with middle school youth in East New York and Astoria to learn about the built environment and collaborate with real architects and engineers – all to propose redesigns of their cornerstone community rooms. And last fall – with the support of funding partners, volunteers, NYCHA, and the Public Housing Community Fund – we made the students' visions come to life with investments in those cornerstone community rooms!

With so many pressing priorities for residents of public housing, we know programming for children and youth can sometimes feel like less of a priority. But to the contrary ~ investing in pathways for children and youth is one of the most critical things we can do to support the success of future generations. I want to thank this committee, Chair Banks, and the Council for your investment in the futures of our youth, and encourage you to continue to deepen that support for out-of-school programming for young people in public housing who need it the most.

I thank you for facilitating this hearing and for your commitment to supporting each and every young person in public housing communities in our City. We are grateful to be able to serve New York City's youth and stand ready to do more. Thank you.

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING HEARING ON THE  
PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

PRESENTED BY:  
IMANE CHERIF EL FARISSY

ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ADVOCATES AND ATTORNEYS, UAW LOCAL 2325

MARCH 10, 2025

Thank you all for the opportunity to speak. My name is Imane Cherif El Farissy, and I am a delegate from CAMBA Legal Services Workers United at the Association of Legal Advocates and Attorneys. We are United Auto Workers Local 2325. UAW 2325 represents over 3,400 active and retired legal services workers at [over thirty non-profit organizations](#) in the NYC metro area and beyond. UAW 2325 members are attorneys, paralegals, social workers, investigators and support staff. We are the workers who fight to maintain permanent housing within the community, advocate for the correction of apartment disrepairs, and keep NYCHA and landlords accountable to the law by making sure New Yorkers have access to justice in our courts and vital social services in our city.

Our members are an essential labor force, but like NYCHA itself, decades of underfunding has led to untenable working conditions. We are facing an attrition and workload crisis. We are facing a student debt crisis. Our salaries and retirement benefits have failed to keep pace with our counterparts in District Attorneys' offices and Corporation Counsel. This inequity in our funding speaks volumes about who is valued in the legal system. When our wages stagnate, the services poor and working class New Yorkers receive are degraded.

Our members are dedicated to public service and when we can no longer afford to stay, we go to jobs in the public sector that have better salaries and real pensions such as the Attorney General's Office and Office of Court Administration. Positions requiring experience go unfilled, leaving those who remain overburdened with rising caseloads. We lose talent and institutional knowledge. Attempts to meaningfully fill senior positions have failed. Our salaries are just too low and the cost of living in this city is too high.

When NYCHA tenants are informed of an administrative proceeding and served with charges, many mistakenly believe that a housing court case has been commenced, failing to recognize an administrative proceeding as a possible preventative measure to housing court action. It takes an experienced Paralegal to understand the charges, interview tenants, review their files, and effectively advocate on their behalf to settle the proceeding. Paralegals play a key role in preventing these cases from advancing to housing court and preventing eviction from public housing. Furthermore, Paralegals may also assist NYCHA tenants and Section 8 recipients to resolve accrued rental arrears balances that threaten their permanent housing. Paralegals knowledgeable of the processes required to secure financial assistance from the Human

Resources Administration through a One Shot Deal or from a charitable organization are crucial to assist tenants to resolve their balances.

In 2025, ALAA has fundamentally changed the terrain of legal services through our organizing. Now, over ninety-five percent of legal services workers in New York City are UAW 2325 members. We will no longer accept a race to the bottom where austerity budgets reign. At every bargaining table, we demand more.

This year, we have aligned the contracts of over 2,100 of our union members across twelve chapters to expire on June 30, 2025 for a potential sector-wide strike in July that could shut down courts across the city. We are committed to bargaining in good faith with our employers. While we do not want to strike, we are prepared to withhold our labor to win a future for the thousands of union members who need better wages for the long-term.

In Fiscal Year 2026, we are asking the Council to fully fund legal services so our employers can meet our core bargaining demands.

Together, we are bargaining to establish a living wage floor of \$70,000 for our entry-level members. We are bargaining to guarantee a minimum 4.5% COLA. We are bargaining to ensure our retirement benefits match what public sector employees get in the state retirement system. And finally, we are bargaining to increase salaries to keep pace with agencies such as the Federal Defenders and Attorney General's office to retain our most experienced members.

Our members are not immune from the affordability crisis that has hit our city hard. Austerity budgets in legal services hurt our union and they hurt New Yorkers. Settling fair contracts centered on these demands will provide stability to our members and ensure working class New Yorkers get the absolute best legal representation. They deserve nothing less.

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING HEARING ON THE  
PRELIMINARY BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

PRESENTED BY:  
JEREMY BUNYANER

ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ADVOCATES AND ATTORNEYS, UAW LOCAL 2325

MARCH 10, 2025

Thank you all for the opportunity to speak. My name is Jeremy Bunyaner, and I am an elected constitutional officer sitting on the Executive Board of the Association of Legal Advocates and Attorneys, United Auto Workers Local 2325. UAW 2325 represents over 3,400 active and retired legal services workers at [over thirty non-profit organizations](#) in the NYC metro area, including the majority of providers participating in the Right to Counsel Universal Access program. UAW 2325 members are attorneys, paralegals, social workers, investigators, interpreters, administrative workers, and more. We are the workers who keep people in their homes, fight for repairs, and keep NYCHA and private landlords accountable to the law by making sure New Yorkers have access to justice in our courts and vital social services in our city.

Our members are an essential labor force, but like with NYCHA itself, decades of underfunding has led to untenable conditions. We are facing an attrition and workload crisis. We are facing a student debt crisis. Our salaries and retirement benefits have failed to keep pace with our counterparts in District Attorneys' offices and Corporation Counsel. This inequity in our funding speaks volumes about who is valued in the legal system. When our wages stagnate, the services poor and working class New Yorkers receive are degraded.

Our members are dedicated to public service and when we can no longer afford to stay, we go to jobs in the public sector that have better salaries and real pensions such as the Attorney General's Office and Office of Court Administration. Positions requiring experience go unfilled, leaving those who remain overburdened with rising caseloads. We lose talent and institutional knowledge.

It takes years as a practitioner to fully understand the power of law like the Williams Consent Decrees, which require that landlords notify the Housing Authority when trying to evict tenants with Section 8. Our members use it as a tool to keep people in their homes. It takes experienced advocates to ensure tenants are not evicted over unpaid NYCHA Section 8 portions of the rent that are not their burden to pay. It takes a depth of knowledge with NYCHA regulations to navigate succession in NYCHA units so that family homes can remain family homes after the death of a loved one. Attempts to meaningfully fill senior positions in the organizations we work for have failed. Our salaries are just too low and the cost of living in this city is too high.

This is why the UAW has fundamentally changed the terrain of legal services through our organizing. Now, over ninety-five percent of legal services workers in New York City are UAW

2325 members. We will no longer accept a race to the bottom where austerity budgets reign. At every bargaining table, we demand more.

This year, we have aligned the contracts of over 2,100 of our union members across twelve chapters to expire on June 30, 2025 for a potential sector-wide strike in July that could shut down courts across the city. While we are committed to bargaining in good faith with our employers and do not want to strike, we are prepared to withhold our labor to win a future for the thousands of union members who need better wages for the long-term. Our wins are wins for the tenants who NYCHA serves and wins for NYCHA itself.

In Fiscal Year 2026, we are asking the Council to fully fund legal services, including the \$350 million required to fully implement the City's existing Right to Counsel law so that our employers can meet the core bargaining demands we are making as UAW legal workers. Together, we are bargaining to establish a living wage floor for our entry-level members, and a minimum 4.5% COLA. We are bargaining to ensure our retirement benefits match what public sector employees get in the state retirement system. And finally, we are bargaining to increase salaries to keep pace with agencies such as the Federal Defenders and Attorney General's office to retain our most experienced members so they can not only continue to serve the tenants of New York City but teach the next generation of advocates.

Our members are not immune from the affordability crisis that has hit our city hard. Austerity budgets in legal services creates eviction and undermines the very purpose of public housing. Fair contracts centered on these demands will provide stability to our members and ensure working class New Yorkers get the absolute best legal representation. They deserve nothing less.

**TESTIMONY OF**

**Kevin Ly**

Forest Hills, NY 11375

**BEFORE THE**

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HOUSING**

**CHAIRPERSON: COUNCIL MEMBER CHRIS BANKS**

**250 Broadway, Suite 1765**

**New York, NY 10007**

**Email: CBanks@council.nyc.gov**

**Phone: (212) 788-6969**

**Date: March 9, 2025**

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**Subject: Urgent Need for Reliable Elevator Maintenance at 415 West 25th Street**

Dear Chairperson Banks and Members of the New York City Council Committee on Public Housing,

My name is Kevin Ly, a resident of Forest Hills, Queens. I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the frequent elevator breakdowns at 415 West 25th Street, a 21-story residential building managed by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), comprising 425 units.

Residents have reported that the building's two elevators are often out of service, causing significant inconvenience and safety concerns, especially for the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and families with young children. The lack of reliable elevator service in such a tall building is unacceptable and poses serious risks during emergencies.

I respectfully urge the Committee to:

1. **Mandate Regular Maintenance:** Implement a strict schedule for elevator inspections and maintenance to prevent frequent breakdowns.
2. **Allocate Necessary Funding:** Ensure that NYCHA has the resources required to maintain and, if necessary, upgrade elevator systems in this and similar buildings.
3. **Enhance Communication:** Establish clear protocols for informing residents about elevator outages and expected repair times.

Addressing these issues is crucial for the safety and well-being of the residents at 415 West 25th Street. I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to prompt action to resolve these concerns.

**Sincerely,**

**Kevin Ly**

Forest Hills, NY 11375



## "FY26 Preliminary Budget Hearing," Hosted by the Committee on Public Housing

### **NYCHA's Mismanagement & the Push for PACT Must End**

NYCHA continues to claim they don't have enough funding—yet at the **November 2024 Board meeting**, they **approved over \$15 million** in support of the **NYC Public Housing Preservation Trust** for predevelopment activities that shift **Section 9 public housing into Section 8 project-based vouchers**.

If NYCHA is struggling financially, why are they funding an entity that relies on bonds instead of maintaining existing buildings? We need to ask:

- How is HUD's rent & subsidy money being spent?
- Is it going toward maintaining buildings? If not, why?
- Is NYCHA practicing demolition by neglect?

Meanwhile, there are 8,000 vacant NYCHA apartments while tenants live in deteriorating conditions. Rent money should be going toward necessary repairs, not funding an entity that will rely on bonds.

In **Fulton & Elliott-Chelsea alone, rent & subsidies bring in at least \$4 million monthly**—where is that money going?

At the **February 2025 NYCHA Board meeting**, Chair Jamie Rubin admitted:

"One (1) of the senators said to us, 'I want to thank you for coming up here because past NYCHA teams never came up. I think it was a little bit of an exaggeration, but he said they never asked for money, so I am grateful that you are up here asking for money. Which is sort of a funny thing to hear, but it made sense. They have NYCHA in their portfolio and they care about NYCHA. He said he was frankly sort of confused in the past years when people from NYCHA would show up and ask for \$6 million, which, I think we can all understand, \$6 million does not really make much of a difference in the context of a \$78 billion capital need.

"So, at least we are up there asking for, you know, substantial, say a lot more, which is great. So, it was an interesting thing to hear. It is in the past but we state and city can do their part to fund NYCHA as they were responsible for 21 developments at one time. They were unfortunately some of the first to be put into the PACT program since they were LL2 mixed finance units."

Rubin also stated:

"Nobody wants to help if they do not think you are doing any work. So now that we are not under that illusion anymore, everybody understands the stuff that has been done, what we need, and part of what we need is for people to get out of NYCHA's way."

We need to get in NYCHA's way—because they are forcing the PACT process onto residents who don't want it.

PACT has harmed communities, as **documented since 2022** in the [Neighbors Helping Neighbors report on RAD in the Rockaways](#). NYCHA claims they will stop PACT if residents reject it, but this is false.

PACT needs to end. It's time to prioritize real solutions for NYCHA's future.

Renee Keitt

**WORD COUNT:** 250-300 words (~2 mins)

Thank you to Chair Banks and members of the Public Housing committee for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Richard Soohoo and I am the Tenants Services Coordinator at 64 Norfolk HDHC at the Chinese-American Planning Council (CPC), the nation's largest Asian American social service organization.

In one square block of NYC in the LES, CPC has 350 units of affordable housing with 265 of those units being earmarked for Seniors with 58 of those units set aside for the formerly unhoused.

I want to share a story of one of our residents:

KJ, incarcerated in 1973 and released in 2001, has struggled with unstable housing and relies on a loose support system of friends and family, though they have been in and out of shelters. He resides in a housing unit for the formerly unhoused at 64 Norfolk, but has faced several health setbacks, including hospitalizations for high blood pressure and diabetes. KJ has an expired State ID, which led to the expiration of his housing subsidy during a CityFHEPS recertification. Additionally, he was unaware of over \$800 in late fees and legal charges, which had been sent to collections, and had also fallen behind on a Con Edison bill. With assistance from his case manager at CPC, his subsidy has been renewed, a payment plan for the utility set up, and his arrears are being addressed through an HRA One Shot Deal.

Our communities heavily rely on housing assistance services like the ones that we provide. However, our communities deserve a City where housing is afforded to every New Yorker. We urge the City to invest in more affordable housing which includes expanding CityFHEPS eligibility. We must have housing that is inclusive of seniors with social services and health care provided that is local and accessible to our communities. Thank you for your time.

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

1

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: James Alvar

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

I represent: Nycha President

Address: 465 Fountain Ave

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

2

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Adam Cohen

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

I represent: Member of Vocal - New York

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Eva Trimble

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

I represent: Chief operating officer, NYCHA

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

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

**(PLEASE PRINT)**

Name: Shaan Mavani

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

I represent: Chief Asset & Capital Management

Address: Officer, NYCHA

**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: Lisa Bova-Hiatt

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

I represent: Chief Executive Officer,

Address: NYCHA

**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: Annika Lescott-Martinez

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

I represent: Chief Financial Officer, &

Address: EVP, NYCHA

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



THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brian Honan

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

I represent: EVP, Intergovernmental

Address: Affairs

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: 3/11/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LAURA LAZARUS

Address: 90 BROAD ST. Suite 1703A

I represent: ANTHOS HOME

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

THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/10/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Sharon Brown

Address: [Redacted] Jamaica NY 11436

I represent: ROSE OF Sharon Enterprises

Address: [Redacted]

Bklyn NY 11238  
Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/10/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Daren Sealey

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

I represent: Center for Justice Innovation

Address: 520 EIGHTH AVE #18 NY NY 10018

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 4/10/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: We the people

Address: FOR DRIVE

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

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/10/2025

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Elizabeth Rodriguez

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

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

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

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



**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/10/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Ar Lones Geter

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

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

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/10/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Jesse Maldonado Koklas

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

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

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

*Appearance Card*

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/10/25

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Richard Soohoo

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

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

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

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

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

Name: Manuel Martinez (PLEASE PRINT)

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

I represent: South Jamaica Houses R.A.

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/10/25

Name: Trenton Price (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_, New York, NY 10015

I represent: Salvadori Center

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

**THE COUNCIL  
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

**Appearance Card**

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

☐ in favor ☐ in opposition

Date: 3/10/25

Name: Christopher Leon Johnson (PLEASE PRINT)

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

I represent: Self

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

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